



Odyssey House School – Wokingham

Anti-Bullying Policy

IMPORTANT:

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- **Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy**
- **Behaviour Management Policy**
- **Equality, Diversity & Respect Policy**

Introduction

We aim to establish a whole school positive culture in which all members of the community feel safe and confident, and treat each other with respect and courtesy, particularly with regard to individual differences. To this end, bullying will be eliminated.

This policy should be read and understood in the context of our Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, and our approach to personal, social, healthcare and economic education.

Our policy has been written in the context of our responsibilities under:

- The Equality Act 2010. The Act makes it unlawful in England and Wales for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil, exclude them or subject them to any other detriment.
- The Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 (as amended)

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, staff will deal with the concern in line with the school Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The support of external services may be accessed to tackle any underlying issues which have contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

What do we mean by bullying?

Bullying involves an imbalance of power which makes it hard for those being bullied to defend themselves. This may be seen or felt physically, online or psychologically, and includes social isolation or intimidation, as well as any threat of violence. It is defined as follows:

- It is deliberately hurtful behaviour; and
- It is repeated over time.

Bullying may take various forms, and is often motivated by prejudice, including:

- Cyber: The use of electronic communications including email, mobile phones, text/multi-media messaging, photographs/video, online profiling, websites, social networks, and instant messaging; all with the intention to frighten, embarrass or harass. This can happen at any time of day with a potentially wider audience and more accessories as people forward on with a simple click;
- Disability: because of, or focusing on, the issue of disability;
- Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures);
- Homophobic or Transphobic: because of, or focusing on, the issues of sexuality and/or gender identity;
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence inflicted on another individual;
- Racist/Cultural/Religious: racial, cultural or religious taunts, comments or gestures;
- Sexual: sexually abusive taunts, comments or gestures; and
- Verbal: for example, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours.

We believe that bullying is a behaviour choice and that anyone can be encouraged to change their behaviour. It can be an individual or a group.

We respect difference and welcome diversity in our children, young people and in society in general, and believe our school should be inclusive.

We believe that pupils should have the right to feel safe, secure and valued and that creating a safe environment and dealing with bullying is everyone's responsibility.

We support a range of positive strategies to deal with bullying and actively challenge the use of humiliation, fear, ridicule and other similar approaches to reduce bullying.

Bullying can result in long-term psychological damage and, in extreme cases, suicide. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation including transgender, special educational needs and/or disability, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Any prejudice-based language is unacceptable.

Bullying is not a criminal offence. However, there are criminal laws in the UK which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour. If we feel that an offence may have been committed our staff will seek assistance from the police.

Education trips and visits are a part of everyday school life and, as such, this policy applies in full when pupils are off site, on work connected to the school. Moreover, teachers have a power to discipline pupils in a reasonable way for conduct on and off the school premises. As such, any bullying incidents occurring off the premises, such as on public transport, school buses or in the local community, will fall under this policy and be treated accordingly. If the matter involves criminal activity, the police will always be informed.

Bullying which is deemed to be illegal must be reported to the police.

The children and young people at Odyssey House School – Wokingham have a wide-range of complex needs. As a school community we understand that bullying in this context can have additional subtleties and raise issues that are in themselves complicated to resolve. Not all students at the school will recognise bullying behaviour if they experience it; equally not all students would recognise their own behaviour as bullying towards another individual. Cognitive understanding and communication impairment are strong factors in how/what the children and young people communicate. As such, the school will take into account the needs of the children and try and help them understand the impact of their actions or behaviours on other members of the school community (e.g. use of inappropriate language as a result of having tourettes)

Bullying will not be tolerated at Odyssey and will be dealt with robustly. The school community has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment.

Objectives

Our policy is implemented whenever the school is responsible for the conduct and welfare of children and young people. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and all staff are responsible for its implementation.

Our objectives are to:

- Enable pupils to understand clearly what constitutes bullying and to understand that bullying, whatever its form, will not be tolerated by the school community;
Make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted upon;
- Enable parents to feel confident that bullying incidents will be firmly dealt with by the school;
Create a safe environment and promote an inclusive ethos in the school where pupils can discuss the cause of bullying without fear of further bullying or discrimination;
- Raise staff awareness of the presence of different types of bullying, and an awareness of groups of pupils who are bullied disproportionately;
- Establish guidelines for action where bullying is evident;
- Develop a range of effective strategies for pupils to learn about moral and social issues;
- Ensure pupils are able to explain how we expect them to behave; and
- Celebrate success as an important way of creating a positive school ethos around anti-bullying.

Our Procedures

Effective staff training is an important aspect of our work to prevent and tackle bullying, including the different types of bullying. All staff have had relevant training and understand the importance of this policy. In particular, our Senior Leadership Team ensures that all staff understand the principles and purpose of the school's policy, the legal responsibilities, how to resolve problems and where to seek support. We use specialised skills to help our staff understand the needs of any pupils, including special educational needs and/or disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT+) pupils.

We all understand that bullying can occur in any school and that we have a responsibility to be vigilant for incidents, especially at times and in places where it is more likely to occur. Given the layout of our school building we are able to monitor pupils closely and staff support pupils during break times as well to ensure that they have adult supervision at all times.

We aim to ensure staff feel confident to consistently tackle all forms of bullying and that pupils are empowered to say "no" to bullying.

If a member of staff suspects that bullying is taking place, or a disclosure is made to them about an incident of bullying, they should always consult a senior member of staff. Under the guidance of a senior staff member, an age-appropriate investigation should take place. Separate meetings, at which all conversations should be recorded in writing, should be arranged with those involved to establish their version of events and assure them that the situation will be dealt with sensitively but firmly and fully.

Parents of both parties are always kept fully informed about how the alleged bullying is being handled.

A proven allegation of serious bullying will result in immediate action being taken against the pupil who has committed the behaviour and also provide immediate support to the pupil

against whom the behaviour was displayed ensure that any child who, with the possible involvement of the police. Following the incident, a senior staff member oversees the monitoring of the situation, liaising directly with the relevant teacher to check that further bullying is not occurring.

Parents are asked to keep the school and staff informed of any concerns and encourage their child to report any incidents immediately to an appropriate staff member. The COO or another member of the SLT will ensure that the incident and any action taken are formally recorded in the behaviour incident log.

Successful Intervention Strategies

- We apply the relevant consequences (sanctions) as detailed in our Behaviour policy, to those who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong. In accordance with our Behaviour Policy, we apply sanctions fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account of any special educational needs or disabilities that pupils may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- We also consider carefully the motivating factors which may have affected the bullying behaviour and whether it indicates any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the child engaging in the bullying behaviour may need support themselves.
- We involve parents to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and that they are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. We make sure that our parents feel confident that we will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way which protects the child.
- We involve pupils so they understand our approach towards bullying and so they are clear in the part they have to play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders.
- We regularly evaluate our approach and ensure that our policy and practice is up to date.
- We make sure that the consequences of bullying reflect the seriousness of the incident, so that others see that bullying is unacceptable.
- We teach pupils that using any prejudice-based language is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- We work with the wider community, such as the police and children's services, where bullying is particularly serious or persistent and where a criminal offence may have been committed.
- We make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted upon.
- We draw on the expertise of specialist organisations with a proven track record in dealing with bullying to ensure our practices are effective and keep children safe.
- We ensure that notices are placed around school which provide appropriate telephone numbers and email addresses for children to contact organisations such as ChildLine and CEOP.
- We listen to our pupils' voice at all times and act accordingly.
- We aim to use restorative approaches in school which focus on reconciliation with those who have been harmed. This enables all those affected by any incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward, enabling everyone to prevent conflict and build relationships.
- It is important for the school to understand the motivation behind any bullying and whether it reveals any cause for concern about the safety of the perpetrator. This is because the bully may need support themselves.
- In serious or persistent cases, parents should be informed and may be asked to come into a meeting to discuss the problem and, if necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted. All attempts will be made to help the bully or bullies change their behaviour. This may include referral to outside agencies or specialist programmes of support.

- Our school uses restorative practice which includes a facilitated meeting being held to enable individuals and groups to work together to improve their mutual understanding of what has taken place and to jointly agree the best solution moving forwards. Sometimes a less formal approach is used with the same principles in place, depending on the nature of the incident. Restorative practice provides an opportunity for everyone to reflect on how they interact with each other and consider how best to prevent harm and conflict, recognising everyone has a part to play and is responsible as such.

Incidents of bullying will be recorded by relevant pastoral staff. This will enable patterns to be identified, and keeping records of bullying incidents will also enable the school to:

- Manage individual cases effectively;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies;
- Celebrate the anti-bullying work of the school; and
- Respond effectively and swiftly to concerns from parents.

The most obvious strategy is the use of appropriate consequences and learning programmes to deal with those pupils who are found to be bullying. Such consequences have three main purposes, namely to:

- Impress on the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable;
- Deter him/her from repeating that behaviour; and
- Signal to other pupils that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

Sanctions for bullying are intended to hold pupils who bully to account for their behaviour and to ensure that they face up to the harm that they have caused and learn from it. They also provide an opportunity for the pupil to put right the harm they have caused. Sanctions available are detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy and will be applied fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account the needs of vulnerable pupils. Ultimately, bullies will not be tolerated at this school and all members of the school community have 3 key Odyssey rights of which one is Being Safe.

We have powers to search included within the Education Act 2011 to tackle cyber-bullying, including, where necessary, deletion of inappropriate images or files on electronic devices, including mobile phones. We use this power under the specific authority of the Headteacher and/or CEO only and where there is good reason to do so, i.e. that it could be used to harm children, disrupt teaching or break the school rules. There are no general searches carried out by the school on pupils

Roles and Responsibilities/strategies

The Proprietor

- Creating the right ethos for the school that ensures it is an inclusive environment.
- Review anti-bullying data presented by the senior leaders on a termly basis to ensure that the school practices are in line with its policies
- Ensure the school is promoting equality for its whole community.

The Headteacher & the SLT

To deliver and organise any necessary training for staff to ensure they understand and implement the anti-bullying policy.

To act as a port of call to advise staff on any bullying related matter

To liaise with external agencies as necessary in partnership to support anti-bullying strategies

Ensure regular review of anti-bullying policy and practice to keep it up to date, including analysis of data published under its single equality scheme.

Keep up to date on bullying related data from the school's behaviour report analysis and plan appropriate interventions either at an individual or whole school level.

Promote anti-bullying week and anti-bullying work in general. Ensure the curriculum covers anti-bullying.

Work with families so that they are aware of the school's policy/practice and specific circumstances if they arise.

To ensure bullying is factored into any analysis of student behaviour

Ensure that behavioural recording systems record any instances of bullying

All school staff

To be constantly monitoring the students for bullying-related behaviour and follow the correct procedure where evidence points towards bullying taking place.

To be constantly modelling high standards of behaviour and to have high expectations for all the students.

The Pupils' Voice

School staff should be constantly vigilant for signs that a student may be subject to bullying behaviour expressed either through a student voice or from signs such as distress, change in mood, injury, change in behavioural norms. Claims or expressions of bullying made by pupils will be taken seriously.

Monitoring and evaluation

The SLT is responsible for maintaining a bullying log which includes instances of bullying.

The SLT is responsible for the implementation of this policy and for reviewing from time to time to evaluate its implementation and impact.

The SLT reports on behaviour and bullying at governance meetings. This forms the monitoring and evaluation function of the proprietor. The Proprietor will review termly, a

report from a member of the Senior Leadership Team on instances of bullying during the year to ensure that procedures are adequate.

Where there are concerns regarding the school's approach to dealing with bullying, these will be explored by the School Proprietor.

Staff will regularly evaluate and update their approach to bullying to take into account the developments in technology.

Appendix 1

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs of behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school vehicle / taxi
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing" asks for money or
- starts stealing money to pay bully
- has possessions or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous and jumpy when a cyber message is received

This is not an exhaustive list.

These signs and behaviour could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Appendix 2

The law and statutory guidance with respect to bullying

THE EQUALITY ACT 2010

Under the Equality Act 2010, new duties on schools and other public bodies came into force from April 2011. The Act strengthens and simplifies existing equality legislation. The Act brings together existing duties not to discriminate on grounds of race, disability and gender which schools are already bound to comply with, and it extends these to include duties not to discriminate on the grounds of age, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or gender re-assignment. It places a requirement on governing bodies and proprietors of schools to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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 their local authority children's social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, schools 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 doing the bullying.

CRIMINAL LAW

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communication Act 1988, 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.

BULLYING OUTSIDE SCHOOL PREMISES

Head teachers have a specific statutory power to discipline pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives head teachers the power to regulate pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, in a town or village centre, cyber bullying or via social networking sites.

Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The SLT should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the actions taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.