



THE DIOCESAN SCHOOL  
FOR GIRLS

# **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

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Review Cycles	
Policy Applicability	All the girls and the staff of the DSG
Policy Owner	Deputy Head–Pupil Affairs

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

We acknowledge that conflict and differences among members of a community are normal and inevitable. We also recognise that bullying behaviour may arise out of children's immaturity, lack of interpersonal skills and poor self-confidence.

However, the DSG is committed to fostering and maintaining an environment in which all pupils and members of staff feel safe, secure and accepted. We commit ourselves to finding ways to communicate and live out values of acceptance and non-violence at our school in order to promote healthy and respectful relationships. All members of the school community have the responsibility to promote a climate where:

- differences are valued, not merely tolerated
- courtesy, compassion, and respect are valued
- the power and influence of one person or a group of people over others is not abused

In order to create an environment in which all people can function without fear of abuse, harm, discrimination, harassment or victimisation, it is our intention:

- to make it known that bullying in any form is unacceptable at DSG and that action will be taken when any form of bullying is identified;
- that those involved in bullying behaviour, in whatever capacity, will receive help;
- that, in recognising that the purpose of the school is to educate, resources are made available to educate all members of the DSG community (teachers, administrators, support staff and pupils) about all aspects of bullying;
- to have structures in place that will eradicate or minimise, as far as possible, opportunities for bullying behaviour;
- that, when deemed necessary, disciplinary action will be taken.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- The DSG Vision and Mission statements
- The Spirituality Policy
- The DSG Code of Conduct for Pupils
- The DSG Pupil Handbook
- The DSG Information for Parents Handbook
- The DSG Parent—DSG Relationship
- The DSG Discipline Policy

It must also be noted that the school is required by law to take reasonable steps to provide a safe and secure environment and to protect girls from deviant behaviour that affects their well-being and infringes on their basic rights to security, human dignity, privacy and education (Squelch 2000: 53, SA Journal of Education – 2007, Volume 27 (2) 191)

## 2 THE OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- a. Bullying is appropriately identified and defined
- b. All members of the DSG community are helped to understand the nature of bullying and its impact
- c. Appropriate strategies and mechanisms are in place and implemented to eradicate bullying as far as possible
- d. Appropriate mechanisms are in place to support those being bullied, those who bully and/or those who witness others being bullied
- e. Appropriate mechanisms are in place for those who report bullying to allow them to feel safe, heard and taken seriously
- f. The disciplinary process to be followed when necessary is clearly understood
- g. All members of the DSG community understand their rights and responsibilities with regards to bullying behaviour

## 3 BACKGROUND

### 3.1 DEFINITION OF BULLYING

There is no single definition of bullying, but three elements are always part of such types of interaction:

- a. **An imbalance of power** where the people who bully use their power. This power can be formally or situationally defined and can be associated with physical strength, status and/or positional power (teachers, prefects, anyone who is older than the target). It can also include access to embarrassing information, popularity, wealth, etc. which is used to control and/or harm others. Power imbalances can change over time even if they involve the same people.
- b. **Repetition** where bullying behaviours happen more than once and/or have the potential to happen more than once.
- c. **The person who is bullied suffers pain** of some kind. This pain can be physical, emotional or mental.

**All three elements should be present for behaviour to be identified as bullying.**

### 3.2 BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

- a. Behaviour that can be construed to be the systematic, uninvited, repeated and intentional abuse of another person over a period of time
- b. Harming another person (or her/his belongings), hurting or embarrassing another person
- c. Violating another person's right to friendship, freedom of thought and safety

- d. Repeated threatening behaviour which is intended to frighten another person
- e. Repeated misuse of power or creation of an unhealthy imbalance of power

Further information of what constitutes bullying behaviour may be found in **APPENDIX 1**

### **3.3 THE IMPACT OF BULLYING**

Bullying:

- Undermines confidence
- Reduces feelings of self-esteem and self-worth
- Leads to feelings of humiliation and deep unhappiness

It can result in:

- Stress
- Fatigue
- Anxiety
- Depression
- Impaired ability to work or concentrate

## **4 APPLICABILITY**

4.1 Bullying may occur in the following relationships:

- a. Child to child: a pupil with identified power (rank-holder, older, popular, first team player, etc.)
- b. Teacher to child
- c. Teacher to teacher
- d. Head of Department to employee within the department

4.2 This policy, while generally applicable to anyone involved with the DSG on the school campus and during any bona fide school events, focuses on the pupil:

- a. Girl to girl
- b. Boy to girl
- c. Girl to boy
- d. Teacher to pupil
- e. Groups of girls to an individual

## **5 DEFINITIONS**

The DSG

The Diocesan School for Girls in Grahamstown

The School	The Diocesan School for Girls in Grahamstown
Head or Head of School	The Head of School for the DSG.
The Chairman of Council	The Chairman of the DSG Council or his/her designate
Pupil	A registered pupil of the DSG
Parents	Includes biological parents, parents of adopted children, legal guardians and caregivers
DSG Community member	Pupil of the DSG, parents and/or guardians of pupils at the school, members of the DSG Council and alumni
Staff of the DSG	Includes members of the academic staff, administrative staff and support staff who are permanently employed, temporarily employed or who are on fixed term contracts
Investigating Officer	Elected by the Head to conduct investigations into alleged bullying
Conduct requirements and rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. All policies and protocols approved by the DSG Council and/or Management of the school</li> <li>b. All policies and protocols that are published and/or in any way notified to pupils, parents and staff</li> <li>c. All relevant legislation and regulations in force from time to time</li> <li>d. Standards of behaviour and socially acceptable conduct expected of parents, pupils and staff of the DSG in accordance with the DSG Mission statement and, generally, with the values and ethos of the DSG.</li> </ul>
Disciplinary Process	The processes and procedures outlined in the DSG Discipline Policy

## 6

## PROCEDURES

### 6.1 STRATEGIES TO REDUCE/MINIMISE BULLYING AT DSG

#### 6.1.1 Education:

Recognising that:

- pupils are children and may be immature in their understanding of moral values and interpersonal relationships;
- pupils, parents and staff may not be fully aware of many of the aspects of bullying;
- our primary role is to be educators,

DSG will regularly expose the teaching staff, the administrative staff and the pupils to opportunities to learn about bullying:

- a. LO lessons
- b. Tutor periods

- c. Chapel
- d. Guest speakers
- e. Staff meetings and seminars

Those members of staff who have wellness/pastoral/counselling responsibilities will ensure that they remain up-to-date with current research and strategies to minimise bullying behaviour.

#### **6.1.2 Proactive observation:**

All those who have direct contact with the girls are to be proactive in observing girls' behaviour and raising any concerns they may have. These concerns may have to do with the girls' interactions or the behaviour that a particular girl may be manifesting that may indicate stress. The Housemistresses, Housemothers and tutors will be the people most likely to identify behaviour that may be of concern.

#### **6.1.3 Identifying those who may be vulnerable**

Members of staff will identify those girls who may be and pay special heed to the interactions around them. The staff will be assisted in this by the Wellness Team, who, without breaching confidentiality agreements, may be in a position to more easily identify vulnerable girls,

#### **6.1.4 Helping girls develop empathy.**

Every possible opportunity should be used to help the girls discuss bullying, what it means to them and how they can deal with it. They should be encouraged to develop empathy and consider the feelings, points of view and impact of bullying on 'the other'. Specific tutor periods will be set aside for age-appropriate activities to address this aspect.

(Further information is available in APPENDIX 2)

### **6.2 REPORTING BULLYING**

Staff, parents and girls will be enabled to comfortably report incidents of bullying to the Head of School, Deputy Heads, House Mistresses, Tutors, the Chaplain, the San Sisters, the School Psychologist and any teacher. How this is to be done is discussed below.

#### **6.2.1 Procedures for reporting bullying:**

##### ***Girls:***

- a. It is understood that girls may be reluctant to report bullying for various reasons (See APPENDIX 3). The pupils of the DSG will be regularly reminded that they may report bullying or any behaviour that worries them. The platform for these reminders will be Assembly, Chapel services and Tutor periods. It will be stressed that such reports will be treated in strict confidence.
- b. Girls may speak to the member of staff directly, email her/him or write a note. Girls may also speak to a member of staff on behalf of another girl.

- c. Girls may also report bullying to a girl they trust who will pass on the report to the appropriate staff member.
- d. The girls will be given the confidence that they will be heard, listened to and that their report will be treated in confidence unless otherwise agreed to by the girl.
- e. All reports of bullying, harassment or abuse must be passed on in a written report to the Investigating Officer.

***The Investigating Officer:***

- a. Will support the person who has reported the bullying and provide guidance and advice about what can/should be done. She/He will refer the reporter to the Wellness Team for support and counselling, if deemed necessary. The Investigating Officer is bound to respect requests for confidentiality unless it is his/her opinion that further harm may occur unless there is some form of intervention. This will be discussed with the reporter.
- b. Will establish as many facts as possible to determine whether the behaviour reported is, in fact, bullying. This may require interviewing the person who has been bullied (if not the reporter) and the person or people who have been involved in bullying behaviour to establish their points of view, provided this does not compromise any confidentiality that has been promised. She/He may also talk to the Housemistress, tutor, and teachers to obtain as much information as possible.
- c. In consultation with the Head, will determine whether further action needs to be taken and refer the matter to the appropriate person.
- d. Will keep written records of all the reports of bullying, irrespective of whether disciplinary action follows.

***Parents:***

If parents are concerned about their daughter and believe that she may be involved with bullying behaviour in whatever capacity, they:

- a. Should report the incident(s) to the School via any member of staff mentioned above
- b. Should not let their child decide on when or whether to make a report
- c. Should give details in writing
- d. Should trust and support the School and the action that is taken
- e. Should not entertain an approach to the alleged perpetrator or her/his parents; this should be left to the School
- f. Must endeavour to remember that their child's impressions may be clouded and their view toward their child be biased, so they should allow the School to deal with the issue.

***The School:***

On receipt of a report of bullying from parents, the written report will be given to the Investigating Officer who will follow the procedure outlined in 6.2.1.2 above. The Investigating Officer will report back to the parents, in writing, on a regular basis about the process being followed and what action is being taken.

If any party is not satisfied with the outcome of any process that has been followed they have the right and responsibility to refer the matter to the Head once all internal processes and procedures have been exhausted and formal feedback has been given.

### **6.3 SUPPORTING GIRLS WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO BULLYING**

Any girls who are identified as needing help and support, whether they have been bullied, have bullied others or have witnessed bullying, will be referred to the Wellness team. A decision will be made by the team regarding what sort of support would be appropriate. A record is to be kept as part of this process and filed accordingly

The decision will be communicated to the Investigating Officer who will ensure that the decision is recorded in the pupil's file.

## **7 DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE**

Should the Investigating Officer determine that there has been bullying, the procedure outlined in the Disciplinary Policy shall be followed.

Consequences for those found guilty of bullying may include the following (this is not a complete list and is dependent on mitigating and aggravating circumstances):

- a. Therapy so that the girl may be given the opportunity to confront issues that trigger bullying (this will be for the girl's parents' account)
- b. Removal of privileges
- c. A verbal warning (which will be documented and placed on record)
- d. Suspension from boarding and/or school
- e. Expulsion from boarding and/or school

## **8 RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Every member of the DSG community has the right to feel safe, protected and free from intimidation, harassment or fear. All members of the community should be able to achieve their full potential in a supportive, caring environment.

DSG, being a Church school, ascribes to the teaching of Jesus Christ, particularly his injunction to 'do unto others as you would have done unto you'.

- 8.1 Our staff will:
  - a. Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others;

- b. Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils;
- c. Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken;
- d. Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

8.2 We expect our staff and pupils to:

- a. Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of
  - a. incurring temporary unpopularity;
- b. Intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied;
- c. Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

## **9 GOVERNANCE**

Good governance requires that all documentation pertaining to notes kept by Reporting Officers, Investigations and Disciplinary Hearings and Appeals are confidential and, as such, kept in a secure environment. All findings must be documented and kept in a secure environment.

## **10 REVIEW OF THE POLICY**

The policy may only be reviewed by the HR Sub-Committee of Council and ratified by Council. The Bullying policy will be reviewed as a matter of course every five years.

Recommended and Reviewed by the HR Sub-Committee of Council (17 July 2013)

Ratified by Council on 16 November 2013

## APPENDIX 1

### INFORMATION ABOUT BULLYING

#### 1 FORMS OF BULLYING

There are a number of forms of bullying:

- **Verbal bullying** — involves saying or writing unkind things: for example, teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting and threatening to cause harm.
- **Social or relational bullying** — involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships: for example, excluding someone, telling others not to be friends with the target, spreading rumours about the target and embarrassing the target in public.
- **Physical bullying** — involves hurting a person's body or possessions: for example, hitting, kicking, pinching, spitting, tripping, pushing, taking or breaking the target's possessions and making mean and/or rude hand gestures.
- **Personal bullying** — involves saying or doing things to the target on the basis of his or her culture, religion and/or religious beliefs and race: for example, making racial slurs, writing offensive graffiti, mocking the person's culture and/or religion or race and making offensive gestures.
- **Sexual bullying** — implicit or explicit unwanted and uninvited verbal or physical behaviour of a sexual nature. Such behaviour is designed to make the target feel uncomfortable and confused and interferes with the individual's right to education and the ability to participate in extra-curricular activities. Examples of sexual bullying, which apply to members of staff, boys and girls, include:
  - comments about the target's body
  - spreading sexual rumours
  - touching in a sexual way
  - making obscene gestures of a sexual nature
  - exposing sexual body parts
  - disseminating or displaying photographs of a pornographic nature
  - passing unwanted notes, jokes, or taunts of a sexual nature
- **Cyber bullying** — uses electronic technology; for example, text messages or emails, rumours sent by email or posted on social networking sites, embarrassing pictures, videos, websites or fake profiles.

Bullying does not only occur during school hours but also travelling to and from school, in the community (for example, social gatherings), on school tours, on the internet etc.

Random acts of unkindness or conflict between two people with equal power who share equal blame cannot be construed as bullying behaviour.

#### 2 ROLES

It is recognised that there are many roles that people can and do play when it comes to bullying. Even if a person is not directly involved in bullying, he/she may contribute to the behaviour. The various roles that can be played are:

- People **who bully**: Often they require support so that they can change their behaviour and/or address any other challenges that may be influencing their behaviour.
- People **who are bullied**: they are the targets of bullying behaviour and need help in learning how to respond to bullying.
- People **who assist bullying**: they may not start the bullying or take the lead in bullying behaviour but they assist by encouraging bullying behaviour and occasionally joining in.
- People **who reinforce**: they are not directly involved in the bullying behaviour but they form an audience. By laughing or providing support for the behaviour, the reinforcers often encourage the perpetrator to continue the bullying behaviour.
- People **who remain outsiders**: they remain separate from the situation; they neither reinforce the bullying behaviour nor defend the target. Some may observe but do not provide feedback about the situation to show that they are on anyone's side. Even just providing an audience may encourage bullying behaviour. These people often want to help but don't know how to.
- People **who defend**: they actively comfort the victim and may come to the victim's defence when bullying occurs.

At different times and in different contexts, people play various roles.

### 3 RISK FACTORS

There is no single factor that puts a child at risk of being a perpetrator or being a victim. Bullying can happen anywhere and depends on the environment.

Children at risk of being bullied generally have one or more of the following risk factors: -

- They are perceived as being different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight, wearing glasses, different clothing, being new to the school or being unable to afford what other children consider to be 'cool', etc.
- They may be perceived and/or considered to be weak and unable to defend themselves
- They could be depressed, anxious or have low self-esteem
- They are generally less popular than others and have few friends
- They do not get along well with others; are perceived as being annoying or provoking or antagonizing others to gain attention
- They are sensitive

Not all pupils manifesting these risk factors that they will be targeted.

There are two types of children who are more likely to bully others:

- Those who are well-connected to their peers, have social power, are overly concerned about their popularity and like to dominate and/or be in charge of others.

- Those who are more isolated from their peers and may be depressed or anxious and/or have low self-esteem and be less involved in school, be easily pressurised by peers or not identify with the emotions or feelings of others.

Perpetrators do not necessarily need to be stronger or bigger than the target. The power imbalance can come from a number of sources: popularity, strength, cognitive ability, etc.

#### **4 Warning signs**

There are many signs that may indicate that someone is being affected by bullying, either as the perpetrator or as the target. It is important that these signs are recognised because not all children ask for help.

It is important to talk with children who show signs of being bullied (see supporting those involved in bullying). These issues can also point to other issues or problems, such as depression or substance abuse. Talking to the child can help identify the root of the problem.

#### **5 Signs of bullying**

Not all children who are bullied exhibit warning signs. Some signs that may indicate bullying are:

- Changes in a child's behaviour
- Unexplained injuries
- Lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, jewellery, etc.
- Frequent headaches or stomach aches, feeling sick or psychosomatic illness
- Changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating.
- Difficulty in sleeping or frequent nightmares.
- Declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school.
- Loss of friends or avoidance of social situations.
- Feeling of helplessness or decreased self-esteem.
- Self-destructive behaviours such as harming themselves or talking about suicide.

In cases where an adult suspects a child is being bullied, it is important to talk to the child. Starting a conversation may be awkward and conversations about daily life and feelings could be a helpful way to get children to open up.

## APPENDIX 2

### 1 ADDRESSING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

It is important to create an environment in which children can talk about bullying, identify what bullying is if it happens to them and/or if it happens to others. Children need to know that there are ways for them to **safely stand** up to bullying and how to get help. This means:

- Encouraging children to speak to a trusted adult and/or use the supporting structures outlined below if they are bullied and/or see others being bullied.
- Encouraging children to report bullying if it happens.
- Urging them to help other children who are bullied by showing kindness or getting help.
- Keeping the lines of communication open

## APPENDIX 3

Some research has shown that an adult was notified in only about one third of bullying cases. Children don't tell adults for the following reasons:

- Bullying can make a child feel helpless. Children may want to handle the problem on their own to feel in control again. They may fear being seen as weak or a snitch.
- Children may fear backlash from the perpetrator.
- Bullying can be a humiliating experience. Children may not want adults to know what is being said about them, whether true or false. They may also fear that adults will judge them or punish them for being weak.
- Children who are targets may already feel socially isolated. They may feel as though no-one cares or could understand.
- Children may fear being rejected by their peers. Friends can help protect children from bullying and children can fear losing this support.

## References

South African Journal of Education (2007 EASA) volume 27 (2) 191-208 – “Educators’ perceptions on bullying prevention strategies” - Corene de Wet, University of Free State

US Department of Health and Human Sciences website – [www.stopbullying.gov](http://www.stopbullying.gov)