Anti-Bullying

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Aquinas Church of England Education Trust

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Anti-Bullying

Statement of Intent

Rye College (the Academy) believes that all pupils are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment; this means being free from all forms of bullying behaviour. This policy outlines how instances of bullying are dealt with, including the procedures to prevent occurrences of bullying.

These strategies, e.g. learning about tolerance and difference as part of the Academy's curriculum, aim to promote an inclusive, tolerant and supportive ethos at the school.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 outlines several legal obligations regarding the Academy's response to bullying. Under section 89, schools must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. These measures are part of the Academy's Behaviour Management Policy, which is communicated to all pupils, staff and parents.

All staff, parents and pupils work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at the school.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our college. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell an adult and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a telling College. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Public Order Act 1986
- Communications Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Education Act 2011
- DfE 'Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE (2021) 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'
- DfE 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'
- DfE 'Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff'
- DCMS, DSIT, and UK Council for Internet Safety 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- DfE 'Supporting children and young people with medication conditions and allergy'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Academy Behaviour Management
- Aquinas Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Aquinas Social, Emotional, Mental Health
- Academy Searching, Screening and Confiscation
- Aquinas Suspension and Exclusion
- Aquinas Relationship, Health and Sex Education
- Aquinas Remote Education

Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, "bullying" is defined as persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another person or group.

It includes name calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at the Academy, at home or online. It is usually repeated over a long period of time and can hurt a child both physically and emotionally.

Bullying is generally characterised by:

- **Repetition**: Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over an extended period of time.
- **Intent**: The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental.
- **Targeting**: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.
- **Power imbalance**: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations.

In most incidents reported as bullying, the root of the behaviour is a breakdown in the dynamics of a friendship group, so we have defined bullying as deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated over a period of time, which may be verbal (including racism), physical, social, cyber or psychological. We use a simple definition: S.T.O.P. = Several - Times - On - Purpose.

Vulnerable pupils are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. Vulnerable pupils may include, but are not limited to:

- Pupils who are adopted.
- Pupils suffering from a health problem.
- Pupils with caring responsibilities.
- Pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Pupils with certain characteristics are also more likely to be targets of bullying, including, but not limited to:

- Pupils who are LGBTQ+ or perceived to be LGBTQ+.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic background pupils.
- Pupils with SEND.

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

All types of bullying will be discussed as part of the RSE and health education curriculum, in line with the RHSE policy.

This curriculum will explore and discuss issues at age-appropriate stages such as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships.
- Boundaries and consent.
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality.
- Body confidence and self-esteem.
- How to recognise abusive relationships and coercive control.
- Harmful sexual behaviour, the concepts involved and why they are always unacceptable, and the laws relating to it.

Types of Bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Teasing another pupil because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, home life, culture, or SEND are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Online (cyberbullying)

Racist bullying: Bullying another person based on their ethnic background or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.

Homophobic and biphobic bullying: Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Transphobic bullying: Bullying based on another person's gender identity or gender presentation, or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.

Sexist bullying: Bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.

Sexual bullying: Bullying behaviour that has a physical, psychological, verbal or non-verbal sexual dimension or dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

Ableist bullying: Bullying behaviour that focusses on another person's disability or support needs; this can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability.

Prejudicial bullying: Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics or experiences, e.g. religion or mental health issues.

Relational bullying: Bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

Socioeconomic bullying: Bullying based on prejudices against the perceived social status of the victim, including, but not limited to, their economic status, their parents' occupations, their health or nutrition level, or the perceived "quality" of their clothing or belongings.

Rye College will not accept any form of **discriminatory abuse**. This may include:

- Verbal abuse, derogatory remarks or inappropriate use of language related to a protected characteristic.
- Deliberate exclusion on the grounds of a protected characteristic.
- Harassment, slurs, or similar treatment based on a difference or perceived difference.
- Misogynistic/Misandrist behaviour or comments].

Important information about bullying

- The nature of bullying can change as children grow older, and can become subtler.
- Most bullying is not physical, or direct. Children identify emotional and social forms of bullying as most hurtful.
- Bullying exists in all ages, social, ethnic and gender groups and in both urban and rural settings.
- Most bullying is between children of the same age.
- Those who witness bullying are as deeply affected as those who are directly bullied.
- Children follow examples. If home life does not offer a secure and safe environment and they frequently see aggressive behaviour between adults and towards themselves they will tend to adopt aggressive behaviour patterns themselves.

Roles and responsibilities

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- Evaluating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it does not discriminate against any pupils on the basis of their protected characteristics or backgrounds.
- The overall implementation and monitoring of this policy.
- Ensuring that all AAC members are appropriately trained regarding safeguarding and child protection at induction.
- Ensuring that the Academy adopts a tolerant and open-minded policy towards difference.
- Ensuring the Academy is inclusive.
- Analysing any bullying data to establish patterns and reviewing this policy in light of these.

- Ensuring the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the Academy to carry out the duties of the role.
- Appointing a safeguarding link AAC member who will work with the DSL to ensure the policies and practices relating to safeguarding, including the prevention of cyberbullying, are being implemented effectively.
- Ensuring that pupils are taught how to keep themselves and others safe, including online.

The Deputy Headteacher is responsible for:

- Reviewing and amending this policy, accounting for new legislation and government guidance, and using staff experience of dealing with bullying incidents in previous years to improve procedures.
- Keeping a record of reported incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for proper analysis of the data collected.
- Analysing the data in the bullying record at termly intervals to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members.

Teachers are responsible for:

- Being alert to social dynamics in their class.
- Being available for pupils who wish to report bullying.
- Providing follow-up support after bullying incidents.
- Being alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups, and informing the Student Hub of such observations.
- Refraining from stereotyping when dealing with bullying.
- Understanding the composition of pupil groups, showing sensitivity to those who have been the victims of bullying.
- Reporting any instances of bullying once they have been approached by a pupil for support.

Parents are responsible for:

- Informing the Academy if they have any concerns that their child is the victim of bullying or involving in bullying in anyway.
- Being watchful of their child's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff members of any changes.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Informing a member of staff if they witness bullying or are a victim of bullying.
- Not making counter-threats if they are victims of bullying.
- Walking away from dangerous situations and avoiding involving other pupils in incidents.
- Keeping evidence of cyberbullying and informing a member of staff should they fall victim to cyberbullying.

Statutory Implications

The Academy understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, it has a responsibility to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The Academy understands that, under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, it could have charges brought against it if it allows the rights of pupils to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously. The Head Teacher will ensure that this policy complies with the HRA; the Head Teacher understands that they cannot do this without fully involving their teaching staff.

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/or communications may be considered criminal offences:

- Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or in a way which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or contains information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information through any media, including internet sites.
- Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to the police include violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment or intimidation, and hate crimes.

Prevention

The Academy will clearly communicate a whole-school commitment to addressing bullying and have a clear set of values and standards which will be regularly promoted across the whole school.

- We are a 'telling College' where anyone who sees bullying, or experiences it, tells an adult.
- Inform the parents or family of the bully of what has been happening.
- Make the punishments for bullying known to all the children.
- Show all the children how to walk away from a bully.

All members of the school will be made aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it. All staff members will receive training on identifying and dealing with the different types of bullying.

- All AAC members, teachers, associates, pupils, parents and families should understand what bullying is.
- All AAC members, teachers and associates, should know what the Academy's policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the Academy's policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.

- As an Academy we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.
- The College draws on the latest guidance from NSPCC and other agencies in developing the most effective approaches.

We use a number of methods for helping children to prevent bullying as and when appropriate – many recommended by Kidscape, these may include:

- Assemblies and tutor programmes.
- Signing a Behaviour Contract.
- Life Education sessions focused on diversity.
- Visible presence around the Academy at breaks.
- Welcoming space for pupils to air their concerns (the Hub).
- yourconcerns@ryecollege.co.uk dedicated email address for pupils to report incidents. This is monitored by the Safeguarding team monitored daily during term time.
- Circle time sessions with Place 2 Be for Year 7 pupils with the theme of friendship.

Staff will encourage pupil cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work. Diversity, difference and respect for others will be promoted and celebrated through various lessons. Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills will be provided through participation in special events, e.g. drama productions, sporting activities and cultural groups.

Seating plans will be organised and altered in a way that prevents instances of bullying. Potential victims of bullying will be placed in working groups with other pupils who do not abuse or take advantage of others.

A safe place, will be available for pupils to go to during free time if they feel threatened or wish to be alone.

The Academy will be alert to, and address, any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst pupils, as these can be a cause, or a result, of bullying behaviour.

The Academy will ensure potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional and social development is not negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g. mental health issues.

Signs of Bullying

No single sign will indicate for certain that a child is being bullied, but staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is a victim of bullying:

- Being frightened to travel to or from school.
- Unwillingness to attend school.
- Repeated or persistent absence from school.
- Becoming anxious or lacking confidence, or becoming distressed and withdrawn.
- Saying that they feel ill repeatedly.
- Decreased involvement in school work.

- Leaving school with torn clothes or damaged possessions.
- Missing possessions.
- Asking for extra money or stealing (to give to whomever is bullying them).
- Physical injuries, such as unexplained cuts or bruises.
- Lack of appetite or problems with sleeping.
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices.
- Lack of eye contact.
- Becoming short tempered.
- Change in behaviour or attitude at home.
- Bullying others.

Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating. Pupils who display a significant number of these signs will be approached by a member of staff to determine the underlying issues causing this behaviour.

Staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a pupil is likely to exhibit bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to them becoming more easily aggravated.
- They have been the victim of abuse.
- Their academic performance has started to fall and they are showing signs of stress

If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify the pupil's Mentor, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

Staff principles

The Academy will ensure that prevention is a prominent aspect of its anti-bullying vision.

Staff will treat reports of bullying seriously and will not ignore signs of suspected bullying. Staff will act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident. Unpleasantness from one pupil towards another will always be challenged and will never be ignored.

Staff will always respect pupils' privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying is not discussed with others, unless the pupil has given consent, or there is a safeguarding concern. If a member of staff believes a pupil is in danger, e.g. of being hurt, they will inform the DSL immediately.

Follow-up support will be given to both the victim and perpetrator in the months following an incident to ensure all bullying has stopped.

Child-on-child abuse

The Academy has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

To prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the Academy will educate pupils about abuse, its forms, and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum, assemblies and Life Education lessons.

All staff will:

- Be aware that pupils of any age and gender are capable of abusing their peers.
- Be aware that abuse can occur inside and outside of school settings.
- Be aware of the scale of harassment or abuse, and that just because it is not being reported does not mean it is not happening.
- Take all instances of child-on-child abuse equally seriously regardless of the characteristics of the perpetrators or victims.
- Never tolerate abuse as "banter" or "part of growing up", and will never justify sexual harassment, e.g. as "boys being boys", as this can foster a culture of unacceptable behaviours and one that risks normalising abuse.
- Be aware that child-on-child abuse can be manifested in many ways, including sexting, sexual harassment and assault, and hazing or initiation-type violence.
- Always challenge any harmful physical behaviour that is sexual in nature, such inappropriate touching. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Harmful Sexual Behaviour refers to developmentally inappropriate **sexual behaviour** which is displayed by children and young people and which may be **harmful** or abusive. It can be displayed towards younger children, peers, older children or adults.

In the event of an allegation and/or disclosure of harmful sexual behaviour, including but not limited to:

- **Sexual Violence** refers to offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- **Sexual Harassment refers** to unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which violates the dignity of the pupil, degrades, humiliates them and/or creates a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment.
- Sexual harassment in particular can take many forms, including but not limited to:
    - Telling sexual stories, making sexual remarks, or calling someone sexualised names.
    - Sexual "jokes" or taunting.
    - Deliberately brushing against someone.
    - Displaying images or video of a sexual nature.
    - Upskirting (this is a criminal offence).
    - Online sexual harassment e.g. creating or sharing sexual imagery, es, unwanted sexualised comments, sexual exploitation, and sexualised bullying.

Coercive control refers to forcing a person to do something that they would not normally do by making threats against their safety or well-being, or that of their relatives or property.

A referral will be made to the Designated Safeguarding Lead will fully investigate the allegation and/or disclosure in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Pupils will be made aware of how to raise concerns or make a report and how any reports will be handled – this includes the process for reporting concerns about friends or peers. If a pupil has been harmed, is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral may be made to children's social care services (CSCS) and potentially the police, where the DSL deems this appropriate in the circumstances.

All staff will be aware and sensitive towards the fact that pupils may not be ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. Pupils being abused may feel embarrassed, humiliated, scared, or threatened.

More information on the Academy's approach to preventing and managing instances of child-on-child abuse can be found within this policy, Aquinas Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Academy's Behaviour Management Policy.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can take many forms and can go even further than face-to-face bullying by invading personal space and home life, and can target more than one person. It can also take place across age groups and target pupils, staff and others, and may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. It can sometimes draw bystanders into being accessories.

Cyberbullying can include the following:

- Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages.
- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips.
- Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress.
- Silent or abuse phone calls.
- Using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible.
- Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name.
- Menacing or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom.
- Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging.
- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites and social networking sites, e.g. Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, WhatsApp, Discord, Gaming platforms

NB: The above list is not exhaustive, and cyberbullying may take other forms.

The Academy has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying - this does not mean it does not happen but it does mean we will act on all reports following our investigation processes. The Academy views cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in this policy if they become aware of any incidents. NB: the Academy has limited ability to deal with online bullying with regards to tracking accounts and proving ownership of accounts.

All staff will receive training on an annual basis on the signs of cyberbullying, in order to identify pupils who may be experiencing issues and intervene effectively.

Staff will be aware that a cyberbullying incident might include features different to other forms of bullying, prompting a particular response. Significant differences may include the following:

- **Possible extensive scale and scope –** pupils may be bullied on multiple platforms and using multiple different methods that are made possible by virtue of the bullying taking place online.
- **The anytime and anywhere nature of cyberbullying –** pupils may not have an escape from the torment when they are at home due to the bullying continuing through technology at all times.
- **The person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is** – it is easy for individuals to remain anonymous online and on social media, and pupils may be bullied by someone who is concealing their own identity.
- **The perpetrator might not realise that their actions are bullying –** sometimes, the culture of social media, and the inability to see the impact that words are having on someone, may lead to pupils crossing boundaries without realising.
- **The victim of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened –** pupils may have taken screenshots of bullying, or there may be a digital footprint that can identify the perpetrator.

Staff and pupils will be instructed not to respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. Evidence of the incident should be recorded, e.g. taking screenshots. Staff will report incidents to their line manager or the Head Teacher for the incident to be investigated and support to be provided. Pupils will report incidents to a trusted member of staff.

Where offensive content is posted online targeting a staff member or pupil, the person targeted will be encouraged to use the reporting mechanism on the website or social media platform to request its removal. Where the person who has posted it is known to the Academy, the Head Teacher will request they remove it directly.

The Academy will support pupils, who have been victims of cyberbullying / bullying, through formal and informal discussions with the pupil about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped.

The Academy will address any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst pupils, as these can be a cause, or a result, of bullying behaviour via the Student Hub.

In all cases, we advise the victim to block and report the person and/or account to the social media platform being used. In cases of sexual images or explicit messages, we assist pupils in reporting the contents to CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection). Families involved in such cases can always contact the Academy for advice.

In accordance with the Education Act 2011, the Academy has the right to examine and delete files from pupils' personal devices, e.g., mobiles phones, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. In these cases, the Academy's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy will be followed.

Procedures

When investigating a bullying incident, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses are all interviewed separately.

- Members of staff ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the pupils being interviewed, including electronic communication.
- If a pupil is injured, members of staff take the pupil immediately to a First Aider for a medical opinion on the extent of their injuries.
- A room is used that allows for privacy during interviews.
- A witness is used for serious incidents.
- If appropriate, the alleged perpetrator, the victim and witnesses are asked to write down details of the incident; this may need prompting with questions from the member of staff to obtain the full picture.
- The Deputy Headteacher will gather evidence of a cyberbullying incident; this may involve text messages, emails, photos, etc. provided by the victim.
- Premature assumptions are not made, as it is important not to be judgemental at this stage.
- Members of staff listen carefully to all accounts, being non-confrontational and not assigning blame until the investigation is complete.
- All pupils involved are informed that they must not discuss the interview with other pupils.

Due to the potential for some specific forms of bullying to be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviour, staff members involved in dealing with the incident are required to consider whether there is a need for safeguarding processes to be implemented.

What should pupils do if they think they are being bullied?

Tell someone – it could be their teacher, parent, family member or any other adult in the Academy.
Or email: yourconcerns@ryecollege.co.uk

What should the pupil tell an adult?

- Who has been bullying you?
- How long has this been going on?
- How many times has this happened to you?
- Has anyone seen this happen? If so, who?
- Has anyone else been bullied by the same person?
- Have you told anyone else about this before?
- Was anything done about it?
- Have you done anything unhelpful that has not helped the situation?

What should a pupil do if they witness bullying?

- Tell an adult in the Academy.
- Email: yourconcerns@ryecollege.co.uk

What should parents do about bullying?

Inform the school if they think their child is being bullied or is bullying other children. Try to establish the facts and keep an open mind. The symptoms at home of children being bullied or who are bullying can sometimes be very similar. With older children it might be useful to refer to this policy. With all children, parents and families should talk about the problems of bullying with their child.

What action will our Academy take?

- The Academy will always make its first priority the immediate physical safety of our pupils.

- The responsible adult will lead the 'no blame' sessions – following carefully the procedures that are laid down in Appendix 1.
- The Academy will inform parents and families of the facts so far established and what has been done so far when possible.
- Parents will be asked to meet with the Academy separately if the bullying behaviour reaches the level of sanctions and suspensions.
- If any agreed strategy then breaks down, a review of the application of the Behaviour Management Policy will be undertaken including alternative approaches.

Sanctions

If the investigating lead is satisfied that bullying did take place, the perpetrator will be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and warned that there must be no further incidents. The perpetrator will be informed of the type of sanction to be used in this instance, and future sanctions if the bullying continues.

If possible, we will attempt reconciliation and will obtain an apology from the perpetrator. This will either be in writing to the victim, and/or witnesses if appropriate, or face-to-face, but only with the victim's full consent. Discretion will be used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the perpetrator.

Parents are informed of bullying incidents and what action is being taken.

All staff involved in managing instances of bullying will be aware that taking disciplinary action and providing support are not mutually exclusive actions and should be conducted simultaneously to encourage more positive behaviour in future.

The Academy will avoid unnecessarily criminalising pupils for bullying or abusive behaviour where possible, as young people with criminal records face stigma and discrimination in future aspects of their lives. The Academy's focus when handling perpetrators will be supporting them to develop more positive behaviours and to refrain from abusive and bullying behaviours in the future.

The Academy will remain cognisant of the fact that continued access to school can be important for rehabilitation of harmful behaviour and will not exclude pupils unless as a last resort – where there have been serious or consistent incidents of bullying, the Academy will act in line with the Aquinas Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

Support

In the event of bullying, victims will be offered the following support:

- Emotional support and reassurance from the school counsellor/Mental Health Team.
- Reassurance that it was right to report the incident and that appropriate action will be planned and taken.
- Liaison with their parents to ensure a continuous dialogue of support.
- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff.

- Advice on aspects of online safety, in the event of cyberbullying, to prevent re-occurrence, including, where appropriate, discussion with their parents to evaluate their online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online.
- Discussion with their parent on whether police action is required (except in serious cases of child exploitation or abuse where the police may be contacted without discussion with parents).

In each instance of bullying that is handled, careful consideration will be given to whether it is appropriate to split up the victim(s) and perpetrator(s), e.g. preventing them sharing classes or spaces where possible, and will split up other harmful group dynamics to prevent further occurrences where necessary. Victims will be encouraged to broaden their friendship groups by joining lunchtime or after-school clubs or activities.

The Academy will acknowledge that bullying may be an indication of underlying mental health issues. Perpetrators will be required to attend a mandatory counselling session to assist with any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. The Academy will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.

Bullying outside of school

Staff will remain aware that bullying can happen both in and outside the Academy, and will ensure that they understand how to respond to reports of bullying that occurred outside school in line with the Aquinas Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The Head Teacher has a specific statutory power to sanction pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives the Head Teacher the power to regulate pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises, and therefore, not under the lawful charge of a staff member.

Teachers have the power to sanction pupils for misbehaving outside of the Academy premises. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, e.g. on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

The Academy may apply sanctions for behaviour occurring outside school, including online, at weekends and during holidays, where the behaviour could have repercussions for the orderly running of the Academy, poses a threat to another pupil or member of the public, or adversely affects the reputation of the Academy.

Where bullying outside school is reported to staff, it will be investigated and acted upon. In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying, members of staff can only sanction the pupil on school premises, or elsewhere when the pupil is under the lawful control of the member of staff, e.g. on a school trip.

The Head Teacher is responsible for determining whether it is appropriate to notify the police of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be of a criminal nature or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police will be informed.

Record keeping

The DSL will ensure that robust records are kept with regard to all reported or otherwise uncovered incidents of bullying – this includes recording where decisions have been made, e.g. sanctions, support, escalation of a situation and resolutions.

The DSL will ensure that all decisions and actions recorded are reviewed on a regular basis for the purposes of:

- Identifying patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour on the part of certain pupils that may need to be handled, e.g. with pastoral support.
- Reflecting on whether cases could have been handled better and using these reflections to inform future practice.
- Considering whether there are wider cultural issues at play within the school, e.g. whether school culture facilitates discriminatory bullying by not adequately addressing instances, and planning to mitigate this.
- Considering whether prevention strategies could be strengthened based on any patterns in the cases that arise.
- Responding to any complaints about how cases have been handled.

Further information

Further information, advice and guidance can be sought independently of the Academy at:

- www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/advice-for-parents-and-carers
- www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying-and-cyberbullying
- https://www.ceop.police.uk/safety-centre/

Monitoring and Evaluation

The Academy views bullying as a very serious impairment to our educational community even though incidents are small in number. We will therefore review the number of incidents on a regular basis and ensure provision and prevention planning is proportionate and timely.

Reviewing

This policy is reviewed every two years by the Head Teacher and DSL. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

EQUALITIES

We recognise that our students bring with them a wide variety of behaviours influenced by life experiences outside college. We aim to respond to each case professionally, objectively and compassionately. We are sensitive when working with children and families with specific needs and experiences and we continuously seek ways to promote successful partnerships. The basis of differentiation will vary dependant on the needs of each case but we will take into account the views of parents and families, colleagues and external agencies together with any Statement of Special Educational Need or Education, Health and Care Plan. We will also ensure compliance with the Trust's Equality Policy taking into account students with protected characteristics and making reasonable adjustments for students with a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010.

Both the college and Trust respects the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) that requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. By following the Trust's Equality Policy, the college seeks to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by such legislation.

DATA PROTECTION

Rye College [The Academy] processes personal data in accordance with the data protection principles embodied in the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Academy complies with the requirements of the data protection legislation as detailed in the Trust Data Protection Policy.

All colleagues are aware of the principles of data protection and will not process personal data unless necessary. The Academy safeguards the personal data it collects through the operation of the Trust's data protection policy and processes and the IT policy. In addition, the Academy has taken steps to ensure that all its contracts that process data have the GDPR compliant provisions.

Appendix 1

Process for dealing with bullying

A member of the Hub will **discuss the situation with the pupil reporting the bullying** to clarify the information and decided upon a course of action that the pupil is comfortable with.

The actions available to the member of staff and pupil, form a tiered response which is dependent on any discussion / investigation outcome, the course of action requested by the pupil and any previously reported incidents relating to the bullying pupil(s).

They can include but are not limited to:

Mediation – the 'no blame approach'

In most cases reported as bullying, the root of the behaviour is a breakdown in the dynamics of a friendship group. This approach is used as a method of dealing with the breakdown of friendships that can lead to bullying behaviour. Using this method, the bullying is the focus not the pupil (s). The no-blame approach adopts a seven-step response to incidents of bullying:

- The teacher talks to the pupil who has been bullied.
- The teacher convenes a meeting with the pupils involved, the reporting pupil and a friend.
- The teacher ensures that there is no power imbalance with numbers of pupils and then explains the problem.
- The group shares the responsibility. The teacher asks the group for their ideas and records their decisions on a joint agreement plan
- The teacher leaves it up to them to implement.
- The teacher meets with the group, after a few days, to review the progress made.
- The teacher will decide who, at this stage, needs to be informed.

Warnings / Restricted areas

This approach is used as a method of dealing re-occurring incidences of bullying. The parents of the pupil and the pupil who is bullying are informed that further action will be taken if it does not stop. Access to certain areas of the Academy during social time may be restricted with sanction put in place if these restrictions are broken. This allows the Academy and home to work together to address the re-occurring bullying behaviour.

Sanctions – detentions, solo study etc.

This approach is used as a method of dealing re-occurring incidences of bullying. The parents of the pupil and the pupil who is bullying are informed that further incidents may result in suspension from the Academy. The restricted areas may be increased or the pupil may be required to remain with a member of staff on duty during social time. If the incidents are occurring during lessons the pupil may be required to move groups.

Suspension (dependant on evidence)

This is only used as a final resort – the bully is suspended for bullying and this phrase appears on their school suspension record.

In more serious cases the Police may be informed i.e., significant physical bullying where a legal threshold may have been reached.

In all cases support will be offered to both parties. (Please note this is not an exhaustive list).

Possible support for pupil reporting

- Place-to-Talk appointment.
- Safe space.
- Nominated adult.
- Peer mentoring.
- Communication with staff to be vigilant.
- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff.
- Advice on aspects of online safety, in the event of cyberbullying, to prevent re-occurrence, including, where appropriate, discussion with their parents to evaluate their online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online.

Possible support to change bullying behaviour

- Place-to-Talk appointment.
- Communication with staff to be vigilant.
- EDI Champion if identified as linked to a protected characteristic.