

Ashfield Valley Primary School

Anti-bullying policy “Our school is a safe school”

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School Aims

- As a school we aim to be
safe
listening
responsive
- To ensure that each child feels safe and secure at school, and is able to enjoy their school life to the full, making the most of the academic and social opportunities available to them.
- To promote a clear “non-bullying” ethos, helping each child to learn to manage their own behaviour and to respect the feelings of others, and also to respond appropriately to any incidents of bullying behaviour that do occur.
- To respond quickly and supportively to reports of bullying behaviour.

Definition of bullying

There are many definitions of bullying, but most have three things in common:

- It is deliberately hurtful behaviour
- It is repeated over a period of time
- It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.
(This may be because of an “imbalance of power” between victim and bully, which may be physical, but also may be due to eg the bully having a larger friendship group.)

Bullying can take many forms, but three main types are:

- physical – eg hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- verbal – eg name calling, insulting, racist remarks, teasing in a nasty way
- indirect – eg spreading nasty stories about someone, excluding someone from social groups.

However, if two pupils of equal power or strength have an occasional fight or quarrel, this is not bullying.

In generalised terms, bullying among boys is characterised by overt physical and verbal abuse, whereas the preferred modes of bullying among girls are rumour, malicious gossip, and social ostracism.

Victims

Victims become victims when they become afraid of the bully. They may feel they deserve to be bullied, and their self confidence and self esteem may be badly affected.

Bullies

The bully usually enjoys the opportunity to dominate, and may be gaining peer approval. They may be making themselves look good because they don't really feel good about themselves. The bully should be helped to recognise their anti-social behaviour and be offered support to modify that behaviour. Bullying will not be eradicated unless the behaviour of the bullies is modified.

Building a non-bullying ethos

School values

We promote school values that reject bullying behaviour and promote co-operative behaviour. This is done for example through positive behaviour management, formulation and promotion of school rules, input in the curriculum in areas such as PSE and in other class discussions, input in assemblies, and in our approaches to dealing with instances of aggressive and hurtful behaviour, where children are asked to consider the feelings of the other child(ren) concerned.

Managing feelings

We encourage children to discuss their feelings, and to recognise that there are times when we all feel angry or fed up. They may not always feel friendly to others, and there may of course be other children that they simply do not get on with. We encourage children that they must take responsibility for their behaviour in these instances. If they have nothing nice or friendly to say, for example, then they should keep quiet and keep themselves to themselves.

“Excuses”

In our management of aggressive or hurtful behaviour, we give clear messages concerning the “excuses” that children may use:

- “It was an accident”
This is only accepted if the child has apologised to the child who has been hurt and has sought help from an adult for that child.
- “It was only a joke” “I was only playing” etc
This is only accepted if the other child has shared the joke or the laughter.

Telling

As a general rule, bullies will choose to do their bullying in places or in ways that will not be detected by staff. Children are urged to tell an adult, either a parent or a member of school staff, if they are upset or frightened by the behaviour of other children. Similarly, children who know that a child is upset or frightened by others are urged to tell an adult. This is linked clearly to the message “Our school is a safe school”. Each child should understand that by telling adults, they will help to make the school safe. Children may be afraid to say anything for fear of retaliation by the bully, and so reassurance should be given that every effort will be made by staff to prevent this.

Building assertive behaviour

We aim to teach children strategies to deal with aggressive or hurtful behaviour:

- to ignore it, if they feel they can.
- to tell the other child firmly “I don’t like what you are doing, please stop it”, and to walk away from them.
- to tell a member of staff

Where children are genuinely victims of bullying, it can be very difficult for them to tell anyone. We respect this, and we understand that children may not feel able to say anything straightaway. They may need some time to understand that what is happening to them is not their fault, and they may find it easier to tell a member of the family, who should then come in and tell a member of staff.

Investigating incidents

Reports of bullying should be taken seriously, and investigated thoroughly. Incidents of bullying should be brought to the attention of the headteacher and logged in the incident book. Direct action against bullying should occur within a context that reminds all pupils that bullying behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in school. Efforts should be made to get to the roots of issue.

The headteacher or classteacher should speak to both the bully and the victim to gain as much information as possible. They should be seen separately. They might be asked to give written accounts where appropriate. Staff who come into contact with the bully or the victim should also be included in the investigation. Sometimes it may be appropriate to ask other children about the incidents.

While all reports of bullying should be taken seriously, investigation will sometimes indicate that the issues are more complex than first appears. The

“victim”, for example, may in some instances be trying to get another child into trouble, or may be failing to take responsibility for their own part in the incident.

Involving parents

Parents should be contacted where there is concern that their child is either a bully or a victim. We aim to build a good partnership with parents in supporting their children in incidents of bullying, both as bullies and victims. Parents should be involved in the school’s work with their children. This will include helping bullies to understand that their behaviour is unacceptable and to learn more constructive ways of dealing with relationships, and helping victims to gain the self confidence that will enable them to deal with any future bullying behaviour that may occur. There should also be positive messages to parents where children successfully learn to manage their behaviour more appropriately.

Parents of victims in particular may need to be made aware of the full scope of the school’s work on anti-bullying, as they may, understandably, focus on their desire to see the bully thoroughly punished.

Dealing with minor incidents

Reprimands from the headteacher and sanctions such as missing playtime for a period may be sufficient to “quell” minor incidents of bullying behaviour. The effects of bullying should be discussed carefully with the bully and he/she should be helped to understand the feelings of the victim. The bully may be asked to explain how he/she should behave towards other children in future.

It may also be advisable to take steps to help the bullies understand that they do not need to gain status or peer approval through bullying others. An approach that focusses only on punishment may entrench the bully’s negative responses to school and to their peers.

Victims should be reassured and encouraged to be assertive. Staff should be informed and asked to be vigilant. Anti-bullying messages should be reinforced through classwork and assemblies.

Dealing with more serious incidents

Involvement of parents at an early stage is essential. In addition to the actions described above, the bully might be barred from lunchtime in school, or parents might be requested to accompany their child to and from school each day, depending where and how the bullying has taken place. In the last resort, the bully may be excluded from school.

The victim should be reassured as above, and more particular steps might be taken to reduce risk to the victim, eg extra supervision in cloakrooms or at the end of the day. Care should be taken that the source of risk is tackled, such as gangs waiting on the steps, rather than staff accompanying the victim out of

school. Staff should also work to restore the victim's self confidence and self esteem.

Working with “bystanders”

Children who observe bullying may effectively condone it because they are glad it is not them on the receiving end. They should be encouraged to respond assertively on behalf of the victim as described above. Bystanders should understand that if they do not tell someone what is going on, then they are effectively letting the bullying continue.

Monitoring and evaluation

The incident book should be examined regularly to see whether bullying is becoming more or less frequent, or is changing in nature. Monitoring will also include gathering the views of teaching and non-teaching staff about behaviour and relationships in school. Outcomes can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy.

Related policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with policies on Behaviour and Discipline, Personal and Social Education.