

CONCORD COLLEGE

COLLEGE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

(incl. Peer-on-Peer Abuse & “Sexting”)

Bullying

Concord means “harmony” and thus Concord College strives for a sense of community from all its staff and students. The College is committed to providing a supportive, caring and safe environment where the welfare of its staff and students is a priority. Any incident of peer-on-peer abuse or bullying is not acceptable, falls far short of the high standards of behaviour expected of both its staff and students, and will not be tolerated. Anyone experiencing peer-on-peer abuse or bullying is encouraged to report it. Any such allegations will be taken seriously, investigated and addressed. No member of the College community should tolerate bullying/ abuse or suffer in silence.

Given the vulnerability of Concord’s boarding students living away from family and friends, as well as the age range of our students and its co-educational and diverse student body, there is the potential for students to experience abuse/ bullying at the hands of their peers. For these reasons, particular vigilance is needed by all adults who work at Concord College in order to deter, detect and act upon any concerns about possible abuse. When accusations of bullying could involve the risk of significant harm to a child, this will result in the implementation of Safeguarding/ Child Protection Procedures and a referral being made to external agencies as outlined in the College’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. (For further details about making referrals to children’s social care, please refer to the separate “Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy” - Staff Handbook doc. 11.16.)

Peer-On-Peer Abuse

Bullying between two young people can also be viewed as peer-on-peer abuse. This is covered by the College’s Anti-Bullying Policy (Staff Handbook document 11.2). In addition, Farrer & Co published a useful “Peer-on-peer abuse toolkit” document (updated in 2019) which has been saved in the Staff Handbook as document 11.2.1. (Pages 10-13 of Farrer’s toolkit contains some useful diagrams and a table which distinguishes between types of sexual behaviours: normal, inappropriate, problematic, abusive & violent. Page 11 contains a useful list of potential signs of peer-on-peer abuse.)

A definition of peer-on-peer abuse is offered as follows on p.10 of Farrer’s toolkit (2019): “...any sign of physical, sexual, emotional & financial abuse, and coercive control between children and within children’s relationships (both intimate and non-intimate), friendships and wider peer associations”.

There is no current legal definition of bullying and it can take many forms but, in general, is a deliberate attempt to make another person feel bad. This deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, makes it difficult for those bullied to defend themselves. It could be by threatening them, hurting them physically, frightening them or upsetting them. It involves someone having some negative power over the person who is being bullied. Bullying happens often, not just once. An alternative definition of bullying which does not require the intent to hurt on behalf of the bully is, “unwanted, aggressive behaviour that involves a real or perceived power imbalance.” Recently, with the increased use of social media by young people, the potential for “accidental” or “unintentional” bullying behaviours has grown considerably. Concord students must take particular care to avoid the danger of their online behaviour being interpreted by others as cyberbullying.

An awareness of the following types of bullying is necessary:

1. Physical (e.g. pushing someone around whenever they are encountered)
2. Extortion (e.g. demanding payment in money or in kind)
3. Gesture (e.g. giving someone “evil” looks)
4. Exclusion (e.g. not allowing another to be part of a group or activity)
5. Verbal (e.g. spreading stories or gossip about another person)
6. Cyberbullying (where information technology is used as a means of communicating verbal and emotional bullying e.g. text message; mobile ‘phone pictures/video clips; mobile ‘phone calls; e-mail; chat rooms; instant messaging; websites including Blogs and social networking sites like Bebo). The following definition of cyberbullying is offered by the DCSF in its “Safe to Learn” antibullying guidance: “Cyberbullying can be defined as *the use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else*. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, it differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity; and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.”
7. Pupils are bullied for a variety of reasons - and for no reason. Specific types of bullying include: bullying related to race, religion or culture; bullying related to special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities; bullying related to appearance or health conditions; bullying related to sexual orientation; bullying of young carers or looked-after children or otherwise related to home circumstances; sexist or sexual bullying.
8. The Equality Act (2010) lists 9 “protected characteristics” which could provide a cause for bullying: Age; Disability; Sex; Gender reassignment; Marital or civil partnership status; Pregnancy and maternity; Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins); Religion or belief; Sexual orientation.
9. Bullying relating to perceived gender will not be tolerated at Concord. Three specific forms of such bullying are: homophobic, biphobic & transphobic. These forms of bullying can be defined as an irrational dislike, hatred or fear of individuals that are, or are perceived to be homosexual (-those sexually attracted to people of the same gender as them, or gay/ lesbian), bisexual (-those who find themselves sexually attracted to both male and female), transsexual (-those who do not fit with traditional gender norms and identify as belonging to the other gender e.g. a male who wears a skirt & make up)
10. Bullying can take place between pupils, between pupils and staff, or between staff; by individuals or groups; face-to-face, indirectly or using a range of cyberbullying methods.

College Policy

No forms of peer-on-peer abuse or bullying are acceptable. Concord College takes its duty of care for its students and its staff extremely seriously and will investigate whenever there are signs, or allegations, of abuse or bullying. External agencies such as the Police, Health Specialists and Social Services will be called in as necessary. Many accusations of bullying and/or abuse could result in the implementation of Child Protection Procedures, as outlined in the College’s Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Many of the College’s students are young people living away from home and are thus particularly vulnerable to bullying and abuse by their peers. All students receive induction talks regarding the College’s concern for them to be safe, healthy and happy. They are encouraged to report any incidents of abuse or bullying. The DSL (or Designated Safeguarding Lead) introduces himself (& his two Deputies or DDSLs) to new students during their induction programme and discusses the range of people they could approach (both staff and student) if they have any welfare problems or questions. Students are encouraged not only to share their own experiences, but to share their concerns about their friends and peers. The College will also raise the awareness of the nature, causes and effects of bullying within its Personal, Social and Health Education programme, assemblies and tutorial periods as appropriate.

Staff should be alert for any changes of behaviour in students and Prefects share in this responsibility. Both staff and students receive regular training in Safeguarding & Child Protection

and should be aware of the need to be vigilant for any signs or symptoms of abuse/ bullying. Such concerns should be shared with staff concerned such as their Tutor, Boarding Parent, the Head of Girls, Principal, Vice-Principal (Academic), Head of Lower School or Vice-Principal (Pastoral).

While the College has not experienced bullying as a significant problem in the past, it recognises that incidents can occur and accepts the moral and statutory duties to be prepared to deal with these as, and when, they occur.

Specific advice for dealing with Cyberbullying Incidents:

Fresh challenges are presented by young people's use, misuse, or abuse of new technologies. Cyberbullying can be unintentional - as with other forms of bullying. However, the perpetrator can share electronic bullying materials and thus the bullying can be aggravated by the involvement of bystanders or "accessories".

Students who experience cyberbullying should be encouraged to store examples of abusive messages or images for use as evidence against the perpetrators. In addition, students should be aware of the means of stopping or limiting the spread of bullying material (e.g. blocking, contacting network managers/internet service providers and/or police).

Sexting incidents (or Youth Produced Sexual Imagery):

If it is thought that any messages sent between students could contain sexual imagery, then great care should be taken as it is possible that criminal offences could have occurred. Students are strongly advised against such risky and illegal behaviour. Colleagues investigating such incidents should consult UKCCIS's overview entitled, "Sexting: how to respond to an incident" & the full advice given in, "Sexting in schools and colleges; Responding to incidents and safeguarding young people". Both documents can be found in the Staff Handbook as 11.2.2 & 11.2.3.

Sanctions:

Specific sanctions should be considered for those found to be guilty of cyberbullying in terms of the College Policies for Computer Network & Access (Student Handbook doc. 7) and also Computers/Network/Internet/E-Mail Acceptable Use (Staff Handbook section 5). Such sanctions could include banning perpetrators from having mobile 'phones and/or stopping students from accessing the College intranet or the internet. However, the deliberate, insidious and malicious nature of serious cyberbullying could lead to very serious punishments being imposed by the Principal on both perpetrators and accessories. The perpetrator (and accessories) could well have done such damage to the College community and its core values of trust and decency, that the bully, or cyberbully and his/her accessories, might have brought their future at the College into doubt. They could be suspended, required to leave, or even expelled from the College community as a result of cyberbullying. In contrast, it should be noted that there is no question at all of any punishment being given to students who experience bullying during their time at Concord.

The following procedure is to be followed in the case of an incident of bullying being either suspected or reported:

Procedure for Dealing with a Bullying Incident

- 1) A written record of the Bullying Incident should be made by the member of staff receiving the allegation as soon as possible. If the alleged victim reports the incident by themselves, they should be convinced that they are being listened to, taken seriously, reassured that further action will follow, they are being supported.

- 2) The Incident should be reported to the Principal, Vice-Principal (Academic), Head of Lower School or Vice-Principal (Pastoral) & DSL as soon as possible. (The written record should follow an oral report as soon as practical.) All incidents of bullying are recorded and a central log of all bullying incidents and responses is held in the Vice-Principal Pastoral's office.
- 3) The Senior Management Team member investigating the Bullying Incident will interview the victim and alleged bully separately and will make a written record of these interviews. Other interviews with students who witnessed the alleged incident(s) might also be necessary at this stage. Victims should be treated with sensitivity. Anonymity cannot be guaranteed if the bully is to be effectively tackled, but discretion and reassurance must be offered.
- 4) At the discretion of the Senior Management Team member, the parents of both the victim and the bully might be contacted at this stage along with the appropriate members of staff (e.g. Boarding parents, Tutors, subject teachers).
- 5) Consideration will be given as to whether an interview, or mediation session, involving the Senior Management Team member, victim and bully would be appropriate and productive.
- 6) Appropriate punishments in the case of actual incidents of bullying will be awarded and recorded. Copies of Bullying Incidents will be kept in both the victim's and bully's student files. Support for the victim will also be provided. The causes of bullying should be considered with both the victim and bully in order to establish how to avoid a repeat of the initial incident.
- 7) A review meeting, or meetings, should be held with both the victim and bully in about a fortnight. If there have been no further incidents, no further action is needed. However, if the review suggests evidence of further bullying, or provocation, then the parents of both the victim and bully will be contacted by the Senior Management Team member at this stage. It is also likely that the Principal will become involved at this stage since Major Punishments (such as rustication, suspension, or expulsion) might be deemed necessary and appropriate. External agencies could also be involved as both necessary and appropriate under related College Policies concerning Abuse and Child Protection (as detailed elsewhere in the Staff Handbook).

Publicising & Reviewing our Anti-Bullying Policy

Concord College's Anti-Bullying Policy will be published and disseminated to staff, students and Trustees and is contained in both the Staff and Student Handbooks. It will also be publicised to parents via the College website.

At the end of every academic year, our students are surveyed and their returns are studied carefully. The results of questions regarding student welfare are scrutinised closely. Students are specifically asked about bullying and whether they feel the College does enough to promote their welfare. A part of the annual report on Safeguarding to the Trustees is a review of bullying incidents which have occurred during the previous academic year.

This Anti-Bullying Policy will be reviewed annually by the DSL along with its Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. This is particularly important in the light of the changes and challenges presented by new technologies and the need to be aware of the specific danger of cyberbullying as outlined above and recent concerns about the scope of peer-on-peer abuse.

The Trustees' Welfare Committee will review this policy every three years.