



Anti-Bullying Policy



REDUCING CONFLICT INCREASING UNDERSTANDING

What is bullying?

Definition

To include racist, cultural, sexist, cyber, SEN, homophobic bullying.

Schools exist in a society where intimidation and harassment occur. Bullying must be taken seriously and is not acceptable in any form.

Students have the right to expect that they will spend the school day free from the fear of bullying, harassment and intimidation.

Bullying

- Devalues, isolates and frightens
- Affects an individual's ability to achieve
- Has long term effects on those engaging in bullying behaviour, those who are the subjects of bullying behaviour and the onlookers or bystanders.

Teachers, students, parents, caregivers and members of the wider community have a responsibility to work together to address bullying.

Our approach

The emphasis of much of our work is to break this cycle of rivalry and conflict, to encourage the pupils to **want** to co-operate and care for each other. In examples of clear cut bullying the importance of this process being implemented skilfully and effectively is heightened.

We do not believe that punitive reaction to bullying has a long-term effect in reducing bullying, and could be argued to reinforce bullying as an approach for life. At best a sanction might relieve the victim for a short period of time; at worse it can increase the anger and resentment towards the victim. If bullying is based on power and intimidation then by imposing sanctions on a bully, they are in effect being overpowered and intimidated, (all be it by those in authority and for the right motive.)

Our bullying policy is reviewed at least annually or immediately if changing circumstances demand it.

Much of our staff training involves understanding the nature of conflict and the development of skills to diffuse confrontations. We firmly believe that through the systematic application of these skills to all conflicts but especially bullying, we can build constructively from negative experiences.

Our approach is three-fold.

- To build an ethos of non-confrontation
- Through mediation between the victim and the perpetrators or perpetrator.
- Counselling

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Building an ethos of co-operation

In all our dealings with the pupils, staff emphasise the importance of respecting the feelings and emotions of others. If a pupil has aggressive tendencies, s/he is made aware of this issue through the target setting process. There is then an expectation that the pupil will consciously work with the support of staff to reducing this problem.

The curriculum builds on this ethos directly through PSHE and our Outdoor Education programme. At key times pupils in PSHE are asked directly about bullying in their experiences in care or at school. Much of the programme for Outdoor Education demands team building and co-operation skills in physically and mentally demanding situations.

The Process

When an incident occurs the following process should be put into practice.

- a) Talking with the victim
The victim must be given time and the opportunity to speak. At Headstart, they are likely to want to concentrate on the facts and revenge. The member of the staff will allow the victim to off load but will then lead the conversation towards talking about their feelings
The meeting should conclude with the member of staff sympathising with the victim and saying that they will go and see the perpetrator. The member of staff will end the meeting by arranging to see the victim again.

- b) Talking with an individual or group
The member of staff will then see the perpetrator. This meeting will be particularly effective if some time has elapsed since the incident so that the perpetrator is less defensive. It is important that this conversation does not get tied down investigating the facts. The conversation needs to

move on to trying to find out the reasons behind the needs of the perpetrator to intimidate others. A useful strategy is to talk about the individual's relationships with other pupils, staff or other adults and not the victim.

If the conversation proceeds well and moves away from "he deserved it", staff should try to get the child to think about how the victim feels.
The meeting should conclude with an agreement on how the pupil should behave in relation to the victim and to others generally.

- c) Follow up meeting
It is essential that both the victim and the perpetrator/perpetrators are seen later to see if the issue has died down. If there is a continuation of the problem then the dialogue needs to be started again. For things to progress, the same principle applies, concentrating on the reasons behind the bullying and not the bullying itself.

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Documentation

All incidents are documented in the incident book. The comment should include the actions taken by the staff.

Conclusion

This anti-bullying policy alone will not stop bullying. Bullying is an aspect of life that we strongly believe can only be reduced through an understanding of why it happens. Our policy is directed at improving this understanding, thereby reducing the need for a bully to bully and as such is an integral part of the project's ethos and philosophy.

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