



MAGDALEN COLLEGE SCHOOL

Dealing with Bullying

A guide for parents and carers

Make a **C**ommitment to
Stop bullying

Introduction

Bullying at Magdalen is unacceptable and we strive to eliminate all forms of bullying. Finding out your child is being bullied is a stressful and distressing experience. It is natural for a parent to feel angry and upset. We hope that you will find this guide helpful and informative; it gives information about the definition of bullying, the different types of bullying, where young people and parents can seek advice and support as well as detailing the strategies that we have found to be effective in order to stop bullying from occurring. We recommend that you read this guide to help you to understand how we can work together.

Some key messages to talk to your child about:

- Keep calm! If your child tells you they think they are being bullied always keep calm, sometimes the thought of a parent contacting school can frighten your child further.
- Praise your child for telling you – it's not easy telling someone, often the child is embarrassed about what is happening and it's a big step to tell an adult.
- Try to find out all the facts and establish if it is bullying. It's not their fault that they are being bullied
- Remember that if you tell your child to fight back or say something 'clever' to the people bullying them, they may end up feeling twice as bad. They might get into trouble themselves, they may get hurt, they may get laughed at more and then they will feel a double failure, having first been a victim of bullying and then by secondly failing to resolve it.

How to recognise if your child is being bullied

Some young people are good at hiding their feelings and the first you know of the problem is when your child:

- Suddenly doesn't want to go to school e.g. hides school clothes, books etc.
- Begins to do poorly in academic work
- Changes his/her usual routine e.g. taking a longer way to school
- Says they are ill
- Becomes moody or bad tempered or is very quiet
- Suddenly loses their appetite or their eating habits change
- Starts wetting the bed
- Sleeps badly
- Comes home with cuts and bruises, torn clothes
- Comes home with possessions damaged or missing
- Wants to avoid leaving the house
- Has fallen out with previously good friends
- Suddenly doesn't want to go on the school bus
- Begs you to drive them to school
- Comes home hungry (bully taken lunch money)
- Continually 'losing' their pocket money

- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone or is nervous and jumpy when a text message comes in

What is bullying?

Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally through threats or superior force.

Many young people do get involved in fights and disagreements every now and then. Teasing and name calling can also be done in a fun way (depending on how the child feels). If he/she feels hurt and upset, it is bullying.

But when this type of behaviour becomes persistent and threatening and directed towards young people who are unable to stand up for themselves then bullying becomes a major problem.

Being a bully or being bullied can happen to anyone and can have long term effects. Bullies are playing with power any way they can.

Bullying can be:

VERBAL:	in the form of name calling, teasing, having rumours spread about them, taunting or threatening – this includes homophobic, racist and sexist comments
CYBERBULLYING:	abusive or threatening text messages or emails, the misuse of social networking sites. The creation of hate groups online, inappropriate use of photography or video
PHYSICAL:	including pushing, punching hitting or kicking
EMOTIONAL:	involving the isolation of the victim by ignoring him or her from group activities, not speaking to them
RACIST:	is an offensive action against someone based on their skin colour, cultural or religious background or ethnic origin

Bullying can also involve:

- persistent rude gestures
- offensive graffiti or deliberate damage to a victim's property
- taking property without permissions
- extortion of money
- passing notes around

- malicious gossip
- forcing the victim to do something against their will
- humiliating, tormenting, ridiculing or threatening
- making fun of the customs, music, accent or dress of anyone from a different culture
- refusal to work or co-operate with others because they are from a different culture

Bullying is not:

- A one off fight or argument
- A friend sometimes being nasty
- An argument with a friend

What to do if your child is being bullied?

- Inform the school – your child’s form tutor, pastoral support assistant, Leader of Learning or ask your child to do so
- Tell your child to try and not look upset and walk away from the situation
- Ask your child to keep a record:
 - Who is involved
 - What happened
 - When/where did it happen
 - Who saw it happen

Who can your child tell in school?

- Form Tutor
- Staff in Student Services
- LSA
- 6th form buddy
- Leader of Learning
- Teacher
- Lunchtime supervisor
- Leave a note in the red boxes around school
- Login to Zumos and Speak Out
- Email confidentially to <http://magdalen.thesharpsystem.com>

What are the consequences of bullying?

We take bullying very seriously and understand that parents can be very upset if their child experiences any form of bullying. Parents and carers quite often want the school to impose very serious sanctions such as an exclusion from school. Research has shown that just

imposing sanctions is less successful in the long term than educating the bully about the impact of their behaviour on the victim. This can appear, to some parents and carers, that the bully is “getting away with it” but the most important outcome is that the bullying stops. We employ a range of strategies in response to any bullying and these include:

- Parents of those involved are informed and discussions are held with the victim and the parents or carers to discuss the most appropriate way forward
- Students attend anti-bullying sessions (using either the Reconciliation or the Mediation approaches) to support victims and help perpetrators to understand the impact of their actions
- Sanctions may be issued depending on the nature of the bullying, the age of the student, the student’s behaviour record, including detentions, internal and external exclusions
- If necessary depending on the type of bullying the Police may be informed
- Records are kept in school of the bullying and the follow-up actions
- Reports are sent to the Local Authority

Information, advice and guidance for parents

There are a number of ways in which we can help to keep young people safe when they are using the Internet/Mobile Phones. It can be harder to spot Cyber Bullying than with ‘traditional’ bullying but there are steps you can take to minimise the risks. Talking to young people and making them aware of the dangers that are associated with technology is an important step. Trying to make yourself familiar with the websites and ‘apps’ your child is using can also be helpful in identifying potential bullying issues. There are certain privacy settings and built in safety features available on the internet and various computer software packages which can be switched on and used. These ensure that you are able to monitor your child’s usage of the Internet & ensure that certain websites and applications are blocked.

At Magdalen College School, we take Cyber Bullying as seriously as we do all other types of bullying and understand the effects can be just as damaging.

There are various places you can visit for further advice which can also provide support and advice for children and young people.

<http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

<http://www.childnet-int.org/>

If you are concerned your child is experiencing racist bullying then please contact the school so it can be dealt with appropriately. It is important to be open with your children about diversity and help them to understand that if someone is different to them it does not make them any better or worse. Unfortunately, we cannot protect young people from racism but we can educate them and ensure they understand how to deal with it if they experience it.

At Magdalen College School we take racist bullying very seriously and understand that its effects can be very damaging to young people. We do our best to educate our students about diversity and difference and aim to have a school environment which is accepting of everyone.

Further information and advice can be found in the following website:

<http://www.childline.org.uk/explore/racism/pages/racism.aspx>

Other websites include:

<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk>

<https://www.bullying.co.uk>

<https://www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/>

<https://www.stopbullying.gov>

A guide to how staff at Magdalen will deal with Incidents of Bullying

At Magdalen we believe that the victim and the member of staff dealing with the bullying should decide together on the best approach to use when tackling a bullying issue. Research has shown that the Reconciliation and the Mediation approaches are proven to be the most effective in the longer term however we also recognise that on occasions it is necessary to issue a sanction in line with the School's Behaviour Policy. The trained staff will always work with the family and the victim to discuss which approach the young person feels most comfortable following.

These will involve either

- The Reconciliation Approach or
- The Mediation Approach or
- School sanctions issued

The Reconciliation Approach

Step one – interview with the victim

When the member of staff finds out the bullying has happened, he/she starts by talking to the victim about the effect/impact the bullying has had on him/her. The aim is not to gather "fact" about who said or did what to whom. The victim should be encouraged to give the names of people to form a group who should help to solve the problem. These will include the victim, colluders, the bullies and possibly friends of the victim.

The victim can be asked to produce a piece of writing or a picture to express how the bullying is affecting them.

Step two – meeting of the group

The member of staff arranges for the group to meet ensuring that there is a balance between helpful and reliable students and those whose behaviour has been causing a problem. It may help to involve another member of staff at this stage.

Step three – explain the problem

The member of staff explains that there is a problem and that the victim is experiencing certain difficulties. Without discussing specific incidents or accusations the member of staff explains how the victim is feeling using the piece of writing or image from the victim to illustrate this.

Step four – share responsibility

The member of staff explains to the group that no-one is going to be punished and that the group has been formed to help solve the problem because there is a shared responsibility for the victim's happiness.

Step five – ask for ideas

The member of staff asks the group to suggest ways that may be able to alleviate the suffering felt by the victim. Members of the group are encouraged to use "I" language – e.g. I will sit next to her in lessons etc. so that they take ownership of the solutions. These ideas are not imposed on the group by the member of staff. The member of staff records these "targets"

Step six – leave it up to them

The member of staff ends the meeting by passing responsibility for the problem over to the group, thanks them for their support and arranges a meeting to see how things are going

Step seven – meet them again

The member of staff meets the group again a few days later to review how things are going. If necessary further meetings are scheduled.

The Mediation Approach

This is used when the Reconciliation approach has either not been successful or those involved are unable to face each other to discuss the situation.

Step one – interview with the victim

When the member of staff finds out the bullying has happened, he/she starts by talking to the victim about his/her feelings. He/she questions him/her about the incidents and asks who was involved. Parents to be informed

Step two – interview other people involved

The member of staff arranges to meet with each student who is involved. This may include witnesses or colluders who joined in but did not initiate any bullying

Step three – explain the problem

The member of staff tells each person about the way the victim is feeling and discusses the details of the incident without apportioning blame

Step four – share responsibility

The member of staff states that he/she knows that the students involved are responsible people and can do something about this situation

Step five – share ideas

Each student involved is encouraged to suggest a way in which the victim could be helped to feel happier. The member of staff gives some positive responses and encourages students to promise better behaviour in future

Step six – leave it up to them

The relevant member of staff emails teaching staff to keep them informed of the incident so that the situation can be monitored. If necessary, seating plans are altered to give greater confidence to the victim. The Member of staff arranges to meet with the students again to see how things are going and the victim is encouraged to reports any further incidents

Step seven – meet again

About a week later the member of staff discusses the situation with each student and the victim which allows the member of staff to monitor the 'bullying' and keep the students involved in the process. A 'Bullying Follow Up' form is completed and if the bullying continues then an alternative plan is devised with the support and agreement of all involved including the parents of both the students and the victim

Step eight – parental update. Parents of all students to receive follow-up communication

School Sanction

There may be occasions when it is necessary or appropriate to issue a school sanction for bullying behaviours. These may be issued before, during or after either of the two approaches have been used. Parents will be informed of the reasons for the sanctions as well as the nature of the sanction. The severity of the sanction will be determined by the incident or repeated incidents and entries on the student's behaviour log.

In extreme cases it may be necessary to inform the police.

What to do if you feel bullied

