

## Anti Bullying Policy

### 1. Introduction

Perceived incidences of bullying at TreeHouse School are low and we believe that pupils are generally supportive of each other. Our pupils experience considerable difficulties with communication, social interaction and empathy which can affect their ability to reflect on the impact their behaviour has on others or to self-manage their behaviour. These difficulties can mean that our pupils are less likely to intentionally ‘bully’ others, although behaviour that could be seen as bullying behaviour does occur on occasions.

This policy is intended to reinforce our efforts to promote and encourage positive attitudes between pupils and to provide a framework for responding to any incidents of bullying when they occur.

### 2. Definition

“Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally” (Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, staff and Governing Bodies, p.6) Bullying can take many forms.

Four main types are:

- Physical e.g. hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- Verbal e.g. name calling, insulting, making racist or homophobic remarks, abusive phone calls
- Written e.g. graffiti on walls, desks and school materials; offensive materials; passing notes
- Indirect e.g. spreading unpleasant stories about someone, excluding someone from social groups, or “cyberbullying”. Cyberbullying is bullying by electronic means. This could be via smart phone, computer, laptop, tablet, or online gaming platforms. It can take place on a range of online or mobile services such as text, email, social networking sites, video-hosting sites, messenger, photo sharing, ‘snapchat’, webcams, or in emails, abusive remarks on social media and online games.

Bullying is not the same as a one off argument, fight or disagreement as it is usually repeated over a period of time, or even towards a number of individuals.

It should be remembered that bullying is a one-way, distressing and hurtful act towards a victim/s, not an exchange between equals or good-natured fun. Bullying is in all cases hurtful, disruptive and damaging to the victim and school community as a whole.

### 3. Statutory duty of schools

Every school must have measures in place to prevent all forms of bullying.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 provides that maintained schools must have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. These measures should be part of the school’s behaviour policy which must be communicated to all pupils, school staff and parents.

#### 3.1 The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 replaces previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act. A key provision is a new public sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011.

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It covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

### 3.2 Safeguarding children and young people

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to their local authority children's social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, schools may need to draw on a range of external services to support the pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

### 3.3 Criminal law

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 alert the Headteacher who will seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications 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.

### 3.4 Ofsted (Schools' accountability)

Pupils will learn best in a safe and calm environment that is free from disruption and in which education is the primary focus. The revised Ofsted framework which came into force in January 2012 includes 'behaviour and safety' as one of its key criteria for inspections. Schools should be able to demonstrate the impact of anti-bullying policies.

“Head teachers have a legal duty to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. Challenging bullying effectively will improve the safety and happiness of pupils, show that the school cares and make clear to bullies that the behaviour is unacceptable.”

#### *Bullying – Don't Suffer in Silence – an anti-bullying pack for schools*

This important issue and these procedures have to be brought to the attention of staff, parents and pupils and the wider school community.

To summarise, there are various legal requirements on and powers for schools that related to bullying. In particular, the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires that headteachers must determine measures on behaviour and discipline that form the school's behaviour policy. This policy must include measures to be taken with a view to “encouraging good behaviour and respect for others on the part of pupils and, in particular, preventing all forms of bullying among pupils.”

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#### 4. Aims

We strive to create a happy and caring learning environment where everyone feels safe. Any behaviour that adversely affects the well-being of another will not be tolerated. Staff strive to ensure an environment where no forms of bullying can thrive and any behaviours that are bullying can be dealt with immediately and effectively. All issues of bullying must be addressed to ensure all pupils can fully benefit from the opportunities available at TreeHouse School.

Every member of staff has a responsibility to work towards eradicating any incidents and types of bullying in TreeHouse.

The aims of the school's anti-bullying strategies and intervention systems are:

- To prevent, de-escalate and/or stop any continuation of harmful behaviour
- To react to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way
- To safeguard the pupil who has experienced bullying and to trigger sources of support for the pupil
- To apply disciplinary sanctions to the pupil causing the bullying and ensure they learn from the experience, possibly through multi-agency support.

This policy sets out how these aims will be achieved and should be read in conjunction with the school's behaviour policy; Equality Scheme, particularly the Gender Equality; Race Equality and Disability Equality Policies; and E-Safety in Teaching and Learning Policy

#### 5. Recognising that bullying is occurring

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, appetite irregularities, feigning illness, refusing to attend school or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in personal habits, lacking concentration or high levels of distractible behaviour. A pupil may become super-vigilant. Individual behaviour patterns are well known to staff and when there are changes in these patterns the possibility of bullying must always be considered. Pupils must be encouraged to report bullying. Advocates for the pupils **must** report possible bullying on behalf of their charges and where possible communication strategies must be put in place to allow pupils to express their feelings. Pupils' communications must be listened to.

TreeHouse staff must be alert to the signs of bullying (in all its many forms) and act promptly and firmly against it in accordance with school policy.

#### 6. Understanding why bullying is occurring

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator/s and 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.

Other reasons or motivations given for bullying include: bullying related to race, religion or culture; bullying related to special educational needs or disabilities; bullying related to appearance or health conditions; bullying related to sexual orientation; bullying of young carers or looked-after children or otherwise related to home circumstances; sexist or sexual bullying.

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Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously the school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; we make judgements about each specific case.

## **7. Implementation**

### **7.1 Preventing bullying**

Our response to bullying does not start at the point at which a child has been bullied. Our person-centred thinking approach and the depth of knowledge held by staff about each pupil means that staff proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place.

Solid relationships between home and school are essential to supporting pupils to respond positively to any changes in the home or school environment that might unsettle a pupil and result in behaviours that could be perceived as bullying or which are bullying behaviours. Preventative action might involve changes to individual behaviour plans, a functional assessment to understand the motivation underpinning the behaviour change, talking to pupils about issues of difference through dedicated events or projects, talking with pupils about how to manage their own feelings and emotions.

Staff themselves will be able to determine what will work best for their pupils, depending on the particular issues they need to address. We have an ethos where pupils are encouraged to treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave.

#### ***'Top down' strategies include:***

- ensuring that all pupils are appropriately supervised
- ensuring that all members of staff are familiar with the policy
- watching for early signs of distress and where pupils are able to communicate, listen to what they are saying
- ensuring that appreciation and respect for all cultures are promoted

#### ***Bottom up strategies include:***

- Individual behaviour support plans for all pupils
- Using group activities to promote appropriate behaviour

The following steps should be taken when dealing with incidents:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded and given to the deputy head teacher who will act with delegated responsibilities on behalf of the head teacher
- The deputy head teacher will interview all concerned and will record the incident
- Information is gathered about the incident before any conclusion is made about whether or not the incidents were bullying behaviour – both the pupil suspected of 'bullying' and the 'victim' will be listened to carefully
- Relevant staff and parents/carers will be kept informed and if the problem persists a multi-disciplinary problem solving meeting will be convened.

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## ***Pupils***

Bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be dealt with immediately.

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

- immediate support and reassurance
- restoring self-esteem and confidence

Pupils who have bullied will be helped by:

- the 'bully' to be informed in a suitable way that their behaviour is inappropriate and must stop
- discovering more about the situation to help restore positive behaviours
- informing parents/carers to help change the behaviour of the pupil

At TreeHouse we aim to use positive methods to create and restore appropriate behaviours. Disciplinary action is rarely thought to be the right choice within our environment, although the possibility of sanctions and the use of exclusions may be necessary in very unusual circumstances.

Positive behaviours, social skills and emotional well-being are promoted within the curriculum, Circle Time, assemblies and subject areas, as appropriate. Circle Time and assemblies also used to help eradicate negative behaviours.

## **Monitoring, evaluation and review**

The school will review this policy every three years and assess its implementation and effectiveness. This will be done through positive action based on Incident Reports and through feedback in Pupils' Reviews. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school and training will be given to staff as part of their induction package to ensure that all staff at TreeHouse are aware of their responsibilities and how to implement them.

## **Equal opportunities**

Diversity of cultures is represented in the books, display materials and equipment used within the school. Activities are organised to give pupils the opportunity to share in, respect and appreciate a wide range of cultures and activities. Each child's culture is recognised and treated with respect across the curriculum and where possible children are given the opportunity to share experiences and knowledge in order to raise self esteem. If a child's culture or race might be a factor in an occurrence of bullying, staff should refer to Procedures for Dealing with and Reporting Racial Incidents.

This policy should be read alongside the following TreeHouse School and Ambitious about Autism Policies:

- Equality Duty
- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Child Safeguarding and Protection Policy and Procedures
- Adult at Risk Safeguarding and Protection Policy and Procedures

## **Further advice and guidance may be found in:**

'Preventing and tackling bullying Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies', Department for Education, October 2014

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