

DOROTHY GOODMAN SCHOOL

POLICY DOCUMENT

ANTI-BULLYING

Introduction

This policy document will form guidelines within which school staff should operate. Instances of bullying in a school for pupils with learning difficulties are likely to be uncommon, because of the level of adult supervision provided. However, it should not be assumed that bullying does not take place, because there will be occasions when it occurs. What is important is that staff recognise it and deal with it by solving the problems presented. Whenever bullying is suspected, then:

- it should always be taken seriously
- it should always be discussed further with at least one other person
- action of some form should always be taken
- it should always be recorded in the Incident Book and reported to the Head Teacher

What is Bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour which causes hurt, fear or distress to another person. It can be physical, social or psychological; intentional or unintentional. The common factors are the feelings of fear, misery and isolation felt by the victim.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- Physical - hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- Verbal - name-calling, insulting, racist remarks, threatening comments
- Social - excluding someone from social groups
- Indirect - spreading stories about someone or their family background

Bullying can include a racist element. Pupils may be called names related to their ethnic origin or may be deliberately isolated, particularly if they are from an ethnic group that is in a minority in the school. Bullying may also be sexist.

Although often overtly intentional, some instances of bullying may also be unintentional, or perceived by the bully as unintentional. Some pupils may not be the instigators of the bullying, but may become drawn into it as active participants, or as bystanders who do nothing to stop the bullying, or as those who encourage it.

Bullies and their Victims

Both bullies and their victims can come from any social or cultural background.

Some children who bully others have experienced abuse or bullying themselves or have lacked positive models for relationships with others, especially in terms of resolving conflict or disagreement. Others may bully simply because the opportunity arises or because the culture of the school permits it to happen.

Any child can be the victim of bullying, just as can any adult. There are things which make some youngsters statistically more likely to be bullied. We know that children who are quiet, shy or who have few friends are vulnerable. Children who are different in some way may be targeted. Children who are large or small for their age, or who are heavier or thinner than the majority may be picked on. Some children behave in ways which annoy other pupils and may provoke bullying.

In a school for pupils with learning difficulties there may be clashes between specific pupils because of the behaviours that each presents, and there may be occasions when a child is bullied because of the responses that he or she produces, e.g. crying, the sound of which may act as a reinforcer to some pupils.

None of these is a mitigating factor; *bullying is always totally unacceptable behaviour.*

Responsibilities

Governors are responsible for drawing up a discipline and behaviour policy for the whole school, including how the school addresses the issue of bullying. Governors will request from the Head Teacher regular reports on the incidence of bullying in school.

The Head Teacher is responsible for maintaining acceptable standards of behaviour and discipline throughout the school. Teachers (and other staff, in support of the teacher) are responsible for maintaining discipline in their classes. Parents are responsible for working with the school to encourage appropriate behaviour in pupils.

Prevention

Most bullying need not occur provided that good preventative measures are taken. These include:

- Pupils should be supervised at all times. Where pupils are learning to move independently around the school it is the duty of responsible staff to be fully aware of what is happening at those times – by following, by asking pupils, by sampling at certain times etc..
- At lunchtimes pupils should never be left unsupervised. Staff on duty should know clearly who they are responsible for, and should check constantly that these pupils are O.K.. They should monitor all areas of the playground (and indoor areas in use) systematically.
- At breacktimes and at lunchtimes pupils should be actively engaged in a wide variety of activities. Sufficient recreational opportunities need to be made available, and pupils should always have access to adequate and appropriate activities and equipment.
- Inclusive social behaviour should be promoted at all times, and staff should specifically include children who find it hard to build up relationships.

Curriculum and Ethos

The curriculum and ethos of the school should promote anti-bullying and respect for each other, by:

- Staff always speaking appropriately to pupils and to each other – using appropriate forms of communication
- Staff welcoming and including all pupils, staff and visitors
- Adults promoting self-esteem and self-respect in all pupils
- Adults leading by example and behaving with politeness and respect towards all
- Pupils being involved in drawing up and discussing the school rules
- Pupils learning to celebrate the achievements of self and others (e.g. through Achievement Assemblies)
- Staff accepting appropriate contributions from all pupils (e.g. in PE & Music, where children may achieve very different standards)
- Pupils' contributions being valued and appropriate attention given to them (e.g. pupil comments at Annual Review)
- Tasks being set which involve collaborative problem-solving

- Staff listening to pupils, taking what pupils say seriously, and acting appropriately
- Equal Opportunities issues being raised and discussed through lessons such as PSHE
- Adults adopting a collaborative approach to the resolution of conflict between pupils

Dealing with Bullying Incidents

Although they will be kept to a minimum, bullying incidents will occur in all schools, and they can only be tackled effectively if staff are aware that they need to look out for bullying and if they know what to do about it. Pupils will find it easier to talk to staff in schools where there is an atmosphere of openness and trust, and where pupils expect to be listened to and taken seriously.

General Principles

1. Immediate Response

A response must always be made to any instance, or any perceived instance, of bullying. The first concern should always be to reassure the victim that they are safe and that the situation will be taken seriously.

2. Supporting the Victim

On-going support may be needed, and their self-confidence and self-esteem may need to be built up. They need to know that they have not deserved what has happened to them. At an appropriate time they may need to learn specific social skills, e.g. joining in with games.

3. Follow-up Work with Bullies

Punishment will not stop bullying. Bullies need to learn that their actions are unacceptable; they need to learn to empathise with their victims; and they need to learn alternative ways of behaving. Staff should negotiate with them changes in their behaviour.

4. Parents

Parents of bullies may well deny that their child is a bully. Parents of victims may be unhappy with the school. School staff must be prepared to listen to parents, and explain to them why they have chosen particular courses of action.

Procedure

If a member of staff notices or believes that they have noticed an instance of bullying, they should follow the procedure outlined below:

- Ensure the safety of the victim
- Explain to the bully that what they are doing is unacceptable
- Inform the class teacher, who will either:
 - Deal with the incident themselves (after speaking to the class team) – deciding how best to negotiate changes in the bully’s behaviour, and whether any specific action needs to be taken, e.g. changes to levels of supervision, groupings, activities etc.
 - or:
 - Inform the appropriate Team Leader or Key Stage Manager, who will then (in conjunction with the class teacher) set up a programme for negotiating the required changes in behaviour, and will examine any other changes in procedure that need to take place
- The class teacher should inform the Head Teacher of the incident, and the Head Teacher will record the incident in the Incident Book (marked: “Bullying Incident”), and will inform parents if appropriate.

Guidance on how best to negotiate changes in bullying behaviour can be found in Leicestershire LEA’s Administrative Memorandum No. 86 (Together We Can Tackle Bullying: Guidance for Schools); and in the LEA’s Anti-Bullying Pack. Copies of both of these can be found in the Head Teacher’s Office.

In addition the school will take an active part in the local authority’s initiative to discover the extent of bullying in special schools by exploring ways of talking to pupils with learning difficulties.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Behaviour in school will be monitored on a regular basis by both staff and Governors. The Policy will be reviewed every two years.

Dorothy Goodman School April 2002

Reviewed and Amended April 2006