

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction: What is bullying?

Bullying is a pattern of persistent hurtful behaviour that diminishes another person. It is one-sided and usually involves an imbalance of power, making the victim feel uncomfortable, insecure and threatened. Bullying includes behaviour motivated by prejudice, discrimination, derogatory and misogynistic behaviour, hostility or stereotyping relating to any protected characteristic, i.e. aimed at certain people because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, religion, gender reassignment, disability, sex or sexual orientation. Bullying based on any protected characteristics (c.f. the Equality Act 2010) is taken particularly seriously.

Bullying can take many forms: verbal, social and physical. It can be perpetrated either in-person or online (cyberbullying). It can be sexualised. It often involves exclusion. All children and young people may find it hard to talk about what is happening to them because they may feel fearful, embarrassed and ashamed even though whatever is happening to them is not their fault.

It is important to recognise that pupils with Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND pupils) are often particularly vulnerable and that additional barriers (e.g. communication barriers) may exist when seeking to determine whether bullying has taken place. SEN pupils are up to twice as likely to suffer bullying.

Aims

At Heritage we acknowledge that bullying destroys relationships and that it can, if unchecked, inflict significant psychological damage upon the victim. It also diminishes the one perpetrating it. Bullying is, therefore, the opposite of what we are seeking to create: an atmosphere and culture characterised by good relationships (See our Behaviour Policy, our PSHE and Citizenship Policy and our Acceptable Use of Screens Policy).

We aim to:

- Provide a safe learning environment for all pupils.
- Work actively to build good relationships throughout the school - between staff, with and between pupils and with parents - and maintain a warm and harmonious atmosphere, where all people connected to the school feel respected, safe and valued.
- Help all pupils understand that good relationships are central to one's own and everyone else's sense of well-being.
- Ensure that the whole school understands what bullying means and that it is deeply damaging to relationships.
- Make it clear that no bullying of any kind will be tolerated. It will immediately be treated as a Serious Incident and, therefore, liable to suspension or exclusion (see our Behaviour Policy).
- Encourage all pupils to take responsibility for their behaviour and its consequences.
- Tackle bullying, including online, which takes place outside of school between pupils who attend Heritage School, given the impact it will have in school.

Legislation and guidance

This policy is drawn up in accordance with the DfE guidance on 'Preventing and tackling bullying', July 2017, and 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges', September 2021.

It should be read in conjunction with our other school policies and guidance:

- Behaviour policy
- Acceptable Use of Screens policy
- Equalities policy
- Safeguarding policy

Types of Bullying

- **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things, including:
 - Teasing
 - Name-calling
 - Inappropriate sexual comments
 - Taunting
 - Threatening to cause harm
 - Using racist, homophobic, sexist language
- **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. It includes:
 - Leaving someone out on purpose
 - Telling other children not to be friends with someone
 - Spreading rumours about someone
 - Embarrassing someone in public
- **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions. It includes:
 - Hitting/kicking/pinching
 - Spitting
 - Tripping/pushing
 - Taking or breaking someone's things
 - Making mean or rude hand gestures
- **Cyberbullying** includes:
 - Sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content (including AI-generated content and manipulated images) about someone else
 - Sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation

Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behaviour.

- **Sexualised bullying**
 Sexualised bullying is a behaviour, physical or non-physical, where sexuality or gender is used as a weapon against another. It is any behaviour which degrades someone, singles someone out using sexual language, gestures or violence, and victimising someone for their appearance. It can also occur online. Sexual bullying is also pressure to act promiscuously and to act in a way that makes others uncomfortable. Some examples of sexualised bullying include:
 - Abusive, sexualised name calling and insults
 - Spreading rumours of a sexual nature online or in person
 - Unwelcome looks and comments about someone's appearance or looks, either face to face or behind their backs
 - Inappropriate and uninvited touching without consent
 - Pressuring someone to do something they do not want to do, using emotional blackmail such as 'you would do this if you loved me' or comparing previous encounters to make someone feel obliged to do something sexual
 - Upskirting - where someone takes a picture under a person's clothing without their permission (Note: This is a specific criminal offence in England and Wales.)

- Pressuring someone to send nudes and using emotional blackmail, for example threatening to end a relationship if they don't send an image or video (Note: Sending sexual images without consent can be illegal.)
- Inappropriate sexual innuendos that is persistent and unwelcome
- Sexism in all its forms and gender stereotyping
- Graffiti with sexual content or display/circulation of inappropriate material of a sexual nature, such as pornography

Characteristics of Those Who Bully

There are many factors that can contribute to bullying behaviour:

- Some pupils bully to attain or maintain social power, to control the behaviour of their peers or to exclude others from their peer group. They feel a need to dominate others.
- Some pupils who bully might come from families with low parental engagement or have overly lenient parents. They can have relationships with parents characterised by poor communication and threats of violence or who are overly authoritarian.
- Some pupils who bully may have been bullied in the past or are currently; they may have feelings of low self esteem or are insecure and may not have skills for handling social situations in positive ways.

Every young person involved in bullying - as the recipient, a bystander, or as one who does the bullying - can benefit from adult, school and sometimes external counselling support. Parents, school, teachers or other professionals can work with young people to help them develop healthy school and peer connections and to learn new social and emotional skills. Bullying is a behaviour that can be changed.

Characteristics of Those Who are Bullied

Generally, pupils who are bullied have one or more of the following risk factors:

- Are perceived as different from their peers, such as being overweight or underweight,
- Are new to a school,
- Do not seem to be what others in the peer group consider 'cool', with respect to clothing for example
- Are perceived as weak or unable to defend themselves; are depressed, anxious or have low self esteem.
- Are less popular than others and have fewer friends
- Do not get along well with others; are seen as annoying; antagonise or provoke others for attention

Even if a child has these risk factors, it doesn't mean that they will be bullied.

Pupils who are bullied can experience negative physical, social, emotional, academic and mental health issues. Pupils who are bullied are more likely to experience:

- Depression and anxiety, changes to sleep and eating patterns and loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy.
- Health complaints
- Decreased academic performance
- Missing school or truanting

Signs that a child is being bullied might include:

- Clothes or possessions are lost or damaged
- Asking for money or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
- Unexplained bruises, cuts, scrapes
- Asking to be driven to school or other places
- Stopping eating normally or coming home hungry
- Truanting or saying he/she is going somewhere but does not turn up

- Claiming to be unwell and not able to go out
- Changing their usual routine
- Becoming withdrawn
- Starting to stammer
- Starting to self-harm or threatening suicide
- Crying themselves to sleep or having nightmares

Whole School Preventative Strategies to Minimise Bullying

- The values which underpin good relationships will be emphasised regularly in assemblies.
- Pupils will be taught strategies to help them deal with difficulties that they may encounter in their relationships with other pupils, e.g. through circle time, through our PSHE programme, or when teachers are responding to specific incidents in the classroom or playground.
- Pupils will be taught not to be a passive witness / bystander, and to understand why this might be tempting (fear, assuming another might step in).
- Parents will be encouraged to promote good behaviour in keeping with the values of the school, e.g. through Parent Information and Discussion Evenings.
- Pupils, parents and staff will be encouraged to talk openly about difficulties that may arise between pupils.

Reporting Bullying to the Police

Some forms of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. These include violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment or intimidation, for example name calling, threats and abusive phone calls, emails or text messages, and hate crimes.

School Response to Allegations of Bullying

Reporting alleged bullying

Bullying can only be addressed if we know about it; therefore it is vital that parents and pupils report any suspected bullying. All information will be dealt with sensitively in coordination with pupils and parents.

Pupils are encouraged to report bullying without feeling they are telling tales. Pupils in the Infant and Junior School are encouraged to report any incidents to their class teacher, or their Head of School (Infants or Juniors). Senior School pupils are encouraged to report incidents to their Tutor, any teacher they feel comfortable approaching, the Mental Health Lead, or any Senior Leader such as the Head of Seniors.

If pupils or parents would prefer, they are encouraged to write to the following email address to report suspected bullying (or any other concerns about how a pupils has been treated by other pupils or by staff): concern@heritageschool.org.uk. This email address is monitored by the safeguarding staff. Any information shared via this email address will be treated with utmost sensitivity; pupils and parents, where appropriate, will be consulted before action is taken unless there is an imminent risk of significant harm (i.e. unless it is an urgent safeguarding issue).

Safeguarding concerns

Some incidents of bullying may constitute safeguarding concerns and require referral to the Designated Safeguarding lead (DSL), particularly where behaviour involves discrimination, sexual harassment, exploitation, serious violence, coercion or significant emotional harm.

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, staff should refer to our Safeguarding Policy and respond to a disclosure accordingly. Particular attention should be given to the possibility of child-on-child abuse, including sexting or sexual violence, and the need to extend support to both victim and perpetrator. It should be noted that staff managing a disclosure of sexting or sexual violence should never view or forward illegal images of a child.

Investigations of alleged bullying

All allegations of bullying will be investigated in a timely manner to substantiate the facts as far as possible. Throughout an investigation, we stress that it is the bullying behaviour, rather than the person doing the bullying, that we disapprove of. We will avoid labelling a child as a 'bully'.

Investigations will include interviews of pupils, adults with first-hand information, and witnesses. Interviews of individuals will be conducted separately. We will handle the identity of the reporting person sensitively, maintaining confidentiality wherever possible.

We will then review all available evidence and notify the pupil and parents of the findings of the investigation as well as any restorative practices (see below) and/or disciplinary action, in keeping with our Serious Incidents in our Behaviour Policy. These might include lunchtime detention or after school detention. We reserve the right to suspend a pupil; a suspension would typically last a day. In extreme cases a pupil could be permanently excluded.

Further to an investigation:

- The victim of bullying will be reassured and offered regular support for a reasonable length of time to restore and build confidence and self-esteem.
- The pupil bullying will be helped to reflect on his/her behaviour, understand the consequences and make changes.
- The situation will be monitored closely to ensure that no further bullying takes place.
- Sanctions for bullying will be followed through in accordance with our Behaviour Policy.
- We will seek to encourage genuine reconciliation through a carefully managed meeting between staff, the perpetrator and the victim.

Restorative practices

Our goal is restored, healthy relationships. It is not enough, therefore, to solely engage in a disciplinary process. Rather, our goal is to encourage reconciliation between the perpetrator and victim. This necessarily involves the perpetrator understanding how his/her actions made the victim feel and being willing to say sorry and ask for forgiveness. It also involves the victim being willing to accept an apology. A reconciliation meeting will only take place after consultation with both sets of parents. It will be carefully managed by staff, with at least two members of staff present at the meeting. Subsequent to a reconciliation meeting, staff will continue proactively to monitor the relationship with a view to protecting the victim and ensuring bullying patterns do not resume.

Logging incidents

Incidents of poor behaviour, including bullying, are recorded on the Behaviour Log by the class or specialist teacher and then reported to Senior leaders. Where there are safeguarding concerns incidents will also be reported on MyConcern. Senior leaders track patterns over time and monitor progress.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

A systematic recording of incidents will help us to review and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of this policy and practice.

Staff Training

Bullying and strategies to minimise it, in accordance with this policy, will be reviewed at regular intervals as part of ongoing staff training at INSET days and on other occasions, including by email updates or through the use of Educare online training modules. This will include reference to pupils with protected characteristics and the particular risks of bullying they may face, and how the school will respond to bullying in relation to a protected characteristic.

Authorised by	Matthew Fox
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