

OBH Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

Sadly, bullying occurs in all schools and in all communities. At OBH we are opposed to bullying of any kind—it is everyone's responsibility to prevent it happening and to react promptly if such behaviour is identified. We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a calm and secure atmosphere. All schools must, by law, have an anti-bullying policy and ours has been developed in order to make pupils, parents and staff aware of the procedures in place to help prevent the occurrence of bullying and also to deal with incidents that take place. This policy has regard to the DCSF documents 'Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools'. These documents are now being replaced by 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' on the Department for Education website:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/bullying/f0076899/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

This policy is reviewed annually and new procedures and strategies are always being sought.

What is bullying?

Bullying may be defined as a wilful, conscious desire to hurt or threaten someone, either physically or emotionally. Examples are given below:

- Physical bullying is behaviour which is intended to hurt another person and results in pain and distress to the victim, such as assault, taking of money or possessions, or intimidation where a child is forced to do something that he/she does not want to.
- Emotional bullying can be teasing, name-calling, taunting, (including homophobic bullying), making hurtful comments about a child's disability or special educational needs, hurtful comments about a child's ethnicity / religion
- Cyber bullying may be defined as "The use of Information & Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones (eg text messages) and areas of the internet such as chat rooms, email and social networking sites, deliberately to upset someone else". This is a particularly odious form of bullying as it can occur 24/7, with the perpetrator(s) being at a considerable distance from the victim. Advice on how to deal with it may be found at <http://childnet-int.org>

Another interesting definition is:

- Any kind of ***ongoing physical or verbal mistreatment where there is an imbalance of power***—this may a bigger, older child picking on a smaller or weaker one, but this is by no means always the case. It is a game of 'one-upmanship'—an attempt to win while the other loses.

Bullying should be distinguished from other normal childhood conflicts—such as a confrontation on the games field—where both children are equally upset and angry over what happened. Indeed it is important for adults to avoid mistaking bullying for normal childhood conflict. Some conflict between children is expected. Bullying, on the other hand, should not be tolerated at all.

Bullying may be carried out by a group or by one person. It may involve physical abuse, threats, name-calling, or less obvious ways such as ignoring or excluding someone, hiding their belongings or 'sending them to Coventry'. It is similar to harassment and other forms of abuse such as racism, and

the abuse of children by adults. The person or people doing the bullying may be the same age or older or younger than their victim. Both sexes bully and are bullied. The main difference between the sexes is that females are more likely to receive indirect bullying (e.g. exclusion) while males are more often threatened and bullied physically.

A child who is being bullied will probably feel unable to stop it happening. In extreme cases, bullying can cause psychological damage or even suicide.

Children accused of bullying may need help just as much as those being bullied. Their behaviour may be connected to hidden personal and social problems. They may be manipulated by other children, or they may be falsely accused.

Criminal Law

The following is taken from the DfE website:

“Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communication Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.”

Bullying by members of staff

This is sadly not unknown in schools. Staff need to be aware that they need to lead by example and that what one person may think is a harmless comment may be hurtful to another. All staff should be aware of the following:

- What a member of staff may regard as ‘teasing’ may be regarded by a pupil as bullying
- Avoid displays of bad temper in front of the pupils.
- Never ridicule the work of a pupil or belittle a pupil in front of others
- Be consistent with rewards / sanctions
- Don’t physically intimidate pupils

Staff should also treat fellow members of staff with respect and should be constructive if criticism is needed. A member of staff who feels that he / she is being bullied by another member of staff should seek help from an appropriate senior member of staff (e.g. member of SMT, Headmaster’s wife, Senior Matron, Housekeeper, Estates Manager, Business Manager). The school complaints procedure may be used if the problem persists.

Why are some children targeted more than others?

Bullies tend to zero in on children who appear vulnerable for some reason. Victims are usually passive, anxious, sensitive and quiet—maybe their self-esteem is low—or they may stand out in some way: perhaps they are taller or shorter, have a ‘negative’ body language, overweight, have a physical disability, come from a foreign country or they may be perceived—rightly or wrongly—as having a different sexuality. At the same time, youngsters who are provocative and annoying, who seek negative attention from peers, also tend to get picked on. Both passive and aggressive victims tend to have few friends, and therefore few allies to rally to their defence in a sticky situation.

How can we spot bullying?

This is often more easily said than done. There is no certain way of spotting that a child is being bullied or is bullying others. Things such as a change in attitude, an unexplained illness, not wanting to go to school, bruising or torn clothes may all have a simple explanation, or they may be the result of something more serious.

Children can go to very great lengths to hide from adults the fact that they are being bullied. They may be afraid that they will be seen as cowardly or weak. They may not want to tell tales or 'grass' on others in their class. They may even be afraid that talking to an adult will lead to even more problems or more trouble for them or that the adult will be unable or unwilling to help them.

Bullied children *may* feel: scared, depressed, sad, lonely, confused, worried, embarrassed, stupid, angry, mad, fed up, tired, not safe, stuck, alone. They *may* be clearly frightened about coming back to school or going to a particular area of the school where bullying occurs (e.g. classrooms / changing rooms), avoid showers / baths, wet the bed, have their possessions 'go missing' or suddenly become damaged, have unexplained scratches / cuts / bruises.

Strategies for the prevention of bullying at OBH

Whilst there are bullying incidents in any school, our aim is always to establish an environment in which bullying does not happen. We therefore:

- Actively discourage bullying
- Discuss bullying openly in weekly PSHE sessions with each form
- Support children who are being bullied and those who bully
- Ask the children to mark on a map of the school the areas they regard as safe and unsafe
- Help bullies to change their behaviour
- Take bullying seriously and find out the facts of any serious incident
- Meet those concerned individually. We may organise a meeting of both parties with their form teachers / tutors / friends. (See guidance for staff)
- Break up bully or diverse groups where it seems necessary
- Involve parents at an early stage
- Help children who are bullied to develop positive strategies
- Record incidents of bullying using the schools PASS system in a consistent way that allows for monitoring of behaviour
- If necessary, involve outside agencies and the school's Educational Psychologist
- Use sanctions against children responsible for bullying—see later section.

Advice for parents

If you have any concerns regarding bullying, or if your child tells you that he / she is being bullied, contact the school as soon as possible. Normally the first point of contact will be your child's Form Teacher but you may wish to speak to another member of staff, or to Mr / Mrs Brett. We are always willing to listen to you and will take your concerns seriously. We will investigate all cases of bullying and will take appropriate action. We will ensure that you are informed of the outcome. If you do not feel that we are taking your concerns seriously, there is a parental complaints procedure for you to follow.

Advice for children (points that may be raised by Pastoral Staff)

If you are being teased or bullied:

- Tell an adult whom you can trust as soon as possible. They will listen to you and handle the situation with sensitivity

- Alternatively, you might want to talk to a senior pupil—possibly one of the School Prefects, or your Dorm Captain.
- You can also use the ‘Suggestions or Complaints Boxes’ but remember that it is not always easy to follow up unsigned messages!
- Try not to show that you are upset—this is difficult
- Try to avoid the bully—again not always easy
- Walk away quickly and confidently—even if you don’t feel that way inside—and don’t try to fight back or say things which may make matters worse
- Try to maintain a positive body language although this is not easy! Try to keep your head up, walk purposefully and look people in the eye
- If someone says something unkind to you, ask them to repeat what they said. The bully may not be brave enough to repeat the remark exactly so they tone it down. They may not have planned for this so it gives you some control of the situation
- If you are different in any way remember that all humans are different and this is what makes us human
- Avoid being in places where bullying happens
- If you feel you are in danger, get away, and talk to someone

If someone else is being bullied:

- Don’t stand by and watch—this makes you equally guilty—fetch help
- Show that you and your friends disapprove
- Give sympathy and support to children being bullied
- If you know of serious bullying, tell a trusted adult. It’s not telling tales; the victim may be too scared or lonely to tell
- Sometimes the person being bullied may ask you not to do anything. You may not want to do anything in case the bully starts to pick on you. But doing nothing usually means that the bullying carries on, or that the bullies become more confident and choose more victims. Part of the fun that bullies get comes from the reaction of bystanders. If you do nothing the bullies may think that you approve of what they are doing.

Always:

- Be careful about teasing others or making personal remarks—imagine how you might feel. Other people may be more sensitive
- Never deliberately leave someone out of a game
- Encourage other children who do not want to join in – they may be nervous.

If someone else comes to you and says that they are being bullied:

- Encourage them to tell someone as soon as possible. Say that unless something is done, the bullying will only continue
- If the person is nervous about telling someone, offer to go with them and to support them. Ask them which member of staff they would prefer to talk to.

Advice for Staff

We must all be extremely vigilant and must in no way ever be seen to condone, be party to, or to turn a blind eye to any teasing or bullying. If a child complains of having been bullied or teased it must be followed up. If the child asks that nothing is done, tell him/her that the bullying will almost certainly continue and that others may get picked on.

If you are not sure how to proceed, consult a senior colleague.

The Form Teacher system is often a very good way of sorting out problems—hopefully using a ‘no blame’ approach—and Mr / Mrs Brett or members of the SMT are always happy to oversee matters. It is often a good idea to get the children concerned together but it must be remembered that the

children may well find this a worrying occasion and it must be done sensitively—the child who has been on the receiving end of the bullying should be consulted in advance. The Headmaster must be kept informed if you are investigating an incidence of bullying so that he may offer advice if necessary—also he is then forewarned should parents contact the school. If the bullying continues then he may take further action as appropriate. You must keep notes of any incident and record these as soon as possible using the school’s PASS system. The Senior Master will always be happy to help you with this. Such notes should include the nature of the initial problem, action taken, and the eventual outcome. This recording is important because it allows us to monitor incidents and to identify any ‘patterns’ such as particular venues and times and also, importantly, whether particular individuals or groups are involved as perpetrators or recipients.

If you are talking to parents of a bullied child:

- Encourage them to talk to their child and to be patient and sympathetic
- Assure them that something will be done
- Talk to them about trying to raise their child’s self esteem and encouraging the child to keep a sense of humour
- Encourage them to focus on their child’s strengths and talents

If you are talking to parents of a child who has been bullying others:

- Encourage them to talk to their child about the situation and the effect that their behaviour has on others
- Criticise the behaviour and not their child. Always find something positive to say about their child
- Explain that you are working with the school to help the child change his / her behaviour
- Express confidence in the child’s ability to change. The child may be encouraged to widen his / her circle of friends.

In case of a violent incident:

Take those involved and witnesses off to a quiet place. Try to prevent them talking to each other and allow them a cooling-off time. It may be appropriate to send for a colleague to assist. (See also the school’s restraint policy.)

It is important to get the facts straight and to carry out an enquiry making written notes of what is said. If there is more than one perpetrator, interview each individually to get the facts straight. Witnesses/bystanders should also be interviewed, then the victim.

As soon as possible, report the incident to the Headmaster, Deputy Head, or member of the SMT.

Safeguarding

Page 5 of our Safeguarding Policy has guidelines on how it is decided if an incident of bullying might constitute abuse and would therefore be a Safeguarding issue. This decision would be taken by the Senior Designated Person (the School Nurse) or in her absence the Senior Master as her deputy. The procedures which would then be followed are detailed in the school’s Safeguarding Policy, which is available on the school intranet and the school website.

Possible sanctions

Some cases of bullying may be resolved without recourse to any sanctions.

In the case of minor incidents, sanctions may simply be verbal warnings. In more serious cases the Headmaster or Deputy Headmaster will apply sanctions as appropriate—these could be severe warnings, removal of free time, or, if the Headmaster deems it appropriate, suspension or even expulsion from the school. Such an action would only be taken in extreme and persistent cases. The Headmaster will always be the final arbiter.

Informing parents of victims / perpetrators

In all cases of persistent bullying, parents of both sides will be informed. In a single case of bullying, the parents will be informed if it is considered appropriate by the Headmaster / Head of Pastoral Care / SMT member or Form Teacher. If Form Teachers are in any doubt as to what to do, seek advice from Mr or Mrs Brett, or a SMT member.

Senior Pupils

School Prefects and Dormitory Captains are given advice as to what to do if a younger child approaches them and says that he / she is being bullied. Such advice includes not promising confidentiality, reassuring the child that something will be done, and talking to a trusted adult.

Anti-Bullying resources

There is a wealth of information on the Internet. Possible starting points are:

Childline	http://www.childline.org.uk
Anti-Bullying Network	http://www.antibullying.net
Bullying UK	http://www.bullying.co.uk
Beatbullying	http://www.beatbullying.org

Review of the Policy

This policy was originally written in October 2009 by Chris Bunting, Senior Master. The last minor updates were made in September 2011.

This policy replaces all previous policies on the handling of bullying.

It will be reviewed at least annually by members of the SMT and the Head of Pastoral Care.

Printed copies of this policy are available in the Common Room, in the Pre-Prep and in the School Offices.

This latest version of policy is always available on the school intranet and the school website. The Senior Master is responsible for ensuring that this happens.

Date of next scheduled review: November 2011.