The Divergent School Group
Harborough School

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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Contributions from
External Scrutiny from
Implementation by Charlie Smith, Headteacher

All policies are underpinned by the critical thread of SAFEGUARDING
All policies stem from The Divergent School Group's VALUES and MISSION

THE DIVERGENT SCHOOL GROUP

VALUES

All children deserve an education which is just the right fit for them
For children to thrive both their talents and needs must be catered to
The curriculum is most effective when it's delivery is individualised
In order to learn we must first be safe and feel safe are essential
To develop & progress emotional, sensory & communication support are needed
Effective practice is based on innovation and contemporary evidence
Understanding comes from the bio-psycho-social and psycho-neurological models
We all benefit when mainstream and special school communities are integrated

MISSION

Our mission is to provide a model of education which is just the right fit for children in the missing middle.
We inspire personal development and curriculum progress so that pupils can be safe, feel safe, be well, learn and thrive.

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FOREWORD

Review

We have designed this policy with a **commitment to ongoing improvement and collaboration** at its core. It is our belief that by continuously refining our approach, we can ensure that our school provides the best possible experience for our students.

To achieve this, we follow a structured process:

1. Regular review and refinement under the guidance of the Headteacher.
2. Immediate full review in case of urgent matters.
3. Annual formal review by the Advisory Board, in consultation with pupils, parents, teaching staff, and the Headteacher.

Ensuring all staff are well-informed through effective communication, which includes the following steps:

a. Holding meetings to discuss changes.
b. Providing training on any changes.
c. Sharing written copies of changes electronically.
d. Assessing staff's understanding informally, with the Headteacher ensuring clarity.
e. Ongoing monitoring by the Headteacher to ensure changes are implemented, and adjustments are made promptly if necessary.

We recognize that clear and timely communication is essential in maintaining a successful educational environment. Through this policy, we aim to foster a culture of continuous improvement and transparent communication among all stakeholders.

Contact

If you have any questions, concerns or ideas related to the Beyond Behaviour Policy please contact the Headteacher, Charlie Smith to discuss on:

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PURPOSE OF POLICY

School Mission

The Divergent School Group is dedicated to ensuring that pupils **are safe** and **feel safe** at school.

We then help pupils to develop skills for **sensory regulation, emotional regulation,** and **communication**.

This work is critical in making school accessible so that pupils are able to **develop personally** and **progress through the curriculum**. As a result of this they can be **well, learn** and **thrive.**

As a secondary effect, this will also result a minimising of behaviour that could be described as disruptive or poor.

Policy Mission

The objectives of this policy are to:
- **Ensure that pupils are safe and feel safe**
- **Promote an understanding** of:
  - The impact on a child of being safe
  - The impact on a child of feeling safe
  - The school's expectations and boundaries
  - Catering to talents
  - Meeting special needs, including:
    - Sensory regulation
    - Emotional regulation
    - Communication skills
- For school staff to carry this out in their **practice** by::
  - Recognising the emotional experiences of the child
  - Responding to the child's emotional experience effectively
  - Reflecting on what happened constructively and with curiosity
- **Generate a culture** where:
  - Pupils being safe and feeling safe is the top priority
  - Relationships between staff and with pupils are safe and compassionate
  - The child's wellbeing is central to all responses that staff give to them
  - Value is placed on the child's neurological development
  - Value is placed on the intrinsic worth of learning (rather than placing value on tokens such as reward or praise)
  - Children's strengths and talents are continually in mind

- Create a **calm, safe** and **supportive environment**, where all children can learn:
  - o Predictable
  - o Visually calm
  - o Well organised
  - o Accessible
- Communicate the **roles and responsibilities of school staff**, in the parameters of their own role, to provide pupils with a school experience that:
  - o Is safe
  - o Feels safe
  - o Caters to their talents
  - o Meets their special needs

Throughout this policy **example scenarios** will be used to illustrate how the policy can be put into practice. It is important to be aware that all children and events are different and that there are typically multiple potentially effective responses which could be used. The best way to support pupils is to understand them as individuals within the unique scenarios that arise.
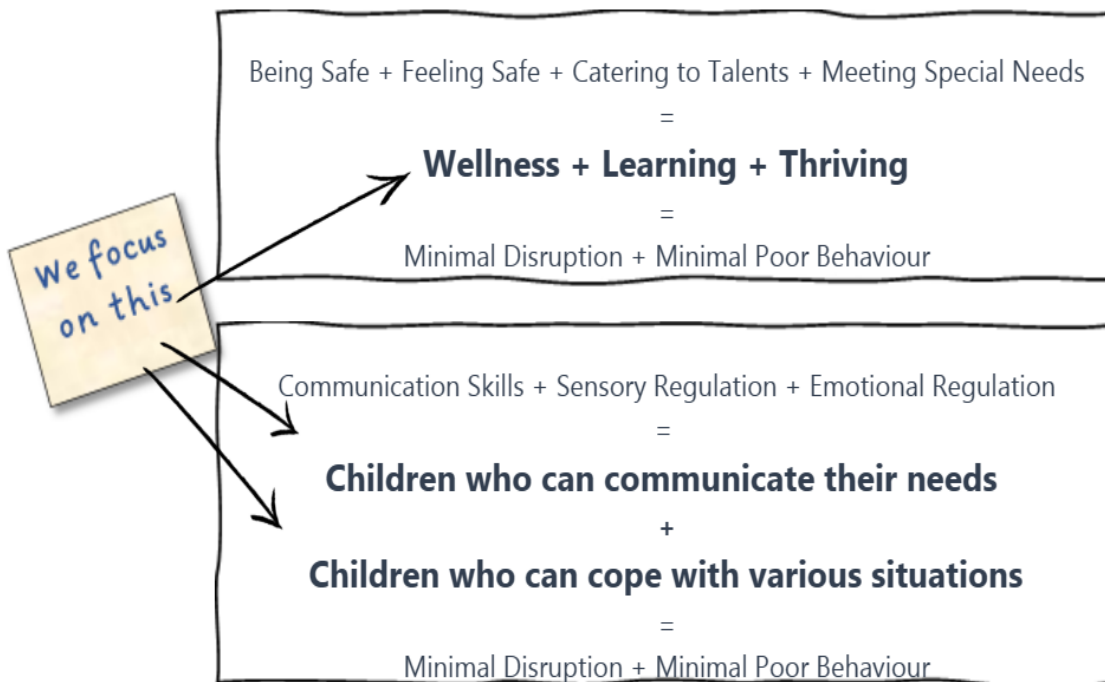
Therefore, the purpose of these scenarios is to give practical examples of how the policy can be put into practice and are not intended as instructions to follow, if a similar event occurred.

PRINCIPLES AROUND BEHAVIOUR

Beyond Behaviour

The Divergent School Group believes passionately that **all behaviour is a vital form of communication**. As such, we regard behaviour that is often described as 'disruptive' or 'poor' to be a <u>symptom</u> of something else.

We focus our work with pupils on the underlying <u>cause</u> of this behaviour, in the knowledge that this work will result in better behaviour as a secondary effect.

Being Safe + Feeling Safe + Catering to Talents + Meeting Special Needs
=
Wellness + Learning + Thriving
=
Minimal Disruption + Minimal Poor Behaviour

We focus on this

Communication Skills + Sensory Regulation + Emotional Regulation
=
Children who can communicate their needs
+
Children who can cope with various situations
=
Minimal Disruption + Minimal Poor Behaviour

Although one of the aims of this policy is to promote good behaviour and reduce poor or disruptive behaviour, it will not be referred to in these terms. In line with The Divergent School Group's values, we believe that the most effective way of supporting a child's development is to look beyond the behaviour itself.

UNDERPINNING

Contemporary evidence and research underpinning this policy:
- SEN/D Review 2023
- Smart but Scattered Teens
- The Compassionate Mind
- The Six Principles of Nurture

Theoretical models of understanding underpinning this policy:
- The Bio-Psycho-Social model of understanding
- The Neuro-Psychological model of understanding
- Bowlby's Attachment Theory
- Mallow's Hierarchy of Needs

Government guidance and legislation underpins this policy:
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2021
- Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2020
- Special Educational Needs and Disability Code of Practice, 2015
- Behaviour and Discipline in schools, 2016
- The Equity Act, 2021
- Use of Reasonable Force in Schools, 2013
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017
- Searching, screening and confiscation at school, 2018
- The Independent School Standards, 2014
- Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy
- Physical, Social, Health and Economic Education
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development (including British Values)

The Divergent School Group taxonomy of policy and procedure both inform and are informed by this policy:
- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-Bullying Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Relationship and Sex Education Policy
- Admissions Policy

The Brooke House College policy and procedure both inform and are informed by this policy:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Brooke House College Health & Safety Policy

The relationship between the policies and procedures in The Divergent School Group Taxonomy and Brooke House policies can be seen below:
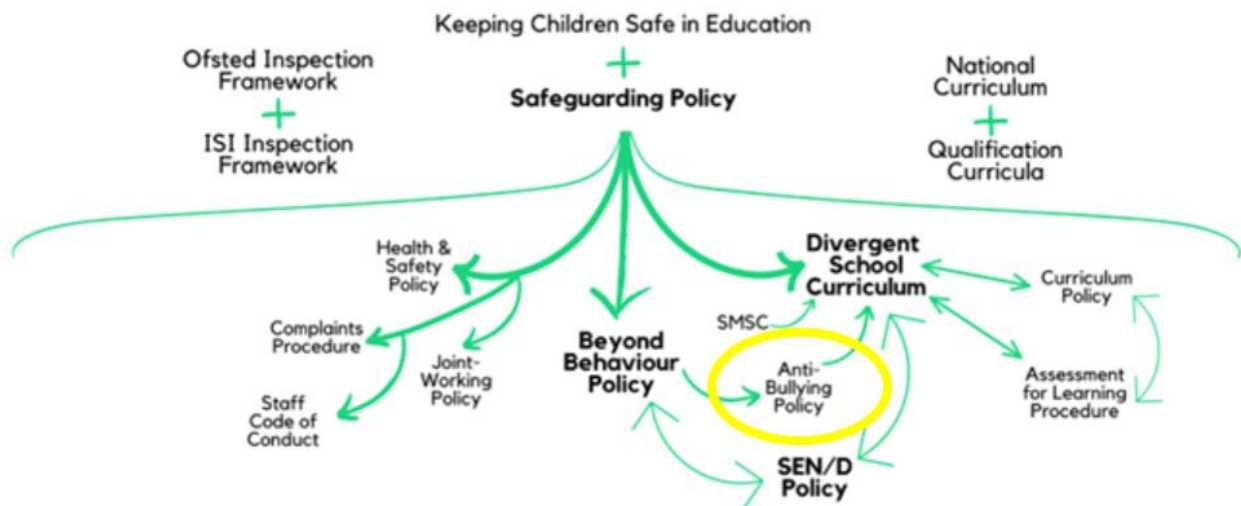
SAFETY

Safety is the first priority of The Divergent School Group. Work to ensure pupils <u>are safe</u> and <u>feel safe</u> is critical in all aspects of this policy.

To be safe we need to be free from the threat of physical or mental harm. But, to feel safe we need to be free from the perception of threat of physical of mental harm.

Everyone has the basic human right to be <u>be safe</u> and <u>feel safe</u>.

As a school, we have a critical duty to maintain the rights of our pupils to <u>be safe</u> and <u>feel safe</u>. All information and procedures in the Beyond Behaviour Policy work towards this.

Being Safe

Principle

What we do

Feeling Safe

The answer lies, partly, in how our brain responds to our environment.

When weighing up risks, the brain's emotional centres receive information about the environment around us first – before the thinking part of the brain, which is further up the chain of command.
In particular, the amygdala, a cluster of brain cells shaped like an almond, is located in the brain's emotional centres and functions as our own personal security officer.

Our security officer reacts to events it sees as a threat – whether real or imagined – as it works to keep us safe.
The security officer does this by triggering the alarm system, known as the fight-or-flight response, prompting us to run from danger or lash out to defend ourselves.
It also triggers strong emotions like fear, anxiety and anger.

The thinking part of the brain, largely located behind our forehead, gets the same information as the security officer, but just a fraction of a second later. So if the security officer has already triggered a strong emotional reaction then our access to rational thinking is reduced.

We might be able to draw upon rational thinking to try and stop ourselves from overreacting, or put the brakes on before we say or do something we regret.

But if the security officer's emotional response is too strong, the thinking brain's attention becomes locked on the perceived threat, and rational thinking goes out the window.

Strong emotions – like anger, anxiety and fear – stop us from thinking rationally, as we all know when we are able to reflect upon it calmly.
And if the security officer doesn't feel safe we are less able to accept any evidence which tells us that we are safe.

Firstly, we can try activities which help us to relax. This might be practicing exercises like 7/11 breathing, or having a soak in the bath. Whatever you do, it should be something which works for you.
Then, when we begin to feel a bit calmer, we can begin to bring rational thinking back online. We might do this by questioning some of the assumptions behind emotionally driven black-and-white thoughts.
So if one of our thoughts is: "if I leave the house a banana shaped hot air balloon might crash land on me," we can ask ourselves how often this happens to people, how many banana shaped hot air balloons are seen floating by the area where we live, and how frequently it has happened to us in the past.
Of course, this is a slightly ridiculous example, but choosing to start with something absurd can help us to break the trance of anxiety fuelled thinking, so that we can be more realistic about how we assess risk.
If, after you have added something to your daily routine which helps you to calm down, you are still finding it a challenge to feel safe, do speak to your GP or contact wellbeing services.

Principle

Feeling safe is about every part of you.
- It is about feeling respected and understood.
- It is knowing you are loved, liked and valued for who you are.
- It is feeling secure and knowing what's happening in your life.
- It's not being hit, insulted, made fun of or humiliated.
- It's about others respecting your body, and not hurting or taking advantage of you in a sexual way.
- It's about others not making you touch them or look at and watch sexual images.

What we do

PRINCIPLES AROUND BULLYING

Definition of Bullying

The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.

It can occur between children, and between adults and pupils.

It can take the form of direct physical or verbal bullying or indirect attack of a more subtle nature. It typically falls into one or a combination of the following categories:

- **Direct physical bullying**, such as:
    - Pushing
    - Hitting
    - Punching
    - Kicking
    - Or any form of violence
- **Direct verbal bullying**, such as:
    - Derogatory
    - Offensive manners
    - Name-calling
    - Sarcasm
    - Spreading rumours
    - Persistent teasing
    - Shouting
    - Insulting
    - Verbal threats
    - Offensive mimicry
- **Indirect bullying**, also known as social bullying or relational bullying, such as:
    - Spreading rumours
    - Social exclusion
    - Ostracism
    - Rejection by peer group
    - Disclosing another's private matters
    - Graffiti
    - Interference with personal property
    - Extortion
- **Cyberbullying**, using electronic media, such as:
    - Email
    - Texts

- o Social media:
  - Posts
  - Comments
  - Videos
  - Images
- **Sexual Harassment or Violence and/or Coercion**

People can be bullied because of **differences or perceived differences**, and can be motivated by prejudice against particular groups, such as:

- Race, religion, culture or belief (or no belief)
- Special educational needs and disabilities
- Mental Health
- Young carers
- Looked after children
- Background
- Gender
- Appearance and size
- Ability and attainment
- Sexuality
- Transgender status

Causes of Bullying - Beyond Behaviour

The Divergent School Group believes passionately that **all behaviour is a vital form of communication**. As such, we regard bullying to be a symptom of something else.

We focus our work with pupils on the underlying cause of bullying, in the knowledge that this work will result in preventing bullying.
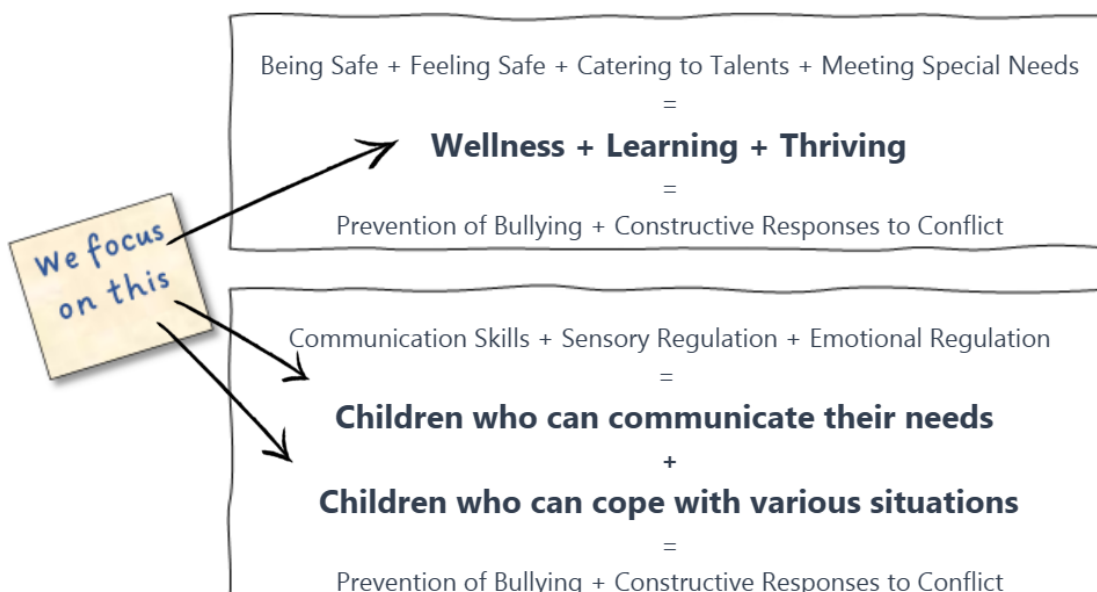
For effective practice, these approaches must be **applied to all parties** involved in bullying, those who are bullying, those who are being bullied and bystanders.

It is essential to **understand the emotional experiences** of pupils who are bullying to respond effectively and prevent future instances of bullying.

Causes of a child bullying may include:
- Unresolved conflict with recipient/s of bullying
- Transference of unresolved conflict with another person
- Being bullied by another person
- Feeling helpless
- Feeling powerless
- Trauma
- Being a victim of abuse from another
- Undeveloped skills for conflict resolution
- Undeveloped skills for communication
- Undeveloped skill for emotional regulation

Impact of Bullying

The Divergent School Group recognises that bullying can have wide-reaching and devastating effects on the person who is bullied. These may include:
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Distress
- Isolation
- Self-harm
- Physical harm
- Physical illness
- Normalisation of poor treatment
- Low self-worth
- Low self-esteem

No one deserves to feel this way because of bullying.

No one deserves to be bullied.

PRACTICE

Therapeutic Integration

The Divergent School Group believes that a **multi-disciplinary team of therapists** can give a significant benefit to pupils.

Speech and Language Therapy and Occupational Therapy are available to all pupils, whilst Psychotherapy is only available to pupils if there is a particular piece of therapeutic work that is needed.

All three disciplines of therapy are also used, in a complimentary way, to inform approaches throughout the school's work, in a systemic and strategic manner.

The aim of therapeutic integration is to help pupils towards the goals of:
- Being safe
- Feeling safe
- Developing communication skills
- Developing sensory regulation
- Developing emotional regulation
- Being well
- Learning
- Thriving
- Developing personally
- Progressing through the curriculum

As a secondary effect, this will also result a minimising of instances of bullying.

Preventing Bullying

The Divergent School Group believes that **the most effective tool for minimising bullying is prevention.**

The **school culture** plays an important role in preventing bullying, the school's culture is:
- Compassionate
- Considerate
- Curious
- Innovative
- Inclusive

The **school culture is enacted** through:
- Language used
  - Factual descriptions
  - Explanations rooted in logic
  - Growth centred
  - Strength centred

- o Kind
- The environment
  - o Accessible
  - o Calming
  - o Organised
- Attitudes
  - o Welcoming of difference
  - o Enthusiasm for new ideas
  - o Forwards looking
  - o Magnanimous
- Relationships
  - o Caring
  - o Warm
  - o Constructive
  - o Have appropriate boundaries
- Norms
  - o Greeting each other with warmth
  - o Pausing to observe situations
  - o Guiding conversations towards growth
  - o Celebrating our own and each other's cultures
  - o Eating together

Personal development and curriculum progress are also central to preventing bullying.

Recognising Bullying

Children, like adults, go through **a variety of emotional experiences**, including those which are distressing.

The **communication of these emotional experiences** will be impacted on by the child's:
- Understanding of their emotions
- Communication abilities
- Emotional regulation abilities
- Sensory regulation abilities
- Special educational needs
- Prior experiences of feeling the emotion
- Prior experiences of communicating the emotion

We consider particularly how any **prior trauma impacts** on the child's emotional experience and how they communicate it.

We are mindful not to focus on the behaviour we see, but to look beyond the behaviour.

School staff are mindful that bullying may occur between pupils, or staff, and are vigilant of **signs that bullying is occurring**. These signs may be explicit or discrete:

- Is frightened of walking to/from school
- Does not want to go on public transport
- Is unwilling to talk about their day
- Changes their usual routine
- Wants to remain with adults
- Isolate themselves
- Stops attending school
- Attends school erratically
- Becomes withdrawn
- Becomes anxious
- Becomes less outgoing
- Starts stammering
- Runs away from home
- Attempts or discusses self-harm
- Attempted or discussed suicide
- Changes in academic progress
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Is bullying other children
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous or jumpy when a message or notification is received

In addition, **parents/carers should also be aware** of the following possible signs and communicate with school staff immediately if they have observed them:

- Ask insistently to be driven to school
- Is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- Cries in bed at night
- Has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Comes home with clothes torn
- Comes home with property damaged or lost
- Asks for money or takes money
- Is bullying siblings or others in family/local community
- Changes in eating habits

We note that these signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and be investigated.

When we observe a child who is bullying, we aim to **recognise the underlying emotional experience**. In order to do this, we ask ourselves:

- What happened to lead the child to this?
- What did the child say or do prior to this?
- Does this relate to the child's family story?
Does this relate to the child's prior school journey?
- Does this relate to a safeguarding matter?

- Does this relate to the child in a way that we are not aware of?

Bullying may happen between school pupils, or staff, in scenarios which are not observed in school, such as cyber-bullying, in the wider community or on the journey to/from school.

We understand that **all behaviour is a form of communication**, we can support the child most effectively when we recognise what emotional experience they are communicating.

Although at times **we may not be able to recognise the emotional experience** of the child, we always recognise that something is being experienced beyond behaviour and respond with compassion.

Responding to Bullying

It is our priority to ensure that everyone is safe.

During an instance of bullying which presents **an immediate risk to safety**, staff must act promptly, they may:
- Verbally intervene
- Offer alternative means of conflict resolution
- Offer pupils space away from one another
- Offer the child who is bullying a 1:1 conversation with an adult
- Offer the child who is being bullied a 1:1 conversation with an adult
- Direct pupil/s to move to separate parts of the room
- Direct pupil/s to leave the room – <u>only if there is no other immediate alternative for safety</u>

In our responses to pupils, **we are always <u>curious</u> and <u>compassionate</u>.**

In order to be **curious,** we:
1. Pause to observe the child
2. Question our own immediate assumptions
3. Consider the **factors that impacted on the emotions** that the child is experiencing, including:
   - The child's existing:
     - Talents
     - SEN/D
     - Family Story
     - School Journey
     - Local Context
   - What happened in the run up?
   - What happened in the moment?

In order to be **compassionate,** we:
- Recognise and acknowledge the pupil's suffering
- Relate to how painful it is to suffer
- Show empathy for the pupil's suffering

- In the moment, tolerate our own feeling that result from the pupil's suffering
- Do what we can to relieve the pupil's suffering

When a **pupil discloses** that they, or a peer, have been bullied, but this has not been observed by school staff (eg cyberbullying, on journey to school), staff are to:

- Move to an environment which gives the child privacy, if needed
- Inform the child early in the conversation that they will need to share their concerns with the headteacher and parents in order to ensure they are safe
- Listen actively, without interrupting
- Repeat back to the child verbatim to confirm understanding
- Refrain from suggesting or implying things that the pupil may wish to say
- Refrain from leading questions
- Thank the pupil for sharing what they are experiencing

It is important to recognise that **this can be difficult for staff** when the situation is provoking their own emotional experience, which may in itself be triggering or distressing.

The better we understand the child's emotional experience, the easier it is for us to separate this from our own emotional experiences.

However, if any member of staff feels unable to separate their own emotional experiences from the situation they are in with a pupil, they must ask a colleague for support and step away. This is both for their own wellbeing and to ensure that the pupil receives the support that they need. If a member of staff needs to take this decision, it is supported and respected by others in the school community.

Reporting Bullying

Following an instance, disclosure or suspicion of bullying records must be made, this is valuable to ensure that details are not forgotten and that follow up action can be taken with accountability.

If any member of staff becomes aware of bullying, they must:

- **Report it** verbally to a senior member of staff as soon as it is safe to do so:
  - Teaching Assistants report to a Teacher, Deputy Headteacher (DDSL) or Headteacher (DSL)
  - Teachers report to the Deputy Headteacher (DDSL) or Headteacher (DSL)
- (In extraordinary instances:
  - If neither the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher are available, report to the Chief Education Officer
  - If the concerns relate to the actions of a Teacher, the Deputy Headteacher or the Headteacher, do not report to this person
  - If concerns relate to the actions of teachers, the Deputy Headteacher <u>and</u> the Headteacher, report to the Chief Education Officer)
- **Log details** of the bullying online using Do-It Profiler as soon as non-contact time is available, no later than the end of the day that the instance occurred:

- Use the facts of what happened or what has been disclosed, not opinions
- Write in short paragraphs or bullet point, not long bulks of text
- Write only information which relates to the bullying

Parents, of the pupil who has been bullied and of the pupil who bullied, are made aware of instances of bullying on the same day. The pupil's class teacher will call the parents as soon as the school day ends, following up with a brief email summarising what has been shared.

If it is felt that sharing this information with a parent would put anyone at risk, this must be discussed with the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher before contact is made, in order to make any extraordinary arrangements necessary.

Reflecting on Bullying

At The Divergent School Group, we reflect with curiosity, compassion and a growth-mindset.

In order to be **curious,** we:
- Use structured, focused time to pause to reflect on what happened
- Question our own immediate assumptions
- Think laterally
- Are open-minded
- Adjust our way of thinking if we become judgemental
- Wonder what led to feelings we don't understand

In order to be **compassionate,** we:
- Recognise and acknowledge any suffering of all concerned
- Relate to how painful it is to suffer
- Show empathy for any suffering of all concerned
- In the moment, tolerate our own feeling that result from another's suffering
- Do what we can to relieve any suffering of all concerned

In order to adopt a **growth-mindset**, we:
- Believe that our strengths and talents can be developed
- Believe that challenges aid growth
- Value learning and progress
- Value the process and the outcome
- Look forwards

During a **Reflective Conversation** meeting staff and/or pupils consider:
1. The factors that impacted on the emotions that those concerned experienced
2. What could be done more effectively if something similar happened in the future

3. <u>What can be done next</u> to ensure that something similar is less likely to happen in the future

Roles & Responsibilities

The headteacher is responsible for implementing the Anti-Bullying Policy consistently throughout the school. It is also the responsibility of the Headteacher to ensure the health, safety and welfare of all children and adults in the school. This includes:

- Safeguarding pupils as their number one priority
- Upholding the values of the school in all work undertaken
- Ensure, and continually monitor,
    - effectiveness of the policy with regards to its purpose
    - staff understanding of the policy, providing support as needed
    - staff ability to implement this policy, providing support as needed
    - conduciveness of the environment for implementation of the policy
- Ask for further support if they do not understand anything relating to this policy
- Ask for further support if they need support to put into practice this policy

The Advisory Board are responsible for overseeing and supporting effective implementation of the Anti-Bullying Policy. This includes:

- Monitoring records related to bullying at least on a half termly basis (as part of a holistic view), or contemporaneously if needed
- Reviewing the effectiveness of the Anti-Bullying Policy in relation to its purpose, at least annually, or contemporaneously if needed
- Keeping safeguarding pupils as their number one priority
- Upholding the values of the school in all work undertaken

School staff are responsible for implementing the Anti-Bullying Policy consistently throughout their work in the school. It is also the responsibility of school staff to ensure health, safety and welfare of all children and adults in the school with whom they have contact in their work. This includes:

- Upholding the values of the school in all work undertaken
- Implement the policy consistently within the parameters of their role.
- Ensure that they are aware of current legislation
- Ask for further support if they do not understand anything relating to this policy
- Ask for further support if needed to put into practice this policy

Parents are vital partners in the school's work, including support of the Beyond Behaviour Policy. We inspire parents to:

- Have an active role in the school community
- Support their child towards their personal development and curriculum progress
- Communicate openly about their child's home life with regards to bullying

Pupils are at the heart of this policy. We inspire pupils to work towards:

- Being safe
- Feeling safe
- Being well
- Learning
- Personal Development
- Curriculum Progress
- Showing themselves and others:
    - Respect
    - Consideration
    - Compassion
    - Tolerance
- Treating the school environment with:
    - Care
    - Consideration

Learning

Learning through **curriculum progress** and **personal development** is central to the Anti-Bullying Policy. This is done discretely and explicitly, to varying degrees as appropriate to the topic, in every subject.

For prevent bullying, the **content of the curriculum** includes:
- Adaptable, to meet each pupil at the learning stage that they are at
- Carefully sequenced, with additional time given for pupils to develop any missing skills that are needed to progress onto the next stage

To prevent bullying, the **delivery of the curriculum** is:
- Individualised to meet special needs, particularly with regards to communication methods and sensory integration
- Individualised to the talents and enthusiasms of the pupil

The content and delivery of the curriculum is adapted in response to instances of bullying and any learning needs of the cohort which have been identified.

Personal Development

Staff Development

Communication of Policy

Induction Training

Monitoring & Mentorship

Continuous Professional Development

Continuous Review

APPENDIX 1
Support Plan

APPENDIX 2
Do-It Profiler Report

APPENDIX 3
Reflective Conversation