



Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy was originally drawn up with regard to the DCSF Guidance – Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence and the subsequent DCSF Guidance – Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-bullying Work in Schools. It has been further revised with regard to DfE Guidance 2011 Health and Safety DfE Advice on Legal Duties and Powers for Local Authorities, Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies. The policy specifically embraces the key elements contained within that guidance. The policy also reflects and supports the principles of the Every Child Matters initiative and includes EYFS.

The school recognises its Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 with regard to race, disability, gender, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and has due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share it.

The school further recognises that it is unlawful to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or potential pupil in relation to admissions (notwithstanding the requirements of the Admissions and Admissions Register Policy), the way it provides education for pupils, provision of pupil access to any benefit, facility or service, or by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment.

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern where 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 act in accordance with the school's Child Protection Safeguarding Policy.

Criminal Law

Although bullying in itself is not a criminal offence in the UK, the school recognises that some types of threatening behaviour – or communications – could be 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.

Aims and Objectives

WEST HOUSE SCHOOL DOES NOT CONDONE INTIMIDATION AND BULLYING UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES

This policy aims to ensure the provision of a safe, caring and protective environment for all pupils, in which bullying cannot thrive. The school recognises that every child has a right to an education free from all forms of bullying and condemns such behaviour for the following reasons:-

- It puts the educational and emotional development of the victim at risk. It can cause psychological damage and in extreme but rare circumstances it can be a contributory factor in episodes of self-harm and suicide.
- Bullying behaviour may encourage others to join up against the victim. Therefore, they, as well as the victim, may be harmed psychologically.
- Bullying adversely affects the atmosphere of a class in particular and the ethos of the school in general.

The policy is designed to ensure that all members of the West House community are aware of the signs of bullying and are equipped with the necessary strategies to counter it. It sits alongside the school's behaviour policy in addressing a specific aspect of serious anti-social behaviour and promotes consistency of approach through the employment of appropriate support measures and staged sanctions.

What is Bullying?

It is important that both teachers and pupils recognise bullying behaviour in order to be able to deal with it. It is made clear to pupils and staff that bullying can take many forms – physical, verbal or psychological – and that the distress caused is not acceptable.

- Physical bullying – hitting, kicking or other physical or sexual assault; taking possessions.
- Verbal bullying – name calling or remarks deliberately intended to cause offence or hurt. These may focus on the following: race, religion, culture, gender, sexuality, disability, ability and special educational needs.
- Indirect psychological bullying – spreading nasty statements about someone; excluding someone from social groups.
- Cyber-bullying – aggressive, intentional acts carried out using electronic forms of contact such as email, text messaging, photographs or social websites.

Bullying is often pre-meditated and persistent, and may involve one or more individuals undermining the confidence and self esteem of others.

What isn't Bullying?

While the school takes matters of alleged bullying extremely seriously, examples of episodes that do not constitute bullying are highlighted. These typically include isolated incidents of games where an individual may become too rough, or where friends fall out over a break-time game of football. However, even in these circumstances, should a pattern of negative behaviour become evident, the school will take appropriate action in line with this policy and the Policy on Pupil Behaviour.

Signs of Bullying

Staff and parents should be aware that children who are being bullied will potentially exhibit symptoms in many different ways. These may take the form of the following:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety or becoming withdrawn and unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoiled by others
- Personal possessions being damaged or going missing
- Diminished levels of self-confidence
- Repeated claims of feeling unwell
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Erratic attendance or late arrival to lessons
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping
- Talking of running away and suicide

Prevention of Cyber-bullying

The potential for instances of cyber-bullying have become increasingly apparent within educational settings during recent years. West House School adopts a zero tolerance approach to this form of bullying, in line with the approach to other forms of bullying. Pupils who are either perpetrators or victims of this form of bullying at school are treated in the same way as those involved in other forms of bullying.

However, mobile phones are prohibited other than on residential visits and the ICT room is only used under supervision. Therefore, the potential for instances of cyber-bullying during the school day is slight. Nevertheless, should a case of cyber-bullying become apparent, the sanctions outlined hereafter will be applied.

Where instances of cyber-bullying occur outside school hours, pupils and parents are advised to save a record of the incident and bring it to the attention of the school.

In all cases of cyber-bullying, the school will seek to advise and support perpetrators, victims and parents, principally through raising awareness. The school has incorporated the management of cyber-bullying into the delivery of the SEAL Unit 3: Say No to Bullying, as part of the PSHE curriculum.

Strategies to prevent bullying

The school adopts a zero tolerance attitude to bullying and all matters relating to allegations of bullying are referred to the Headmaster. Pupils are made aware of the fact that such matters are dealt with at the most senior level and this is emphasised throughout assemblies during the year. Thus, pupils are taught to recognise the school's stance and this acts as a deterrent to potential bullies.

Furthermore, through the delivery of the SEAL strategy in PSHE lessons, matters relating to bullying are given significant attention during the year. All staff share a responsibility to deliver the SEAL unit 'Say no to Bullying' and this again emphasises a united approach to prevention by the school. Other educational elements such as projects, drama, stories, literature, historical events and current affairs are also used appropriately.

Pupils entering the school are given a child-friendly information booklet designed to raise their awareness of the issue and therefore act as a preventative measure.

The school is acutely aware of potential 'hot spots' and careful management of playtimes in relation to restrictions and staffing are in place to minimise the risk to an individual pupil. Risk assessments relating to playtimes cover specific strategies to prevent bullying.

Throughout their schooling, pupils are actively encouraged to speak out and are reminded regularly that all incidents will be thoroughly investigated. A community culture opposed to bullying is thus created and maintained from the most junior to the most senior member of the school.

Instances of homophobic, sexist or racial bullying, involving either staff or pupils, will be governed by this policy and, in the case of pupils, the sanctions laid out hereafter will be employed appropriately.

In alleged cases of staff being bullied, the member of staff should report the matter to the Headmaster or a member of the Senior Management Team. The matter will be addressed in accordance with the Grievance Procedures outlined in the Contract of Employment.

Procedure to deal with bullying at West House School

The following advice for pupils is read out to every class in the form lesson at the beginning of every term. It is also explained by the form teacher to any new pupils arriving mid-term. It emphasises the responsibility of the victim, other pupils and members of staff to stamp out bullying.

What to do if you are being bullied at school

- Try not to retaliate physically. A bully may stop being nasty if there is no response from you.
- Tell an adult what is happening, e.g. parents / form teacher, Matron, Deputy Head, Head of Pre-Prep & Nursery, Headmaster. Remember, it is not your fault that you are being bullied.

What to do if you see someone else being bullied

- Find an adult and explain what you have seen or heard.
- Do not ignore bullying, you have a responsibility to stop it (remember the school Code of Conduct).
- Do not get involved or join in any bullying.

When you report bullying

The school will:

- Take the report seriously and find out the facts of any incident.
- Support children who are being bullied.
- Take appropriate action against the bully in line with the staged sanctions outlined below.

Staff procedures for dealing with bullying

- The first priority is to calm and care for the victim.
- A member of staff should immediately investigate the facts. Should it become immediately apparent that there is some evidence of bullying behaviour the matter should be referred to the Headmaster who will undertake the investigation. In the absence of the Headmaster, the Deputy Head or Head of Pre-Prep and Nursery will undertake the investigation.
- Investigations will be recorded on the 'Incident of Intimidating or Bullying Behaviour' form, along with a judgement – 'Bullying not proved', 'Bullying suspected – situation to be monitored' or 'Bullying proved'
- If the judgement of the Headmaster or his representative is that there is sufficient evidence for bullying to have taken place, the procedure outlined below will be followed.

Sanctions

If a pupil or a group of pupils is found guilty of bullying, then the school will apply an appropriate sanction to be recorded on the 'Intimidating or Bullying Behaviour – Pupil Record' form. All members of staff will be informed.

The school does acknowledge that pupils bully for a variety of reasons and staff are trained in the psychology related to this behaviour. In dealing with an incident of bullying, the bully will be encouraged to admit to, acknowledge and apologise for his actions. If necessary, the bully will be counselled and set targets aimed at improving his behaviour.

Where a proven episode of intimidating or bullying behaviour is apparent, the following staged consequences/sanctions will be applied:

1. First stage:
 - A verbal warning that such behaviour will not be tolerated. This will be issued along with an explanation of why the actions constitute bullying.
 - Lunchtime detention.
2. Second stage:
 - Playtime confinement for a period of one day and a general conduct report issued. Parents informed of this action, verbally.
 - Counselling session with the Learning Mentor.
 - Lunchtime detention.
3. Third stage:
 - Playtime confinement for a period of one week and a general conduct report issued. Parents informed in writing.
 - Counselling session with the Learning Mentor.
 - Lunchtime detention.
4. Fourth stage:
 - A Headmaster's Saturday detention – parents informed in writing (Prep Department only).
 - Counselling session with the Learning Mentor.
 - Home/School meeting arranged to discuss behavioural issues.
5. Fifth stage:
 - Fixed-Term exclusion from school.
 - Final warning.
 - Counselling session with the Learning Mentor upon return.

It is the desire of the school that pupils are given every opportunity to address their own behavioural difficulties. However, the Anti-Bullying Policy sits alongside the Policy on Pupil Behaviour and while the staged responses of each policy are independent of each other, patterns of significant negative behaviour will be discussed at the weekly staff briefings.

Each term, a child starts with a zero record. However, a fixed-term exclusion brings with it a final warning, which is communicated in writing to the parents of the pupil concerned. A further episode of bullying behaviour will result in a permanent exclusion. This decision will be taken at the sole discretion of the Headmaster, once all evidence has been considered.

Members of the Senior Management Team are responsible for ensuring that sanctions are consistently applied and carry out an audit of written records on an annual basis.

Training

A weekly meeting is held for members of staff working within the Prep Department at which they have the opportunity to discuss pupil behaviour and to ensure that policies relating to such are being consistently applied.

Members of staff have the opportunity to discuss and review the contents of this policy on an annual basis. They receive formal training in anti-bullying measures at least every three years.

Responsibilities

The Headmaster is responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented and procedures outlined hereafter followed. It will be reviewed annually or in line with changes in regulatory requirements by the Senior Management Team in consultation with members of staff and the Student Council. The Board of Governors supports the Headmaster in all attempts to prevent bullying and reduce the likelihood of bullying at the school.

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