



FRANCIS HOLLAND SCHOOL REGENT'S PARK

Name of Policy	Anti-Bullying
Author	SLT
Committee for Review & Approval	Education
Date of Last Revision	January 2016
Date of Committee Approval	February 2016
Date of Council Approval	March 2016
Date of Next School Review	January 2018
Date of Next Committee Review & Approval	February 2018
Date of Next Council Approval	March 2018
Regulation Number	Part 3 10
Regulation Description	Written policy to prevent bullying with regard to DfE Guidance Preventing & tackling Bullying May 2012

Availability of this document:

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Anti-Bullying

Definition of Bullying

The Government defines bullying as behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can make the lives of its victims a misery: it can cause serious psychological damage, undermining the victim's confidence and self-esteem and destroying their sense of security. At worst, bullying can be a factor in suicide. Additionally, those who conduct bullying or witness the bullying can also experience emotional harm; the impact on parents and school staff can also be significant.

Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour including the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Communications Act 2003, the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and the Public Order Act 1986.

The Malicious Communications Act 1988 addresses cyber-bullying: it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which 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.

Other specific types of bullying include:

- Bullying related to race, religion, or culture;
- Bullying related to special educational needs or disabilities;
- Bullying related to appearance or health conditions;
- Bullying related to sexual orientation (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender);
- Bullying of young carers or looked after children or otherwise related to home circumstances;
- Sexist or sexual bullying.

Aims

The aim of our anti-bullying policy is to clarify for students and staff that bullying is always unacceptable. We wish to encourage an environment where independence is celebrated and individuals can flourish without fear. Every student has the right to be safe and happy in school, and to be protected when she is feeling vulnerable. It is important that we promote an atmosphere in which the entitlement of each individual member of the community to respect and courtesy is fully understood, and victims and witnesses of bullying know that on approaching a member of staff they will be taken seriously.

Objectives

- To clarify that bullying, is unacceptable;
- To ensure that students and staff are clear about the roles that they can take in preventing bullying;
- To develop girls' self-esteem and suggest strategies for assertiveness and dealing with difficult and threatening situations;
- To ensure that pupils who experience bullying know how to report bullying and are confident in the school's ability to help;
- To ensure that pupils who experience bullying are safeguarded and supported;

- To hold pupils who engage in bullying behaviour to account for their behaviour through appropriate sanctions and taking steps to repair the harm that they have caused;
- To ensure that both victims and bullies are advised and supported to prevent recurrence.

The principal ways in which bullying takes place are physical, verbal, emotional or in the form of cyber-bullying.

Bullying off school premises

The school takes seriously incidents of bullying which take place off school premises. Where such incidents are reported to school staff, they will be investigated and acted upon under provisions in the Education and Inspections Act (2006).

Possible Signs of Bullying

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness or clinging to adults. They may show changes in their work pattern, may lack concentration, try to take more time off school or even truant from school. We look out for such changes and parents know to contact us if they have any concerns or we communicate our concerns with parents.

Encouraging Disclosure

It is important that we create an atmosphere in the school where students who are being bullied, or others who know about it, feel that they will be listened to and believed, and that action will be swift but sensitive to their concerns. It should be clear that not telling protects the bully or bullies and gives the message that they can continue, perhaps bullying others too.

Encouraging an environment in which bullying is reported is important:

- To make clear to the bully the results of her actions, in order to help her to stop behaving in this way, and to improve and develop as a person;
- To make the whole community aware of the need to tackle bullying swiftly and efficiently.
- To allow records to be kept and monitored to enable patterns to be identified thereby aiding prevention of bullying.

Procedures

If bullying is suspected or reported, the Head of Year – or Pastoral Deputy Head will discuss the matter with all parties, individually or together as considered appropriate. Every effort will be made to resolve the issue through discussion while making it clear to the bully that her behaviour is not acceptable, and has caused distress. Parents of both parties may be informed. Clear factual written records will be made of everything that has occurred to enable possible patterns to be identified in future. The situation will continue to be monitored with support as necessary given to the student who has been bullied.

Detailed procedure

If bullying is suspected the following procedure should be implemented; speed is important. Steps 1 and 2 should happen within one day – two days at the most.

1. The Head of Year – or Pastoral Deputy Head– interviews the victim of bullying to ascertain facts of situation. As soon as possible and within at least twelve hours of this conversation, the girl writes a concise and absolutely honest account of what she has experienced. This is given directly to the Head of Year or Pastoral Deputy Head. It is emphasised to the girl that no-one else should be shown this account. Depending on the circumstance of the case, the Pastoral Deputy Head or Head of Year will determine whether to inform parents at this stage.
2. The Head of Year/Pastoral Deputy Head interviews the alleged bully and then asks her to write her version of events – procedure as above. If several girls are implicated, each girl is interviewed separately and asked to write an absolutely individual account of her version of events. Again, ensure speed in account(s) being handed in to the Head of Year/Pastoral Deputy Head.
3. The parents of the victim should normally be contacted to keep them informed of how we are responding to this situation.
4. Within 48 hours of step one, the Head of Year/Pastoral Deputy Head sees both the victim and the alleged bully together. Both girls' accounts will by this point have been read and considered by Head of Year/Pastoral Deputy Head and form teacher. This is a crucial meeting – will normally need at least 40 uninterrupted minutes. Judicious selection of phrases from each pupil's account used to make both girls aware of how their actions have affected the other girl. The aim of this meeting is to effect lasting reconciliation.
5. The parents of the alleged bully and the parents of the victim should be kept informed (preferably by phone) of our response and the outcome.
6. Girls' accounts and the outcome of the situation are kept on girls' files for subsequent weeks and months; the situation must be closely monitored by the head of year and form teacher. All staff should be alerted to look out for any recurrence of bullying behaviour. Records of allegations of bullying are kept centrally by the Pastoral Deputy Head and monitored to allow identification of patterns incidents.

Should the Head of Year/Pastoral Deputy Head be unavailable, the Deputy Head should conduct the anti-bullying procedure. The form teacher and the Head must be kept fully informed from the very beginning of stage one. All phone calls with parents to be recorded by staff on file notes, in the normal way.

Staff responsibilities and preventative strategies

We recognise that pupils may be reluctant to report bullying for fear of repeat harm. It is therefore important that staff show that they can support pupils to prevent harm, that bullying is not tolerated and that there are solutions which work. Pupils need to receive a clear message that nobody ever deserves to be bullied.

Staff receive regular INSET to increase their awareness of bullying issues and preventative strategies. The Anti-Bullying Policy forms part of new Staff Induction and there are regular reminders of it in Staff Meetings. Form tutors also deliver elements of the PSHE programme which addresses bullying, assertiveness and related matters.

Additionally, staff seek to acknowledge and praise the successes and skills of individuals, in order to help them to develop their self-esteem and become less vulnerable to bullying. Staff need to be sensitive to the possible effects of their communications with pupils, and aim at consistent fairness, in accordance with the Child Protection policy. No member of staff should ever deliberately humiliate a girl. (Please see Code of Conduct).

Bullying is addressed through the curriculum:

- By dealing with the topic of bullying within the PSHE programme in a way which explores why it happens and gives alternative ways of behaving and dealing with difficulties;
- The PSHE programme also deals with issues which may give rise to prejudice;
- By using creative learning through Art, Music and Drama to develop understanding of feelings and develop pupils' social and emotional skills;
- By raising awareness of the negative consequences of bullying in literature, historical events etc;
- By using teaching methods that encourage co-operative work and a variety of groupings so that students extend their relationships beyond a small group of friends;
- By holding assemblies that raise awareness of the school's anti-bullying policy and help to develop emotional literacy;
- By the adults of the community striving to set an example of sympathetic community life, where appropriate care and concern is shown between each other and between students and staff.
- By every member of staff showing clear disapproval of any exclusive or unfriendly behaviour;
- When group work is undertaken in lessons, by organising groups to avoid exclusion of the vulnerable in the class.

Vigilance outside the classroom

- Any instances of deliberate unkindness, exclusion, or overt bullying witnessed by a member of staff should be reported straight away to the form tutor or Head of Year. Teachers need to be particularly vigilant at times and in places where victims are more vulnerable and bullying is less easily seen, including:
 - At breaks;
 - Travelling times between lessons;
 - In classrooms between lessons;
 - In the areas of the playground;
 - In cloakrooms and toilets;
 - In corridors and stairwells;
 - In the dining room;
 - Before the member of staff arrives for the start of the lesson and at the end.

To reduce the likelihood of bullying taking place in these areas, the following preventative measures have been put in place:

- Staff Duty Rota – to ensure effective supervision at break time and lunchtime;
- SLT patrolling the school to ensure duty rota is effectively enforced;
- Guidance to staff about the necessity for punctuality to lessons and registration;

- Reminders to staff at briefings about the importance of carrying out duties;
- Supervision of the changing rooms before and after PE lessons;
- CCTV cameras in certain parts of the school;
- Restricted access, at school, to social networking websites e.g. Facebook;
- Restricted use of mobile phones in school.

Staff should be sensitive to the possible effects of their communications with pupils, and aim at consistent fairness. No member of staff should ever deliberately humiliate a girl.

Steps to combat cyber-bullying

To combat cyber-bullying, the school actively manages hardware, software and connectivity as part of our safeguarding procedures. Both staff and parents are reminded of the importance of vigilance in this respect. Access to social networking sites in school is restricted.

Sanctions

The school will always support victims of any form of bullying. If the bullying behaviour continues and discussion has not worked, then sanctions for the bully will follow. The sanction may involve an after school detention but any sanction available to the school may be used to correct, punish or remove a pupil who bullies, in or out of school. Suspension or even exclusion may be necessary in the case of severe and persistent bullying. For more information please see the Behaviour and Sanctions Policy.

Safeguarding

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, Miss Colette Mahieu who will make the necessary referral to the local authority children's services if appropriate. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, the school may need to draw on a range of external services to support the pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in bullying.