



BIRKENHEAD SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

At Birkenhead School we are committed to promoting respect for the individual and their happiness within the community and therefore we will strive to eradicate all forms of bullying and abusive behaviour towards any member of the community. Staff and Governors do not condone any form of bullying. Governors support the Headmaster in the eradication of all thereof. To this end the Designated Safeguarding Lead will keep a centralised overview of instances of bullying, and this will be reported to Governors at board meetings.

We aim to develop a school ethos that encourages civilised behaviour and views bullying as unacceptable. This ethos is one in which relationships are based on mutual respect, trust, care and consideration for others rather than on power and strength. We will not allow bullying to impinge on an environment in which all pupils are encouraged to do their best and where self-respect and respect for others is actively promoted.

Whilst we are aware that within a large community tensions will arise, it is the responsibility of all pupils to be tolerant of others and to ensure that their behaviour is not hurtful to them. As part of the School community, pupils have a responsibility to discourage bullying and to report incidents of it.

Our approach to bullying is based on the key values of Respect and Responsibility and this policy was drawn up in consultation and agreement with the Student Council.

Definition:

Bullying is aggressive behaviour, normally repeated, which makes other people feel uncomfortable, distressed or threatened, whether intentional or not. It can be the action of one pupil or a group, or different pupils on different occasions. It can be an unresolved single frightening incident, or a series of such incidents. It may be overt and intimidating but is often hidden and subtle. Bullying may also be indirect, e.g., manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. Statistically, those pupils who are LGBT, SEND or from religious or ethnic minority communities are more at risk of bullying, and this should always be considered when bullying is reported.

Bullying may be criminal: in cases of physical assault, for example, or if money or property is demanded with threats, or when bullying is racial.

Examples of types of bullying:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g., hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist racial taunts, graffiti, gestures; these may touch on religion or culture
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments, sometimes this can be sexual exploitation where money, gifts or attention is offered for sexual favours. This is a criminal offence and will be reported to WSCB and the Police
- Homophobic because of, or focussing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing; comments may focus on disabilities, physical attributes such as hair colour or body shape, or on specific learning difficulties/educational needs
- Cyber
 - (i) through the medium of ICT – misuse of the internet, social networking sites, email, chat rooms, etc.
 - (ii) through mobile phones using text messaging, calls, transfer of images
 - (iii) misuse of associated technology, i.e., camera & video facilities

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts and can make the lives of its victims a misery; it undermines their confidence and self-esteem and destroys their sense of security; it can have a life-long negative impact on young people's lives. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Moreover, pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving, and understand the consequences of their actions.

What to look for

Pupils 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 school. Pupils who are being bullied may come home with clothes torn or books damaged, and possessions may 'go missing'. They may offer improbable excuses for any of the above. Pupils who are victims of cyber-bullying may appear withdrawn or upset after using the internet or mobile phone.

All members of the community must be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with School 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.

Stopping Bullying

- If you know of someone being bullied, or see someone being bullied, it is very important that you tell someone – either the member of staff on duty, or a member of staff you know and trust. If possible, go to your *Form Teacher/Tutor, Head of Year or the Deputy Head.

- Prefects and pupils in positions of authority have a vital role to play in the identification of possible bullies. An informal word at an early stage can often prevent problems developing and they must consider their ‘overseeing’ function as a crucial part of their role. They are often much closer to incidents than members of staff and must therefore use their insights to a positive effect. Peer mentors can be allocated to assist both victims and perpetrators overcome the effects of bullying and bullying is discussed at Student Council Meetings. There is specific advice available, and peer mentors with expertise in the bullying of members of our community that are statistically more vulnerable such as LGBT pupils, those with SEND or those from ethnic or religious minorities.
- If you are being bullied, it is very important that we know so that we can help you. Keeping quiet will not make the problem go away. If possible, go to one of the members of staff mentioned above, or talk to a member of staff whom you know well. If you cannot do this, ask your parents or a friend to do it for you. It is very important in any case that you talk this issue over with your parents. We will identify the bully, investigate the facts and ensure that the situation does not happen again. We will give you immediate and continued support. Our experience is that bullying does stop when it has been reported and dealt with and that the victims of bullying do not suffer as a result of telling.
- If the bullying constitutes cyber bullying, a screenshot should be taken of the evidence and reported to your form tutor or head of year as soon as possible.
- The Chaplain and School Nurse are available to talk over problems.
- The following telephone number might be helpful if you would prefer to talk to someone anonymously: **CHILDLINE – 0800 1111** is a 24hr, free, confidential helpline for children who are experiencing abuse, bullying or stress of any kind.

What will happen in cases of bullying?

Our first priority is to stop the bullying happening and enable the victim to feel safe and happy again. This may involve punishing the bully. However, young people can make mistakes or may not appreciate the distress they are causing; in order for them to stop it may be sufficient to make it clear what impact their behaviour is having and that we consider this to be unacceptable. However, if this is not sufficient and bullying persists or the bullying behaviour has been particularly severe, various sanctions may be applied, ranging from detention to exclusion from School by the Deputy Head or Headmaster or the Head of the Prep in the case of pupils up to Year 6 (see Disciplinary Policy). In these cases, parents will be involved. Repeat or serious offenders will be required to follow the 12-week ‘Bullying Rehabilitation Programme’.

Procedure:

- The victim will be interviewed by their Form Teacher/Tutor or Head of Year, on their own, and asked to write an account of events (where appropriate). The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. The victim is also given the opportunity to discuss his/her own reactions and behaviour towards the bully. The victim is given support and advice.

- Once the Form Teacher/Tutor and/or Head of Year are clear that a bullying offence has been committed, the bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually and asked to write an account of events (where appropriate). The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them.
- It is likely that parents will be involved at an early stage in order to engage their support in dealing with the matter. Delay in doing this can delay resolution.
- Details of the incident will be recorded on all the pupils' files. The Deputy Head is copied in so that it can be recorded as a bullying incident. The pastoral team will decide on an appropriate course of action. In the first instance the Form Teacher/Tutor or Head of Year will see the pupil or pupils whose behaviour has caused distress and give them a formal 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. A sanction may also be imposed.
- If appropriate, or it is a pupil's second offence, the Deputy Head or Head of Prep will become involved and the parents of the bully will be contacted. The following sanctions may be applied, in line with the School's disciplinary policy:
 - detention
 - internal exclusion (the pupil or pupils are withdrawn from the School community but are supervised on the School premises)
 - compulsory completion of the 'Bullying Rehabilitation Programme'
 - external exclusion (the pupil or pupils are required to remain at home for one or more days)
 - permanent exclusion

Incidents of reported bullying will be followed up by Form Teachers/Tutors and Heads of Year, to monitor that the problem has been resolved. All reports of bullying, whether later confirmed as such or not, will be entered on the Bullying Log on the T Drive in order to keep track of trends and patterns.

Protecting Pupils From Online Bullying

All students have access to training in Cyber-Bullying through PSHE, Assemblies and Digital Awareness Week. Student Council Representatives, Mental Health First Aiders and Prefects are easily identified and trained to act to support and refer victims of bullying. The School Network is also monitored for any evidence of cyber bullying (see separate e-safety policy).

Preventive action

The key points of our Anti-Bullying policy are provided to parents of all pupils when they arrive at the School on the School website and from the School Office. They are communicated to pupils in an age-appropriate way. This may take place in lessons, Form time, assemblies and PSHE and for older pupils will include displaying the policy in classrooms and printing it in the Student Diary and Planner.

Pupil Relationships

Many activities in School and visits out of School contribute towards establishing good relationships. Residential trips are organised in order to act as a bonding exercise to enable pupils to work co-operatively in teams; these trips also enable Form Teachers/Tutors and Heads of Year to observe relationships within the Year group. All pupils new to Year 7 have a Peer Mentor who is a member of the Sixth Form and meets them for lunch once a week. Opportunities to extend friendship groups are

provided through the House system and many other co-curricular activities. Student counsellors in the 6th Form, with a qualification in Mental Health First Aid are available to offer support to victims, and perpetrators of bullying.

Curriculum

Issues regarding bullying, methods of dealing with bullying, prejudice, discrimination and stereotyping form part of our pastoral and PHSE programme at appropriate stages of pupil development. This includes the use of theatre. The PSHE Co-ordinator also provides up-to-date resources to Heads of Year for use within Form time. In Prep, Circle Time can be a helpful medium for dealing with issues related to bullying.

Bullying is discussed in assemblies and anti-bullying is promoted by the Student Council (eg 'wear something blue' in Anti-Bullying Week).

When delivering lessons staff encourage pupil co-operation through the use of group work and pair work. Sport and games can be particularly effective in promoting teamwork. When appropriate, pupils will be allocated to groups selected by the teacher, and these will be changed at regular intervals to allow pupils more contact with a wider circle of pupils in their year group. The composition of groups should show sensitivity to those who have been the victims of bullying.

Staff

All staff must be alert to the possibility of bullying taking place and do everything they can, both in their own attitudes and via the curriculum, to encourage caring, responsible behaviour. Staff need not only to be alert to bullying taking place and to respond when it does, they must also ensure that their dealings with pupils do not display elements of what may be or perceived to be bullying (e.g. using nick-names). Staff must avoid tacitly reinforcing the bullying or isolation of pupils. Pupils must see that staff treat all pupils with the same degree of respect and that, even in exercising discipline, staff are fair, consistent and controlled.

In their teaching Staff should, where appropriate, exploit opportunities to discuss bullying and reinforce the School's principles of care and respect for others. Form Teachers/Tutors especially have a major pastoral role in this respect.

All staff, however, must be watchful, know their pupils, and carefully observe the social relationships between them. They should be alert to possible bullying, particularly exclusion from friendship groups, and ensure that they inform the Form Teacher/Tutor of such observations. Bullies can sometimes operate in a very subtle way. They must ensure that there are adequate supervisory arrangements at times and places where bullying is most likely to take place. Conscientious carrying out of duties is an essential part of this.

Staff must be prepared to listen: accusations of bullying may come from children who have observed bullying taking place or been on the receiving end themselves, or from parents or other members of staff.

Staff should be prepared to talk: this may involve quiet discussion with children involved, further discussion with the Form or with other staff, and dialogue with parents if necessary. In some circumstances and for some age groups a reprimand from the teacher may be sufficient to resolve the problem.

Staff are given training on bullying during staff meetings and INSET. Support literature is also available on the T - Drive and from the Deputy Head.

Parents

Parents must take their children's concerns seriously and should not hesitate to seek advice from the School and to report any concerns or incidents of bullying. Children may try to persuade parents not to intervene for fear that this may make the situation worse. In our experience this is not the case. The first point of contact should be the Form Teacher/Tutor.

Action in cases of bullying

Staff should report cases of suspected bullying to the Form Teacher/Tutor(s) concerned and, where appropriate, the Head of Year. The involvement of all staff in eliminating bullying is welcomed but we need to bear in mind that bullying can have serious consequences and parents can sometimes threaten to take legal action in bullying incidents. The School has an established procedure to be followed when allegations of bullying are made and this will be applied once cases are reported.

Responses will depend on the severity of the incident(s) but should always be as prompt as possible once discovered.

The School keeps a central record of bullying incidents and actions taken. The Deputy Head (for Seniors and Prep) is responsible for maintaining an overview and monitoring incidents and reports of bullying so that any patterns can be identified. They do this through the completion of the 'Bullying Log' by Heads of Year on the T-Drive, their own records and half-termly reviews by Heads of Year (Seniors) and SMT (Prep).

** For pupils in Prep, the person with primary pastoral responsibility is the Form **Teacher**; in Seniors, we refer to this person as the Form **Tutor**, since he or she may not necessarily teach the pupil. In Seniors, Heads of Year represent an additional level of pastoral responsibility.*

Bullying and Unkindness – The Prep

As pupils make their way through the Little School and Junior Prep years, they are constantly learning and developing their understanding of what constitutes unkind or bullying behaviour. As children develop at varying rates, their grasp of what bullying is, is not always a clear one. Often, children accuse others of bullying with little consideration for how bullying is defined. Such accusations are

taken seriously, but often the reality is the incident has been an exchange of unkind words or a disagreement between two children. We actively promote kindness throughout Prep through form time and circle time, themed assemblies and PSHE; however, children are at a key developmental stage in their understanding of managing relationships and, at times, they can find consistent application of kind behaviour challenging.

When a child reports that another pupil has been unkind to them, form teachers will carefully look into the issue and discuss what has occurred with the relevant children involved and any others who may be able to offer further insight. They may also seek further guidance from the Deputy Head of Prep, but the majority of these issues are either one-off incidents or examples of thoughtlessness. The children are given guidance on how to work together to resolve any differences and parents may be informed, if necessary. These incidents are logged on pupil pastoral files and the 'Record of Unkindness' which is kept centrally by the Deputy Head of Prep.

As children's interpretation of incidents and behaviour can vary greatly between one another, ascertaining a clear and definitive picture of what has happened can be difficult. For parents, it can be equally challenging to grasp a full understanding of events when they only hear one perspective. In these instances, we encourage parents to seek further clarification from School before any judgements are made or conclusions drawn. We place significant emphasis on the need for honesty from all involved and look to draw out the learning opportunities that these incidents can offer.

When it is clear that a child has been subject to behaviour that has gone beyond unkindness or disagreement and can be defined as bullying, the matter is taken very seriously. The Deputy Head of Prep will work with form teachers to investigate the allegation, recording and keeping all records centrally. The parents of those involved are met with to discuss the issue, appropriate sanctions are arranged and support is provided to the relevant children. Whilst it is important to be clear with the child who has been bullying that their behaviour is unacceptable, it is also important to gather further insight into the motivation behind their behaviour and any underlying difficulties they may be experiencing. One to one pastoral support sessions are provided with Nurse Rennie as part of the rehabilitation process. Equally, support for the child who has been the victim of bullying is paramount as the effects of bullying can be long lasting and detrimental.

**Kirsten Pankhurst 27th September 2018. To be reviewed September 2019
David Rushworth (Governor) check 10th February 2017**