

# **BICKLEY PARK SCHOOL POLICY ON BULLYING**

## **1. School Commitment**

The School recognises that bullying is always a threat, and that there will be times when it emerges in practice. The School is committed to reducing bullying at every opportunity, and to eradicating any concept that it is acceptable. Central to the School's commitment is that all staff, teaching administrative, matrons, catering, cleaning, caretaking and ground staff are aware that bullying may arise at any moment and that it is always wholly unacceptable.

The purpose of this policy is to enable all staff concerned, together with parents and children themselves, to undertake the achievement of this aim.

## **2. Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is the deliberate pursuit of and abuse of power, or strength, or responsibility in a wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone. Bullying may include racial, religious, cultural, sexual, disability related or cyber forms and can cause serious psychological or physical damage.

## **3. Types of Bullying**

- a) Physical bullying, a simple expression of physical power by one pupil or one group of pupils over another, is simple to define. Pupils who bully physically, together with their victims, are always aware of the simple expression the abuse of power they are undertaking.
- b) Psychological bullying is often more difficult to detect, is more insidious and more amenable to being camouflaged.
  - Verbal teasing can be most insidious.
  - The removal of property, either surreptitiously or in the form of withholding a victim's property when he or she is present.
  - Name calling or insulting of either the victim or victim's family, close friends and so forth.
- c) Spontaneous outbursts of temper loss, given that they are one-off incidents, do not constitute bullying in themselves. The important distinction in bullying is that the bullying behaviour is repeated, or the threat of its repetition is always present, which allows the victim to suffer at all times in school, not just when an incident is taking place.

## **4. Reasons for Bullying**

- a) Children feel insecure or inadequate themselves, and use a weaker person as a way to bolster their own self-image. This can particularly occur with children who have been bullied themselves.

- b) Children who are spoiled, or who have become accustomed to getting their own way, can react in a bullying way when they come up against resistance.
- c) Children who are under pressure to succeed may well find that they can cut corners by bullying.
- d) Individual children, who do not fit a mould, are particularly likely to stand out from the group as a whole, and seem “willing” victims.

## **5. Symptoms of Bullying**

- a) Many bullied children try hard to camouflage the fact that they are being bullied. Often the most strongly felt emotion amongst victims is guilt that this is happening to them at all. Therefore, all adults, and pupils, need to have some view of how they might determine that bullying is a possibility, even when the victim is not talking about it. Symptoms that may be important indicators are as follows:-

- An adverse change in the quality of a pupil’s work.
- More than usual absence from school.
- Regular loss or damage to books or equipment.
- Unexplained bruises or scratches.
- Refusal to say what is wrong.

- b) While the possibility of listing specific aspects of behaviour of a potential victim seems quite easy, in practice, given that so many victims do not wish to own up to bullying, it is important that staff and parents are ready to consider the best way to assessing whether negative relationships and bullying are a threat at any time.

## **6. School Management: Attempts to prevent bullying**

- a) The purpose of this policy is to prevent bullying whenever possible.
- b) A bully will very often see the victim as a stereotype. Thus, the bully must have stereotypical reactions broken down, and see the victim as an individual person with feelings similar to his or her own. In resolving cases of bullying, a good deal of forward momentum can usually be created by breaking down stereotypes (see Sections 7 and 9 below).
- c) The School recognises that the physical site has too much space and hidden areas for comfort. While physically there is little we can do about this, though ensuring that everywhere is well lit, that lights do work, that windows are clean, and so forth, is one aspect. Of great importance in managing the physical aspect of the site is the publication of carefully constructed duty rotas, full briefing of staff to alert them to dangers, and ensuring that break timetables in particular

are always adhered to. Particular areas, such as changing rooms, lavatories, the edge of the school grounds, or anywhere else which is not readily in public gaze, will be particularly patrolled and vigilantly monitored. All aspects of possible bullying and how to deal with incidents are discussed in full at the weekly staff meetings and joint action is taken accordingly.

## **7. School Management: Education**

- a) All components of the curriculum will take the chance to raise the benefits of positive relationships whenever the chance arises.
- b) Particular aspects of the programme, where relationships, including bullying, include the following:
  - Personal, Social, Health Education programme.
  - Assemblies and Chapel Services.
  - House meetings, whether whole House or certain age groups.
  - Form Tutor groups.
- c) Adults, teaching and non-teaching staff play an enormous role in setting a positive example:-
  - All adults set a proper example of respect, kindness and good manners, not only to each other, but also to children.
  - Standards of discipline will be maintained in a quiet, controlled and caring atmosphere.
  - Adults to whom incidents of bullying are reported will deal promptly and effectively with such matters.
  - Records of bullying incidents, together with action taken, will be reported to Form Tutors and the Head. It is essential for long-term successful pastoral care that incidents of any sort are noted carefully to those concerned.
- d) The School's equal opportunities policy will play its part in ensuring that relationships amongst all those employed by the School are established on a positive basis of mutual respect.

## **8. Communication**

- a) Pupils have a central role, perhaps the central role, in ensuring that bullying is eradicated as far as possible.
  - If a child feels he is a victim of bullying, they must also feel free to report it in the confidence that something needs to be done. Even if an incident ends up being judged as not bullying, the reporting of it equally will not end up as being "sneaking".
  - Children who are present when bullying is taking place, even though they are neither victim nor perpetrator, cannot allow

themselves to be neutral. Third parties in such cases will be trained to inform adults of any incidents of bullying they have seen or heard of. Again, it is essential that such reports are taken extremely seriously by staff or other adults (see Section 9 below).

- In some cases perhaps a school prefect or other older pupil who has respect and personality will be able to pro-active steps to stop an incident there and then.
- b) Staff are committed to eradicating bullying not only through their own example, but through undertaking full communication about any bullying incidents or reports of them. In particular, staff commit to the following:-
- To listen carefully and sympathetically to all reports of bullying and to follow these up where appropriate, or relaying such incidents to other appropriate staff.
  - Talking to parents about such incidents.
  - Having dealt with any incidents themselves, reporting the details to all concerned.
- c) Parents have a major responsibility to assist us all to eradicate bullying, especially as follows:-
- Supporting the School's policy on bullying, especially in our quest to eradicate it.
  - Reporting promptly all bullying incidents to Form Tutors or the Head, who will guarantee their personal anonymity.

## **9. Complaints Procedure**

- a) Pupils should always report incidents of Bullying or of observed distress to someone they trust. The member of staff consulted should:-
- Make them feel at ease, including creating a secure and private environment.
  - Give them time to explain the situation. Listen carefully.
  - Make notes where necessary.
  - Pass no immediate judgement.
  - Make it clear that the problem will be treated seriously and looked into as a matter of urgency.
- b) If the preferred member of staff is not available, pupils should go to the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Form Tutor.
- c) If the allegation is of a very serious nature, refer the matter immediately to the Head, or Deputy Head (Pastoral).

- d) Although each case is likely to require a specific and unique approach, the following general procedure may provide a useful guide:
- Make a preliminary investigation by talking to witnesses.
  - Consult with colleagues - to find relevant history/background.
  - Interview pupils separately to test their version of events.
  - If one party admits to being the aggressor, he should be left in no doubt about the School's disapproval of their actions. They should be told that a full account of what has happened may be kept "on file" for future reference.
  - It may be necessary to act on one's judgement and decide who is the bully and who is the victim.
  - It is often very helpful to get the bully to admit they can now see their behaviour has helped make someone unhappy. At the same time, they will usually admit they did not want to make the victim unhappy. Then it is straightforward to get the bully to agree that his future behaviour will not cause further unhappiness. Should that agreement be broken, then a very serious incident will have occurred.
  - Sometimes, the victim will also have behaved in a way more or less annoying or unacceptable. This may have led to the bullying and, if so, the victim also needs to be analysed, and a commitment made to adjust this behaviour.
  - Victims should be assured of patient and sympathetic listening, and should be given ongoing advice, remediation and support.
  - The member of staff dealing with the incident should complete the Incident Report Card appropriately.
- e) Bullies should be assured of suitable punishment, (which may include exclusion) which will be a deterrent, as well as counselling and rehabilitation. As every case of bullying is likely to be different, appropriate sanctions should be discussed, implemented and followed up on each occasion. It is recognised that victims may well want to see the bully punished in some way. Experience suggests that a face-to-face apology is often appreciated by the victim, and it is also an opportunity for the member of staff to gauge the sincerity of the bully.
- f) A written record of clearly substantiated incidents will be kept by the Head or Form Tutor. It is vital that other relevant teachers are involved and informed throughout. It may be helpful to inform all staff at the morning briefing.
- g) In consultation with the Head, it may be thought necessary to contact parents.
- h) The situation will continue to be monitored.

**10. Promulgation and Review of bullying policy**

- a) This policy forms an integral part of the Staff Handbook and is available to parents on request. It will be discussed during at least one staff meeting every term and will be reviewed every two years.
- b) Copies of the Schools 'Golden Rules' are placed in public areas. All sections of this policy will be promulgated to the pupils.

September 2011