

OAKLANDS SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Introduction

Bullying can be described as being a deliberate act done to cause distress solely in order to give a feeling of power, status or other gratification to the bully. The policy has regard to DCSF Guidance 'Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools' (2007).

Definition

Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour. It can be:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures), ridicule, humiliation;
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, making rude remarks, making fun of someone;
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, throwing stones, biting, spitting, punching or any other forms of violence, taking or hiding someone's things;
- Racist/cultural/religious racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, making fun of culture and religion
- Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive or sexist comments;
- Homophobic because of/or focussing on the issue of sexuality;
- Disability unkind comments or actions made to a child relating to their disability
- On-line/cyber setting up 'hate websites', sending offensive text messages, offensive messages or photographs on social networking websites, e-mails and abusing the victims via their mobile phones;
- Any unfavourable or negative comments, gestures or actions made to someone relating to their disability or special educational needs.

Bullying often focuses on anything perceived as being different from the majority. This can undermine our work in promoting equal opportunities and teaching moral principles. Bullying may seize upon aspects of body shape or appearance, class, race, religion, sexual orientation, disability gender or nationality.

Bullying is often recognised as a prolonged 'attack' but it may also be a single unresolved event, which casts a shadow over a child's life. Research has shown that whilst schools do not tolerate bullying, its extent is often greatly underestimated. Bullying is a serious problem because it can cause psychological damage and even suicide (although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour).

Aims and Objectives

- To create an atmosphere where all children can reach their full potential within a safe and caring environment and therefore bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour will not be tolerated;
- To ensure children are made aware of the code of conduct, which outlines how pupils are expected to behave towards all other members of the school community. This code of conduct outlines the fact that harassment will not be tolerated by anyone;
- To address issues relating to bullying and behaviour using educational elements such as assembly times and through the school's policy on P.S.H.E. and citizenship. (see P.S.H.E. policy);
- To use projects, drama, stories, literature, historical events, current affairs and so on to raise children's awareness of issues relating to bullying;
- To ensure that parents are made fully aware of the school's anti-bullying policy;
- To work closely with other professional agencies to ensure that children stay safe as stated in The Children Act 1989, The SEN and Disability Act 2000, The Government Green Paper 'Every Child Matters' 2003 and The Children Act 2004;
- To raise awareness of staff through training, taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely.

Strategies for Dealing with Bullying

Relationships can break down and so procedures to deal with bullying need to be in place. The purpose of this procedure is to protect and support the victim, to guide and educate the perpetrator and to re-establish a secure and happy environment.

All staff will receive training in dealing with bullying via induction and regular review of policy at staff meetings. The Bullying Policy dovetails with the school behaviour policy and staff need to be aware of all these policies.

Depending upon the perceived seriousness of the situation, issues of bullying will be dealt with by the class teacher and the Headmistress and / or Deputy Head. The Headmistress / Deputy Head will inform any other member of staff as necessary and keep confidential records of all bullying incidents.

The emphasis for all teachers should be upon listening, understanding and helping all concerned. All pupils should know that we regard bullying as a serious offence and that all claims of bullying will be thoroughly investigated.

Procedures

Reporting and Recording Arrangements

A pupil who feels they are being bullied must tell a teacher and/or a parent or guardian or any other member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. If they do not feel confident enough to speak up by themselves, pupils should be encouraged to enlist the moral support of a friend. Above all pupils should be encouraged to tell someone straight away.

Teachers should not ignore or disregard a complaint. When a case is referred to them teachers should:

- ask for details and record the information on an anti-bullying incident report sheet
- give completed form to the Headmistress / Deputy Head in an envelope.

The Headmistress / Deputy Head will then follow these procedures:

1. As soon as possible the Headmistress / Deputy Head should interview all involved parties. It is essential that records are kept of all interviews (using a School Encounter form – available in the staff room).
2. The Headmistress / Deputy Head should speak to the victim to establish what exactly has occurred and whether there are any witnesses. These witnesses should then also be interviewed. (It may not be possible to preserve confidentiality in these discussions as the person accused of bullying will need to be told exactly what they have done and the effect it has had.)
3. The person being accused of bullying should then be interviewed, once the details of the complaint have been established. Again this should be recorded on an encounter form.
4. If a bullying incident has been reported to the Headmistress, then parents of both the victim and the child doing the bullying will be informed. Parents will be made fully aware of the school's anti-bullying policy. It will be stressed that if the bullying continues sanctions will be used.
5. All members of staff, including lunch time supervisors, involved with the pupils should be made aware of any incidences of bullying and any strategies such as report or target cards and not sitting by or working with certain pupils.
6. The Headmistress / Deputy Head should arrange a follow up meeting with the pupils a week later to check how things are going and offer support to both the victim and the bully. A record of this should also be kept on the relevant form.

Pupils will be made aware of the school's policy on bullying via educational elements such as PSHE, assemblies, projects, drama, stories, literature, historical events, current affairs etc.

Involvement of Parents

Parents have an important part to play in our anti-bullying policy. We ask parents to:

- a) look out for unusual behaviour in your children – for example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their usual standard;
- b) always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, with whom they have spent their time, etc;
- c) inform the School immediately, if you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow;
- d) if a child has bullied your child, please do not approach that child on the playground, involve an older child to deal with the bully or contact the parents of the alleged bully. Please inform the school immediately;
- e) reinforce the School's policy concerning bullying and make sure your child is not afraid to ask for help;
- f) if you know your child is involved in bullying, please discuss the issues with them and inform school. The matter will be dealt with sensitively.

Parents will be made fully aware of the school's anti-bullying policy. In some cases, parents may be the first to alert a teacher to an incident of bullying and they may be in some distress when they contact the School.

Good practice includes:

- recognising that the parent may be angry or upset
- keeping an open mind – lack of staff awareness does not mean it is not happening
- remaining calm and understanding
- making clear that the School does care and that something will be done, explaining the school policy and seeing that procedures are followed.

Sanctions

Sanctions for the bully may include:

- targets for behaviour from the Headmistress, Deputy Head / Lower School Co-ordinator or Upper School Co-ordinator
- reporting to the Deputy Head / Lower School Co-ordinator or Upper School Co-ordinator or Headmistress on a daily or weekly basis,
- loss of playtimes or exclusion from school at lunchtimes.
- If the behaviour of the bully does not improve this could lead to suspension or ultimately exclusion (see exclusion policy).

As the behaviour of the bully improves then sanctions should be removed and the child should be praised for their good behaviour. It is important to remember that their self-esteem may also have been damaged by being found bullying, or low self-esteem may have been the root cause.

Both the bully and the victim will be offered support by their class teachers and Senior Management who have dealt with the issue. (See also the School's Behaviour Management Policy).