

SPARK Schools Anti-Bullying Policy

1. General

1.1. SPARK Schools does not tolerate bullying in any form, and all members of SPARK Schools staff are committed to promoting a safe and caring environment for all SPARK scholars.

1.2. Staff, scholars and parents will work together to address issues of bullying when these arise.

1.3. SPARK Schools aims to create a safe and secure environment where:

1.3.1. individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted;

1.3.2. individuals empathise with one another, and offer one another support; and

1.3.3. any form of bullying is reported and the necessary steps are taken to eliminate such behaviour.

2. What is bullying?

2.1. For the purposes of this Policy, bullying is defined as: “any form of aggressive behaviour or harassment by an individual or a group, repeated over time, which intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally and is generally based on an imbalance in power. Bullying can be physical or non-physical in nature” (“Bullying”)

2.2. Types of Bullying (for the sake of clarity):

2.2.1. Physical Bullying includes but is not limited to:

2.2.1.1. Physical Bullying includes, but is not limited to, punching, kicking, tripping, pushing, taking and/or the damaging of possessions, threatening someone, extortion or preventing someone from leaving or entering an area or space.

2.2.2. Non-physical Bullying includes but is not limited to:

2.2.2.1. provocative behavior, which includes, but is not limited to, making rude gestures and pulling faces, producing offensive graffiti, being aggressive in your opinions, and wearing discriminatory clothing/badges/items;

2.2.2.2. verbal Bullying includes, but is not limited to, name-calling, making fun of another person, being repeatedly critical, prolonged unkind teasing, making threats,

spreading rumours and lies about another person, and making racist, sexist or homophobic comments;

2.2.2.3. relational Bullying includes, but is not limited to, spreading rumours and gossiping, the breaking of confidences and the deliberate splitting of a friendship or friendships and/or stealing of friend/s to with an intention to isolate and hurt a person;

2.2.2.4. sexual harassment, which includes, but is not limited to, the spreading of sexual gossip, the spreading of gossip about “crushes” and similar; making sexual innuendos and jokes or making derogatory comments about someone’s appearance;

2.2.2.5. cyber-Bullying, which includes, but is not limited to, the sending of cruel or threatening messages via text, e-mail, WhatsApp, instant messaging or other forms of social media; posting nasty pictures or messages about others or making unkind comments about another person in text or instant messages, in e-mails, in chat rooms or on social media; taking explicit photographs and sending them on to others; “stealing” someone’s identity and/or pretending to be that person; and refusing to allow somebody to leave a WhatsApp group, by endlessly “re-adding” them.

3. Reporting of Bullying

3.1. Scholars can verbally or by e-mail report Bullying to any member of staff.

3.2. Parents can verbally or by e-mail report Bullying to any member of staff. They may also make use of our organization’s hotline for whistleblowers: 0800 212 050.

3.3. Any evidence of Bullying (WhatsApps, screenshots, e-mails etc) that is received by a staff member should be provided to the Principal who must keep same for record purposes.

3.4. All reports of Bullying will be taken seriously, will be investigated thoroughly and feedback will be given.

3.5. The reporting of Bullying will be encouraged as the right thing to do.

3.6. Confidentiality will be upheld and respected insofar as is possible.

4. Procedure to Deal with Bullying

4.1. When an incident of Bullying or suspected Bullying is reported, the School will respond in a manner that is appropriate to the incident. Depending on the circumstances and nature of the incident, the following steps will usually be taken:

4.1.1. a member of school leadership will meet with the victim to establish what has taken place, to ensure that the victim understands and is comfortable with the action that the School will take in dealing with the matter, and to ensure that the victim will not be placed at further risk;

4.1.2. the victim's Parents will be contacted and informed of the situation, and kept apprised of the School's actions and approach. If it is felt that the victim is in need of further support or counselling, this will be recommended to Parents;

4.1.3. a member of school leadership will then meet with the alleged perpetrator of the Bullying incident to hear their side of the situation, and to ensure that the Bullying behaviour stops immediately. Depending on the type of incident, Parents may be called. If there is negative comeback from the perpetrator to the victim following this, Parents will be called in to a meeting with a member of school leadership. If it is felt that the alleged perpetrator needs some sort of intervention, psychological or otherwise, this will be recommended to Parents;

4.1.4. in the event that the accounts given by the victim and the alleged perpetrator are substantially different, investigating staff will usually bring both Scholars into an interview together for mediation by an independent third party, (with or without Parents) or will investigate further by interviewing witnesses to the alleged incidents;

4.1.5. the incidents will be recorded in each scholar's records;

4.1.6. if the perpetrator repeats his/her behaviour, the School will be obliged to take more stringent steps to curb this. In the event of repeated Bullying behaviour that is felt to endanger one or more Scholars in the school, the perpetrator may be asked to leave the School in accordance with the Code of Conduct; and

4.1.7. in incidents which involve cyber-Bullying, whether these occur on or off the School property, the School reserves the right to take the same action as for other incidents of Bullying behaviour.

5. Role of Parents

5.1. Parents are advised to:

- 5.1.1. be alert to signs of unhappiness in your child's life. Any change in attitude, drop in school marks, avoidance of School or social activities and other unusual behaviours may indicate Bullying;
- 5.1.2. be aware, in a respectful manner, of social behaviours and the content posted on electronic sites and social media by their children and their peers;
- 5.1.3. be supportive when an incident of Bullying in any form and, in particular, of cyber-Bullying, is reported as this can be extremely damaging and have lasting effects;
- 5.1.4. encourage your child to keep any evidence of Bullying;
- 5.1.5. inform a member of staff if there is any concern about your child being a victim or perpetrator of Bullying;
- 5.1.6. not take matters into your own hands by confronting the alleged perpetrator or his/her Parents; and
- 5.1.7. refrain from encouraging your child to retaliate.