



**SEDGEFIELD  
HARDWICK**

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# **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

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Adopted: September 2018

Review: July 2021

See also related policies:

- **Behaviour Policy**
- **Safeguarding Policy**

Unfortunately bullying is something which is happening more and more. Often it is not so obvious, but we must never think that bullying does not happen in our school. Being bullied can be an extremely traumatic experience for the victim, who may suffer in silence for a long time. This can result in truancy, academic under-achievement, loss of confidence and self-esteem, depression, social withdrawal, addictions and in extreme cases, suicide.

A clear policy for all adults who deal with our children is necessary as failure to act against the bullies gives a silent but powerful message to pupils that bullying is acceptable. It must not be allowed to happen to our children, but before deciding upon a policy it is worth considering the question:-

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying takes many forms and it can be difficult to recognize. A common definition is 'willful and conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone else', (Tattum & Herbert 1990). Yet this is not sufficient, either, since there may be no 'conscious desire'; bullying could be an unconscious temporary reaction to stress, such as a new baby in the family; or it may not be a desire to 'hurt', but rather, a lack of empathy – a 'sin of omission'.

Whatever the nature of the desire, the end result is still distress from bullying.

A suggested integrated definition of bullying:

- "Bullying is: the abuse of power by a person who is in some way stronger, resulting in some distress, harm, or neglect of necessary attention for another." (Eve Brock 1992)

This definition reflects the view that bullying is a child abuse/protection issue. It also needs to be acknowledged that this definition can encompass bullying of pupils by members of staff, also bullying of staff members by other staff members, by pupils or by pupils' parents.

### **BULLYING ACTS**

Bullying may include the following

- physical assault
- verbal threat or taunting with racist, sexist, homophobic, xenophobic, disablist or any other personal overtones
- spreading offensive rumours
- mental antagonism such as excluding from a group or 'sending to Coventry'
- hiding, spoiling or destroying personal property
- stealing, extortion
- being bullied into truancy, smoking, abusing alcohol or other substances such as glue
- sexting

Boys may more readily admit to bullying behaviour due to 'macho' cultural norms, and that physical bullying is more easily visible to staff than girls tormenting.

Some children both bully and are bullied; some operate in groups. Pupils who bully probably have the following characteristics in common:

- they lack empathy, and do not imagine how the victim feels
- they tend to lack guilt, and 'rationalise' (i.e. make up plausible excuses which they accept) to suggest that the victim deserved it
- they may learn from their parents, who may use harsh, inconsistent or physical punishment, or show rage to get their own way in the household. Some parents may teach aggressive values, such as, "You've got to hit them first before they hit you." Or on the other hand, parents may have been over-tolerant of their children's early aggressive behaviour.

The biggest weapons of the bully are **THREAT and FEAR**

## **IS THERE A TYPICAL BULLY?**

The traditional stereotype of the bully is of a boy/girl who is academically or personally inadequate, who may be bigger than his/her peers and who bullies to gain respect or power. To rely on this stereotyping is wrong. There is no unique collection of characteristics that adds up to a bully, and a bully is often very difficult to recognize or identify.

They may be:

- academically achieving less
- bigger, stronger and older than the people they bully
- like to be in charge, to boss others about and tell them what to do
- unpopular or insecure
- quite secure and happy
- achieving as well as – if not better than – their peers

## **WHERE DOES BULLYING OCCUR?**

It is often said that most bullying takes place on the way to and from the school. This is not the case. Research findings indicate that school and the playground are the places where most bullying takes place. It is therefore important that school devised measures to counter it.

**REMEMBER – BULLIES ALSO NEED HELP, AS WELL AS THEIR VICTIMS.** They need to be able to do something or achieve something that will improve their self-esteem.

If your child is bullying:

- remain calm
- don't bully or hit the child – it will make matters worse
- try to find out why your child is bullying
- talk to the Headteacher, teachers, dinner staff, friends and anyone who can give you more information
- if the situation is not serious, give it time to sort itself out
- if it is serious, don't hesitate to get help. The school will get in touch with the Educational Psychologist or local Child Guidance Centre
- set firm and realistic guidelines and rules to help your child control his/her behaviour
- ensure your child apologises either in person, or in writing to the child he/she has bullied

## **THE VICTIM**

Contrary to popular belief, bullying victims don't always differ much from other children. Children who wear glasses, are very thin, or overweight, have red hair, speak with a pronounced accent or stutter, do not automatically invite bullying attacks.

(Care should be taken when applying the following observations, as it is often difficult to distinguish between the causes and consequences of bullying.)

The victims are more anxious and insecure than pupils in general – often cautious, sensitive and quiet. Many are lonely children with few friends (which may be by choice) and have difficulty asserting themselves in the peer group.

The long-term effects of persistent bullying can make children feel isolated and wonder what is wrong with them. They may begin to feel that they deserve the teasing and harassment, so they become withdrawn and less willing to take social, intellectual or vocational risks.

Particularly at risk are those children from vulnerable or minority groups- and those who are disabled.

## **BULLYING – POSSIBLE SIGNS**

Children may

- be frightened of walking to and from school
- be unwilling to go to school
- beg parents to drive them to school
- change their route to school
- begin doing poorly in their school work
- go home regularly with clothes and books destroyed
- become withdrawn and start stammering
- become distressed, stop eating
- cry themselves to sleep
- attempt suicide
- have nightmares or even call out “leave me alone”
- have unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts
- have possessions go missing
- ask for money or begin stealing money (to pay the bully)
- continually ‘lose’ their pocket money
- come home starving (because dinner money was taken)
- give improbably excuses to explain any of the above

## **FOR CHILDREN WHO ARE BULLIED**

Things to do if you are being bullied:

- tell an adult you can trust
- tell yourself that you don’t deserve to be bullied
- stay with groups of people, even if they are not your friends – there is safety in numbers
- try to ignore the bullying
- try not to show you are upset – which is difficult
- if possible avoid being alone in places where bullying happens eg. the school toilets
- try being assertive – shout NO! loudly – practice in front of a mirror
- walk quickly and confidently away – even if you don’t feel like it
- if you are in danger, get away – do not fight to keep possessions
- fighting back may make it worse – if you decide to fight back, talk to an adult first
- check yourself over – are you being provoking? Could you alter your behaviour in any way?
- leave expensive items at home, and don’t brag about money or possessions
- if you have a nickname you hate or are called names, try to get used to it. Do not be afraid to laugh at yourself. Try to make jokes and shrug off casual taunts. If you are amusing you may become popular
- keep a diary of events – time and place and what is said
- get your parents to contact the school and explain the situation
- REMEMBER: It is not right that bullying is allowed to go on, the bullies should not get away with such appalling behaviour.

## **HOW PARENTS CAN HELP**

- If you are worried that your child is being bullied ask him/her directly.
- Be aware of the signs and symptoms.
- Take bullying seriously and find out the facts when told about an incident.
- Don’t agree to keep the bullying a secret.
- Talk with the teacher or Headteacher if it is school bullying.
- Help your child practice strategies such as shouting ‘NO’, walking with confidence and running away.
- Give your child a chance to vent his/her feelings about being bullied.
- Arrange to meet your child at school if necessary.
- Talk to other parents and discuss ways to stop bullying.
- Check that your child is not inviting the bullying.
- Keep a written diary of the incidents.

- Invite children to your house to help your child make friends.
- If it happens out of school, consider informing the police, or see your solicitor.

### **CHILDREN BULLYING CHILDREN**

It is most difficult to draw up a list of procedures, as each case of bullying will be different. Teachers will from time to time use their own expertise and judgement as to what steps to take and how far to go with a particular incident.

The following procedures are merely guidelines. If there is bullying:

1. Find out both sides of the story in an attempt to see if it is really a case of bullying and not boisterous play.
2. Have a chat to the children involved, and give the bully a 'verbal warning'.
3. Follow up a particular incident by observing the children involved. This will hopefully tell if it was just an isolated incident or if there is a pattern to the bullying behaviour.
4. If an incident happens at playtime talk to the teachers on duty. If at lunchtime talk to the lunchtime supervisors.
5. It may be necessary to see the parents of both the victim and the bully. Explain the situation and ask both sets of parents for their co-operation.
6. If the bullying continues a record needs to be made of 'proven' bullies and also of persistent victims. All staff need to be informed.

### **ACCEPTING REPORTS OF ALLEGED BULLYING FROM PUPILS**

- ATTEND to what is being said without any display of shock or disbelief. Be patient; wait during 'silences', prompt gently "And?"
- ACCEPT what is said ('Believe' is too strong; the allegation may be false, keep an open mind.)
- ANNOTATE – jot down notes
- ALLAY FEARS: reassure the pupil that he/she was right to tell you (but don't promise confidentiality, as you may need to refer to others, staff/parents/ed. psychologist/social services/police)
- ASSUAGE any guilt. Reassure the pupil that:
  - i) it is not the pupil's fault that he/she was bullied; he/she is not the only person to have suffered
  - ii) if the pupil who bullied 'gets into trouble', it is her/his own responsibility/fault, never the fault of the pupil who rightly complained

### **RESPONSIVE GUIDELINES**

- Do not ask 'leading' questions, eg. "What did he/she do next?" (This assumes he/she did.) Instead ask open questions such as "Anything else to tell me?" or prompts such as "Yes?", "and?"
- Do not criticise the bully in personal terms (eg. "Naughty, wicked child") only their behaviour (eg. "Bullying is not acceptable.") Remember that reconciliation is an aim.
- Explain what you will do next
- Offer support; explain that the pupil can have you or another chosen pupil or adult support him/her in any later talks if they are needed.
- Try to see the matter through yourself, but anyway keep in contact with the pupil.

### **NOTE TAKING GUIDELINES**

- Preferably, make some very brief notes at the time, on any paper at hand, and write them up as soon as possible. Keep your original notes.
- Record the date, time, place, any noticeable non-verbal behaviour, and the words used by the pupil rather than re-interpreting them yourself.
- Record statements and observable things, rather than your interpretations or assumptions, (remember also that parents may wish to see your notes).
- Relax (or try to). If it is a serious, upsetting case you might need some support for yourself, if so, ask for it.

## TALKING WITH PUPILS WHO HAVE, ALLEGEDLY, BEEN BULLYING

In dealing with those who bully, there are three positive aims:

- To stop the bullying behaviour immediately
- To re-educate the pupils' attitudes and behaviour for the future
- To reconcile the pupils involved, if possible.

### Approaches to talking with pupils

#### A. Common concern method (Anatol Pilas of Sweden 1989\*)

Aim : to elicit a feeling of 'common concern' for the well being of the bullied pupil (without expressing it directly).

The method is based on the following:

- A non blame stance towards those who have been bullying
- A short 'therapeutic talk' (10-20 minutes)
- An individual approach (even when a group has bullied together)
- Conflict – resolution/problem-solving approach, rather than a blame/punishment orientated approach

Outline sequence of the 'therapeutic dialogue';

- Non blame start : "I understand you've been mean to ....."
- Request information : "What happened?"
- Close and move forward : "That's probably enough about it for now."
- Resolve conflict/problem : "What can you do to improve things?" "What do you suggest?"

The aim is for at least a 'live and let live' relationship between the pupils, if not reconciliation.

- Agree and arrange follow up : agree some approach/action (apology, recompense, etc.) "We will meet in a week's time to review." Arrange time and place for review meeting. The review meeting might begin, "Can you tell me how you've been getting on?"

#### B. Non-violent conflict resolution (Jamie Walker, 1989<sup>†</sup>)

Aim : to promote non-violent (non-bullying) ways of resolving conflicts between people.

Features of this approach include the following:

violence is condemned (verbal violence as well as physical)

the need to find a win – win solution to conflict, that is one in which "both sides at least partially meet their own needs".

#### C. Self-awareness and responsibility approach (Eve Brock 1992 <sup>‡</sup>)

The assumption underlying this approach (based on phenomenological psychology – by sense perception rather than by thought or action) is : that every action has meaning for the actor, that need or want, and that drive action there is always a 'pay-off'. a reward-based reason why people behave in a particular way.

If the need and the pay-off of any action can be established; alternative positive ways of meeting the need can be found and used to replace the (anti-social) behaviour. The emphasis is on growing self-awareness and self-responsibility.

Aims : to elicit from the pupils what it is they get from bullying, (their pay-off), whether they need it, and how they might get it in alternative, positive (socially acceptable) ways.

\* PIKAS, Anatol "The Common Concern Method for the Treatment of Mobbing" in Roland & Munthe, (Eds) *Bully: An International Perspective*. Fulton 1989

<sup>†</sup> WALKER, Jamie "Resolving classroom conflicts non-violently" in Roland & Munthe, (Eds) *Bullying: An International Perspective*. Fulton 1989

<sup>‡</sup> BROCK, Eve "A positive approach to bullying". A workshop for professionals involved with children/young people from Nursery to Further Education. Longman 1992

## **TALKING WITH PARENTS**

### **Parents of any children involved, in any role, in bullying**

The aim should be to foster and maintain a good relationship in both the short term and the long term.

Points for consideration:

- Who should talk with parent(s)? (Need for a colleague present?)
- Where to talk?
- What attitude/approach should be taken? Could any non-verbal behaviour be helpful?
- How to explain the school's position? What to do in case of threat or violence?

### **Parents of a child who is, allegedly, being bullied**

- Allow the parent(s) to express their feelings
- Accept those feelings (they are real for that parent, even if they might seem excessive to the school). Useful phrases include, "I realize you're upset." "I'll try to help you." "This must be difficult for you." AVOID "I know how you feel."
- Assure the parent(s) that you are pleased that they have taken the time to come to school.
- Express the view that bullying is unacceptable, and that school intends to act positively. Promise to (and do) keep in touch with them.
- Record incident- and make HT aware (for Recording File)

### **Talking with parent(s) of a child who had, allegedly, been bullying**

- Avoid labelling their child 'a bully'. Begin by offering some positive view/aspect of their child, which school appreciates and values.
- Show a shared concern for their child's problem (anti-social bullying behaviour) and a concern to help the child fulfill his/her best potential. Useful phrases include: "I'm sure we both share a concern for . . . 's future." "We need to help him/her to show his/her best side/develop his/her potential and talents/avoid spoiling him/herself with this sort of behaviour."
- Ask if anything could be upsetting/stressing the child, now or recently, to trigger the bullying behaviour.
- Get the parent(s) to agree, if possible, that bullying the child who bullies will not be a positive approach to take.
- Explain what you intend to do next; get their agreement, if possible. Promise to (and do) keep in touch with them.

N.B. It is always best if all parents are made aware of the school's approach to bullying (both in writing and at meetings, formally and informally) and encouraged to share the school's positive approach i.e. aiming to stop the bullying behaviour.

The best way to eliminate bullying is to have a very positive approach to good behaviour and encourage it at all times, staff may feel the child should be offered a chance to 'redeem themselves'. Often an "I won't be informing your parents this time, but if this happens again, I will have to contact them." (This would of course depend upon the seriousness of the bullying incident).

If staff are in any doubt about procedures they should consult the Headteacher.

## **BULLYING BY STAFF**

Instances of staff bullying children or even colleagues are, fortunately very rare. In the unlikely event that a member of staff suspects a colleague of bullying, they should report their concerns immediately to the Headteacher.

If the person suspected of bullying is the Headteacher, concerns should be expressed to the Deputy Head.

The main solution of a bullying problem is to be seen to be both fair and consistent. By adhering to these agreed procedures and using our professional judgement as to the appropriate course of action to be taken, we can prevent bullying from becoming a problem in our school.

## **BEING PROACTIVE**

Through the PSHE curriculum, (See curriculum) children should be taught to-

- keep themselves safe (e.g. Stranger Danger)
- manage emotions
- Resist Peer pressure
- Establish and maintain effective friendships
- Work as a team
- Value and celebrate difference
- Tolerance of all

Children need to know there is someone they can talk to (regularly monitored through self evaluation)