



The Collaboration Of Middleham VA CE And Spennithorne CE VC Primary Schools

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

Introduction and Aims

No school can guarantee that bullying will not occur, but the overall aim of this policy is to reflect and promote a climate in school where bullying and harassment cannot flourish and where all members of the school community are treated with respect. This is entirely consistent with the school's vision and ethos where we expect a high standard of behaviour from all members of the school community. This policy reflects our desire to:

- Enable children to learn and be taught to their full potential, regardless of gender, race, religion, age, ability, appearance or culture.
- Promote good personal relationships between people based on co-operation and mutual respect.
- Encourage a caring and responsible attitude towards the lives, opinions and property of others at all times and employ strategies and systems to ensure this.

The nature of bullying

There are many definitions of bullying, but we consider bullying to be behaviour and actions which are:

- deliberately hurtful (including aggression)
- repetitive or persistent
- based on an imbalance of power, leaving the victim feeling defenceless

Bullying can be physical: (pushing, hitting, kicking, pinching, threats, stealing), verbal (name calling, insulting, sarcasm, persistent teasing, offensive remarks, spreading rumours), emotional (tormenting, ridicule, humiliation, exclusion from social groups), racist (taunts, jokes, graffiti, gestures) or sexual (inappropriate and uninvited touching, abusive comments, innuendo).

Why do some children bully?

Bullies pick on smaller, weaker victims as a way of making themselves feel better. Very often they are unhappy, have difficulty making positive relationships, are lacking self-esteem, or have inadequate role models and support systems in their lives. Some children turn to bullying as a way of coping with a difficult situation such as the death of a relative or their parent's divorce. Others are lacking in basic social skills and boundaries of acceptable behaviour; they are selfish, spoilt and care little for the feelings of others.

Symptoms of bullying

Teachers can play a crucial role in identifying when bullying occurs and need to be aware of the symptoms of bullying. Victims may be reluctant to attend school and are often absent, be more anxious and insecure than others, become withdrawn and lack confidence, have fewer friends or withdraw from friendships and often feel unhappy and lonely, suffer a drop in standards of school work, suffer from low self-esteem and negative self-image and looking upon themselves as failures - feeling stupid, ashamed and unattractive. In more extreme cases, children may stop eating, have nightmares, have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts, may start stealing, show reluctance to go out at playtimes, asking for jobs or feigning illness or ask to be sent home early or hang around school in order to leave late.

The school employs several strategies to promote our anti-bullying policy:

- Regular themed assemblies and collective worship (employing SEAL materials)
- School-wide adoption of the *Golden Rules*
- Regular School Council meetings
- Use of a Friendship Buddy
- Regular Circle Time/PSHCE sessions
- Pupil and Parent Questionnaires

Sanctions

Bullying is subject to agreed sanctions just as any undesirable behaviour; these are detailed in our Behaviour Policy. Where sanctions do not resolve the problem, permanent exclusion may be justified in the most serious and persistent cases, particularly where violence is involved.

Curricular approaches to bullying

Anti-bullying forms part of an overall strategy for Personal Social Health Education and Citizenship, which aims to create an effective climate for learning and equip young people with skills and knowledge to prepare them for adult life. Discreet PSHE, including anti-bullying, is timetabled for weekly Circle Time in all classes. In addition a PSHE unit specifically focused on anti-bullying is taught in all classes each year.

Anti-bullying lessons (and PSHE lessons in general) will include such essential aspects as:

- children working together to help one another, managing conflicts within the group
- tasks needing a group effort
- children sharing information and dividing work towards common goals
- roles varying within groups: leading, problem-solving, tidying up

Such integrated classroom work can allow children to:

- explore issues and controversies by considering different points of view
- be more tolerant of others and more willing to listen
- trust those of the opposite gender and those from other ethnic groups
- become better integrated into the peer group
- work together, to develop relationships and friendships

This last point is fundamental. Children who have a good network of friends feel more positive about themselves, develop more confidence and value other people more. The school becomes safer and more caring as relationships improve generally.

Cyber Bullying

Organisational approaches to bullying

The school's playground environment is carefully organised to offer space for educational, social, physical and creative activities, reduce boredom and therefore bullying. This is achieved by providing:

- A stimulating range of playground equipment and activities including football, basketball, skipping ropes, etc. (including playground tubs)
- Games and activities painted on to the playground
- Designated areas for different activities –i.e. restricting football to the far end of the playground with LKS2 and UKS2 taking turns to play, etc.
- Quiet areas for conversation, calming down or observation, including a “friendship bench” and garden
- A good level of adult supervision at lunchtimes and playtimes
- Staggered dinner sittings to reduce numbers on the playground

This policy will be reviewed in line with the school's policy review schedule.

Circle Time

Time should be set aside each week for teachers and pupils to sit in a circle and take part in enjoyable activities, games and discussion. The positive atmosphere generated in the well-managed circle usually spreads into other areas of class activity. Circle Time should:

- create a safe space to explore issues of concern
- explore relationships with adults and peers
- enhance effective communication
- affirm the strengths and enhances the self-esteem of each member

Circle time should last for 20-30 minutes. Children and staff should listen carefully, making eye contact with one another and address particular problems – for example, relationships, anger, fighting and bullying.

With reference to the school's *Golden Rules*, the teacher and children should agree on simple, positive rules that encourage the group to:

- focus on their own feelings and those of others
- listen to one another and tolerate others' views
- learn to take turns
- discuss difficult issues using a problem-solving approach

Involving parents

Parental support is often a key to success or failure in anti-bullying initiatives. The majority of parents support anti-bullying measures and are keen to participate. Consultation is important, helping create an ethos in which positive behaviour is encouraged, and bullying considered unacceptable.

However, a significant few do hold unhelpful attitudes saying bullying is an inevitable part of growing up and encouraging bullied children to 'stand up for themselves' rather than seek help. While understandable, this conflicts with the aim of most anti-bullying initiatives to encourage children to tell staff about bullying rather than try to fight back.

Parents may contact school, often in some distress, to report that their child has been bullied. Their concerns must be taken seriously. The first point of contact for parents is likely to be the class teacher. It is important that all staff know the school policy and when to refer parents to the headteacher.

Good practice includes:

- recognising that the parent may be angry and upset
- keeping an open mind - bullying can be difficult to detect, so a lack of staff awareness does not mean no bullying occurs
- remaining calm and understanding
- making clear that the school does care and that something will be done
- explaining the school policy, making sure procedures are followed
- asking for details and recording the information
- making a further appointment to explain actions and find out if it has stopped
- following up with staff to ensure that appropriate action has been taken and that the school policy has been implemented