



Grow Independent School Anti-Bullying Policy

Policy Document (2023-2024)

Updated:	March 2023
Review date:	September 2024
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Introduction

In this document, we are not concerned with those deeper personal, social, emotional or psychological issues that underlie and often precipitate bullying behaviour. What we are intent upon is a clear explanation of a set of attitudes and a related framework for intervention that will allow us to manage the problem of bullying behaviour in an efficient and effective manner.

These guidelines are intended to help staff to develop a shared understanding of the problems involved in identifying, containing, reporting and intervening when we face bullying behaviour by our students. We need a team approach and a common sense of purpose. We must have a generally understood framework for action and procedures that are clear and workable.

This is an extremely important area. We work with many students who exhibit social, emotional and mental health difficulties. They may have hurt themselves and might have suffered trauma. They may seek to retaliate against people and things. Containing these complex emotions which can lead to aggressions within the peer group is one of our primary professional tasks. Any failure to do so will release sub-cultural peer group reactions that may have serious consequences for a number of our students. We need to be aware of these peer group dynamics, and ensure groupings are small and carefully considered. We have to monitor the peer group very carefully for signs of intimidation and bullying. We must then take considered and decisive action.

Further advice and guidance can be obtained from the DfE:

- Behaviour and discipline in schools (January 2016)
- Preventing and tackling bullying (July 2017)
- Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying (June 2018)
- KCSiE (September 2021)
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools/colleges (May 2018)
- Mental Health and Behaviour in schools (November 2018)

Our School community

- Discusses, monitors and reviews our anti-bullying policy on an annual basis.
- Supports all staff to promote positive relationships and identify and tackle bullying appropriately.
- Ensures that pupil/students are aware that all bullying concerns will be dealt with sensitively and effectively; that pupil/students feel safe to learn; that pupil/students abide by the anti-bullying policy.
- Reports back to parents/carers regarding their concerns about bullying and deals promptly with complaints; parents/carers in turn work with the school to uphold the anti-bullying policy.
- Seeks to learn from good anti-bullying practice elsewhere and utilises support from other relevant organisations when appropriate.

Definition

Bullying is defined by the DfE as:

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Forms of bullying covered by this policy

Bullying can happen to anyone. This policy covers all types of bullying including:

- Bullying related to race, religion, beliefs, or culture
- Bullying related to LDD (learning difficulties or disability)
- Bullying related to appearance or health conditions
- Bullying related to sexual orientation (homophobic bullying) including the use of homophobic language
- Bullying of young carers or looked after children or otherwise related to home circumstances
- Sexist, sexual and transphobic bullying, including the use of transphobic language
- Cyber bullying
- Other prejudice-based bullying not identified above

Other relevant forms of bullying:

• **Physical**

Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence, making a child/young person do something they don't want to do or stopping them from doing something they do want to do. Taking belongings, damaging someone's belongings.

- **Emotional**

Being unfriendly, excluding and tormenting, sending malicious emails, or text messages, intimidating glances and body language.

- **Verbal**

Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, insulting, blackmail and threats, making offensive remarks.

- **Discriminatory**

Making offensive remarks and singling out for poor treatment based on someone's gender, race, gender re-assignment, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation – this may be unlawful (Equalities Act 2010).

- **Hidden or indirect bullying**

Lying and spreading rumours, negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks, playing nasty jokes to embarrass or humiliate, mimicking unkindly, encouraging other to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's reputation.

Signs to look for

- Falling out with previously good friends
- Being moody and bad tempered
- Being quiet and withdrawn
- Wanting to avoid leaving the house
- Aggression with brothers and sisters
- Doing less well at schoolwork, signs of struggling
 - Unwilling to go to school or socialise
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Claiming to be unwell on a regular basis, particularly in the morning
- Coming home with cuts and bruises
- Self-harm/self-injurious behaviour
- Torn clothes
- Asking for stolen possessions to be replaced

Staff have to be extra vigilant of young people's behaviour patterns as it can be difficult to separate out behaviour that stems from the young person's background and or attachment issues and behaviour that stems from being bullied. Staff should be particularly sensitive to sudden and or extreme changes

Preventing, identifying and responding to bullying

The following guidelines provide a framework for containing and changing attitudes towards bullying. These have been compiled after much discussion among senior staff. They are aimed at creating an ethos that will not tolerate the oppression of one person by another. These guidelines aim to establish a whole-school policy and contain both long and short-term strategies that involve the school organisation and curriculum.

- All students, parents and staff must recognise that any form of bullying is completely unacceptable in our school. This message will be made explicit when a student and his/her family/carers first come for an interview; it will be stated very
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clearly in the student handbook; and will be reiterated regularly in school assemblies and house meetings.

- No member of staff or student must ever ignore a young person being bullied or in distress as a result of being bullied. No tales of bullying must ever be discounted. They must be recorded and thoroughly investigated. Seeing and doing nothing is professionally indefensible. It implies support for the aggressor, offers no help to the victim and is an act of collusion with the bully. Every case of bullying must be followed up immediately.

Actions following an incident of bullying:

1. Offer the young person need medical assistance
2. Find a quiet space to talk with the young person and or key staff with whom they may prefer to talk with
3. Fact finding asks how the young person is feeling, explores who, what, where, when.
4. Other staff to talk with alleged perpetrator and ask how the are, and explore their view of the incident
5. Staff to record on our online school management system, 'Arbor' - each staff member has their own log in
6. All parents to be informed within the day

These steps are essential; they allow senior staff to monitor the bullying/victim behaviours of individual students and to check its frequency throughout the school. It also provides information for the therapeutic staff to use in their work with the children.

7. Victims need to be given support. They will need re-assurance that the matter will be dealt with discretely and sensitively and that they will suffer no further occurrences of repercussions from disclosure. They are entitled to positive action: stopping the bullying immediately without implying that they are the cause of what has been done to them. As members of staff, we must ensure that this happens.

8. Adults dealing with an incident must not be physically or verbally aggressive towards the aggressor. We must never bully the bully. It gives credibility, if we react in this way, to the very behaviour we seek to eliminate. We do, however, act very firmly and purposefully in our interventions with students who are producing anti-social hostile behaviour towards others.

9. The member of staff must make the unacceptable nature of the behaviour and its consequences clear to the bullying student. The range of sanctions available for minor incidents is outlined in the school behaviour policy. Something must be done, even if it is only discussing the incident with the individual and their care staff at the end of the school day. The student must see that any form of bullying is

taken seriously. Senior staff will deal with more severe incidents, parents, the Local Education Authority, and social worker (if applicable), will be informed in writing by the school.

10. Suspension will be considered when there are repeated incidents of bullying. The Headteacher will make this decision, but it will only be used under very special circumstances.

11. The school will not hesitate to exclude students whom they believe jeopardise the safety of other children or continually threaten their right to safety. Again, this will be used very infrequently and only after very careful consideration and full consultation with parents and placing agencies.

Positive steps to prevent bullying:

Always be aware of the school's physical environment. It is difficult to specify where bullying is likely to occur in buildings and grounds such as ours, but by visiting 'quiet' locations frequently and by knowing where all the students you are responsible for are playing/occupied (and with whom), difficulties are less likely to occur.

All staff must be vigilant for the early signs of distress in students such as:

- Isolation.
- A desire to remain with adults all the time.
- Erratic attendance
- Changes in eating habits
- Feels ill in the mornings/key times
- Unexplained injuries
- Threatening to or attempts running away
- Threatening to or attempts self-harm
- Threatens or attempts suicide
- Cries themselves to sleep at night/and or has nightmares
- Becomes withdrawn and anxious
- Nervous or jumpy when a text message is received
- Bullying others
- Performance in school begins to drop
- Asks for money or starts stealing money/items

Although these behaviours may be symptomatic of other problems, they may indicate that bullying is taking place. Likewise everybody must be observant for any other indications that a student is being targeted, such as:

- Personal equipment being 'lent' or going missing.
- Money received from home going quickly.
- Clothes being damaged.
- Bruising/injuries.

Additional Notes

Students must not 'buy off' the bully with sweets or other 'presents' and they must never give in to demands for money. They are strongly recommended to talk to a member of staff, a student they trust.

Students are not encouraged to hit back. We are a 'talking' school and never advocate aggression as a means of solving problems. It may well also be contrary to the young person's nature. We seek to resolve conflict creatively and constructively. Non-violent behaviour must be recognised and celebrated.

The victims of bullies need their self-esteem raised through activities designed to improve their social skills. They need support from all the involved adults, both at school and at home, to counter feelings of inferiority and guilt. Suggestions for suitable activities and strategies are the responsibility of the psychological staff and will be reflected in individual care plans and the teachers' planning documents.

Bullying can be fuelled by prejudice. At Grow, we strive to ensure that prejudice and hatred is not accepted. Any sexist, homophobic, transphobic, targeted at faith, disablist and racist comments or language must be challenged. Once again, a failure to act implies concurrence. We have a very determined inclusion ethos which we maintain and is well documented.

Bullying as a subject will be addressed in the following ways:

- Assemblies Class discussions
- As a cross-curricular theme – especially in RE, English, citizenship, PHSE and art.
- Individual care plans
- Group counselling Individual counselling – particularly with regard to exploring the reasons for a pupil's bullying/ victim behaviour
- Ancillary/maintenance staff must be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying that they see. This coincides with their role in the school's policy on behaviour. It is discussed regularly in their meetings with supervisory staff.

Involvement of the whole school community

We will:

- Listen and take time to talk to children and young people who disclose bullying, take what they say seriously and investigate the situation
 - Work with staff and outside agencies to identify all forms of prejudice-driven bullying
 - Actively provide systematic opportunities to develop pupil/students' social and emotional skills, including their resilience
 - Consider all opportunities for addressing bullying including through the curriculum, through displays, and through peer support and pupil/student voice
 - Train all staff including Support staff, Administration and Facilities staff to identify bullying and follow school policy and procedures on bullying, including recording and reporting incidents of bullying
 - Actively create "safe spaces" for vulnerable children and young people
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- Use a variety of techniques to resolve the issues between those who bully and those who have been bullied

Involvement of students

We will:

- Listen to young people's views on the extent and nature of bullying
- Ensure pupil/students know how to express worries and anxieties about bullying
- Ensure all pupil/students are aware of the range of sanctions which may be applied against those engaging in bullying
- Involve students in anti-bullying campaigns in schools
- Participate in National Anti-Bullying Week
- Ask pupils/students to annually complete a pupil/student survey which includes how they feel bullying is managed and supported at Grow Independent School.
- Publicise the details of helplines and websites using various methods including links on our school intranet and website
- Offer support to pupils/students who have been bullied and to those who are bullying in order to address any underlying issues they may have
- Pupil/students will identify peer anti bullying mentors when the student population is of sufficient size to appoint these roles effectively and appropriately.

Liaison with parents and carers

We will:

- Ensure that all parents/carers know who to contact if they are worried about bullying
- Report back to parents/carers regarding their concerns about bullying as quickly as possible
- Ensure all parents/carers know about our complaints procedure and how to use it effectively, promoting this by its inclusion on the policy area of the school website
- Ensure all parents/carers know where to access independent advice about face to face and cyber-bullying, including the use of links on our school website
- Work with all parents/carers and the local community to address issues beyond the school gates that give rise to bullying

We expect parents/carers to:

- Inform the school of any suspected bullying, even if it does not involve their child
- Encourage their child to report bullying to a member of staff
- Inform their child(ren) not to retaliate through violence in any situation
- If their child has been accused of bullying, work in partnership with the school and listen to evidence

Continuous Professional Development

Staff will be offered on-going training with direct delivery through specific safeguarding and E safety training as well as active involvement in PSHE lessons and participation in the National anti-bullying week. This will interlink with statutory safeguarding updates and will support E safety/Online safety and cyber bullying

lessons being delivered to support the safer internet day and on-going support practice for staff and the pupil/students.

Bullying outside of school premises

The school will work collaboratively with all key stakeholders to prevent and respond to bullying outside of school. Care will be taken to listen and respond to information received regarding incidents outside of the school premises, and action will be taken in accordance with this policy.

Monitoring and review, policy into practice

This policy will be monitored and reviewed during the last term of each academic year, reflecting on the previous 12 months on a rolling cycle unless statutory guidance dictates otherwise. Any issues identified through the monitoring of this policy will be incorporated into the school action plan. The Head of Service with lead responsibility of well-being and pastoral care, will be the named Anti-Bullying Coordinator who is responsible for how the school uses the guidance by the DfE.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of:

- Head Teacher to take a lead role in monitoring and reviewing this policy and is responsible for co-ordinating and strengthening the schools' approach to anti-bullying.
- The Head Teacher, Teaching and Non-Teaching staff to be aware of this policy and implement it accordingly
- Pupil/students to abide by the policy
- Parents/carers to abide by the policy.