



## ANTI BULLYING POLICY

This policy is reviewed annually in April

| Issue no | Author/Owner | Date Written | Approved by School Committee on | Comments   |
|----------|--------------|--------------|---------------------------------|--|
| 1.       | C.Ferguson   | Nov 2014     | Nov 2014                        | New lead, policy reviewed  |
| 2.       | C.Ferguson   | May 2015     | May 2015                        | Minor amendments   |
| 3.       | C.Ferguson   | April 2016   | April 2016                      | Annual Review  |
| 4.       | C.Ferguson   | April 2017   |                                 | Peer to Peer abuse<br>Links to other school related policies   |
| 5.       | C.Ferguson   | April 2019   |                                 | Minor amendments   |
| 6.       | C.Ferguson   | April 2020   |                                 | Minor amendments   |
| 7.       | A. McLellan  | April 2021   | 17 <sup>th</sup> April 2021     | <b><i>New additions highlighted in red</i></b><br>Prejudice based bullying included<br>Hate crime based bullying included<br>Being proactive section for the tripod included<br>Strategies for responding to bullying behaviour – a whole school approach included |

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**Rationale:**

This school is committed to providing a caring, friendly, safe, positive and inclusive environment for all students and staff so that they can work in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our school.

**Aim:**

To show the school's approach to bullying with a strong emphasis on how we try to prevent it happening as well as how we deal with it if it does occur.

**School's Approach:**

Our approach is based on the following:

- We aim to make the school one in which bullying rarely occurs
- We need to work to prevent bullying in the first place
- We need to support the victim in dealing with the problem
- We need to work with the bully to prevent them continuing to behave unacceptably
- Our aim must be to prevent the bullying – that is more important than punishing the bully and this means we sometimes have to take a softer line than we might wish to, in order not to cause more problems for the victim
- We encourage students to tell us; our approach is that: "In this school it's alright to tell, and, as we tell parents and students: "If we know about a problem we can probably solve it; if we don't know about it we definitely can't."

It's the Headteacher's and Assistant Headteacher's (Pastoral) responsibility to make sure the actions listed below are being followed, through ensuring that all Heads of Year, Assistant Heads of Year, tutors and staff know the action we take.

**Our definition of bullying:**

Bullying is unwanted, aggressive behaviour among school aged children that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying should not be seen as friends falling out, although that can on occasion escalate into a bullying situation. It can be:-

- Undermining confidence
- Name calling
- Threatening
- Extorting money
- Damaging property/belongings
- Graffiti or spreading rumours about the victim
- Abusive phone calls/text messages/emails/messages/pictures on the internet
- Turning others against the victim
- Pushing/kicking/shoving/hitting
- Forcing the victim to do something they don't want to
- Getting the victim into trouble
- Stealing their belongings
- Consistent criticism designed to put someone down
- Unpleasant references on internet/chat lines/social media
- It can be a one-off situation or it can be a gradual build up over time.

The above list is not exhaustive.

### **When/where is bullying likely to take place in relation to our students?**

- On the bus
- Walking to and from school
- Walking around the school between lessons
- Lunch time/break time both within the building and on the fields – particularly vulnerable places are toilets, classrooms when staff aren't around
- In lessons and registration
- At home and/or outside school, especially through the use of mobile phones, email and on the internet through social media or gaming.

Remember it can happen at any age, including after students leave us when they no longer have the protection of the school, it's therefore important to show students how to develop strategies that prevent bullying happening and how to deal with it if it does occur.

### **Why does bullying happen?**

- If a student is in any way different and/or lacks confidence about that difference – especially for homophobic comments, comments about being seen to be too clever or very weak, or if someone is overweight
- If the bully and victim are of different cultures (ethnic minorities, travellers), beliefs or peer groups
- When a student falls out with her/his friends
- If a student looks or acts vulnerable
- If there's anything unusual about a student's looks
- If a student is dirty or smells
- If a student has low self-esteem – both the victim and bully will often have low self-esteem
- Family feuds that come into school
- Dislike that builds up over time – especially if it's fuelled by friendship groups on both sides
- When a bully feels threatened by the power or popularity of another student; or if they are jealous of another student
- When the bully is unhappy about something, maybe at home, and they take out their aggression on more vulnerable people
- When a bully has learnt the power of bullying from being bullied themselves and decides to exert that power
- If someone is showing off.

### **We recognise that different types of bullying include:**

*Physical* – hitting, kicking, spitting, tripping someone up, stealing/damaging someone's belongings, etc.

*Verbal* – name-calling, insulting a person's family, threats of physical violence, spreading rumours, constantly putting a person down

*Emotional/psychological* – excluding someone from a group, humiliation.

*Racist* – insulting language/gestures based on a person's actual or perceived ethnic origin or faith, name-calling, graffiti, racially motivated violence

*Sexual* – sexually insulting language/gestures, name-calling, graffiti, unwanted physical contact

*Homophobic* – insulting language/gestures based on a person's actual or perceived sexuality, name-calling, graffiti, homophobic violence

*Cyber* – bullying by text message, bullying on the internet (in chat rooms, on bulletin boards and through instant messaging services), hate websites.

*Peer to Peer* - Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as peer on peer abuse.

### **Prejudice-based bullying**

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability. It might be motivated by actual differences, perceived differences or as a result of association with someone else. We record these forms of prejudiced based bullying by their type. This is in recognition that these groups are protected by the Equality Act 2010 because of the prejudice experienced by some groups in the wider society. We also recognise that there are others groups of children and young people who may be vulnerable to bullying including children that are in care, young carers or those with mental health issues. We recognise therefore that we sometimes have to look at developing specific work or practice to prevent bullying of groups of students.

### **Prejudice based / hate incident**

This is a one-off incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility, prejudice or ignorance, based on a person's perceived or actual ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity or their association with someone from one of these groups. These can also include indirect prejudice driven behaviour that is not targeted at one individual. The impact of this expression of prejudice against an equality group whether intentional or not can be damaging and must therefore be responded to as a prejudice based or hate incident. One-off incidents are not bullying, however we record prejudiced based incidents using the above definition. At Stowmarket High School we recognise the impact that prejudice can have on students.

### **Being proactive**

Bullying can seriously damage a young person's confidence, sense of self-worth and future mental health and students will often feel that they are at fault in some way. Students may not realise they are being bullied because of their age or special educational need. Students that are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness or taking unusual absences. There may be evidence in learning patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school. These signs and symptoms may indicate other problems, but bullying is considered a possibility and will be investigated. Therefore, like other safeguarding issues, staff aim not wait to be told of bullying to raise their concerns. We are also aware that some groups of students may find it harder to report bullying than others. For example, black and minority ethnic pupils might feel that reporting racism will put their friendship groups at risk. Wherever possible and appropriate, we will involve those who are experiencing bullying in finding the solutions.

## **Strategies for responding to bullying behaviour – A Whole School Approach**

### **Reporting bullying**

Early identification of bullying is the most effective way of minimising bullying behaviour and the effects on the person being bullied. We also acknowledge that the perpetrator needs to understand that their behaviour is unacceptable. This student(s) will need support to change their behaviour and explore the underlying reasons for bullying. Students are encouraged to report any harmful or hurtful behaviour, even if they are not sure whether it is bullying. They are encouraged to report for themselves or for their friends. They can do this through:

- Speaking to their form tutor
- Speaking to another trusted adult in the school community
- Speaking to a parent/carer who may then contact the school
- Speaking to a friend and asking the friend to help tell an adult

### **Responding to bullying**

All students have a role to play to intervene to support their peers (if it is safe to do so) and to report bullying by:

- Alerting an adult in school to any concerns
- Talking to their friends about the situation

All of us have a responsibility to avoid encouraging or inciting bullying and to not stand by and let someone else be harmed.

### **Advice for students (if you have been bullied)**

- If you feel able to and it is safe to do so, ask the bully to stop, ignore it, say no and walk away
- Try not show you are upset or angry, but remember this is not your fault
- Tell a friend what is happening and ask for their support
- Tell a trusted adult in or out of school (ask a friend to go with you if it helps)
- Do not delete evidence of online bullying as it can be used as evidence
- It is possible the situation will take time to resolve, but unless you tell someone, we cannot help you – and we can make sure you are safe

### **Advice for Parents and Carers**

- Listen and talk to your child about the situation and discuss and agree next steps.
- Contact your child's Head of Year if you are worried or concerned
- Monitor social networks/computer use
- Reinforce the value of good behaviour

### **Staff:**

All staff will be expected to:

- Promote an environment that is constructive and safe for all students through their own practice and actions
- Follow the procedures set out in this policy when they are dealing with bullying
- Work in cooperation with colleagues, students, parents/carers, staff from other organisations in the local community and the School Committee to combat bullying.

### **Find out the facts from the victim:**

- Check if anyone else witnessed it
- Check with the victim what they would like us to do
- Find out the facts from the victim and any witnesses. Talk to the alleged bully to find out their account of the incident/s. Then ask why they have behaved that way and explain the consequences and expected future behaviour
- Sometimes it's appropriate to talk to the two together, especially if it's a falling out based on a misunderstanding, to try and put things right
- Give the bully a warning, from a member of staff (often the pastoral staff), that it is never to happen again and if it does there will be serious consequences
- Contact parents of the bully
- Contact parents of the victim and outline what support we can offer.

### **Set up strategies to support the victim:**

- Arrange help sessions via meetings with pastoral staff or online help websites
- Give them a mentor
- Consider the use of Restorative Practice
- Encourage the victim to keep a daily log that can be shown to the year team so any incidents can be dealt with promptly. If they are handed in each day, this means any problems can immediately be followed up. These are usually given out for up to three weeks
- Pair up to a member of staff so that they've got a safe haven to go to at any point in the school day
- Give them a "time out" card if they need one (it will stipulate where the student can go) so they can leave at any point if they are upset without having to explain
- Allow them to phone home if they need to once a day or whenever
- Regular phone calls home to check all is well. Always phone three weeks after the initial report to see how things are
- There may well be a reason why the victim is bullied which we can support them with e.g. clothes, smell, hanging onto groups who don't want them
- Ensure the incident is written up in both the victim's and the bully's file
- Record all incidents on Go 4 Schools and our Bully Log which allows us link incidents together and monitor the situation in the future.
- Depending on the level of the bullying, work with the bully to try to stop them behaving in a similar way. A lot of bullies will have very low self-esteem, and will often have difficult home circumstances. They too may benefit from a mentor. They might also benefit from something like online help websites.
- If the bully continues with their action then we will step up the action that we take. At this point the gentle approach disappears, though our aim still needs to be to stop the bullying, and therefore we need to find time to reason with the students as well as sanctioning them – deprive them of lunchtimes, break time, keep them with us at registration, take them away from their tutor group and/or place them with AHoy/HOY/SLT. If the problem is on the bus, they could be removed from the bus, initially for a few days. (See below for the next step if there is still no improvement).

We will consider a tutor group change if the bullying is within a form group. Sometimes however it can work well if you get the rest of the tutor group on the side of the victim, and they will look out for the victim.

Throughout the process check that the victim is aware of what is happening and that they are OK. Watch out for the bully getting others in her/his form, or other friends, to act against the victim.

The sanctions need to get progressively more demanding. They may be kept after school so they can't go home at the same time as the victim. They may go into Supervised Exclusion. They may be excluded for a lengthy period from the bus. We will exclude the bully, permanently if necessary (or apply for a managed move) if they continue to impact on the health and safety of others.

With incidents outside school, we encourage parents to let the police know. Sometimes we'll speak to the students to try to calm things down, sometimes we contact all the families concerned to let them know what we would recommend. School will not deliver sanctions to students following incidents which occur out of school but we can help with advice.

Bullying by a teacher towards a student would be dealt with through disciplinary procedures. Bullying by a student(s) towards a teacher is dealt with in a more disciplinary way, usually by the Headteacher, as the victim is generally less vulnerable.

### **Our first approach must be preventative**

How do we try to prevent it?

- Posters around the school with lists of contacts of people both in and outside school that would help people if they were unhappy
- Being very pro-active and letting students know when we've taken serious action
- Not having areas where bullying is likely to take place e.g. cloakrooms, huge areas of lockers
- CCTV inside the building and outside focused on specific parts of the school grounds
- Assemblies throughout the year telling of our approach; there may need to be further assemblies during the year
- Tutor discussions throughout the year to focus on bullying
- Looking at the topic in the curriculum, particularly within PSHE
- During school transition we always ask if there is anyone a student doesn't want to be with to minimise the possibility of igniting previous issues.

## **How do we get to know about it?**

- Student will tell a family member, a member of staff or their peers or their mentor
- We'll find the student upset
- A friend or parent will tell us
- We'll notice a student has lost her/his spark, they'll start being ill and wanting to go home, attendance might slip, their appearance might change etc
- Students may have mobile phone/internet evidence
- The student might write about it in their work
- Something seen on CCTV or once reported we may be able to confirm it on CCTV.

It is essential that when we do know about it, we promise that we will do our very best to solve it; we might not get it right the first time, but we will keep working at it, and that we have several approaches that we can use.

At Stowmarket High we have the following policies in place that should be read in conjunction with this policy:

- Behaviour For Conduct Policy
- Peer to Peer Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy

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