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10a Anti-Bullying Strategy

The nature of UCS's foundation makes us especially concerned to create a community founded upon principles of tolerance and mutual respect. This strategy takes as its starting point the UCS Code of Conduct, a document familiar to all members of the school community. It has also been written with reference to the DfE guidelines 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' (July 2017) and to Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2020). The policy should be read in the context of section 6 of the UCS Safeguarding Policy, which sets out how the school will deal with incidents of online sexual harassment.

All acts of bullying or intolerance are completely unacceptable within the community of UCS. It is the duty of every teacher, pupil and parent to support this principle and to act upon it on all occasions.

Under the terms of Sections 90 and 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 we reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips, and that occur in the vicinity of the school, involving our pupils.

Definition

Bullying can happen to all children and young people and it can affect their social, mental and emotional health. It may be said to include all acts that are deliberately cruel towards another member of the school community:

- physical intimidation
- sustained or repeated teasing, verbal abuse (including social media, mobile electronic devices, text messages, photographs [sexting] and email). The school will not pass off such teasing as "banter" and it is important that all members of the community understand this
- racial, sexist, ethnic, sexual or religious comments or taunts
- unkind references to a child being adopted
- unkind references to a child being in the role of carer
- unkind references to another person's special educational needs or disability
- unkind reference to another person's intellectual capabilities
- rejection or deliberate isolation of a pupil by his peer group; tormenting or spreading malicious rumours
- manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone
- complicity in unkind behaviour that falls short of direct participation

All behaviour of this kind is unacceptable at UCS. It can cause psychological damage and in extreme cases may even result in the suicide of a victim. It is the responsibility of all members of the school community, pupils as much as staff, to express their disapproval of such behaviour whenever it is encountered. Training is given to staff in order to raise their awareness of the problem and with the aim of reducing the risk of bullying.

Signs of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school

- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoiled by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Medical Centre with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers.

Preventative Measures

All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place. We discuss bullying and its effects in initial pupil induction, Form periods and Lower- and Whole-School assemblies. Pupils are also referred to the school's E-safety policy which provides guidance about behaviour when using the school's network as well as privately-owned mobile devices.

Every classroom has the school's Code of Conduct posted, which stresses the need to treat other members of the community with tolerance, courtesy and respect, and which makes clear that deliberate cruelty, teasing, abuse, bullying and intolerance are always unacceptable within the school community. Posters created by pupils are often displayed around the time of Anti-Bullying Week and there is also a noticeboard where information is permanently available concerning what to do if a pupil feels unsafe or if they are being bullied and providing details of members of the school who are there to help.

In PSHE, pupils consider the reasons why some people might bully. They learn

- to be more sensitive to others' feelings
- the fine line between teasing/"banter" and bullying
- how to stand up for themselves
- to deal with unwanted name-calling
- how sloppy language can develop into bullying
- to take responsibility for what they say

All Staff Safeguarding training refers to the importance of being aware of the need to ensure that bullying does not take place, and requires staff to challenge bullying

behaviour and either to deal with incidents where appropriate or to refer them to senior pastoral staff.

It is hoped that, supported by this, members of staff - particularly form tutors, Lower School Wardens, Deme Wardens, and the Headmaster - will succeed in creating an environment in which bullies (whether single or in groups, whether active or passive) are left in no doubt of the need to reconsider and to adjust their attitudes towards others.

We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form Teachers, Wardens and Heads of Section who support the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and who are alert to possible signs of bullying and trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority.

If any pupil, parent or teacher believes that bullying is taking place, it is essential that this is drawn to the attention of pastoral staff (Form Teacher, Lower School or Deme Warden, Pastoral Deputy Head or the Headmaster) at once. Such approaches will always be treated in complete confidence. Pupils in particular distress may choose initially to visit the school counsellor, or may be referred to the school counsellor by a member of staff. All reported incidents are recorded and investigated immediately. It is important that parents and school work closely together to ensure that a clear message about the unacceptability of bullying is made to all members of the school community. Parents need to feel confident that the school will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way that protects the young person.

In addition to this we have reinstated an email address (help@ucs.org.uk) which Lower School pupils can use to contact senior students to raise concerns of bullying. The Captain of Monitors and other senior pupils will undergo safeguarding training in the autumn term of 2020. Should concerns be raised through this email the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Head of Lower School will automatically be copied in. Such an approach allows us to judge whether or not the issues can be dealt with by the senior pupils themselves or by the pastoral staff.

Procedures to Deal with Reported Bullying

- The member of staff who first becomes aware of bullying, or to whom it is first reported will control the situation and reassure and support the pupils involved.
- He or she will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible.
- The victim will be interviewed on his/her own and asked to write an account of events.
- The bully, together with all others involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to write an account of events.
- The incident should be recorded.
- All appropriate pastoral staff should be informed. In serious incidents, the Head should be informed.
- The victim will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separate from the alleged perpetrator. It will be made clear to him/her why revenge is inappropriate. He/she will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him/herself.

- The alleged bully will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why his/her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. He/she will be offered guidance on modifying his/her behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions.
- The parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- A way forward, which might include disciplinary sanctions and/or counselling, should be agreed. This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures. Any disciplinary measures used must be applied fairly, consistently and reasonably taking into account the needs of all concerned. It is important that the motivations behind the bullying behaviour are considered and whether or not they reveal any concerns about the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case the child engaging in bullying may need support themselves.
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place.
- In very serious cases, and only after the Head has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or Social Services. However it is the policy of University College School to attempt to resolve such issues internally under the school's own disciplinary procedures.

While such matters will always be treated seriously, every effort will be made to provide prompt, sensitive and effective support for both victim and bully. The services of the school counsellor are likely to be recommended here. Ultimately it is the school's responsibility to ensure that bullied children feel safe at school, and on their way to and from school.

Repeated or serious offences of this kind by particular pupils are likely to lead to suspension or even exclusion from UCS.

We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

Electronic Communication

The development of electronic means of communication – the internet, electronic chat-rooms and associated web-sites – has created new avenues for bullying, cruelty, unkindness and intolerance.

The policy stated above applies equally and directly to such electronic communication involving any members of the school community.

The school expects all pupils to adhere to its E-Safety Policy. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors pupils' use. All pupils will be required to sign an acceptable user agreement before they first log on to the school system every term.

In particular, all pupils must be aware that:

- Messages or images posted on websites must never be teasing or abusive of others – including other members of the school community – nor should they encourage others into teasing, “banter” or abusive behaviour.
- Such messages or images must never include racial, sexist, ethnic, religious or other taunts or remarks directed towards others.
- Such messages or images must never suggest threats or intimidation towards others.
- Such messages or images must never be such as to damage the reputation of the school, nor of any member of the school community – whether staff or pupil.
- As a general principle, no image of the school, or of any member of the school community, should be posted on the internet or communicated electronically to others, without the consent of the individual(s) involved. In the case of the school itself, this will require the consent of the Headmaster.

Pupils and their parents should note that this policy applies to all media of electronic communication, not simply to the use of the school’s own IT network. The school’s network allows for the monitoring of all devices that are connected to it in partnership with a company called Esafe.

As with any cases of bullying, cruelty or intolerance, offences against this code will be treated seriously. Offenders are likely to be excluded from school. Repeat or serious offences may lead to permanent exclusion from the school.

Support for staff who are bullied

It is also important that, as a school, we make it clear that bullying of staff, whether by pupils, parents or colleagues, is unacceptable and all staff have the right to be supported by the school in such instances. Again this could take place in a variety of forms, with cyberbullying a growing issue of concern.