Anti-Bullying Policy

Bullying will not be tolerated in St. Louis Grammar School; each student and member of staff should feel at ease and free safe and secure. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to inform the relevant staff member/s.

St. Louis Grammar School holds the following principles and values:

- students have the right to learn in a safe and supportive environment;
- students and staff have a right to express any concerns about bullying and feel confident that these will be dealt with;
- the welfare of students is paramount, and students' needs, whether a targeted student or a student displaying bullying behaviour, must be separated from their behaviour;
- should bullying concerns be identified, St. Louis Grammar School will work in a restorative and solution-focused manner to achieve the necessary change;
- students who are targeted will be listened to and supported;
- students who engage in bullying behaviour will be listened to and supported to accept responsibility and change their behaviour;
- staff will receive awareness-raising training regarding bullying prevention, including effective, appropriate strategies for intervention;
- where a concern arises, staff will receive ongoing support from the Senior Leadership Team, especially those with pastoral responsibility;
- where necessary, the active participation of parents in partnership with the school will be sought in order to resolve concerns involving their child; and
- parents/guardians will be consulted on changes to this Policy.

St Louis Grammar School draws a distinction between relationship difficulties and bullying behaviours.   St Louis Grammar School accepts the following definition of bullying:

"*The repeated use of power by one or more people intentionally to harm, hut or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.*"
Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum 2005

Thus, bullying behaviour usually displays the following features:
- it is repetitive and persistent;
- it is intentionally harmful;
- it involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent or stop it; and
- it causes distress.

The following are unacceptable behaviours BUT only constitute bullying behaviours when they are recurrent/persistent, targeted with intent and where a power imbalance between pupils is evident.

Type of incident:

1. Physical bullying (includes jostling, physical intimidation, punching/kicking, any other physical contact which may include use of weapons)
2. Verbal bullying (includes name calling, insults, jokes, threats, spreading rumours)
3. Indirect bullying (includes isolation, refusal to work with/talk to/play with/help others, interfering with personal property) and includes Cyber-bullying: misusing mobile phones and internet programmes to humiliate, threaten and isolate another.

Pupils may be targeted on the basis of race, religion, culture, gender, perceived sexual orientation or gender identification.

Cyberbullying

Technology offers not only opportunities to extend relationships in a positive manner, but also for cyberbullying. Cyberbullying refers to any cyber-communication that is intended to frighten, upset, embarrass or harass another person. It is generally seen as cyberbullying if the action is repeated more than once.   The most effective ways of dealing with such behaviours are:

- do not respond and do not interact;
- keep copies of all nasty emails or conversations;
- seek help and advice from the relevant source: parents; staff; appropriate websites; the PSNI.

St. Louis Grammar School will seek, where reasonable, to be responsive to instances adjudged to be cyberbullying. Action taken will be the subject of due consideration and may differ between situations. For example, should transcripts of inappropriate texts or online conversations be discovered, the parents/guardians of the student/s generating the material may be invited to a meeting with the child's Year Head or another member of senior staff at which copies of the offending material may be handed across and sanctions applied if relevant. Advice may be sought from the PSNI or other relevant outside agencies should the school feel appropriate.

Recognising the Signs of Bullying

Members of staff and parents/guardians should watch for signs of distress in students. Possible symptoms that a young person is experiencing bullying may include:

- a pattern of physical illness e.g. headaches, stomach aches;
- anxiety about travelling to and from school;
- reluctance to come to school;
- changes in temperament and/or behaviour e.g. a tendency to become more emotional, upset or angry than usual;
- signs of anxiety or distress e.g. sleep disturbance, not eating, weeping, stammering;
- unexplained damage to, or loss of, possessions and/or clothing;

- unexplained bruising or cuts;
- increased requests for and/or stealing money;
- decline in quality of school work for no obvious reason;
- the desire to remain with adults;
- fear of using the internet or mobile phone, nervous and jumpy when a cyber message is received.

Individually, such signs and symptoms do not necessarily mean that a student is being bullied. However, if there is a combination or repetitive occurrence of these, then further investigation is needed in order to determine what is affecting the student.