



Anti – Bullying Policy

Mission Statement

'To educate young people to meet the challenges of life courageously, to use their talents to the full and to live the values of Christ's Gospel'

Aims and Objectives

The aim of our anti-bullying policy is to clarify for students, parents, carers, and staff that bullying is always unacceptable, and incidents will always be addressed. Our school is a community founded on Christ and we therefore try to uphold Gospel values of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation. All members of our school community sign up to the Code of Conduct, which emphasises these Gospel values, and affirms that we should value one another and treat others as we would wish to be treated. Every student has the right to feel safe and happy in school and to be protected.

This policy has regard to DfE (Department for Education) advice Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017), the Malicious Communication Act (1988) the Online Safety Act 2023 and can be found within the 'Policies' section of the Thornton College website.

Staff

All staff members have a responsibility to be alert to and always respond to signs of bullying behaviour. The Deputy Head will be the designated person responsible for developing a whole school approach to bullying. The Head of Prep, Heads of Year and/or Boarding Staff will work with the Deputy Head to ensure that the effects of bullying are taken seriously and to work with their year group(s) / Boarding Houses to prevent and tackle bullying.

Staff awareness of bullying is raised in Staff Meetings and through Prep and Head of Year meetings as well as INSET and whole staff meetings, where appropriate. Behaviour and Bullying is also reviewed each half term at Senior Leadership meetings and reported termly to Governors. These sessions ensure that all staff are aware of their role in keeping our students safe from bullying and any form of harm; that they understand the principles of our policy; that they understand our procedures; that they understand their legal responsibility to ensure that all of our students irrespective of their race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender, special educational need and/or disability, or family situation are free from prejudice and discrimination; that they understand where they can access support in dealing with these issues should they arise; and they also ensure that any issues can be discussed as necessary in order to action any incidents and prevent future incidents from occurring.

The Head Teacher and the Deputy Head completed the Anti-Bullying Alliance 'United against Bullying' training in 2023 and ran the UAB whole school programme in school until it finished in 2024.. The Head Teacher completed training as the Staff Anti-Bullying Lead. The Assistant Head – Head of Prep completed the same training in 2021.

Students

In Prep, students in Year 5 are trained to be Anti-Bullying Ambassadors following an in-house designed course.

Anti-Bullying Ambassadors assist in raising awareness of bullying and support their peers in the prevention of bullying. Initiatives also include efforts to improve the well-being of students and creating a student-led Anti Bullying Policy – See Appendix 6. Anti-Bullying Ambassadors can be identified by special badges.

There is a Senior Equalities and Anti-Bullying Committee with representatives from every year group including Sixth Form. This Committee will take the lead on initiatives such as Anti Bullying Week and raising awareness of our anti bullying strategies such as TootToot and ongoing education through assemblies.

Anti-bullying initiatives are also addressed within the Pastoral Programme, including recognition of such events as Anti-Bullying week, and the Anti Bullying Committee will work closely with the Equalities Committee as well as schoolwide using surveys and acting upon the feedback received.

Definition of Bullying

Thornton has accepted a definition of bullying to be: deliberately hurtful behaviour usually repeated over a period of time, which intentionally hurts another pupil or group, physically, emotionally, or verbally. The school recognises that bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on the grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs, and disability, or because a child is adopted or a carer. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media, or gaming, which can include the use of images and video). It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences, including prejudice-based bullying because of a protected characteristic.

Students, staff, parents, and carers are supported to understand the school's definition of bullying through this policy, (which is available on the school website), assemblies, parent meetings, and documentation discussed and posted in tutor groups and planners.

Students may also refer to the Princess Diana Award definition of bullying as: 'Repeated, negative behaviour that is intended to make others feel upset, uncomfortable, or unsafe' – the three 'Us. or the Anti Bullying definition. "The **repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online**". This definition may also be included in any parent meeting and student assembly and/or discussion about bullying.

Cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience.

Possible Signs

Bullying can cause distress to students to the extent that it affects their health and development or cause them significant harm (including self-harm).

Signs of bullying can include but are not limited to

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor academic achievement
- Isolation
- Threatened or attempted suicide

Prejudice – based bullying because of a protected characteristic

All staff are aware that students with SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) and / or differences/perceived differences are more susceptible to being bullied / victims of child abuse. This includes LGBTQ+ students. In keeping with the Equality Act 2010 we take very seriously our duty to take steps to eliminate harassment, victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. Where appropriate and/or necessary, the school will invest in specialised skills to understand and address the needs of students.

Prevention

All staff are aware that children learn best in a calm and safe environment and that it is everyone's responsibility to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. At Thornton, staff closely monitor the behaviour and interactions of students and act quickly should issues arise that may lead to incidents of bullying. Autistic children and young people may not be able to recognise bullying being done to them due to a lack of social understanding and it is therefore important that staff continue to monitor relationships. Staff log concerns on CPOMS and inform tutors, Heads of Year and/or Boarding Staff of any concerns and relationships are monitored. Where appropriate, early intervention takes place, either through a conversation with individuals, with groups of pupils and/or with parents / carers.

Prevention is also assisted through a concerted effort to develop a community of respect and tolerance. This is achieved through discussion of issues of difference in curriculum lessons, PSHE, and assemblies. Students are reminded of the importance of demonstrating tolerance and respect to all of those around them both in how they speak and in how they behave. They are not only encouraged to speak up if they are experiencing any difficulties, but they are also encouraged to speak up for any others they see who may be experiencing difficulties.

The Tutor Well Being Programme allocates specific time, in addition to that listed above, for students and staff to discuss issues of equality, diversity and inclusion. Topics may be introduced by tutors and/or Heads of Year, or student led. Specific assemblies may also be arranged to address issues of respect and tolerance with specific year groups or with Prep and Senior schools as whole communities. We encourage the students to think outside of 'one single story' and instead celebrate what makes each in our community unique.

Emphasis is placed on the school's high expectations of behaviour and respect for all. All students are made aware of such expectations and both staff and older students know it is their responsibility to exemplify these standards to all in their own behaviour. Senior girls who are given positions of responsibility, are aware that they should be setting a good example to the rest of the school. Prefects and the Head Girl team have links with classes across the school and are available to listen. Students are aware that they should inform a member of staff should a student confide that they are being bullied or should they find themselves as bystanders.

We recognise that boarders who have experienced unpleasant or bullying behaviour from another boarder may feel particularly vulnerable as they cannot, unlike day girls, go home and distance themselves from the other student. Further, we recognise that, unless the incidents were of such a serious nature as to warrant exclusion from the girl exhibiting bullying behaviour, that both girls will need to eventually re-establish a relationship with each other due to the nature of boarding houses. After following the behaviour policy and sanctioning as appropriate, we will offer the boarder the opportunity to either move rooms/corridors or to ask for the other student to move. We will then offer restorative justice meetings and support for the boarder exhibiting bullying behaviour to recognise the hurt caused and to change her behaviours. Boarding staff will closely monitor to ensure that the affected boarder is supported and feels safe.

In addition to the support offered by tutors, the availability of staff as part of the school's Listening Ear initiative also allows students to discuss any concerns they have.

Curriculum

Our curriculum enhances this policy: -

- by dealing with the topic of bullying, in a way which explores why it happens and gives alternative ways of behaving and dealing with difficulties.
- by using teaching methods which encourage co-operative work and a variety of groupings, so that students extend their relationships beyond a small group of friends.
- through assemblies and PSHE.

We aim to protect all students and staff and ensure that they always feel safe, including when using recent technology and accessing the internet. All students are made aware of the Anti-cyberbullying Code and the 7 rules.

Cyber-bullying by children, via texts and WhatsApp or other social media platforms.

Thornton College has mechanisms in place to deal with incidents and sanctions are applied to students in keeping with our behaviour policy. Students are educated to understand and respond to the risks involved (including the sharing of concerns with a responsible adult) and information sessions and talks are scheduled as required. This is overseen by our Deputy Head and Head of Prep along with the Computer Science Leads in both Senior and Prep School. We have appropriate filtering and monitoring software in place to keep our students safe when accessing the internet at school. All staff are aware of safety issues and have signed the Information Technology Policy. Students will be taught appropriate use of the internet and social media as part of their IT, tutor, and PSHE programme.

Students, staff, and parents are supported to understand the risks posed by the CONTENT accessed by students including disinformation and misinformation – their CONDUCT online including behaviour that increases the likelihood of, or causes, harm- who they have CONTACT with in the digital world, including peer to peer pressure and adults posing as children or young adults with the intention to groom or exploit them– and the risks posed by COMMERCE, including online gambling and inappropriate advertising.

If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and there is reasonable ground to suspect it contains evidence in relation to an offence, or a pornographic image or a child or an extreme pornographic image, the device will be given immediately to the police or stored as instructed by the police.

We have an agreed IT and E-Safety policy and Acceptable Use Policy in place that outlines our management of access to the internet. Our internet access is monitored by Smoothwall to prevent access to material that is inappropriate for our students and a daily report is emailed to the IT Manager, Senior House Mistress and the Deputy Head along with immediate alerts when searches of an extremist, profane or sexual nature are detected. We manage access to 3G and 4G through our Behaviour Policies and Use of Devices Policy. Boarders, other than Sixth Form, are not allowed access to their mobile devices overnight.

For further details see our IT Acceptable Use & E-Safety Policy.

Procedures

Allegations of bullying are reviewed by Heads of Year, the Deputy Head Teacher and the Assistant Head - Head of Prep (and/or Boarding Staff where appropriate). However, we acknowledge that a bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. (In this instance, all concerns will be reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead). External support may still be sought and provided for students whether or not the incident is deemed to be a safeguarding issue. This may be to support the student/s who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

All staff recognise that early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and is not acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

On report of an incident of bullying, Heads of Year and/or the Deputy Head/Assistant Head - Head of Prep and/or Boarding Staff will investigate. Statements will be taken from all students involved and any witnesses. Depending on the nature of the incident and whether it is deemed an incident of bullying or a pastoral/friendship related incident, action will be taken by staff and details logged on CPOMS.

Once information is collated, the HOY and/or Boarding staff will discuss the statements and any further evidence with the Deputy Head Teacher or Assistant Head - Head of Prep.

Where there are incidents of bullying, sanctions will be issued in line with the Behaviour Ladder. Every effort will be made to resolve the problem through talking to both parties. This may involve all parties taking part in the Restorative Justice programme. See Appendix 5 The focus should be on how the situation can be resolved.

Parents of both parties should be informed of what has happened and how it has been dealt with.

If the bullying behaviour continues, and discussions have not proved successful, then further sanctions follow in line with the Schools Behaviour and Sanctions Ladder. It is important that support is maintained for both parties, even when sanctions have been applied.

The school will support all children who are bullied and make appropriate provision for a child's needs. The nature and level of support will depend on the individual circumstances and the level of need. These can include asking the pastoral team to provide support, providing wellbeing support, engaging with parents, referring to local authority children's services, completing a Common Assessment Framework or referring to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Procedures involving electronic devices:

The Mobile Phones in Schools Guidance (February 2024) states that

“Headteachers, or staff they authorise, have a statutory power to search a pupil or their possessions where they have reasonable grounds to suspect that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item as set out in legislation or any item identified in the school rules as an item that may be searched for. Headteachers can and should identify mobile phones and similar devices as something that may be searched for in their school behaviour policy”.

The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the Head Teacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone.

If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable ground to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must give the device to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

Consequences

In line with our Behaviour Policy, there will be consequences for incidents of bullying behaviour. We recognise that the serious nature of bullying can cause physical and emotional harm, both of which may lead to psychological damage to the victim. All incidents of bullying will be treated seriously. Should investigations confirm an incident of bullying has taken place, the student accused of bullying behaviour will be sanctioned according to the behaviour ladder and parents/guardians contacted so that the school can work with them to prevent such incidents occurring again. Parties involved may be invited to participate in the restorative justice programme established in Thornton. Parents will be informed of developments. During meetings individuals will be made aware of their behaviour and its effect upon others. Support will be offered to all who need it, and this may include continued meetings with the Head of Year / Assistant Head – Head of Prep or a member of the wellbeing team.

Should the student who has alleged an incident of bullying not wish to participate in a programme of restorative justice, the individual/s accused of bullying behaviour will be required to meet with the Head of Year / Assistant Head – Head of Prep to discuss the impact of their behaviour on others and to be supported to change their behaviour.

1. In serious situations the individual accused of bullying behaviour may be excluded from lessons or excluded from school for a fixed period.
2. First the Deputy Head and subsequently the Head Teacher will become involved when offences are repeated / very serious.
3. Very serious incidents of bullying will result in expulsion - (See Behaviour Policy, Exclusion from School).

The school will continue to maintain communication with parents so that the school and parents can continue to work together to resolve any concerns and so that any situation may be monitored to ensure all conflicts have been resolved.



What is bullying?

When someone says or does something unintentionally hurtful and they do it once,
that is **rude**

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they do it once,
that is **mean**

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they keep doing it
— even when you tell them to stop or show
them that you are upset, that is **bullying**



What is bullying?

Several Times on Purpose

How can we stop bullying?

S

Stand up to them and use your words to tell them to stop.

T

Take appropriate action to move away from the situation.

O

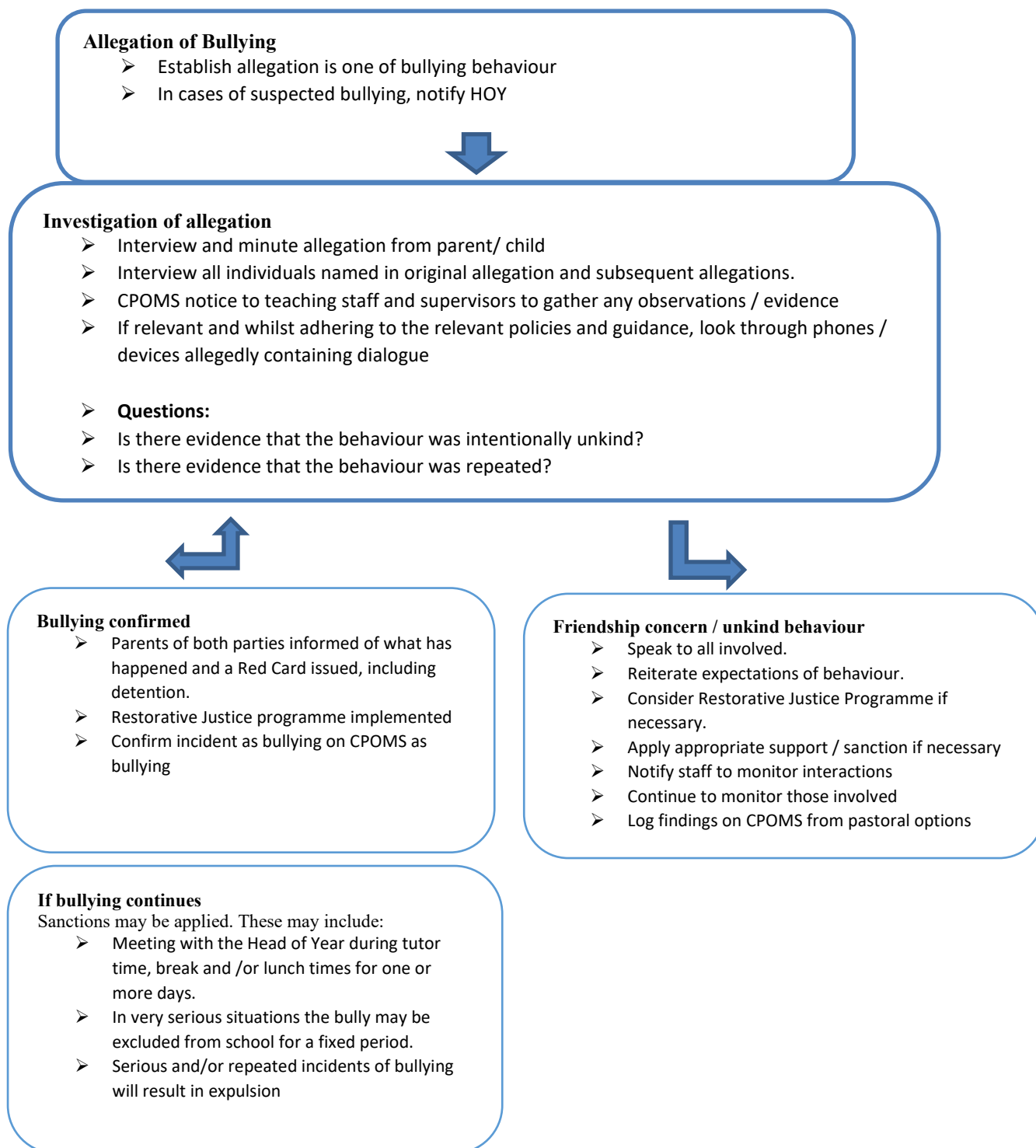
Open up to an adult or prefect straight away.

P

Prevent things from getting worse. Don't ignore it!

Appendix 3:

Bullying and Restorative Justice: Staff



Appendix 4

Bullying and Restorative Justice: Parents / Students

Thornton College recognises the serious nature of bullying. All incidents of bullying will be treated seriously. In line with our ethos, our approach to bullying is guided by the values of love and forgiveness; as such, our initial response will always be to support all involved and seek ways to resolve concerns and build relationships.

Allegation of Bullying – This can be made to any member of staff. They will discuss with you whether the incident/s is/are suspected bullying or a friendship/pastoral concern.



Investigation of allegation

The Head of Year/Head of Prep (and/or form tutor in the Prep School) will be informed of the allegation and will investigate. They will:

- Speak to you / your daughter
- Speak to all individuals / witnesses you / your daughter names and anyone else named during the investigation.
- Speak to staff who may have witnessed incidents
- If relevant, look through phones / devices

Based on the evidence collated during the investigation, the Head of Year/Head of Prep will consider whether:

- behaviour was **intentionally unkind**
- behaviour was **repeated (this is usually the case, although there may be exceptions)**



Bullying confirmed

- You and the parents of those accused will be informed of what has happened and a Red Card issued to the child accused of bullying
- Your daughter will be offered the opportunity to take part in Thornton's Restorative Justice Programme.

Friendship concern / unkind behaviour

- The HOY/Head of Prep will speak to all involved and emphasise our high expectations of behaviour. The Restorative Justice programme may be implemented.
- Sanctions will be implemented if required.
- Staff will continue to observe the relationship and ensure that it remains positive.

If bullying continues

Sanctions will be applied. These may include:

- Meeting with the Head of Year during tutor time, break and /or lunch times for one or more days.
- In very serious situations your daughter may be excluded from school for a fixed period.
- Serious and/or repeated incidents of bullying will result in expulsion

Misinterpretation of behaviour

- You / Your daughter will be informed that evidence does not suggest an incident / incidents of *bullying* occurred.
- Your daughter will be offered support if necessary.
- Staff will be asked to observe the relationship and ensure that it remains positive.

Appendix 5: Restorative Justice

Restorative Justice Philosophy Statement

Thornton College is a school community, which endeavours to live true to the values in our Mission Statement and accepting of the wide-ranging differences, which exist among its members. To make our community work we believe that it is essential to recognise the intrinsic worth of every member of that community as a unique individual with a unique contribution to make, but more importantly, and in keeping with our ethos, to recognise that each member is of equal value to God (imago Dei).

We also recognise that, in each community, there will, from time to time, be conflict, as differences of opinion emerge and individuals speak and act in ways which cause hurt to others, whether intentional or not. The mark of a strong community is not the absence of such conflict but rather, the way in which the community recognises and deals with it so that relationships which are broken can have the potential of being restored, that those who feel victimised are heard and that we are all called upon to take responsibility for our part building a community of respect and responsibility, where forgiveness is encouraged and where honesty is required. To this end, we believe in the concept of Restorative Justice in that what has been said and done cannot be unsaid and undone but needs to be dealt with constructively, framed correctly and lessons learned.

‘Peace-making does not mean passivity. It is the act of interrupting injustice without mirroring injustice, the act of destroying evil without destroying the evildoer, the act of finding a third way that is neither fight nor flight but the careful, arduous pursuit of reconciliation and justice.’

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice enables those who have been harmed to convey the impact of the harm to those responsible, and for those responsible to acknowledge this impact and take steps to put it right. Restorative approaches refer to a range of methods and strategies which can be used both to prevent relationship-damaging incidents from happening and to resolve them if they do happen.

Effective Restorative Practices foster awareness of how others have been affected by inappropriate behaviour. This is done by actively engaging all participants in a process which separates the deed from the doer and rejects the act not the actor, allowing individuals to make amends for the harm caused. Restorative Practices acknowledge the intrinsic worth of each person and their potential contribution to the school community.

We believe that our Restorative Practices framework will:

- Improve behaviour and attitudes;
- Provide explicit tools within a defined framework to challenge unacceptable behaviour, resolve conflict and repair harm;
- Improve relationships; establish rights, accountabilities, and responsibilities to the community.
- Provide a safe, philosophical basis for staff, pupils, and parents to share ideas and discuss issues openly and honestly.

Our policy is based on the belief that the victim has a voice, and that voice should be heard.

When someone has been harmed, they need:

- Someone to say sorry.
- Someone to listen.
- To be allowed to be upset or angry.
- To reach a position where they feel better.
- For the other person to understand the cause of the upset or hurt.
- To be respected.
- To know it will not happen again.
- To draw a line underneath it and have a fresh start.

By putting the victim at the centre of the process, the wrongdoer is held accountable to the person they have harmed and is also given the choice to put things right and to make amends.

A Restorative Conversation is not a soft option; it requires the wrongdoer to accept responsibility for their actions and find a way to put things right, including reassuring the victim that it will not happen again. If the wrongdoer is not prepared to do this, or the offence is repeated, then the Behaviour Ladder, The School Code of Conduct and other relevant policies come into effect. There are a series of graduated sanctions which will be implemented.

The concept of being RESTORATIVE is central to what it means to be human and is a vital part of the education of children. It is about:

- Showing respect – everyone is important
- Taking responsibility – owning up.
- Reparation – putting things right.
- Re-integration – starting again.

We intend that this approach will help our students develop good relationships, resourcefulness, resilience, reflective thinking, appropriate risk-taking and the ability to take responsibility.

Promoting Restorative Approaches

Our Code of Conduct states that we want everyone at Thornton College to be happy and to be able to learn and to be safe. All pupils are encouraged to be aware not only of their own needs but also those of others. We aim to develop values of respect, tolerance, self-control, resilience, and a sense of responsibility. However, unfortunately we cannot get it right all the time and conflict is a part of life – it is how we deal with it that makes the difference. The restorative approach helps us to learn from conflict by aiming to repair and balance.

At Thornton College, we have high expectations of our pupils. We encourage all children to try their best to achieve their goals. They should understand that it is the responsibility of staff and pupils to uphold and maintain our school rules. For occasions when this is proving not to be the case, we use restorative approaches to help pupils understand the impact of their actions and how to put it right. We believe that by using this Restorative Approach we are giving pupils the skills to independently make better and more informed choices in the future.

Restorative approaches encourage pupils to think about how their behaviour affects others, both pupils and staff. It helps children to develop respect, responsibility and truth telling.

If a pupil in our school has been negatively affected by someone's behaviour, we will try our absolute best to make sure they feel that it has been put right for them and that it will not happen again.

If a child has done something wrong, they will be asked to put things right and change their behaviour so it does not happen again

The Process

When our pupils find themselves in conflict or upset, we will ask them:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking when it happened?
- What needs to happen to put this right?
- What would you do differently next time?

We might also say to our pupils:

- What would you think if this happened to you?
- How can you put this right?
- What could you do differently next time?
- What other choice could you have made?
- How could you make sure this does not happen again?

Most situations can be dealt with by working through these questions with the intention of a fair outcome for everyone. If somebody is upset, the aim is that they feel better. If someone has done something wrong, the aim is that they take responsibility for their actions and help to fix the situation

Praise and Rewards

At Thornton we believe that the key to promoting positive behaviour is through praise and rewards. Some of the ways we do this are:

- Positive comments every day and in Reports
- Stickers
- Star charts for staying on 'Green'
- Commendations, House Points and Certificates
- Mention in assemblies or the Head's Letter
- Providing opportunities for students to recognise and praise each other through peer assessment and listening and responding in lessons and in 'circle time.'

Accentuating the positive often helps to prevent the multiplication of the negative. We aim to be a community in which the positive is upheld and applauded, so that our students learn self-discipline regarding their own words and actions and learn to make good choices, as well as accept responsibility for the choices they do make and their effects on others.

Discipline is not control of children – many children are not easily controlled. When children's lives and behaviour are too regulated by others, they feel no need to control themselves, since others do it for them. An important long-term goal is to facilitate the development self-discipline. We believe that discipline is about leading by example, guiding and encouraging children within a framework of rights and responsibilities to consistently think about what they do and make good choices. These should work together to create a caring community atmosphere.

To that end, we adopt a resolution focus to issues which arise in school on a day-to-day basis. We promote the concept of a fresh start: although persistent or serious misbehaviour needs recording,

every child must feel that every day is a fresh start. We aim to recognise conflict, face it, deal with it fairly and move on positively with the aim of restoring peace within the community.

Our guiding principles are;

RESPONSIBILITY: taking responsibility for your own actions

REPAIR: developing the skills within our school community so that its individual members have the necessary skills to identify solutions that repair harm and ensure behaviours are not repeated.

RE-INTEGRATION: working through a supportive process that aims to solve the problem and allows young people to start again.



WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

If you are bullied, you need to **tell someone**

You can tell **any** adult including teachers and parents.

You can tell **any** of the anti-bullying ambassador team.

You can tell a friend too, but make sure you trust them.



WHAT IF I AM BULLIED?

You need to:

1. Tell them to **stop**
2. Walk away
3. **Tell someone**

Do not:

1. Do what they say
2. Snap back
3. Think it's your fault
4. Hide it

