



**ALTERNATIVE
CENTRE OF
EDUCATION**

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

(Including Cyber Bullying)

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The aim of the centre's anti-bullying policy is to prevent bullying of any sort and to ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. All members of the community, including teaching and non-teaching staff, learners and parents or guardians should understand what bullying is and be familiar with the centre's policy on bullying: therefore, the aim of the policy is to help members of the Centre community to deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly, to prevent it. Bullying is an anti-social behaviour which affects everyone; it is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that comes to their attention and these reports will always be taken seriously. This policy is available on the Centre website, and electronic shared staff area and by request from the Head of Centre. This anti-bullying document is also compliant with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Centre (2013), Standard 12: Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships and the Single Equality Act, 2010. The policy has regard through significant requirements to the relevant legislation and current DfE Guidance – Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Centre Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies (July 2011).

Definition of Bullying.

Bullying may be defined as any deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time that intentionally hurts another Learner or group physically or emotionally, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves and is often motivated by prejudice.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include,

- Physical (including sexual) assault.
- Verbal abuse, by name calling, teasing, or making offensive remarks.
- Cyber-bullying, which is defined as the act of using the Internet, mobile phones, video games, or other technology gadgets to send, text, or post images intended to hurt or embarrass another person. "It is also defined as acts of aggression through computers, mobile phones, and other electronic devices" (Jackson & Cohen, 2012).
- Indirect emotional tormenting by excluding from social groups or spreading malicious rumours.

Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidatory but is often hidden and subtle. It includes actions or comments that are racist, religious, or cultural, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, sexual or which focus on disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape), age or any reference to Special Educational Needs.

The seriousness of bullying cannot be emphasised enough. Bullying is among the top concerns that parents, carers or guardians have about their children's safety and well-being at and on the way to and from the Centre. Bullying is also a top concern of children and young people themselves. Bullying makes the lives of its victims a misery: it undermines their confidence and self-esteem; and destroys their sense of security and can be psychologically damaging. Bullying impacts on its victims' attendance and attainment at the Centre, marginalises those groups who may be particular targets for bullies and can have a life-long negative impact on some young people's lives. At worst, bullying has been a factor in Learner suicide.

It is acknowledged that bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. It should also be recognised that the consequences of being allowed to 'get away with it' can be detrimental to them as well as to their victim. All Learners deserve the opportunity to be helped to

understand what acceptable behaviour is. There are criminal laws that apply to harassment, assault, and threatening behaviour. If staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police.

Counter Bullying Procedure

What to look for:

Learners who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences, or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from the Centre.

Members of staff and all members of the community must be alert to the signs of bullying; legal responsibilities are known and community members should act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with Centre policy. Surveys have shown that in the vast majority of bullying incidents, MOST people knew that what was going on was wrong. Sometimes people, either through lethargy, peer group pressure, or tacit support for what is going on, fail to take action.

What to do:

The way to stamp out bullying is for people to be aware of the issues involved, and to be clear in their own minds what action to take should cases arise:

If you are the victim:

1. If you feel able to, confront the bully by verbally making him/her aware that you think that what he/she is doing is wrong.
2. Share your feelings with someone else.
3. If possible, talk to a member of Staff about the incident. If you would rather not go straight to a member of staff, talk to your friends, or any trusted adult. They may well be able to advise on an appropriate course of action or will be able to involve other people who can. There are also people outside the Centre who would be willing to help. Childline: 0800 1111

Procedure if a Learner should witness bullying behaviour

1. Support the victim by offering your friendship and make it clear that in your opinion what is happening to them is wrong.
2. Encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully yourself.
3. Accompany the victim to a trusted adult or suggest that you see a member of staff on their behalf.

Procedure for members of Staff should you witness an incident of bullying, or it is reported to you:

1. Reassure and support the Learners involved.
2. Advise them that you are required to pass details on to another member of staff.
3. In the case of incidents involving learners, the Head of Centre should be informed. The Head of the Centre must record all incidents of reported bullying and ensure that they keep a central log of all complaints or incidences of bullying and record the way in which they were dealt.

What will happen?

The victim will be interviewed by the senior member of staff, on their own, and asked to write an immediate account of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. The victim is also given the opportunity to discuss his own reactions and behaviour towards the bully. The victim is given support and advice and counselling is suggested if deemed appropriate.

Once the senior members of staff are clear that a bullying offence has been committed, the bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually and asked to write an immediate account of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. Details of the incident will be recorded on all Learners' files. The Head of Centre is copied in so that it can be recorded as a bullying incident. The member of staff will decide on an appropriate course of action. In the first instance the member of staff will interview the Learner or Learners whose behaviour has caused distress and give them a formal bullying warning; making it clear that any further incident (or discussion about the current incident) would be considered to be further bullying. It will be made clear why the behaviour was inappropriate and unacceptable. Support and counselling will be offered. A suitable punishment will also be given. If the member of staff decides it is appropriate, or it is a Learner's second offence, the Head of Centre will become involved and the parents or guardians of the perpetrator/s will be informed by letter or telephone. The following sanctions may be applied in accordance with the Centre behavioural policy.

Formal Centre Warning from the Head of Centre.

The Head of Centre will speak to the Learners involved and will contact the parents or guardians giving details of the offence and inviting them into Centre to discuss the matter and to be present when their child is given a Formal Centre Warning. Their support for the Centre's actions should be enlisted if possible.

Fixed Term Exclusion at the Head's Discretion

These are minimum sanctions. In very serious cases it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or Social Services. However, it is the policy of the Centre to attempt to resolve such issues internally using our own disciplinary sanctions, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely.

The Centre will raise awareness of the staff through training and take action to reduce the risk of bullying at the times and places where it is most likely to occur. The key points from this policy will be prominently displayed on Centre notice boards and will be discussed with Learners during teacher led child protection sessions. Anti-bullying will feature as a discussion point for Student committees and feedback will be taken to senior staff. It will also be revisited as necessary during PHSE sessions to all years and reinforced in other areas of the curriculum as the opportunities present themselves e.g., drama, physical education. Opportunities will also be sought to allow parents or guardians to contribute to the Centre's actions to prevent bullying.

Incidents of reported bullying will be followed up by senior staff, to monitor that the problem has been resolved. The record of bullying offences will be reviewed by the Head of Centre regularly at periodic meetings to watch for patterns and check that the policy is effective.

We are absolutely confident that the vast majority of our community will agree with our sentiments on Bullying. It is our intention to identify and take action against those who do not.

References

DCSF Safe to Learn, Embedding anti-bullying work in schools.

National Minimum Standards for Boarding school (2013)

DfE Guidance – Preventing bullying: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying> Updated 17 November 2014

No Bullying.com website: <http://nobullying.com/what-is-cyberbullying/>

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