

City of Oxford Swimming Club



Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

COSC are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our members so they can swim in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our club. If bullying does occur, all swimmers or parents should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a **TELLING** club. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the club Welfare Team or any committee member.

What is bullying?

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or a group by another person or group where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.

Bullying can be:

- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, mocking, teasing and threats
- **Physical:** use of physical violence (e.g., pushing, kicking, hitting, punching), intimidating behaviour, theft or intentional damage to possessions
- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding (emotionally and physically), humiliating, tormenting, and spreading rumours
- **Cyber:** misusing digital technology to bully a person or group through messages or actions that are threatening or cause offence, anxiety or humiliation (e.g., malicious texts messages, trolling)
- **Racist:** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual:** unwanted physical contact, sexual advances or comments intended to cause offence, humiliation, or intimidation. This could include pressure to send images of a sexual nature
- **Homophobic:** because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality or gender identity
- **Disablist:** because of disability or special educational needs
- **Based on difference:** because of real or perceived difference (e.g., looks, social behaviour, family circumstances etc.)

Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Members of COSC who are bullying others need to learn different ways of behaving. The club has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Objectives of this policy

All committee members, coaches and teachers, swimmers and parents should understand what bullying is. All committee members, teaching and coaching staff should know what the

club policy is on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported. All swimmers and parents should know what the club policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises. As a club we take bullying seriously. Swimmers and parents should be assured that they would be supported when bullying is reported.

Bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and symptoms

A child, even if they do not say they are being bullied, may indicate by signs or behaviour that they are being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Says they are being bullied
- Is unwilling to go to club sessions
- Starts to drop their level of training or competition
- Becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Appears frightened of walking to or from sessions or galas
- Changes their usual routine
- Feels ill before training sessions
- Comes home with clothes torn or swimming equipment damaged
- Has possessions go "missing"
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- In more extreme cases starts stammering
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is frightened to use the internet or their phone
- Is jumpy or nervous when a message is received
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above

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

Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to the club welfare team, coach or team manager, a member of the committee or ring Swim Line.
2. The lead welfare officer (coscwelfareofficer@gmail.com) will be informed of all alleged bullying incidents.
3. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be referred to the ASA for advice.
4. Parents should be informed and will be asked to come to a meeting to discuss the problem.
5. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
6. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated, and the bullying stopped quickly.
7. An attempt will be made to help the bully(bullies)change their behaviour.
8. If mediation fails and the bullying is seen to continue the club will initiate disciplinary action under the club constitution.

Club action

If the club decides it is appropriate for it to deal with the situation the following procedure, outlined below, will be followed.

1. Reconciliation by getting the parties together. It may be that a genuine apology solves the problem.
2. If mediation fails/is not appropriate a 3-person panel (made up from Lead Welfare Officer, Welfare assistants, coach, or chairperson) will meet with the parent (or adult nominated by parent) and swimmer alleging bullying to get details of the allegation. Minutes should be taken for clarity, and these should be agreed by all as a true account. If the swimmer is aged 16 to 17 the parent and young person can agree to have no parent or adult present.
3. Information may be gathered from witnesses where appropriate and with consent of parents if the witness is under 16 years old.
4. The same panel should meet with the alleged bully/bullies and parent/s and put the incident raised to them to answer and give their view of the allegation. Minutes should again be taken and agreed. Further information from witnesses should be gathered if required.
5. If bullying, in the view of the panel based on evidence or balance of probabilities, has taken place, the swimmer should be warned and put on notice of further action, (i.e., temporary or permanent suspension if the bullying continues) in line with club disciplinary procedures. Consideration should be given as to whether a reconciliation meeting between parties is appropriate at this time.
6. In some cases, the parent of the bully/bullies or bullied swimmer can be asked to attend training sessions, if they are able to do so and if appropriate. The welfare team should monitor the situation for a given period to ensure the bullying is not being repeated.
7. All coaches involved with swimmers involved should be made aware of the concerns and outcome of the process.

In the case of adults reported to be bullying swimmers under 18

1. Swim England **should always be informed** and will advise on action to be taken.
2. It is anticipated that in most cases where the allegation is made regarding a teacher or coach, child protection awareness training may be recommended.
3. More serious cases may be referred to the police, social care or judicial complaints procedure.

Prevention

COSC has a code of conduct, which includes what is acceptable and proper behaviour for all members of which the anti-bullying policy is one part. All swimmers and parents sign to accept the constitution and codes of conduct upon joining the club. The club Welfare Officer will raise awareness about bullying and why it matters, and if issues of bullying arise in the club, will consider meeting with swimmers to discuss the issue openly and constructively. This policy is based on the guidance provided to schools by KIDSCAPE. KIDSCAPE is a voluntary organisation committed to help prevent child bullying (<https://www.kidscape.org.uk/>).

Helpful organisations

Swim Line: 0808 100 4001

Childline: 0800 1111

Kidscape parents' helpline (Mon and Thur 9:30-2:30): 07496 682785

Family Lives: 0808 800 2222

National Bullying Helpline: <https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/>