



# The Village School

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## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### General Statement

The proprietor values the good relationships fostered by the school, and wishes it to be known that every allegation of bullying will be taken seriously. Some experts say that every person should be treated as being bullied simply because she says that she is. It is better this way round than to tell them 'not to be so sensitive'.

All staff, pupils and parents should be aware of the negative effects that bullying can have on individuals and the school in general, and should work towards ensuring that it does not take place by promoting a positive, inclusive atmosphere throughout the school.

This policy has been drawn up with the assistance from guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* (DfE -00292-2013, October 2014) and will be reviewed against any new government guidance issued from time to time.

### Aims

- All members of The Village School community, students, staff and parents, are valued as individuals and have the right to feel safe and happy within the school environment. Bullying is not acceptable.
- The aim is to raise awareness among staff and girls of the vulnerable individual who has low self-esteem and who is excluded or humiliated by others, and to promote in the school an ethos which deplores anyone being left out, being unsupported or being humiliated and to comply with the School's duties under the Equality Act 2010.
- This policy will apply to bullying behaviour outside of the School of which the School becomes aware.

### Definition

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour, whether physical or psychological, repeated over a period of time. We must be particularly mindful of those who cannot defend themselves.

According to 'Kidscape' it involves:

- exclusion
- aggression (deliberate)
- unequal power relationship
- results in pain and distress

These must be of a persistent nature, not isolated incidents.

## **BULLYING BEHAVIOUR**

**Pupils, staff and parents may be perpetrators or victims of bullying.**

**What students, staff and parents should know:**

- be aware that no one has to put up with bullying;
- bullying can cause psychological damage to victims and even, in extreme cases, suicide;
- although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour;
- every person has the right to tell an individual who is bullying that the behaviour is unacceptable;
- report the bullying to a trusted adult/teacher;
- be confident that the matter will be dealt with appropriately.

The following are examples of bullying behaviour:

- Verbal: name calling, put-downs, offensive language, nuisance phone calls, spreading malicious rumours, tone of voice.
- Visual: offensive notes, cyberbullying (social websites, mobile 'phones, text messages, photographs, e-mail) and graffiti.
- Victimization: damage or theft of others' possessions, threats to get people, repeated social exclusion, being ignored.
- Physical: fighting, pushing, shoving, gestures, invasion of personal space.
- Bullying may also be racial, regarding someone's religion, belief or culture, sexual, sexist, homophobic, related to pregnancy and maternity, related to a person's home circumstances or related to a person's age, disability, special educational needs, learning difficulty, health or appearance.

### **Legal aspects**

A person who makes a physical or sexual assault on another, or who steals or causes damage to the property of another, commits a criminal offence and also a civil wrong known as a tort for which there can be legal consequences outside the School. Bullying behaviour may also be regarded as threatening behaviour or harassment which can be either a criminal offence or a civil wrong. Misuse of electronic communications could also be a criminal offence, for example it is an offence to send an electronic communication (such as a text message or email) to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety.

## **IDENTIFYING BULLYING**

Victims may often:

- be late
- lose belongings
- under-achieve
- produce careless work
- be isolated
- change behaviour e.g. outburst of temper, withdrawal, illness

### **What parents should do**

If you are aware your daughter is being bullied you should:

- listen and try to provide an open, non-judgemental environment for your daughter to talk about her problem;
- tell her you understand and give her support. Remind her she has the right to feel safe;
- suggest your daughter speak to a member of staff;
- if the problem seems particularly serious, or ongoing, contact the Form Teacher immediately;
- try to avoid an angry or emotional response;
- parents should realise that actions such as phoning the parent of the bully and discussing the matter with other parents can inflame the situation;
- contact the school straight away if the issue continues to be unresolved;
- trust the school to carry through actions that will solve the problem.

## **CYBERBULLYING**

The use of text messages, email or social networking sites to isolate, humiliate or spread rumours about others are serious and potentially criminal acts. The school runs seminars throughout the year on this issue for parents and pupils are actively advised about internet safety during ICT lessons, using supporting materials throughout the school. Importance is placed on educating and empowering pupils' to tackle cyber-bullying and who to tell if it occurs. Bullying in this manner can and will lead to permanent exclusion from the school.

All reported incidents of cyberbullying will be treated seriously whether they occur in or out of school. School staff have the right to confiscate mobile 'phones as a disciplinary penalty.

### **Responsibilities**

The Headmistress has a legal duty to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among pupils.

The Headmistress will:

- ensure that all staff have an opportunity of discussing strategies and reviewing them
- determine the strategies and procedures
- ensure appropriate training is available

- ensure that the procedures are brought to the attention of all staff, parents and pupil.

The Welfare Officers (Ellen Bolsom and Cora Reilly Bolsom) will:

- be responsible for the day-to-day management of the policy and systems
- keep the Head and designated teacher informed of incidents
- arrange relevant staff training
- determine how best to involve parents in the solution of individual problems
- make a termly report to the Headmistress.

Form Teachers will:

- be responsible for liaising with the Welfare Officers over all incidents involving pupils in their form
- be involved in any agreed strategy to achieve a solution.

All staff will:

- know the policy and procedures
- be observant and ask pupils what is happening to them
- deal with incidents according to the policy
- never let any incidence of bullying pass unreported, whether on-site or during an off-site activity.

## **Anti-Bullying Education in the Curriculum**

The school will raise the awareness of the anti-social nature of bullying through use of form time and in the curriculum programmes of study as appropriate.

Changing the attitude and behaviour of bullies will play a major part in the strategies used by the school.

## **Procedures for Dealing with Incidents**

How is bullying shown?

It can be:

- physical
- verbal
- social or psychological
- cyber bullying
- often an inter-relationship between classes/groups

## **Signs of Bullying**

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, e.g. becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be changes in work patterns, a lack of concentration, or truancy.

- Victims may often:
  - be late
  - lose belongings
  - under-achieve
  - produce careless work
  - be isolated
  - change behaviour e.g. outburst of temper, withdrawal, illness

All staff should be aware of these possibilities and report promptly any suspicions of bullying to the Class Teacher.

## **Strategies for Dealing with Bullying**

- ensure that there are positive strategies and procedures in place to help both the bullied and bullies
- if bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be investigated and dealt with initially and immediately by the teacher approached
- if a racial element to the bullying is suspected the Headmistress or Deputy Head must be informed immediately
- the member of staff will record the details of the incident and inform the Form Teacher
- the Form Teacher will interview all the parties and make a record
- staff teaching the bullied pupil will be informed at an appropriate time

- the Form Teacher will determine in consultation with the Welfare Officers the appropriate strategy and plan of action to combat the bullying
- the Form Teacher will oversee the implementation of the strategy
- parents will be kept informed by the Form Teacher
- any sanctions against the bullies will be determined by the Form Teacher / Welfare Officers / Headmistress)
- Counselling should be offered to the bully and the receiver of bullying
- Ensure that there are positive strategies and procedures in place to help both the bullied and bullies

Websites to help the school community: [www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org) [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)

## **Bullies**

Changing the attitude and behaviour of bullies will be part of the responsibility of the positive procedures used by the school. However, the school recognises that sanctions will also have to be used against bullies.

## **Sanctions**

Any of the school's formal interventions can be used against bullies and bystanders, as appropriate. For persistent offenders or incidents considered as gross acts of aggression a meeting will be arranged with the child, parents, the Headmistress and Deputy Head, resulting in the possibility of a pupil being permanently excluded.

## **Involvement of Parents**

Parents, as well as all staff and pupils, should know that the school will not tolerate bullying and takes a positive approach by giving pupils and parents appropriate strategies to deal with antisocial behaviour and how to combat it.

The whole school community should be encouraged to create a more secure and happy environment.

## **Criteria for Success**

Given the size of our small community (both pupils and staff), discussion of any problems that arise is usually immediate. The Form Teacher is made aware of any troublesome situation either by the receiver, her parents, other classmates or any member of staff. All these parties are encouraged to come straight to the teacher if worried and this is what normally happens. The Form Teacher will talk through the situation with all concerned and, in some cases, the parents of the alleged bully may be invited in to contribute as well.

In the aftermath of any incident, all staff, especially the Form Teacher and the playground supervising staff will keep a close eye on the children concerned. The Form Teacher will also elicit feedback from the receiver, her parents and any other relevant source. We usually find that this intervention, which often includes involving the receiver's parents in supporting and increasing her social skills, has a speedy, successful conclusion. A similar approach is applied to the perpetrator, as and where appropriate.

The Form Teacher will keep the Headmistress or Welfare Officers posted on the progress of the incident, and they, of course, liaise with one another.

All incidents will be recorded and filed. The file will be reviewed on a termly basis.

### **Counselling**

The school is prepared, in appropriate cases, to arrange counselling for both bullies and the bullied.

### **Reporting and Recording**

All incidents must be recorded and reported using the school's 'Bullying Incident Form'.

### **Staff Training**

The Headmistress is responsible for arranging a programme of staff development, which will include anti-bullying strategies. This will include training for education support staff as well as teachers.

### **Monitoring and Review**

The Welfare Officers will keep and consider reports on serious incidents, and make a termly report, with statistics, to the Head. The Head and Deputy will consider the reports to determine what can be learned from the incidents and how they were handled, with a view to improving the school's strategies.

### **Achieving positive behaviour**

#### Children within Pre-prep and Preparatory

- When children under five behave in inconsiderate ways we recognise that strategies for supporting them will need to be developmentally appropriate and differ from those for older children.
- We recognise that very young children are unable to regulate their own emotions, such as fear, anger or distress, and require sensitive adults to help them do this.
- Common inconsiderate or hurtful behaviours of young children include tantrums, biting or fighting. Staff are calm and patient, offering comfort to intense emotions, helping children to manage their feelings and talk about them to help resolve issues and promote understanding.
- If tantrums, biting or fighting are frequent, we try to find out the underlying cause - such as a change or upheaval at home, or frequent change of carers. Sometimes a child has not settled in well and the behaviour may be the result of 'separation anxiety'.
- We focus on ensuring a child's attachment figure in the setting, their key person, is building a strong relationship to provide security to the child.

## Rough and tumble play, hurtful behaviour and bullying

Our procedure has been updated to provide additional focus on these kinds of inconsiderate behaviours.

### *Rough and tumble play and fantasy aggression*

Young children often engage in play that has aggressive themes – such as superhero and weapon play; some children appear pre-occupied with these themes, but their behaviour is not necessarily a precursor to hurtful behaviour or bullying, although it may be inconsiderate at times and may need addressing using strategies as above.

- We recognise that teasing and rough and tumble play are normal for young children and acceptable within limits. We regard these kinds of play as pro-social and not as problematic or aggressive.
- We will develop strategies to contain play that are agreed with the children, and understood by them, with acceptable behavioural boundaries to ensure children are not hurt.
- We recognise that fantasy play also contains many violently dramatic strategies, blowing up, shooting etc., and that themes often refer to 'goodies and baddies' and as such offer opportunities for us to explore concepts of right and wrong.
- We are able to tune in to the content of the play, perhaps to suggest alternative strategies for heroes and heroines, making the most of 'teachable moments' to encourage empathy and lateral thinking to explore alternative scenarios and strategies for conflict resolution.

### *Hurtful behaviour*

We take hurtful behaviour very seriously. Most children under the age of five will at some stage hurt or say something hurtful to another child, especially if their emotions are high at the time, but it is not helpful to label this behaviour as 'bullying', and strategies for this behaviour is included within our policies. For children under five, hurtful behaviour is momentary, spontaneous and often without cognisance of the feelings of the person whom they have hurt.

- We recognise that young children behave in hurtful ways towards others because they have not yet developed the means to manage intense feelings that sometimes overwhelm them.
- We will help them manage these feelings as they have neither the biological means nor the cognitive means to do this for themselves.
- We understand that self-management of intense emotions, especially of anger, happens when the brain has developed neurological systems to manage the physiological processes that take place when triggers activate responses of anger or fear.
- Therefore we help this process by offering support, calming the child who is angry as well as the one who has been hurt by the behaviour. By helping the child to return to

a normal state, we are helping the brain to develop the physiological response system that will help the child be able to manage his or her own feelings.

- We do not engage in punitive responses to a young child's rage as that will have the opposite effect.
- Our way of responding to pre-verbal children is to calm them through holding and cuddling. Verbal children will also respond to cuddling to calm them down, but we offer them an explanation and discuss the incident with them to their level of understanding.
- We recognise that young children require help in understanding the range of feelings they experience. We help children recognise their feelings by naming them and helping children to express them, making a connection verbally between the event and the feeling. "Eve took your car, didn't she, and you were enjoying playing with it. You didn't like it when she took it, did you? Did it make you feel angry? Is that why you hit her?" Older children will be able to verbalise their feelings better, talking through themselves the feelings that motivated the behaviour.
- We help young children learn to empathise with others, understanding that they have feelings too and that their actions impact on others' feelings. "When you hit Eve, it hurt her and she didn't like that and it made her cry."
- We help young children develop pro-social behaviour, such as resolving conflict over who has the toy. "I can see you are feeling better now and Eve isn't crying any more. Let's see if we can be friends and find another car, so you can both play with one."
- We are aware that the same problem may happen over and over before skills such as sharing and turn-taking develop. In order for both the biological maturation and cognitive development to take place, children will need repeated experiences with problem solving, supported by patient adults and clear boundaries.
- We support social skills through modelling behaviour, through activities, drama and stories. We build self-esteem and confidence in children, recognising their emotional needs through close and committed relationships with them.
- We help a child to understand the effect that their hurtful behaviour has had on another child; we do not force children to say sorry, but encourage this where it is clear that they are genuinely sorry and wish to show this to the person they have hurt.
- When hurtful behaviour becomes problematic, we work with parents to identify the cause and find a solution together. The main reasons for very young children to engage in excessive hurtful behaviour are that:
  - they do not feel securely attached to someone who can interpret and meet their needs – this may be in the home and it may also be in the setting;
  - their parent, or carer in the setting, does not have skills in responding appropriately, and consequently negative patterns are developing where hurtful behaviour is the only response the child has to express feelings of anger;
  - the child may have insufficient language, or mastery of English, to express him or herself and may feel frustrated;

- the child is exposed to levels of aggressive behaviour at home and may be at risk emotionally, or may be experiencing child abuse;
- the child has a developmental condition that affects how they behave.

Where this does not work, we use the Code of Practice to support the child and family, making the appropriate referrals to the Camden Behaviour Support Team where necessary.

**Prepared:** 1 February 2007

**Last reviewed:** November 2016

**Date for review:** November 2017