



## **WHOLE SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

### **Context**

Bromsgrove International School will not tolerate any form of bullying whether it be verbal, physical, or online. All forms of bullying are understood to be damaging and detrimental to young people and it is recognised that the physiological effects can be long lasting.

Our anti-bullying policy is practical and based on research and best practice from other schools. It aims to provide a secure and supportive environment that fosters an atmosphere where students can confide in staff, knowing that bullying incidents will be handled positively, and that by telling a member of staff it will stop.

### **How is this policy promoted to all concerned?**

- Activities to raise the level of awareness of bullying aimed at parents, students and staff, such as a calendared anti-bullying week.
- During the school year students will be reminded of the anti-bullying policy, through assemblies, the PSHE/BEAM curriculums and other activities.
- During the school year, should bullying be reported, the Pastoral teams will assess the need for additional education to be provided.
- This policy will be reviewed and evaluated periodically.

This Policy draws upon the DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education Sept 2024.

### **Aims**

We aim to create a safe and secure environment where all children can flourish. Bullying is unacceptable, and we have measures in place to reduce its likelihood. We treat all reports of bullying seriously and handle them fairly and calmly.

### **Objectives**

- Ensure that we provide a safe, secure environment for all students.
- Counter views that bullying is an inevitable part of school life.
- Increase awareness of bullying and to encourage debate and discussion amongst staff and students.
- Involve the whole staff and student body in combating bullying and making it unacceptable at Bromsgrove School
- Create a supportive climate and break down the climate of secrecy that often surrounds bullying.
- Encourage students who are being bullied or who observe bullying to inform staff.
- Highlight how we can educate students about bullying and relationships.
- Move beyond a crisis-management approach and above all try to prevent bullying occurring in the first place.
- Complement the School's behaviour and discipline policies.



## What is Bullying?

### Definitions

Bullying is a deliberately conscious, persistent and repeated behaviour to verbally, physically, psychologically or emotionally hurt another person. On some occasions, bullying can be a single incident in which the victim is made to feel hurt, humiliated, or intimidated. There will usually be a power imbalance in the bully/victim relationship such that the victim will have difficulty defending him or herself. This imbalance may be due to an age gap or obvious difference in physical stature. It can be carried out by an individual or a group. Bullying can be racial, religious, cultural, sexual/sexist, homophobic, disability or cyber.

For example, bullying can be:

- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures, insults about appearance or family)
- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Racist:** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures or any kind of racial harassment
- **Exclusion:** from social groups, spreading of malicious rumours
- **Sexual:** unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments. Homophobic taunting of a person because of a difference in sexual orientation or due to a transgender nature.
- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, insults about appearance or family
- **Cyber:** offensive e-mails, text messages, calls or use of photographs. There has been a big upsurge in bullying via email, text messaging, the creation of humiliating websites and abuse via social websites. Electronic devices have provided the ideal methods for bullying. See also the additional policy related to e-safety.
- **Misuse of associated technology:** i.e. camera and video facilities

Isolated or one-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a one-off hurtful text message or other private messaging do not fall within the definition of bullying and will be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy.

Bullying often and usually takes place away from staff; it can also be difficult to establish what happened and reports of bullying will often require time to be investigated both fairly and thoroughly for the sake of all parties. We must gather as much evidence as possible in order to establish what really happened. We also recognise that bullying takes place in all schools and in many other areas of society and that like all aspects of relationships between human beings we will need to work very hard at this aspect of pastoral care and must never be complacent about it.

### Our Ethos

The main factors that reduce and remove bullying are as follows:

- Create an environment and foster attitudes within the student body that bullying is unacceptable.
- Ensure that bullying can be easily reported – via various methods and with discussion with our Student Leadership Team.
- Educate students through assemblies, tutor time and in our BEAM curriculum, so that students understand bullying related to child on child abuse, and gender, racial and sexual harassment.
- Promote staff awareness, with training on a regular basis to ensure that staff remain concerned and vigilant at all times.

Schools which make clear their abhorrence of bullying and who take every incident seriously tend to have less bullying.



## **The Consequences of Bullying**

Bullying may lead to physical injury.

Children who are bullied suffer great psychological stress and there are a number of well-known symptoms, especially if they are the victim of a persistent campaign of bullying. Students may:

- feel confused, ill, nervous and experience recurring memories
- feel powerless, rejected, isolated
- suffer from impaired concentration, sleep difficulties and depression
- become withdrawn, suffer from loss of self-esteem and a negative self-image

The impact on the child's School career may also be significant:

- Some play truant as a result
- A school phobia may result
- Work will inevitably suffer

Generally, students who are bullied risk failure at School. Even worse, sometimes bullying endangers the whole child.

## **The duties and responsibilities of the school**

The Headmaster and Governors have a duty to:

- encourage within the School community good behaviour and respect for others through the promotion of high expectations
- prevent all forms of bullying among students.

When a school accepts a student onto the roll it takes responsibility for his or her physical, psychological and educational welfare. The focus should not just be on the students' educational attainment but on nurturing their emotional growth and making sure that they are safe.

The School should act as would 'the reasonably prudent parent' who would ensure that one sibling was not emotionally or physically abusing another. Our behaviour policy promotes intolerance and guidance of next steps when dealing with incidents of bullying and harassment.

In addition, it has an anti-bullying policy clearly understood by staff and students and available to parents.

## **Secondary Procedures**

- Students should feel that they can talk to any member of staff regarding any incidents of bullying they may have been victim to or witnessed.
- Students are encouraged to speak directly to their form tutors, Heads of Key Stage and are offered privacy and sensitivity when doing so.
- Students can self-report any incidents they have witnessed or experienced discretely via a QR code in their learning journals which will be regularly checked and actioned by Heads of Key Stage and Assistant Heads where necessary.
- Students can self refer directly to the school counsellor through drop in sessions or direct contact via email should they need to.



## **Staff Procedures**

First steps:

- Remain calm and avoid emotional reactions.
- Take all incidents seriously
- Consider if your reaction should be conducted in private
- Be reassuring and offer support to the victim
- Be clear with the perpetrator that their actions will be taken seriously and reported
- Report the incident via Engage or CPOMS depending on the circumstances.

Next steps:

- All reported cases will be investigated. Students must be confident that bullying will be investigated and taken seriously. Particular priority will be given to ensuring that the victim does not suffer any reprisals from the alleged bully or associates either during or after the investigation. Be aware that students are likely to see failure to respond or allegations, as toleration of bullying it is vital to act promptly and firmly to combat it whenever and wherever it occurs.
  - ◊ CPOMS should be used to record actions taken.

## **Reporting in Early Years**

1. Notify the Head of Early Years Campus or in their absence the Assistant Head via the Behaviour Tracking Log or CPOMS depending on the severity of the incident.
2. The Head of Early Years will review the situation (teachers report, CCTV, behaviour log, IEP's) and decide on the next steps.
3. The Head of Early Years Campus or the Assistant Head will speak to students involved and will document the discussions. Depending on the nature of the discussion another adult will be present to ensure an accurate record is kept and that the individual understands what has been recorded. Translation might be required, in this incident a TA or front office staff member would be asked to support. If appropriate we will notify the parents that we are looking into a highlighted concern.
4. Sanctions and next steps will be discussed and when appropriate, the Headmaster.
5. All parents will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and invited to meet with the Head of Early Years Campus to discuss the next steps.
6. Support, mentoring, supervision or counselling will be put into place to support the students involved.
7. If necessary, classroom teachers will be informed to be vigilant in spotting tensions involving students.
8. Records on CPOMS will be kept up to date.

Parents with concerns are encouraged to report matters to the school.

## **Reporting in Primary**

1. Notify the Assistant Head of Primary, Head of Primary or DSL via Engage or CPOMS depending on the severity of the incident.
2. The Assistant Head of Primary will liaise with the Head of Primary, and decide on appropriate action.
3. The Assistant Head of Primary or Head of Primary will collect statements from students involved and will notify the parents that an investigation is being conducted.
4. Sanctions and next steps will be discussed with the Assistant Head of Primary, Head of Primary, and when appropriate, the Headmaster.



5. All parents will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and invited to meet with the Head of Primary to discuss the next steps.
6. Counselling will be put into place to support the students involved.
7. If necessary, classroom teachers will be informed to be vigilant in spotting tensions involving students.
8. Records on CPOMS will be kept up to date.

Parents with concerns are encouraged to report matters to the school.

### **Reporting in Secondary**

1. Notify the Head Of Key Stage, Assistant Head of Secondary (Pastoral), or DSL via Engage or CPOMS depending on the severity of the incident.
2. The Head Of Key Stage will liaise with the Assistant Head of Secondary (Pastoral) and decide on appropriate action and, if necessary, involve the Head of Secondary.
3. The Head Of Key Stage will collect statements from students involved and will notify the parents that an investigation is being conducted.
4. Sanctions and next steps will be discussed with the Assistant Head of Secondary (Pastoral) and Head of Secondary.
5. All parents will be informed of the outcome of the investigation and invited to meet with the pastoral team to discuss the next steps.
6. Counselling will be put into place to support the students involved.
7. If necessary, classroom teachers will be informed to be vigilant in spotting tensions involving students.
8. Records on CPOMS will be kept up to date.

Parents with concerns are encouraged to report matters to the school.

### **Staff Awareness**

- Staff need to be very aware of areas of the School where bullying might take place and be sensitive to the times and situations when it is more likely to happen e.g. in toilets, in changing rooms, at break and lunch, when students are waiting to enter a classroom, meal queues or on School transport. Bullying can take place discreetly in classroom situations; teachers should be observant and act firmly and swiftly if they suspect or find evidence of bullying.
- Staff should be vigilant at all times in attending their duty points and ensure that they are actively watching for any signs of child on child abuse.
- Staff in boarding houses should be particularly observant; there is more scope for the bully because this is their home. However, at its best a boarding community can be very supportive and disapprove strongly of bullying.
- Staff are asked to watch for early signs of distress in students – deterioration of work, spurious illness, isolation, desire to remain with adults, avoiding friends at break times, erratic attendance. Staff need to be aware of racist and sexist language and actions and the need to take action even when the interactions can be considered as banter so as to create an environment where respect is of paramount importance.
- Staff training on bullying should be held each academic year to ensure everyone in the community knows how to respond appropriately when faced with bullying behaviours.
  - ◊ Information about peer on peer abuse can also be found within the Safeguarding and Child Protection Handbook for staff to refer to.



## **Education**

We can prevent and reduce bullying by making use of various strategies:

- Using targeted activities in tutor groups as part of the PSHE (Primary) or BEAM (Secondary) Pastoral Curriculum. For example, using drama, role-play, etc. within the formal curriculum to help students understand the feelings of bullied children and to practise the skills they need to avoid bullying.
- Information, resources and advice being available throughout the school in libraries and the school counsellor.
- Students' views are sought regularly through the action of student voice sessions.
- Students are supervised in key areas at key times with improved supervision in known problem areas.
- Short awareness-raising poster campaigns and special events.
- Liaison with parents and the community through meetings and other activities.
- Buddy schemes
- Anti-bullying workshops for students and assertiveness training via the School Counsellor.

Our assembly programme allows for a strong anti-bullying message to be conveyed as well as the BEAM Pastoral Programme.

Heads of Key Stage will also reinforce at appropriate times to individuals, groups and at assemblies. Survey results are shared with students in year groups.

There will be numerous opportunities through the curriculum, especially in PSHE/BEAM Pastoral. All staff can make use of opportune moments.

We should emphasise to students the importance of:

- conflict resolution and negotiating skills
- rights and responsibilities
- respect for others
- courtesy to others

## **Communication**

Throughout a case of bullying, good communication is vital, especially with those students involved. Staff should make clear to parents of victims and bullies the actions we are taking, why we are taking them and what they can do to help and enforce our actions. Poor communication simply adds to the problem and can create the impression the School is not taking the matter seriously enough.

## **Information to staff**

Staff should be informed of ongoing cases that are being investigated and the outcome. Email can be used to inform staff. The senior member of staff leading the case should use the confidential email format as per policy.

At the end of the investigation the outcome should be communicated to staff electronically.



## **Supporting Victims**

Anyone can be bullied but certain students can be particularly vulnerable:

- those from ethnic minorities
- those with special educational needs
- those who stammer or may have some disability
- those who may lack confidence in peer group situations
- children who may seem different in some way – quiet, shy, alone, physically smaller

It must be recognised that the first priority is to support and protect the victim of bullying i.e. to raise their self-esteem, to offer support to counter feelings of inferiority and guilt.

It is also important to support witnesses; they can be deeply affected as they can often experience feelings of guilt. Regular education of the “bystander effect” should be offered during pastoral time.

For primary school children, it is crucial to fully understand what constitutes bullying. While we take every accusation of bullying seriously, it is important for both children and parents to recognise that bullying behavior is typically repeated, often over a long period of time, and differs from a falling out among friends. Bullying is rarely a single act of inappropriate behaviour.

## **Working with the perpetrators**

We need to consider:

- the antecedent conditions making the bully behave as she or he is the behaviour itself
- what the consequences of the behaviour are and whether this might be perpetuating the bullying

Depending on the age of the child, the relevant staff (class teacher, form tutor or Head of Key Stage) will seek to discuss the behaviour with the perpetrator and aim to better understand how the behaviour has come about.

Where appropriate the school counsellors will support the child to modify their behaviour and to understand the impact of their actions in order to avoid repeated incidents of bullying.

## **Working with parents**

Bullying is a highly emotive issue and little else can rival it in this regard. Parents of victims can rightly become very upset on behalf of their child, very protective and/or angry and upset. Parents of victims often feel helpless; parents of bullies often do not know and also feel very vulnerable and defensive when they find out.

All forms of bullying should be reported to parents, even if it is to inform them of what has happened and that we have taken action. It is important to be fully open with parents.

- Staff should make clear to parents of victims and bullies, the actions we are taking, why we are taking them and what they can do to help and reinforce our actions.
- We urge parents to contact us immediately if they have any suspicion of bullying; sometimes schools may be unaware of a problem.
- The word bullying is an emotive word. Providing examples of what has happened may prove to be better instead of labelling a student a bully if evidence is not clear.



- Contact with parents should be made to inform them that their child is under investigation.
- Details of the specific incident and sanctions should also be conveyed to parents, ideally with a face to face parent meeting and then followed up in writing. Any suspensions or exclusions given will be issued both verbally and in writing from the Headmaster.

### **Sanctions and Next Steps**

As always, any sanction must be proportionate to the offence and should allow the student to make amends where appropriate. Follow school discipline procedures.

- Minor Offences: Discipline for minor offences might include a reprimand, detention or withdrawal of certain privileges.
- Serious Offences: A range of sanctions may be used, from internal suspensions to exclusions that are spent at home. Permanent exclusion must be a last resort. Only the most serious and persistent cases would justify permanent exclusions.

### **Informal Discipline**

Bullying is rarely solved by sanctions; listening and talking to students is paramount to understanding the root cause of bullying and the best way to change attitudes. Sanctions are not always the best way to repair relationships and to overcome bullying. Sometimes it is important to do a lot of talking and listening to students and take considerable time in fact-finding and reaching a resolution. Unless there is imminent danger to a child, instant action is not required.

Many students, when confronted with their actions that are deemed to be bullying, will not repeat the behaviours. As with all disciplines, we must be consistent and fair. Actions for bullying require adaptable and flexible thinking and good communication within a team to determine the right outcome.