

GIFS BULLY PREVENTION POLICY

Statement of Intent

At GIFS we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. To that end, bullying of any kind is unacceptable at GIFS.

If bullying does occur, all students are counselled to tell and feel assured that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. *Students* who know that bullying is happening are encouraged to report incidents of bullying to the administration. Staff that is aware of bullying behaviour are required to respond and report the incidents to administration.

We confront bullying as an issue because we are a caring school and we believe that:

- Bullying makes people unhappy and leads to low self-esteem.
- Students who are being bullied are unlikely to concentrate fully on their schoolwork.
- Some students avoid being bullied by not attending school.
- Students who observe unchallenged bullying behaviour may copy this behaviour.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is the taking of actions with the intention of hurting or intimidating another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim. It includes the use of physical force, threat, or coercion to abuse, intimidate, or aggressively impose domination over others. The behavior is often repeated and habitual. One essential prerequisite is the perception, by the bully or by others, of an imbalance of social or physical power.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic: because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality, or gender identity
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber: All areas of Internet, such as email & Internet chat room misuse; mobile threats by text messaging & calls; misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera & video facilities.

Cyberbullying is the deliberate use of Information Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the Internet, to hurt or intimidate someone else. This policy applies to bullying and cyberbullying of or by any student whether it occurs inside or outside of the school.

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one should be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who bully others should learn other ways of behaving.

Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Who might be bullied?

- Bullies pick on vulnerable children
- Students who are new to the class or school
- Those who are different in appearance, speech or background to the other pupils
- Students who have low self esteem
- Students who react in an 'entertaining or funny' way when bullied
- Students who are nervous or anxious
- Groups of bullies can victimise other groups. For example, students can be stereotyped as 'nerds' or not 'cool' and these groups are often ostracized.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child:

- changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- Is frequently truant
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- Has lunch or other monies continually "lost"
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Begins to exhibit bullying behaviour towards other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous or jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours may be indicative of other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Procedures

Once reported -

- The bullying behaviour or threats will be investigated and every effort made to stop the bullying on school premises and/or during school events either on or off campus.
- The school will supervise and carefully monitor interactions between the bully and the bullied person.
- An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their attitude and behaviour.
- The school counsellor has an important role to play in dealing with, or giving support and advice to staff in dealing with the bully in a constructive and instructive manner.

Dissemination of Information

1. The administration will report bullying incidents to the appropriate teachers and other persons who interact on a regular basis with the students involved.
2. In all cases, bullying will be recorded by the administration via an **Incident Report Form** (see template) - A copy of the document will be given to the school Counsellor. A copy of the report will be placed in the student's file.
3. The administration will inform the parents. They will be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. An official letter is either sent or given personally to parents by the administration. This serves as official written documentation of the incident.

Advice for:

STUDENTS

If you are being bullied

- Tell someone you trust
- You will not be blamed for reporting
- If you can, ignore the bully
- If you can, do not show you are upset
- If possible, avoid being alone in places where bullying happens (for example, in out of the ways places in the school building, bathrooms, or empty classrooms)
- If you can, be assertive
- Walk away quickly and confidently, even if you do not feel that way inside

FRIENDS

- Listen and talk it through
- Try to be sensitive and avoid judging
- Try not to leave the person on their own
- Persuade the person being bullied to talk to an adult

BYSTANDERS

- Even if you don't take part in bullying but see it and walk away, you are ignoring your responsibilities
- Report the incident to an adult
- Give sympathy to the person being bullied

PARENTS

- Parents who are concerned that their child might be being bullied, or who suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying, should contact their child's class teacher immediately. If they are not satisfied with the response, they should contact either the school counsellor or the administration.
- Parents have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy, actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school.

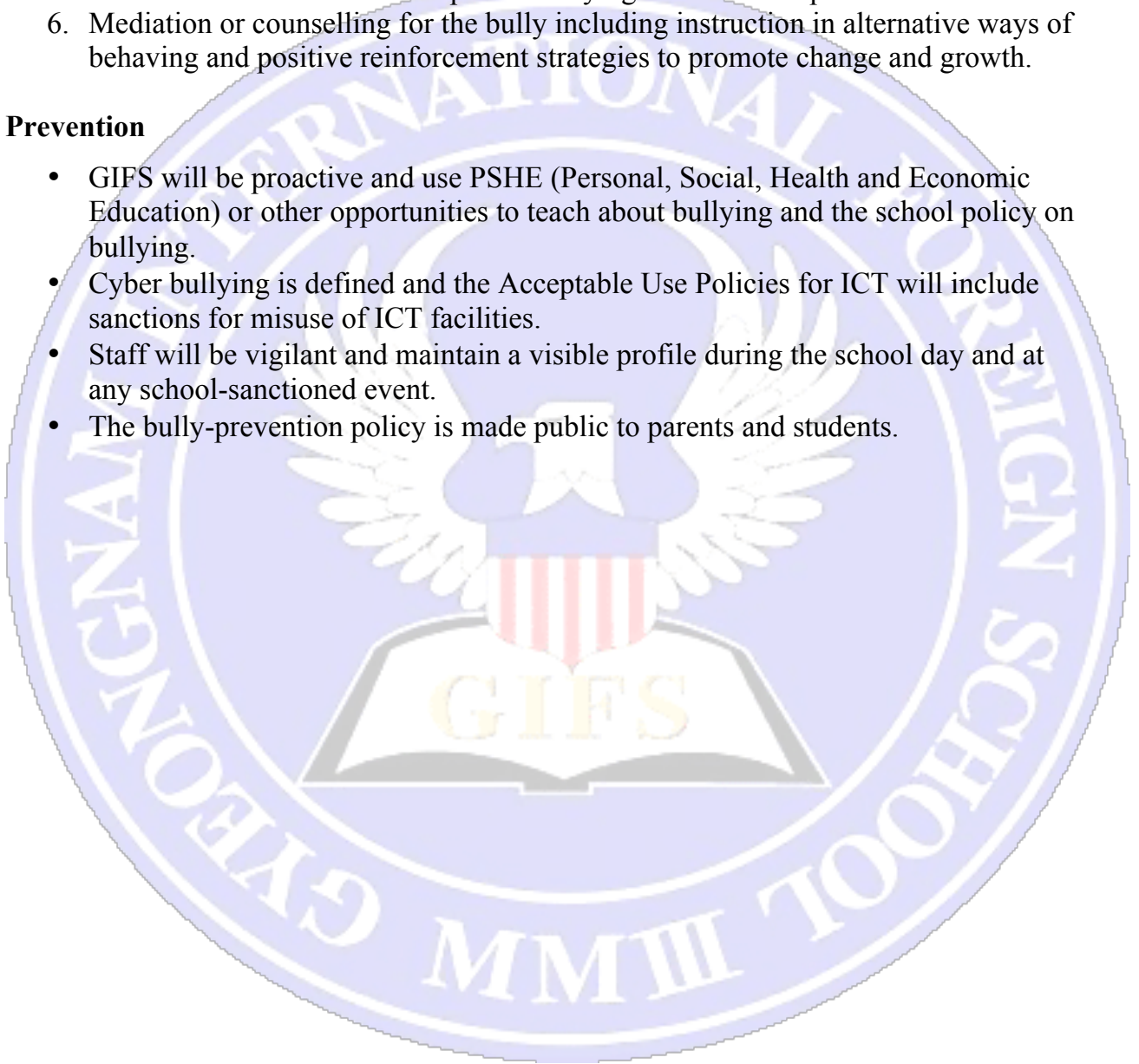
Outcomes

1. In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion will be considered.

2. Detention and/or loss of privileges, including suspension from the use of GIFS transportation, or participation in GIFS athletics and other after school activities.
3. If possible, the students will be reconciled. Adults will use a problem solving approach, including adult mediation between the perpetrator and the bullied person (provided that this is safe for that person.)
4. The bully should make a sincere apology and commit to stop bullying.
5. After the incident(s) has been investigated and outcomes determined, the students will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.
6. Mediation or counselling for the bully including instruction in alternative ways of behaving and positive reinforcement strategies to promote change and growth.

Prevention

- GIFS will be proactive and use PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education) or other opportunities to teach about bullying and the school policy on bullying.
- Cyber bullying is defined and the Acceptable Use Policies for ICT will include sanctions for misuse of ICT facilities.
- Staff will be vigilant and maintain a visible profile during the school day and at any school-sanctioned event.
- The bully-prevention policy is made public to parents and students.



INCIDENT REPORT

Date of incident: _____

Time of incident: _____

Place of incident: _____

Student(s) involved in incident: _____

Name of person taking initial report: _____

DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT:

IMMEDIATE ACTION TAKEN:

FOLLOW UP ACTION TO BE TAKEN:

Signature of Administrator