Counter Bullying Policy And Procedure

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Introduction

At Overley Hall School, we recognise the right of every child to live and learn in a safe and secure environment. We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils, so that they can learn in a relaxed atmosphere. We are bound to developing our policies and strategies, for preventing and responding to bullying.

In our very special environment it may be difficult on occasion to distinguish between what is the very challenging behaviour of the young people and the intent of this behaviour. Therefore, as a staff team we must be aware of the behaviours of our young people and also be aware of the following definitions. A number of our pupils may become aggressive for a number of reasons. Aggression is usually linked to heightened anxiety. This challenging behaviour may not always be bullying in the normally accepted sense of the term, but the consequences for the victim may be considerable and the same.

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is deliberate and hurtful behaviour, repeated over time, where it may be difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

As highlighted by the Department for Education (DFE, Preventing and tackling bullying, 2017) and Bullying.co.uk, there is no legal definition, but 'bullying is usually defined as **repeated** behaviour with the i**ntent** to hurt someone'. This could involve being **physically** or **emotionally** hurt. Bullying can often be aimed at certain people because of their differences such as race, religion, gender or sexual orientation or any other aspect such as appearance or disability' (DFE 2017).

Bullying is seen as a form of peer on peer abuse.

Bullying can be**:**

- Emotional **-** Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, giving threatening looks and/or gestures, humiliating someone, name calling and insulting.

- Physical - Pushing, pinching, hitting, kicking, and punching.

- Verbal - Name calling, insulting remarks, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing offensive remarks about a child's weight, height hair colour, family, gender orientation.

- Indirect - Spreading rumours whether true or not, getting someone into trouble.

- Cyber bullying- Can occur in or outside of school

- Online bullying - which is via social networking sites, gaming sites, chat rooms or anywhere online.

Bullying may be driven by prejudice

- Racist - Racial taunts, graffiti and / or gestures.

- Sexual - Unwanted physical contact or sexually inappropriate or abusive comments.

- Homophobic (someone is scared or dislikes gay/ homosexual people) or transphobic (when someone is scared or dislikes transgender people) which can include:

- Making comments about a person's gender or sexuality that deliberately makes them feel uncomfortable
- Calling a person names or teasing them
- Hitting, punching or hurting a person
- Making sexual comments or asking sexual questions
- Ignoring or excluding a person due to sexual orientation
- Making comments about a person's sexuality online
- Name-calling - Probably most common and often linked to differences such as ethnic origin, nationality, colour or sexual orientation.

Bullying could also include:

- Taking personal items or things away from people
- Damaging belongings or clothing
- Stealing a peer's money
- Taking friends away from a peer
- Posting insulting messages or rumours
- Forcing a person to do something they don't want to do
- Threats and intimidation
- Making silent or abusive phone calls
- Sending offensive texts or messages

Generative artificial intelligence (AI) - Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard.

- Overley Hall School recognises that AI has many uses that may help or learners learn, but may also have the potential to be used to bully others. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.
- We will treat any use of AI to bully pupils in line with our Counter Bullying policy.

All of the actions above are serious, however we need to be mindful of the situations in which they occur and fully investigate and be sure that they are part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour, before we take further steps.

Steps we can take to prevent bullying

The DFE (2017) states that, 'successful schools create an environment that prevents bullying from being a serious problem in the first place'. At Overley Hall School we aim to be successful in preventing bullying by firstly ensuring that our young people are *supervised* whilst interacting with peers or staff so that the opportunity for bullying is reduced.

If bullying by student to student is witnessed or suspected, it must be correctly documented and the victim offered as much support as is necessary. The

perpetrators must be spoken to, given guidance, and if necessary counselling. Debriefs should be offered to both parties (for more details please see Section 5 below).

Responsibilities for preventing bullying.

- **Headteacher**

- To ensure that staff follow appropriate policies and procedures in relation to Counter Bullying.

- To report to the SAS Board via the Head Teacher's Report on any incidents of bullying and what actions have been taken.

- Promote the school as a local community focal point to help build mutual respect and understanding

- **Support & Scrutiny Board**

- To monitor incidents of bullying and impact of actions that been taken to prevent/ manage incidents

- **All Staff**

- Show and demonstrate respectful behaviour to all at all times
- Respect the rights of every child / young person and member of the school community.
- Respond immediately to any suspicions or allegations of bullying by reporting them to a senior member of staff. Incident reports and risk assessments must be completed.

- **Classroom staff:**

- Promote a positive working ethic that discourages any form of racism, homophobia or language that could be interpreted as such.

- Help all to understand and respect people with disabilities

- Work with any people who bully to support them to change their behaviours.

- To use logical or natural consequences (Sanctions) as felt appropriate, keeping in mind 'logic' or 'natural' (as well as learning developmental ability) where a positive example can also be experienced by all involved.

- Encourage young people to report bullying behaviour

- Ensure young people are not isolated by helping them to develop 'play skills' and promoting peer groups with similar interests

- Ensure Individual Positive Support Plans are updated

- Reinforce school/class rules and values whilst rewarding those who adhere to them

- Being vigilant at all times

- Address the underlying issues that can attract people towards violent extremist causes
  - Equip learners with the knowledge and skills to reflect and think for themselves so able to challenge and debate; giving them the opportunity to learn about different cultures, faiths and gain an understanding of the values we share. Young people or learners from all backgrounds need to be empowered to discuss matters relating to terrorism and preventing extremism.
  - Helping learners to gain a sense of identity and forming views about controversial issues and recognising how they can influence and participate in decision-making. Encouraging young people to express their views but to appreciate the impact their views can have on others, to take responsibility for their actions and to understand that the use of violence to further any cause is criminal.
  - Develop the knowledge linked to online-safety to prevent others influencing extremist or prejudiced views through the internet
  - Develop the knowledge of parents and carers to raise their understanding of online safety
  - Develop resilience in our pupils, give them opportunity to make positive contributions and promote a 'listening' community here at Overley Hall;
  - Provide advice on managing the risk and responding promptly to incidents which impact on the school community

- Promote the British Values through promoting: democracy and modelling how diverse views can be heard, analysed and challenged in a way which values freedom of speech and freedom from harm; preventing harm to pupils by individuals, groups or those who promote violent extremism, and manage risks within the school;
- Support individuals who are vulnerable;
- increase the resilience of pupils to acquire the skills to challenge violent views; promote an ethos and values that promotes respect for others; (see school aims and values; developing curriculum opportunities which allow grievances to be aired, explored and demonstrate the role of conflict resolution and active citizenship.
- Raise awareness of violence associated with cultural beliefs (female genital mutilation)
- Promote the Every Child Matters outcomes for pupils
- Focus on reducing the attainment gap for all groups of pupils
- Promote pupil's wider skill development in teaching and learning e.g. social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL)
- Promote active citizenships and pupil voice
- Develop links with families and local communities, including through extended school

- **Parents**

- To report to school via their child's teacher/tutor or Head Teacher any concerns that relate to their child being worried about any form of bullying.

Strategies that we may use to support us preventing bullying

- Social stories and / or comic strip conversations;
- Stories about bullying
- Role playing scenarios to help develop understanding
- Talking mats to support learners to express how they feel
- Brad time where people can speak to our clinical psychologist about any worries or concerns they have
- Zones of regulation boards used during the day
- Debriefs after incidents
- A perceptive Pastoral Deputy Head working within the school and visiting rooms and the staff room to ensure that any staff worries are discussed as they arise
- Using different types of bullying as themes in planned schemes/topics of work and are discussed in Morning Meetings;

- Sharing different strategies to help stop bullying such as telling, fogging (when a person who is being bullied responds with neutral statements or is in agreement with what the bully says) etc.
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters to tell people
- Guest speakers such as community police officers into the school to help raise awareness
- Writing stories, poems or making drawings about bullying; although in cases where this may not be in line with learning ability, it would be more about practicing and highlighting positive behaviours
- Providing our young people with appropriate communication strategies such as writing that is supported by pictures so they have a way of reporting bullying, e.g., inserting a bully symbol into ACE Communication Books

Steps taken if bullying is reported (or suspected):

Due to the unique needs of our young people if bullying is reported or suspected it is important to be mindful of:

- The young person's disabilities and /or known behaviours.
- Any changes in behaviour that have been observed and documented.
- What the young people are trying to communicate.
- The communication used to ensure the learners know that the behaviour is not acceptable whilst keeping in mind appropriate communication aids.
- Strategies that are required to help the young person change / manage their behaviour. This may also include using logical or natural consequences that clearly redirects any unacceptable behaviour in the least confusing way.

The above need to be carefully considered as some behaviours may not be intentional but could have an effect on another learner's emotional state - as they cannot understand that the behaviour might not be intentional.

It is also just as important to:

- Support the young person being bullied; including a debrief process related to learning needs (Positive Support Plans will highlight the 'De-brief level' and assessment sheet required.

Bullying of any description will always be taken seriously and steps taken to reduce or counteract the risk of bullying.

Bullying of students by staff will be taken seriously and fully investigated, strictly adhering to Safeguarding and Allegations against staff procedure. This could lead to an immediate suspension.

Staff should also recognise whether the young people or their representatives want to consider contacting external agencies for help and support, such as:

- Advocates
- Childline: 0800 1111
- The Safeguarding Board Partnership: 01952 385700
- The PREVENT team – West Mercia Police
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Search | NSPCC0800 136 663
- Anti-bullying alliance
- Childnet's cyberbullying guidance
- NSPCC

Record keeping

It is vital that staff respond immediately about any suspicions or allegations of bullying by reporting to a senior member of staff.

Incident reports and risk assessments must be completed and given to a senior member of staff.

Monitor, document and report – Complete Incident on Behaviour Watch.

Ensure the Behaviour Support Plan (PSP) is updated, shared and acted on.

To raise awareness and help young people to inform:

This policy is available in communicate 'InPrint' format and is displayed on the notice board in brief, for all to see.

There is a communicate 'InPrint' version of 'How to make a complaint' pinned up in several rooms across the school and also in the reception area of the

school there is a pupil friendly version to enable most of our students to make a complaint.

Each term, young people are asked to complete a communicate ‘InPrint’ questionnaire which asks them for their feelings and thoughts.

Students less able to communicate may need to be supported using a Safeguarding Talking Mat resource which will be supported by Speech and Language Therapy.

Related Policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Behaviour Support Policy