

THE ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL GROUP LTD

Anti-bullying Policy



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BULLYING: OUR SCHOOL'S VALUES AND BELIEFS

We are an Independent School and, in an attempt, to encapsulate the ethos, spirit and aims of our school we have agreed the following 'Statement of Intent':

The school will provide a secure, caring, community where everyone can learn their own self-worth in an atmosphere of tolerance, mutual respect and co-operation. We intend the school to be a happy and enjoyable place to work, which will provide the opportunity for every child and adult to fulfill their potential in a relaxed and therapeutic environment. We will encourage pupils to become confident, independent learners who are able to contribute positively to the school and the community in which they live so they can take their full place in society secure as individuals, whilst able to respect the needs and values of others. We understand the seriousness of bullying, both physical and emotional which may cause psychological damage. Bullying on the basis of the protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously.

In line with this statement:

- All bullying, of any sort, (including on-line bullying, child on child abuse) is therefore unacceptable.
- Pupils who experience bullying will be supported.
- All incidents of bullying are recorded on the school electronic Behaviour Watch system.
- We recognise the effects that bullying can have on pupils' feelings of worth and on their schoolwork, and the school community will actively promote an anti-bullying environment.

This policy is written with regard to the non-statutory advice Preventing and tackling bullying (July 2017), and the most recent Keeping Children Safe in Education (K.C.S.I.E.) Statutory Guidance 1st September 2023.

A bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm. In situations such as these, please refer to our Child Protection policy.

Our intentions in producing this policy are:

- To express our belief that all pupils should be included fully in the life of the school.
- To provide a learning environment free from any threat or fear, which is conducive to the achievement of individual aspirations.

- To reduce and to eradicate, wherever possible, instances in which pupils are made to feel frightened, excluded or unhappy.
- To reduce and to eradicate, wherever possible, instances in which pupils are subject to any form of bullying.
- To respond effectively to all instances of bullying that are reported to us.
- To establish a means of dealing with bullying, and of providing support to pupils who have been bullied.
- To provide support for pupils who are accused of bullying, who may be experiencing problems of their own.
- To ensure that all pupils, parents and staff are aware of the policy and that they fulfill their obligations to it.
- To create an environment of good behaviour and respect, and to celebrate successes.
- To meet any legal obligations which rest with the school.

Our definition of bullying:

Bullying intentionally hurts another pupil or group physically or emotionally and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, culture, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and/or disability, or because a child is adopted or is in care. Bullying may occur directly or through cyber-technology (social media sites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and e-mail).

Bullying involves dominance of one person by another, or a group of others, is pre-meditated and usually forms a pattern of behaviour. Bullying is therefore:

- Deliberately hurtful
- Repeated, often over a period of time
- Difficult for victims to defend themselves against.

It can take many forms, but the main types are:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, taking another's belongings.
- Emotional – name calling, insulting, making offensive remarks.

- Cyber-bullying, which is defined as the use of ICT by an individual or group in a way that is intended to upset others. Examples include using social media sites, mobile phones, text messaging, `sexting`, photographs, video and e-mail, social exclusion (refer to the Cyberbullying Policy).
- Indirect –spreading nasty stories about someone, exclusion from social groups, being made the subject of malicious rumors, sending malicious e-mails or text messages on mobile phones/social networking sites. This can also include the exploitation of individuals such as ‘False Friendships’, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, and radicalisation.
- Complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidating but is often hidden and subtle.
- Prejudice-related – derogatory and discriminatory language and behaviour including that which is racist; homophobic; biphobic; transphobic and disablist in nature. This language and behaviour may be directed towards people because of their race/ethnicity/nationality, because they are LGBTQ+, or are perceived to be, or have a parent/carer, sibling or friend who is, because they have a learning or physical disability. Such language and behaviour are generally used to refer to something or someone as inferior.

There is no hierarchy of bullying, all forms of bullying are taken equally seriously and will be dealt with appropriately.

Creating an anti-bullying climate in the school:

Our school’s positive behaviour policy explains how we promote positive behaviour in school to create an environment where pupils behave well; where pupils take responsibility for their own and each other’s emotional and social well-being; and where they include and support each other.

We also draw on the school’s Curriculum, PSHCE Materials, Collective Reflection, projects, Pupil Voice, stories and literature to promote appropriate behaviour through direct teaching, and by creating an emotionally and socially safe environment where these skills are learned and practiced. Our aim is to create a climate where bullying is not accepted by anyone within the school community and for our pupils to understand the importance of avoiding prejudice-based language.

Our curriculum is used to:

- Raise awareness about bullying and our anti-bullying policy, including cyber bullying.

- Increase understanding for victims and help build an anti-bullying ethos.
- Teach pupils how constructively to manage their relationships with others.

Restorative Work, Personal & Social Development, Collective Reflection, Pupil Voice and guest speakers are used to show what pupils can do to prevent bullying, and to create an anti-bullying climate in school.

Bullying will **not** be tolerated, and we make this clear in the information we give to pupils and parents when they join our school. A copy of the anti-bullying policy will be given to parents and carers at induction upon request. The 'School Charter' is displayed around the school and in classrooms to remind pupils of their rights and responsibilities.

We will publish our anti-bullying policy on the school website.

Posters around school will tell pupils what to do if they are bullied, or see others being bullied. There are also confidential helpline numbers displayed for agencies such as Child-line, which pupils may prefer to use.

Our Pupil Voice offers a forum in which concerns about bullying can be discussed on a regular basis.

We will provide written guidance for parents in the pupil induction pack what to do if they suspect their child is being bullied at school.

We will ask pupils whether they feel safe in school, and we will supervise and try to eliminate any unsafe areas which they report to us.

We will provide regular training/reminders for teachers and non-teaching staff on spotting the signs of bullying and how to respond to it. Staff will be trained in the content of this policy and where they can source support including specialised skills to understand the needs of our student, including SEND and LGBTQ+ pupils.

It should be noted that bullying is not only pupil centered, but staff can also be bullied too by other staff, parents or pupils which will not be tolerated. New staff are allocated a mentor and are made aware who they can express their concerns to if the need arises, talk directly to their line manager, headteacher, school HR Manager or Union Representative.

Strategies for dealing with bullying:

In dealing with incidents of bullying we will use a range of strategies, selecting those appropriate to the circumstances from the following list:

- Co-operative group work throughout the school: to encourage pupils to work together, be tolerant of others' ideas, trust others and be more willing to listen.
- Circle Time: to set time aside for pupils to take part in enjoyable games, activities and discussion in a safe environment where all opinions are valued.

- Mentoring: to appoint a specific pupil(s) as a support/friend/mentor (appointed by a member of staff)
- Pupil Voice: to allow pupils to improve their environment by taking responsibility for their school and the behaviour and actions within the school.
- Support group: to involve the bullied pupil, those involved in the bullying and bystanders to form a group to support the bullied pupil. Responsibility for change lies with those involved in the bullying.
- Mediation by adults: to establish ground rules that will enable the bully and the person being bullied to co-exist in school.
- Restorative justice: Focusing on educating the perpetrator of bullying of the harm their actions are causing and giving them the opportunity to reconcile with the victim.

(seek guidance from www.bullying.co.uk)

Responding to incidents when they occur:

Pupils who have been bullied, including on-line bullying or bullying outside of school, should report this to:

- Their teacher or chosen adult in school.
- Any member of staff.
- Their pupil mentor.
- Pupil voice member.
- Their class member of the pupil voice.
- Their parents/carer.
- A school friend.

Pupils who see others being bullied should report this to:

- Any of the above

Members of staff who receive reports that a pupil has been bullied should report this to:

- A DSL/DDSL or member of the senior leadership team.

Reports of bullying will be logged by:

- The Headteacher/DSL/DDSL

Where bullying is based on one of the protected characteristics (age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation), we will log the appropriate reason for the bullying, and all reports will be taken seriously and will be followed up by the Headteacher/DSL.

We will provide support and work with pupils who have been bullied, this could involve some or all of the following: -

- They will be reassured that they do not deserve to be bullied and this is not their fault.
- We will assure them that it was right to report the incident.
- We will encourage them to talk about how they feel.
- We will try to ascertain the extent of the problem.
- We will engage them in making choices about how the matter may be resolved.
- We will try to ensure that they feel safe.
- We will discuss strategies for being safe and staying safe.
- We will ask them to report immediately any further incidents to us. We will affirm that bullying can be stopped and that our school will persist with intervention until it does.
- We will involve their friends/older pupils in the peer support/buddy system.
- We may then adopt strategies from the following list as appropriate: -
 - We will interview the pupil (or pupils) involved in bullying separately.
 - We will listen to their version of events.
 - We will talk to anyone else who may have witnessed the bullying.
 - We will reinforce the message that bullying is not acceptable, and that we expect bullying to stop.
 - We will seek a commitment to this end.
 - We will affirm that it is right for pupils to let us know when they are being bullied.
- **We will adopt a joint problem-solving approach where this is appropriate, and ask the pupils involved to help us find solutions to the problem. This will encourage pupils involved to take responsibility for the emotional and social needs of others.**
- We will consider sanctions under our school's Positive Behaviour Policy.

- We will advise pupils responsible for bullying that we will be checking to ensure that bullying stops.
- We will ensure that those involved know that we have done so.
- When bullying occurs, we will contact the parents/carers of the pupils involved at an early stage.
- We will keep records of incidents that we become aware of and how we responded to them.
- We will follow up after incidents to check that the bullying has not started again.
- We will also work with pupils who have been involved in bullying others to ascertain the sort of support that they themselves need.

There is a tendency, often quite a natural one, to want to investigate an incident and “get to the bottom of it.” Sometimes this will be entirely appropriate. There will be other occasions where an extended investigation is actually unhelpful and where a problem-solving approach will be the most effective response.

(further information on strategies can be found at www.bullying.co.uk)

Our policy will be to use our discretion to respond flexibly and in an appropriate way to each incident.

When tougher measures are needed:

If necessary, we will involve the following range of sanctions that are in line with the school’s Positive Behaviour Policy. These include:-

- Offer restorative practices, involving parents/carers.
- Withholding participation in school events that are not an essential part of the curriculum.
- In extreme cases we will also consider fixed term and/or permanent exclusion from school. This can only be agreed with the executive headteacher once all other avenues have been explored.

Our responsibilities:

Everyone within school is expected to:

- Act in a respectful and supportive way towards one another, and to act as role models.
- Adhere to and to promote the objectives of this policy.

Pupils are expected to:

- Report all incidents of bullying and suspected incidents that victims may be afraid to report.
- Support each other and to seek help to ensure that everyone feels safe, and nobody feels excluded or afraid in school.

Parents/carers can help by:

- Supporting our anti-bullying policy and procedures through discussions at parent/carer days, looking at the school website and reading newsletters.
- Encouraging their children to be positive members of the school community.
- Discussing with their child's teacher any concerns that their child may be experiencing bullying or if they are unhappy in some other way.
- Helping to establish an anti-bullying culture outside of school.

Bullying outside of school premises:

Schools are not directly responsible for bullying that occurs off the premises, but we know that bullying can occur outside the school gates and on journeys to and from school. The bullying may be done by pupils from our own school, by pupils from other schools or by people who are not at school at all. Where a pupil or parent tells us of bullying off the school premises we will:

- Talk to pupils about how to avoid or handle bullying outside of school.
- Talk to the Headteacher of another school whose pupils are involved in bullying.
- Talk to the police.
- Where bullying outside school is reported to staff, it should be investigated and acted upon. In all cases of misbehavior or bullying the teacher can only discipline the pupil on school premises or elsewhere when the pupil is under the lawful control of the staff member.

Concerns, complaints and compliments:

We recognise that there may be times when parents/carers feel that we have not dealt well with an incident of bullying, and we would ask that this be brought to the Headteacher's attention. If the Headteacher cannot resolve these concerns informally, parents/carers can raise their concerns more formally through the school's Complaints Procedure, a copy of which may be obtained from the school office.

We would also be pleased to receive compliments and feedback from parents/carers when things have gone well.

Evaluating our policy:

We will evaluate our anti-bullying policy using the following measures:

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- The numbers of incidents that are reported to staff over a given period.
- Pupils' perceptions of bullying in school through structured discussions in class time.
- The number of days of absence which are thought to arise as a consequence of bullying.
- We will investigate patterns of absence to ensure that children are not taking unnecessary days off school due to fear of being bullied.
- The number of complaints and compliments that we receive from parents.
- From the comments made by visitors and other people connected with the school.

Ownership of this policy:

This policy was agreed by the policy committee.

The policy applies to all staff and to all pupils, whether temporarily or permanently on the school roll.

The Headteacher is responsible for introducing and implementing this policy within their own TAS school. However, all staff, all pupils and their parents/carers have an active part to play in the development and maintenance of the policy, and in its success.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard.

TAS recognises that AI has many uses to help pupils learn but may also have the potential to be used to bully others. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

TAS will treat any use of AI to bully pupils in line with our anti-bullying/cyber bullying policy.