



Vernus International School

BULLYING & CYBERBULLYING POLICY

AY: 2023 - 2024

Date of Policy	September 2022
Date of last review	September 2023
Date of next review	August 2024
Lead Member of Staff	Principal & Head of Wellbeing

Cyber Bullying Policy (2023-2024)

Introduction

The spirit of Vernus International School strives to reinforce the principles of thought and consideration of others; tolerance; equality of opportunity; and the recognition and acceptance of others. Bullying Issues form a key part of the school's wellbeing, which are underpinned by the American Curriculum and the UAE Moral Education Program.

Related Policies that are Required of Schools

- ❖ Online Safety Policy
- ❖ Behavior Management Policy
- ❖ Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy
- ❖ Wellbeing Policy
- ❖ PHSE Policy

Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all students and staff enjoy a safe working environment free from bullying. This policy serves the entire school.

Aims and Objectives

- ❖ To ensure that VIS students are provided with a safe and secure learning environment and all students are aware of psychological damage that bullying can inflict on others
- ❖ To ensure that staff raise awareness amongst VIS students
- ❖ To support students who are being bullied and to help them feel safe again, to rebuild their confidence and self esteem

Bullying

Bullying is referred to "Undesirable Negative Behavior" in KHDA Behavioral policy. The KHDA ensures the importance of creating a safe learning environment for students to flourish mentally, emotionally and academically, insists on the importance of scaffolding the positive desirable behaviors and enhances the goodness in oneself by establishing some methods and strategies to reduce the negative behavioral acts.

Cyberbullying

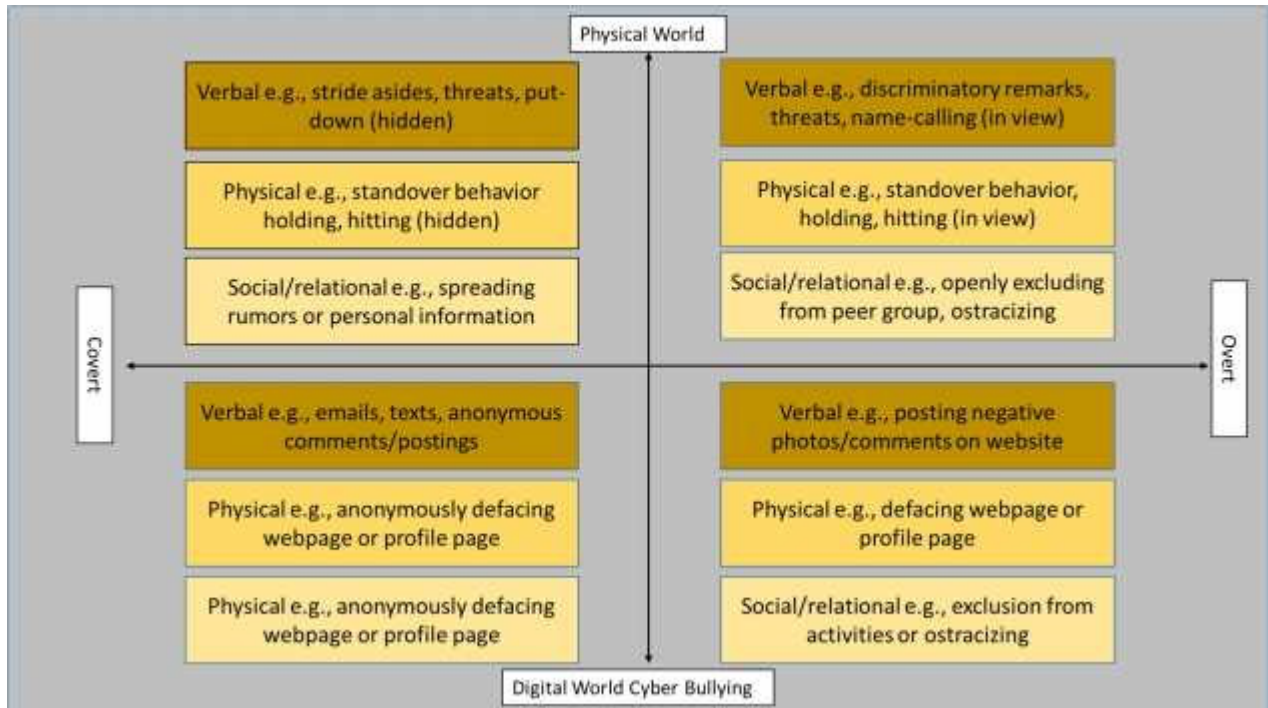
It is bullying that takes place in form of inappropriate comments sent through SMS, Text, Email and apps, or online in social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. It includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else.

Examples of this include but are not limited to:

- ❖ Bullying by text, messages or calls on mobile devices
- ❖ The use of cameras to cause distress, fear or humiliation
- ❖ Making threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating remarks online
- ❖ Posting threatening, abusive, defamatory or humiliating material online
- ❖ Hijacking/cloning e-mail or any social media accounts

The particular forms of cyberbullying can include any of the following:

- ❖ Harassment or cyberstalking
- ❖ Defamation or vilification & Manipulation
- ❖ Impersonation & Peer rejection
- ❖ Unauthorized publication of private images



Cyber bullying is generally criminal in nature, and it should be noted that the UAE Penal Code (Federal Law No. 3 of 1987, Article 138) prohibits publishing *'through any means of publicity news, pictures or*

comments pertaining to the secrets of people's private or familial lives even if the same is true'.

According to cybercrime laws in UAE, *a suspect who blackmails or threatens [commits any form of bullying or intimidation] to dishonor or shame a victim using the telecommunication system [social media tools or internet] could face jail or fines.* Cyberbullying leaves no physical scars so it is less evident to a parent or teacher, but it is nevertheless highly intrusive and the hurt it causes can be very severe.

The VIS School has clear expectations to use information and communication technology and tackles incidents of cyberbullying in order to prevent them from escalating and causing serious damage to an individual, the school community and the school's reputation. While following KHDA instructions, Vernus International School takes a zero tolerance approach to all forms of bullying. Any student(s) who bullies/bully another student/students will be dealt with and be made to apologize for their actions. Bullying, harassment, victimization and discrimination is not tolerated at all. We treat our all students and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to respect the staff, the school and each other, in return. All forms of bullying are unacceptable at our school and any instances will be recorded and, where appropriate, will result in disciplinary action. Vernus International School has certain guidelines to stop bullying/cyberbullying attached in appendix -1.

Identifying Bullying

VIS School works to identify bullying behavior at the early stages and towards behavior modification before the problem becomes more serious. Advice and counselling are available for all students, to support making the right choices and not succumbing to peer pressure.

The following signs and symptoms may be indicators of bullying:

- ❖ Anxious & unwilling to attend class, Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling
- ❖ Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm
- ❖ Pattern of physical illnesses e.g. headaches, stomach aches
- ❖ Unexplained changes either in mood or behavior which may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or especially after longer school holidays
- ❖ Visible signs of anxiety or distress e.g. stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting
- ❖ Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either students or teachers.
- ❖ Possessions missing or damaged; Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing

Roles and Responsibilities

Principal

The principal is responsible for ensuring the full implementation of this policy. The main tasks of the principal are to:

- ❖ Lead the implementation of the anti-bullying policy and procedures at the school.
- ❖ Ensure all staff members are aware of this policy and the expectations it sets for them.
- ❖ Monitor and review the school's anti-bullying policy and data annually together with the Head of Wellbeing and the school governing board

Head of Wellbeing

The main tasks of the Head of Wellbeing are to:

- ❖ Inform parents and students of the anti-bullying policy and the procedures in place.
- ❖ Ensure that all staff are trained and knowledgeable of the school policy and procedures, and provided with support as needed
- ❖ Deal with any bullying reports
- ❖ Discuss with the victims of bullying and the bullies and come up with a plan how to stop such behavior & contact the parents of bully/bullies and the parents of victims
- ❖ Ensure that accurate records are maintained on all cases of bullying, and that these are kept in a secure place and marked "strictly confidential"
- ❖ Monitor and review the school's cyberbullying policy and data annually together with the principal and the school governing board.

Practices & Procedures

- ❖ Treat all reports seriously and sympathetically.
- ❖ Straight away, inform other staff, ensure the incident is documented.
- ❖ Remain totally objective and helpful. Take reports from both parties.
- ❖ If the incident is minor and can be handled on the spot, do so, discussing the implications with all parties.
- ❖ Cyber bullying: where incidents of cyber bullying are reported the school will intervene and investigate and deal with the alleged incident.

- ❖ If a serious incident occurs the school Head of Wellbeing will be told of the incident and will talk to those involved. Head of Wellbeing will inform the teachers' line manager. Parents will be contacted based on severity level.
- ❖ Disciplinary action, in line with the school's range of sanctions, will be taken where appropriate. Such action may include letters, meetings with parents, internal suspension or the child leaving the school in the following academic year. Alternatively, parents may be asked to remove their child from the school.

Cyberbullying - Preventative Measures

For the prevention of cyber-bullying, in addition to the measures described above, [Vernus International School]:

- ❖ Expects all students to adhere to its [policy for the safe use of the internet/ E-Safety Policy]. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors students' use;
- ❖ May impose disciplinary sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse, of the internet;
- ❖ Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe;
- ❖ Does not allow the recording & commenting obnoxious language in any e-learning platform, or where they may cause annoyance to others

Investigation

The nature of any investigation will depend on the circumstances. It may include:

- ❖ A review of evidence and advice to preserve it, for example by saving or printing (e.g. phone messages, texts, emails, website pages).
- ❖ Efforts to identify the perpetrator (looking at the media, systems and sites used)
- ❖ Speaking to witnesses who may have useful information.
- ❖ Requesting a student to reveal a message or other iPad/phone content or confiscating a phone/iPad (teachers do not have the authority to search the contents of a phone).

If a member of staff suspects or is told about a cyber-bullying incident, they are expected to follow the protocol outlined below:

- ❖ Ask the student to show them the mobile/iPad or any other device
- ❖ Note clearly everything on the screen relating to an inappropriate text message or image, to include the date, time and names

- ❖ Make a transcript of a spoken message, again record date, times and names
- ❖ Tell the student to save the material in question and send it to the Head of Wellbeing
- ❖ Set an urgent meeting with the student to see the Head of Wellbeing
- ❖ Normal procedures to interview students and to take statements will be followed particularly if a child protection issue is presented.

Working with the perpetrator

Work with the perpetrator and determine sanctions on an individual basis, in accordance with the cyberbullying policy, with the intention of:

- ❖ Helping the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop
- ❖ Holding the perpetrator to account, so they recognize the harm caused and do not repeat the behavior
- ❖ Helping bullies to recognize the consequences of their actions and facilitating change in their attitude and behavior
- ❖ Demonstrating that cyber bullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it.

Vernus International School will have a school wide program regarding bullying to inform and educate students about the issues related to bullying and to give them strategies to deal with situations they might encounter. School will work to identify opportunities in the curriculum where bullying and other forms of antisocial behavior can be discussed. VIS will celebrate & organize different events to work on bullying issues and create awareness among all school stakeholders.

Reporting

As a school, we encourage victims and witnesses to speak up. Staff will be alert to changes in behavior, attitude and wellbeing. All incidents will be treated seriously, however trivial they might seem at first. Every individual in school has the duty to report an incident of bullying whether it happens to themselves or to another person.

Communication

The school communicates with parents on any incidents and investigations. We work in partnership with parents and students to prevent any bullying and to deal with any incidents of bullying.

Disciplinary Structures to Deal with Incidents of Bullying

In line with the KHDA procedures and the VIS Behavior procedure for disciplining students, the Bullying cases are considered to be high level violations. Accordingly, the school applies the following behavior modification methods.

Sr. No.	Violation Level	Violation Decision
1	1 st Violation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Internal exclusion ● Warning Form no 1 & 2 ● Parents are notified (written and verbal)
2	2 nd Violation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1/2 Day exclusion ● Warning Form no 3 & 4 ● Parents are notified (written and verbal) ● Meeting with parents
3	3 rd Violation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 1-2 days exclusion ● Warning Form No. 5 – 7 ● Parents are notified (written and verbal) ● Meeting with parents ● Re-registration Reviewed

Review

This policy will be reviewed at least once a year by the principal and the Head of Wellbeing.

Appendix – 1

School Guidelines for Cyber Bullying

Guidance for Staff

If you suspect or are told about a cyber-bullying incident, follow the protocol outlined below:

Mobile Phones/iPads

- ❖ Ask the student to show you the mobile phone/iPads
- ❖ Note clearly everything on the screen relating to an inappropriate text message or image, to include the date, time and names
- ❖ Make a transcript of a spoken message, again record date, times and names
- ❖ Tell the student to save the message/image
- ❖ Go with the student and see the Head of Wellbeing, or in her absence, a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Computers

- ❖ Ask the student to get up on-screen the material in question
- ❖ Ask the student to save the material
- ❖ Print off the offending material straight away
- ❖ Make sure you have got all pages in the right order and that there are no omissions
- ❖ Accompany the student, taking the offending material, to see the Head
- ❖ Normal procedures to interview students and to take statements will then be followed particularly if a child protection issue is presented.

Guidance for Students

- ❖ Do not give out personal IT details
- ❖ Never reply to abusive emails
- ❖ Never reply to someone you do not know
- ❖ If you believe you or someone else is the victim of cyber-bullying, you must speak to an adult as soon as possible. This person could be a parent/guardian, your teacher, Head of Wellbeing , SLT members of the school.
- ❖ Do not answer abusive messages but log out and report them.

- ❖ Do not delete anything until it has been shown to your Homeroom Teacher, Junior Teacher, Head of Wellbeing or SLT (even if it is upsetting, the material is important evidence which may need to be used later as proof of cyber-bullying)

Guidance for Parents

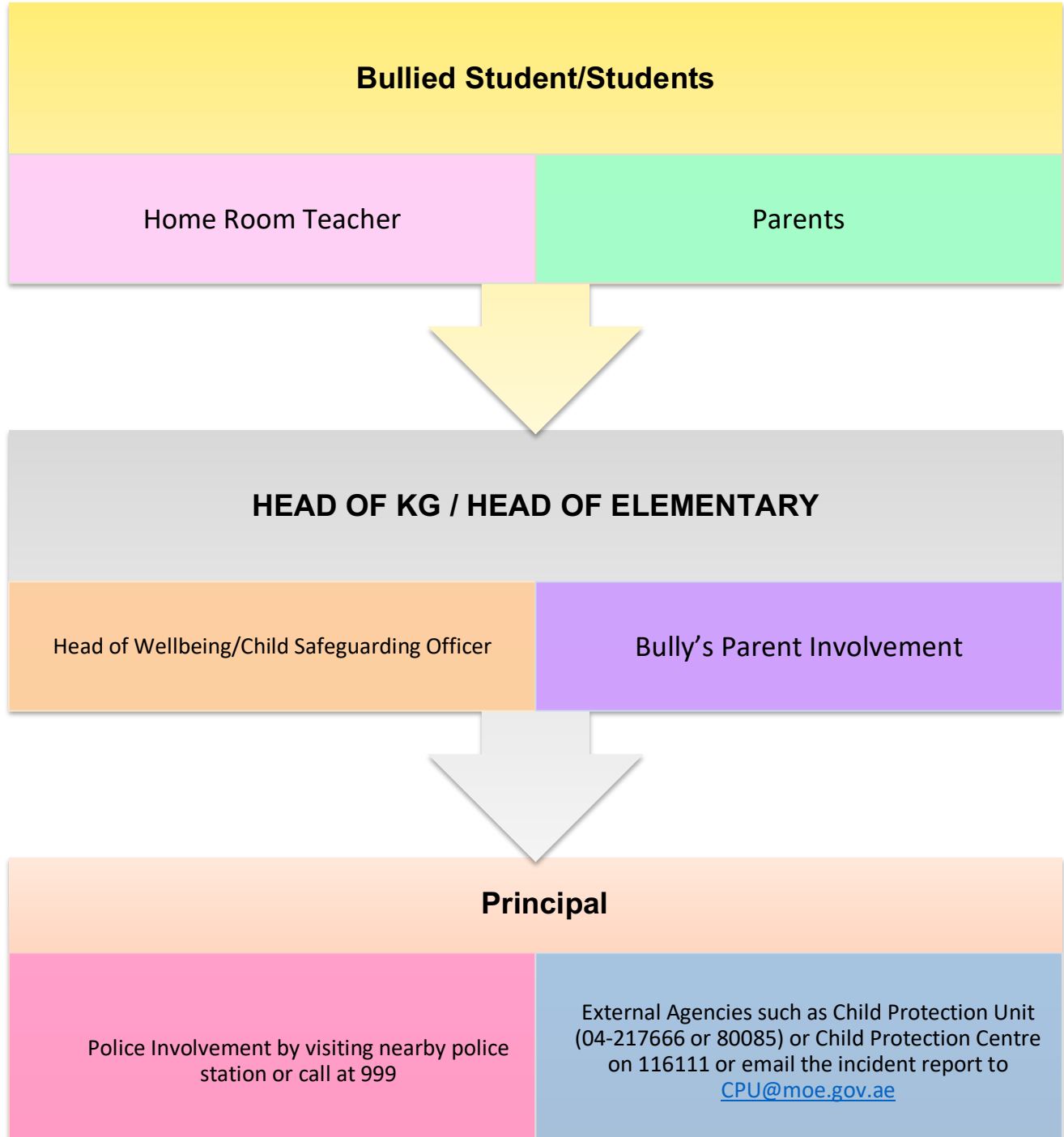
It is vital that parents and the school work together to ensure that all students are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyber-bullying.

Vernus International School informs parents of the cyber-bullying policy and the procedures in place to deal with cyber-bullying.

- ❖ Parents can help by making sure their child understands the school's policy and, above all, how seriously VIS takes incidents of cyber-bullying
- ❖ Parents should also explain to their sons or daughter's legal issues relating to cyberbullying
- ❖ If parents believe their child is the victim of cyber-bullying, they should save the offending material (if need be by saving an offensive text on their or their child's mobile phone) and make sure they have all relevant information before deleting anything
- ❖ Parents should contact the Principal/Head of Wellbeing as soon as possible. A meeting can then be arranged, which may involve other relevant members of staff

Appendix – 2

Cyber Bullying/Online Safety Reporting Process



Appendix - 3

Detailed Offence Levels & Severity

Rating	Behavior	Action Needed	1 st Offence	2 nd Offense	3 rd Offence
Severe	Behavior that risks injury, harassment, stalking, threats of emotional or physical violence, stealing or destruction of personal property	Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting to teachers & Head of Wellbeing/ Section heads, Principal, Child Safeguarding Officer, parents, Board of Trustee, external agencies	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record •Head of wellbeing/Section Head's involvement •Suspension or expelled for up to 30 days •Warning Form No. 5 •Parent conference • Possible police Involvement by visiting nearby police station or call at 999 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Documentation •Head of wellbeing/Section head & Principal's Involvement •Parent Conference •Warning Form No. 6 •Behavioral Intervention Plan •Referral for long term suspension or expelled for up to 90 days •Possible police contact or external agencies External Agencies such as Child Protection Unit (80085) / email the incident report to CPU@moe.gov.ae 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Documentation • Head of wellbeing /Section head & Principal's Involvement • Parent Conference •Warning Form No. 7 • Referral for long term suspension or expelled for up to 180 days • Possible police contact or external agencies External Agencies such as Child Protection Unit (80085) / email the incident report to CPU@moe.gov.ae
Major	Intimidating, pushing, tripping, planned exclusion, disrespect of one's feelings or property, emotional aggression,	Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting to teachers & Head of Wellbeing /Section heads, Principal, Child Safeguarding Officer & parents	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record • Head of wellbeing /Section Head's involvement •Opportunity for apology /make it right •Parents are notified (written and verbal) & Parent conference •Warning Form No. 2 •1-3 day suspension 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Documentation • Head of wellbeing /Section head & Principal's Involvement •Parents are notified (written and verbal) & Parent conference •Warning Form No. 3 •3 – 5 Day suspension • Possible police Involvement by visiting nearby police station or call at 999 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Documentation • Head of wellbeing /Section head & Principal's Involvement •Parents are notified (written and verbal) & Parent conference •Warning Form No. 4 •Up to 10 days suspension •Possible police contact or external agencies External Agencies such as Child Protection Unit (80085) / email the incident report to CPU@moe.gov.ae
Moderate	Name calling, insulting remarks, spreading rumors, ridiculing & hurting others feelings (written or spoken)	Reassure students that they have done the right thing by reporting to teachers and Head of Wellbeing /Section heads	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record • Head of wellbeing /Section Head's involvement •Opportunity for apology/make it right •Detention / 1 day suspension 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record • Head of wellbeing /Section head & Principal's Involvement •Warning Form No. 1 •Parents are notified (written and verbal) & Parent conference • 1 – 2 Day suspension 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record • Head of wellbeing /Section head & Principal's Involvement •Warning Form No. 2 •Parents are notified (written and verbal) & Parent conference •2 – 3 Day suspension
Mild	Mean or rude gestures or name calling /teasing	Students Knows strategies and can responds appropriately	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record •Warning (Verbal) •Detention 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record • Head of wellbeing /Section head's Involvement • Parents are notified (verbal) by call •half – 1 Day suspension 	<u>Intervention</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teacher Log & Record • Head of wellbeing /Section head's Involvement •Warning Form No. 1 •Parents are notified (written and verbal) & Meeting with parents •1 – 2 Day suspension

