

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. SPARK Schools is committed to working together with all staff, scholars and parents to address any 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 that is directed towards an individual or group, repeated over time, which intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can be physical or non-physical in nature” (“Bullying”)
 - 2.2. Types of Bullying (for the sake of clarity):
 - 2.2.1. Physical forms of Bullying include but is not limited to punching, kicking, tripping, pushing, taking and/or the damaging someone else’s possession/s, threatening someone, extortion or preventing someone from leaving or entering an area or space.
 - 2.2.2. Non-physical forms of Bullying include but is not limited to:
 - 2.2.2.1. provocative behavior, rude gestures/ pulling faces, producing offensive graffiti, being aggressive in the expression of an opinion, and wearing discriminatory clothing/badges/items;
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- 2.2.2.2. verbal Bullying such as name-calling, making fun of another person, being repeatedly critical, prolonged or unkind teasing, making threats, spreading rumours and lies about another person, and making racist, sexist or homophobic comments;
- 2.2.2.3. relational Bullying such as 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 such as 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 such as 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 report Bullying to any member of staff both verbally or via email.
- 3.2. Parents can similarly report Bullying to any member of staff both verbally or via email. Parents’ may also make use of the SPARK Schools hotline for whistleblowers: 0800 212 050.
- 3.3. Any evidence of Bullying (WhatsApp’s, screenshots, emails etc) that are 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 and will be thoroughly investigated. Feedback will also be given.
- 3.5. The reporting of Bullying will always be encouraged.
- 3.6. During the reporting process, confidentiality will be upheld and respected insofar as is possible.

4. Procedure following Reports of 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 SPARK Schools 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 behaviour is immediately stopped. Depending on the type of incident, the parent/s of the alleged perpetrator may be contacted. If further incidents of bullying continue to occur, the parents of the alleged perpetrator will be called in to a meeting with a member of SPARK Schools leadership. If further intervention is required, psychological or otherwise, this will be recommended to parents of the alleged perpetrator;
 - 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 their respective parents) or will be investigated further by interviewing witnesses to the alleged incidents;
 - 4.1.5. All incidents of bullying will be recorded in the relevant scholar's records;
 - 4.1.6. Repeated incidents of bullying may amount to serious offence in terms of the SPARK Schools Code of Conduct and could lead to the suspension and/or expulsion of the perpetrating scholar.

5. Role of Parents

- 5.1. Parents are advised to:
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- 5.1.1. be alert to signs of unhappiness, changes in attitude, drop in school marks, avoidance of school or social activities and any other unusual behaviour that may indicate that their child/ren is a victim of Bullying;
 - 5.1.2. be aware, in a respectful manner, of social behaviour and the content posted on electronic sites and social media by their child/ren and their peers;
 - 5.1.3. be supportive when an incident of Bullying takes place in any form;
 - 5.1.4. encourage their child/ren to keep any evidence of Bullying;
 - 5.1.5. inform a member of staff of any concerns related to Bullying;;
 - 5.1.6. not take matters into their own hands by confronting the alleged perpetrator or his/her parents; and
 - 5.1.7. refrain from encouraging any retaliation in response to any Bullying.
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