

## **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

A fundamental tenet of our school ethos is a commitment to creating a strong sense of community and an environment in which all students can feel happy, safe, valued and motivated to realise their full potential, personally as well as academically. Bullying in any form is fundamentally at odds with this ethos and, therefore, wholly unacceptable. As a school, we are wholly committed to:

- Preventing bullying – by continuing to maintain a culture which does not present fertile ground for bullying in any form to flourish; and
- Countering bullying when it does occur – by ensuring that, when they do occur, all instances of bullying are dealt with promptly, robustly and consistently.

### **Definitions**

**Bullying** is defined, in the DfE document *'Preventing and tackling bullying - advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies'*, October 2014, as 'behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'.

**Bullying generally involves an imbalance of power** between perpetrator and subject. Such an imbalance of power may be physical or psychological; it may derive from an intellectual imbalance or through having access to the support of a group or through the capacity to isolate someone else socially. It can result in the intimidation of the person who is the subject of the bullying through the threat of violence or through efforts to isolate them either physically or online.

**Bullying is often motivated by prejudice** against particular groups, for example on grounds on race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between children.

**Bullying can manifest itself in a variety of forms**, including:

- Physical (eg, pushing, hitting, kicking, pinching, taking or damaging belongings);
- Verbal (name-calling, graffiti, taunts, constant teasing, making disparaging or offensive remarks, sarcasm);
- Emotional (tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, spreading rumours, ignoring, isolating);
- Cyber-bullying – in which emotional, psychological or verbal bullying can be conducted through a digital medium, such as text messages, social media and email, all of which may be used to transmit offensive or embarrassing messages and photographs.

**Cyber-bullying** has grown to become a widespread phenomenon globally as a result of the rapid development of technology and the widespread access to it by young people. It is especially pernicious in that it can occur at all times of the day or night, in or outside of school, with a

potentially bigger audience which can grow exponentially as offensive messages or images can instantaneously be forwarded on to any number of others.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give schools stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, to delete inappropriate images or files on electronic devices, including mobile phones. More detail on this point can be found in our 'Conducting a Search' policy.

**Bullying is always serious.** It is well known that bullying in any form can have far-reaching and potentially devastating effects on children. It is, therefore, something that must always be taken very seriously and addressed as decisively and as quickly as possible.

#### **When does bullying become a child protection issue?**

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be treated 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, then as a school we have a duty to report the concern to the local authority children's social care.

#### **When might bullying constitute a criminal offence?**

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to be aware that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could constitute a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 or the Public Order Act 1986.

It is, for instance, an offence under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 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.

If we should have any concern of this nature, then the matter will be reported to the police and their advice and assistance sought.

#### **Bullying outside school premises**

Schools are within their rights to discipline students for misbehaving outside schools premises 'to such an extent as is reasonable'. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring physically away from school premises or online.

If an instance of bullying outside of school involving one or more of our students is reported to us, we will investigate it and deal with it in line with the principles and procedures set out in this policy.

#### **Signs and Indicators**

Early signs of bullying may include:

- erratic attendance;
- deterioration of work / diminishing achievement;
- frequent reporting of illness;
- isolation and / or withdrawal;

- appearing ill at ease in the school environment or in the company of peers;
- physical problems such as recurring headaches and stomach aches;
- signs that may suggest the possible onset of an eating disorder;
- signs of depression;
- desire to remain with adults.

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## **Preventing and countering bullying at d'Overbroeck's**

### **Principles**

- Bullying in any form, by or towards any member of our school community, is not tolerated at d'Overbroeck's.
- We are committed to the prevention of bullying through the promotion of the school's ethos of mutual respect, non-discrimination, equal treatment and collective responsibility.
- The school's stance on bullying is made known to all members of the school community, students, staff and parents.
- Where bullying does occur, our response will be informed by an awareness of the importance of reacting to incidents promptly and firmly and in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent manner; the need to safeguard and support the student who has experienced bullying; the importance of applying appropriate disciplinary sanctions to those responsible for bullying.
- Sanctions applied to those who are responsible for bullying should have a number of purposes: to make clear to the perpetrator that his or her actions are unacceptable; to deter him or her from repeating that behaviour; to ensure that they learn from the experience; and to signal to all members of the school community that bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.
- It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour to see if this reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the person engaging in bullying behaviour may need support themselves.
- Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking into account any special educational needs or disabilities that the students may have. Acts of bullying are no more acceptable from students with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) than they are from anyone else, and this principle must be clear at all times. However, the decision on what sanctions to apply in the case of a student with SEND must take into account the nature of the student's learning difficulty or disability and the extent to which s/he is able to understand and is in control of what s/he is doing.
- Bullying is not always easy to detect. It is important that students feel able to recognise it and to report it. We promote a culture of open and frank communication, and we encourage our students to report any incidence of bullying immediately to a member of staff.

- We are a relatively small community and any harm to an individual harms the whole. Consequently, it is everybody's responsibility to put a stop to any form of bullying by intervening or reporting suspected incidents.
- Any incident or allegation of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated immediately and thoroughly (unless there is a suspected child protection issue, in which different guidance applies).
- Action will be taken as appropriate in each instance. The principle set out in this policy should always guide the response and action taken. Beyond that, we do not lay down hard and fast rules since all incidents and all individuals are different. We will always seek to involve the parents of the student(s) involved and to ensure communication is as open and as frequent as is necessary.
- No school can be effective without parental help. We encourage parents to support our anti-bullying stance and to become involved in the resolution of problems if and when they arise.
- We are aware that bullying usually has a cause and that bullies can themselves be victims. We will endeavour to achieve outcomes which benefit both parties. However, failing a positive response from the 'bully', we will put the needs of the 'victim' first.
- The school will not accept 'banter' as a valid reason or excuse for perpetrator to use as justification for mis-intreptation of their actions.

## **Procedures and guidance**

This section sets out actions to be taken by the school, staff and students. It also offers some guidance for parents.

### **A. The school**

We recognise that, although relatively rare in this school, bullying can happen and needs to be addressed by the whole school community. Consequently, we will:

- Take any allegation or instance of bullying very seriously and ascertain the full facts of any incident.
- Do all we can to support any student who is being bullied.
- Take all possible steps to help those who are involved in bullying to change their behaviour.
- Act firmly and promptly where bullying is identified, matching action to need since all cases are different. This may involve some or all of the following:
  - a. meeting those concerned individually;
  - b. using peer group pressure actively to discourage bullying;
  - c. involving parents at an early stage;
  - d. helping children to develop positive strategies and assertion;
  - e. applying sanctions as appropriate.
- Be equally concerned about any bullying that may occur outside of school.
- Record incidents of bullying in a consistent way that allows for monitoring of behaviour.
- Follow up bullying incidents by appropriate monitoring.

- Promote an atmosphere in which students will feel free to report any instances of bullying and provide opportunities for children to discuss bullying issues and policy in age-appropriate contexts such as PSHE, school council and other contexts such as drama and poetry.
- Raise awareness about bullying and the school's anti-bullying stance through the PD curriculum, assemblies and any other appropriate opportunities within the curriculum and in the co-curricular and extra-curricular programme.
- Help to avoid bullying through teaching students how to manage their relationships with others.
- Regularly review our approach to take account of developments in technology, for instance updating our acceptable use policies for the internet and other electronic devices.
- Ensure that all staff are fully aware of the school's policy on bullying and of their responsibility to report any known, alleged or suspected instances of bullying to senior staff as soon as possible. Provide appropriate staff training in Inset days and other opportunities as appropriate.

## **B. Staff**

Procedures to be followed:

- Staff must be alert to signs of bullying and act promptly where there is a concern.
- All reports must be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly - unless there is a suspicion of anything that might constitute child abuse. In such cases, allegations must be reported immediately to one of the staff with designated responsibility for child protection who will then deal with the issue in line with the school's Safeguarding policy. No investigation to be carried out by any staff members where a child protection issue is suspected.
- If a bullying incident is witnessed, the subject of the bullying should be removed from the situation immediately.
- In some instances, where the issue is believed to be relatively minor, the first-contact teacher may feel confident to deal with the situation there and then. This is acceptable, so long as it is remembered that in any case of bullying senior staff must be kept informed from the outset. If in doubt, please seek assistance.
- Any investigating member of staff should be able to invest sufficient time to listen to both sides of the argument and to avoid rushed responses. At the same time, do not leave students at risk or with the impression that nothing is being done. Remember that bullying usually has a cause and that bullies can themselves be victims.
- Provide support and understanding for the student who has been subjected to bullying. Avoid the 'natural victim' syndrome and the idea that the victim is somehow to blame. When you need to pursue your investigations, involve other students and staff to ensure that he or she does not feel isolated or alone. Make sure the victim is aware of any course of action you decide to take.
- Be sensitive to issues of confidentiality – remember that confidentiality cannot be promised to a child – and to the needs of all the children involved.

- Ensure that you have all the facts of the case and speak to relevant witnesses. Ensure also that the bully understands that he or she must take responsibility for his or her actions, that he or she knows the seriousness of the offence, and that any repetition will invite further action.
- Do not deal with bullying by taking a bullying approach.
- Full records should be kept of incidents, investigations and final outcomes by staff involved in dealing with such situations.
- Parents will be involved as necessary by senior staff with pastoral responsibilities.
- The school will endeavour to deal with any issue of bullying in a positive manner that will achieve outcomes that are constructive for both parties. A range of sanctions may be employed which, where the seriousness of the behaviour is deemed to warrant it, could involve suspension or expulsion.
- When following any course of action, it is imperative that staff watch out for 'comeback' on the victim. Bullies must be shown that this cannot happen, even to the extent of being warned that if it should happen, their school career itself could be in jeopardy. Staff may need to maintain a 'watching brief' for a considerable time.

### **C. Students**

Bullying is any behaviour which causes someone else to feel frightened or hurt or humiliated; it must have no place in our school.

- Everyone has the right to be safe and happy at school.
- Everyone has the right to enjoy the best possible conditions to make the best of their talents whilst at school.
- No-one should have to suffer name calling, teasing, taunts, physical violence or cyber-bullying. No-one should feel isolated or excluded. No-one should have their property interfered with.

In short, you should not have to suffer in any way as a result of the words or actions of someone else. It is the responsibility of the whole school community, staff and students, to make sure that it does not happen – and, if it does, to put a stop to it.

Prevention is better than cure. We can help to maintain a bully-free school by:

- showing respect for each other whatever our differences may be;
- dealing fairly with each other;
- avoiding actions such as name calling or 'borrowing' equipment without permission;
- avoiding 'teasing'. One person's 'joke' is another person's misery;
- going out of our way to involve new or shy students in our activities;
- noticing when bullying is happening and speaking out against it.

### **If you feel you are being bullied...**

- Do not put up with bullying. You have a right to be happy and to be treated with respect as an individual.
- Get away from the bullying situation as quickly and calmly as you can.
- Tell a trusted adult about what is happening. Tell your parents, your form teacher or any other member of staff you feel particularly comfortable talking to. You will be listened to and something will be done.
- When talking to an adult about bullying, try to be clear about the detail: what happened? When and where did it happen? Who was involved? Who saw it happening? If something similar had happened before, how often and when did it happen?
- The school will make sure that the situation is sorted out - and that you will not suffer any comeback.
- You can also be sure that anything personal you may tell us will remain confidential provided no one's personal safety is likely to be at risk as a result.

### **If you witness bullying...**

- If you witness an incident of bullying and feel confident enough, intervene and tell the person who you think is guilty of bullying behaviour that what they are doing is offensive and unacceptable.
- At the very least you must tell someone about what is happening: a member of staff, form teacher, the school counsellor – anyone who you feel will be able to help. If you do not tell someone, then you are encouraging the bullying to go on. It is very important to stamp out bullying – so tell someone about it!
- Don't stand by and watch – get help.
- Show that you and your friends disapprove.
- If you know that bullying is happening, tell a trusted adult. This is not telling tales – the victims may be too scared or lonely to tell. You will be listened to seriously and in confidence.
- Avoid teasing or personal remarks yourself: imagine how *you* might feel.

### **D. Parents**

We would offer the following advice for parents:

- It is always a good idea to take an active interest in your child's social life and chat about friends and activities inside and out of school. As well as keeping up to date with your child's friendships you may well learn of disagreements or difficulties.
- Watch for signs of unhappiness in your children such as an unwillingness to go to school in the morning, recurrent headaches, stomach aches for which there is no apparent physical explanation, etc.
- There are many reasons why a student might be unsettled at school, but bullying is a possibility. If you think the child is being bullied, please let us know immediately and ask for a

meeting with a senior member of staff. You can be sure that we will treat the issue very seriously and investigate it thoroughly.

- Do allow us some time to do so. You will be kept apprised of developments. Equally, we would ask you to keep us informed of your child's demeanour and behaviour outside of school to help us judge the success of our response. It is also important that the student is aware that the same policy towards the situation is being implemented both at school and at home.
- It is our aim to resolve the situation so that the bullying stops. Should you have continuing concerns, please share these with us so we can address them.

### **Specialist organisations - sources of advice and support**

A number of organisations offer specialist information and support on issues of bullying. Here are some of the main ones.

- **Family Lives** [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)

Family Lives (formerly known as Parentline Plus) is a national charity that offers help for parents on a very wide range of issues. Bullying is one of them.

Family Lives operates a 24-hour helpline which is there to offer advice and to help children and parents deal with bullying. The helpline is operated by trained volunteers and calls are free and confidential. The Family Lives helpline may be reached on 0808 800 2222.

- **The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA)** <http://www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk/>
- **Kidscape** <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/>

And, specifically on cyber-bullying and online safety advice and information:

- **ChildNet International** <http://www.childnet.com/>
- **Think U Know** <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/>
- **Digizen** <http://www.digizen.org/>
- **UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)**  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukcci>

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