



Old Vicarage School

Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy applies to the whole school including the EYFS.

Introduction

The School acknowledges that, from time to time, girls feel they are being bullied and the word “bullying” may cover a wide spectrum of behaviour.

The School recognises that bullying of any kind is wrong. The effects on the victim can cause psychological damage which can continue long after actual bullying has stopped. Any incident is therefore taken seriously and investigated swiftly.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies: Child Protection & Safeguarding; Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusions, and; e-Safety.

Aims and Objectives

Bullying is wrong and damages individual children. We therefore do all we can to prevent it, by developing a school ethos in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable.

We aim to provide a safe, secure and mutually respectful environment where all can learn without anxiety and where measures are in place to reduce the likelihood of bullying.

All those connected with the School are made aware of the School’s opposition to bullying. Staff have a clear understanding of their responsibilities regarding the zero tolerance of bullying in the School.

What is bullying?

Bullying can be defined as words or actions that are meant to be insulting, intimidating or hurtful to another pupil or group of pupils and which happen on a regular basis.

Bullying can take many forms and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be continued unkindness in relation to a pupil’s home circumstances, health, gender identity or appearance. It might be indirect, for example, malicious gossip, exclusion from activities, or damaging someone’s property. Or it might occur through cyber-technology (social websites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs, and email).

If staff become aware of a child on child abuse as set out in our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy or any other child-on-child incident or any pupil behaviour (actual or suspected, even if it appears relatively innocuous) or anything that gives rise to a safeguarding concern, it should be reported immediately to a DP in accordance with the procedures set out in our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy. Our Safeguarding Policy provides guidance on handling such allegations.

The School’s philosophy regarding bullying

The Governing Body supports the Head in all attempts to eliminate bullying from the School. Any incidents of bullying will be taken very seriously and dealt with appropriately and effectively and in accordance with procedures set out in the Staff Handbook.

Throughout the School the course of action will, as far as possible, be immediate and appropriate to the age and maturity of the child.

Incidents of bullying that do occur are recorded and monitored to enable patterns to be identified. The School's anti-bullying strategies and their effectiveness are reviewed regularly.

The role of the Head

The Head ensures that all children know that bullying is wrong and that it is unacceptable behaviour.

The Head ensures that all members of staff are trained to identify the signs and effects of bullying, have a clear understanding of anti-bullying strategies (for both the victim and the bully), know how to implement these effectively, and where to seek support.

The role of the teaching and support staff

All staff are required to be constantly vigilant for signs of bullying and seek to prevent it from taking place. During the daily staff briefings, staff are expected to raise and discuss any suspected bullying as well as particular friendship patterns and incidents that could lead to bullying if not dealt with early. Some incidents may be minor but may develop into a pattern of persistent behaviour.

The role of parents

Parents who are concerned that their child might be being bullied, or who suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying, should contact their child's class teacher immediately.

Parents have a responsibility to support the School's anti-bullying policy and to actively encourage their child to be a positive member of the School.

Dealing with a bullying incident

If a bullying incident comes to the attention of any member of staff it must be reported immediately to the Head or a member of the Senior Management Team, regardless of whether it takes place at school or outside. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be investigated and an appropriate strategy will be agreed for dealing with the case. The aim is to ensure that the bullying is stopped as quickly as possible. Emphasis is placed on understanding the root of the problem.

Depending on its seriousness, the case may appropriately be handled by any one of a number of people but in every case a written report of the incident must be placed on the file of the pupils concerned. Parents of both the bully and the victim will normally be contacted and the issues discussed with them. In serious cases, the Governors will be informed.

Disciplinary measures, in accordance with the School's Behaviour, Discipline and Exclusion Policy, will be used to deal with bullying and will be applied fairly, consistently and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities and the needs of vulnerable pupils. Sanctions will reflect the seriousness of an incident and convey a deterrent effect. Strong sanctions, such as exclusion, may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying.

Attempts will be made to help the bully (bullies) to change their behaviour. Bullies may be asked to apologise genuinely. Wherever possible, victim and bully will be reconciled.

After an incident has been investigated and dealt with, it will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

Where appropriate, the specialist skills of counsellors or external agencies may be required to understand the particular needs of pupils.

Prevention

The Head and staff lead by example, creating an environment of mutual support, good behaviour and respect, where the successes of all children are praised, rewarded and celebrated. When children feel they are important and belong to a friendly and welcoming school, bullying is far less likely to be part of their behaviour.

Old Vicarage is a listening school. We want our pupils to feel able to express any concerns with the confidence that staff will listen and act in their (the child's) best interests. Pupils are encouraged to talk to their form teacher, or any adult. If they would prefer not to talk, they can use the "Worry Box" in each classroom. The School 'Buddy' system helps to reinforce the feeling of mutual support and a listening ear.

Teachers use a full range of techniques to prevent and deal with bullying; including assemblies, stories and drama as well as in other areas of the curriculum. Bullying and its consequences are covered during PSHE lessons. Children may be unaware that certain types of behaviour (name calling, banter spreading malicious rumours, etc) constitute bullying and may not realise the misery that they can cause. Differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice-based language will be discussed. Pupils are taught how they can prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders.

Age appropriate lessons are given in both IT and PSHE about the dangers of cyber-technology including its potential for abuse (cyber-bullying, sexting and peer on peer abuse). Pupils are taught that it is a criminal offence to send an electronic communication to another person (words and/or images) with the specific intent to cause distress or anxiety.

All network access is password protected and all users have clearly defined access rights according to their role. Pupils are not permitted to access social networking sites at school (most sites require users to be aged 13 years or older) but we teach the safe use of these sites as we are aware that some pupils use them. All internet use is monitored by the School's IT Support Manager.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF BULLYINGS

A child may indicate by signs of behaviour that she is being bullied. These may include:

- Physical injuries such as bruises or scratches they can't explain away
- Fear or anxiety of going to school
- Moodiness
- Unexpected illness (tummy aches, aches, etc.)
- Bedwetting
- Nightmares
- Lack of interest in school
- Aggressive behaviour
- Lack of appetite
- Nervous & jumpy when a cyber-message is received

Safeguarding children

A bullying incident will be addressed as a child protection concern when there is "reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm" (please see our Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy). If staff become aware of any incident of sharing of nudes or semi nudes, it will be reported to the School's Designated Safeguarding lead.

Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, the School may need to draw on a range of external agencies, such as the police or children's services, to support the pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle an underlying issue which has contributed to a child doing the bullying.

Monitoring and review

The effectiveness of this policy is monitored on a regular basis by the Deputy Head and, in turn, by the Head, who reports to the Governors on request.

Signed: **Mandy Fawcett**
Position: Deputy Head

Lucy Barnes
Governor

Revised: March 2022
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