

Anti-Bullying Policy

More Than Ed | Independent School

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1. Introduction

This policy recognises and interprets our responsibility for the wellbeing of our staff, students, guests, visitors, the local community and outside agencies. It should be read alongside our Behaviour and Relational Policy.

We recognise that the behaviour of some of our students may have an impact on other people, events or objects. Our aim is to support students to understand their behaviours and emotions, and how to cope in a variety of situations and contexts while building relationships and practising social interactions. If our students have the knowledge and understanding of bullying and the effect their behaviours may have on others, we would expect them to follow the rules of this anti-bullying policy, and we would support students through the process if necessary.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the school. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to tell, and to know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to be supported to learn different ways of behaving and coping. We will respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

2. What is Bullying

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online. Bullying can be:

- Emotional: being unfriendly, tormenting, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation or intimidation.
- Excluding: deliberately excluding and isolating people.
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, graffiti and gestures, including discrimination relating to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, sexually abusive comments, or exposure to inappropriate images or films.
- Online / cyber: posting on social media, sharing photos, threats by text message or call, misuse of associated technology, and social exclusion.
- Indirect: including the exploitation of individuals.

3. Our Context and Approach

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is our first priority, but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical. Nearly all of our students are supported on a 1:1 basis, and levels of support are high within our small-group provision, which means there is always a high level of supervision for all learners. This enables us to monitor bullying carefully and effectively, and to support learners to adapt their behaviour and language, discuss their actions, and put plans in place to support behaviour change.

The intense levels of support our students receive enable our staff to develop positive and effective relationships with our learners, and to understand behaviours that learners display or may struggle with being directed at them. A number of our students have experienced bullying during their life, which needs to be taken into account when we are dealing with specific cases.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can themselves have a significant impact on all students and, if left unchallenged or dismissed, can lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. We set clear expectations about acceptable behaviour and, through early intervention, personalised programme design and proactive ways of working, we aim to prevent negative behaviours from escalating.

4. Safeguarding Children and Young People

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, a bullying incident will be addressed as a child protection concern under the Children Act 1989. In such cases, staff should discuss the matter with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead, report their concerns to the local authority children's social care, and work with them to take appropriate action.

External support can be given to students whether or not a matter is deemed a child protection concern. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, we may need to draw on a range of external services to support a student who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue that has contributed to a student engaging in bullying.

5. Criminal Law

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, some types of harassing or threatening behaviour, or communications, could be a criminal offence – for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, any person who sends an electronic communication that conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender, is guilty of an offence if their purpose in sending it was to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient.

6. Objectives of this Policy

- Develop a calm environment, free from disruption, in which education is the primary focus so our students can learn.
- Develop a sense of caring and respect for one another, and build caring and co-operative relationships.
- Support students to understand what appropriate and positive behaviour is.
- Make it easy for students to report bullying where they are able, and ensure they feel assured they will be listened to. For students who are not able to express their feelings, particular attention is paid to mood, engagement, behaviour, body language, enjoyment, attention and relationship changes.
- Ensure the Headteacher, Learning Managers, teachers, teaching assistants, non-teaching staff, students and parents/carers understand what bullying is.

- Ensure all staff know the school's policy on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported.
- Ensure all students and parents/carers know the school's policy on bullying and what to do if bullying arises.
- Take bullying seriously, assuring students and parents that they will be supported when bullying is reported – bullying will not be tolerated.

7. Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)

While bullied students will not routinely be considered as requiring SEN support, the school and, where appropriate, the local authority should provide support in a proportionate and tailored way to meet individual needs. The relevant statutory guidance, the SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, sets out how developing a graduated response to the varying levels of SEN among children and young people is the best way to offer support. Some bullied students will have SEN.

8. Promoting Appropriate and Positive Behaviour

- The school's curriculum prioritises supporting students to develop the skills for building relationships, respect, and working appropriately and positively with others.
- Our SMSC curriculum supports our young people to gain knowledge and understanding of bullying and cyberbullying.
- Each student is supported to develop effective, consistent and progressive communication methods, helping them to express themselves and to understand and be understood.
- All staff are trained on, and understand, the principles and purpose of this anti-bullying policy, its legal responsibilities, how to resolve problems and where to seek support.
- We create an inclusive and safe environment and celebrate success.
- Where possible, staff talk to students about issues of difference.
- The Headteacher will respond immediately to any request from a parent or carer to investigate incidents of bullying.

9. Procedures for Supporting Students

- Bullying incidents are reported on CPOMS. In serious cases, the student's parents/carers may be informed and asked to attend a meeting to discuss the adaptations and strategies needed.
- Bullying behaviour, or threats of bullying, must be investigated and stopped quickly. Students will be fully supported in recognising and understanding the reasons behind their behaviour, and the impact it may have on others.

10. Support for Staff Who Are Bullied

It is important that the school takes measures to prevent and tackle bullying among students. It is equally important that the school makes clear that bullying of staff – whether by students, parents or colleagues – is unacceptable.

11. Reporting and Recording Bullying

The ability to report and record incidents of bullying is a crucial part of our anti-bullying strategy. We aim to make it as easy as possible for our students to report incidents, and we actively encourage our young people to report anything they see, hear or experience that makes them feel uncomfortable. There is always a mechanism for students to report bullying to any member of staff, the Designated Safeguarding Leads or the Headteacher. Creating an environment where our young people feel safe to report bullying is an essential part of our ethos, and the way we support a young person to do so, and respond to their reports, depends on their particular learning and communication needs.

12. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside the school's other policies, including:

- Behaviour and Relational Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety / E-Safety Policy and Acceptable Use Policy
- SEND Policy and SEND Information Report
- Equality Policy
- PSHE & RSHE and SMSC / British Values policies
- Complaints Policy

13. Legislation and Guidance

In drawing up this policy, the school has had regard to the following:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (the requirement to have and implement an anti-bullying strategy)
- Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, current edition)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying, and Cyberbullying: advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE)
- Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years (2015)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997; Malicious Communications Act 1988; Communications Act 2003; Public Order Act 1986