

Anit-Bullying, including Cyberbullying Guidelines

Definition of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as any deliberately hurtful behavior which intentionally hurts another pupil or group physically or emotionally.

It is often difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying is an antisocial form of behaviour which affects everyone; it is unacceptable and OPDS is committed to helping eradicate it in the most appropriate way

Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that comes to their attention and OPDS will treat such reports seriously.

Examples of bullying behaviour include:

- Physical (including sexual) assault
- Verbal abuse, by name calling, teasing or 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. This can include the use of social media, mobile phones, text messaging, photographs, video and e-mail

Consequences of Bullying

OPDS believes that all cases of bullying are serious, whether physical or emotional/psychological.

It can be psychologically damaging and, at its worst, can be a factor in pupil suicide. It is acknowledged that bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. It should also be recognised that the consequences of being allowed to 'get away with it' can be detrimental to them as well as to their victims.

The aim of our policy is to prevent bullying of any sort and to ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied.

All personnel with whom we deal, including pupils, parents, host families, contractors and school staff should have an understanding of what bullying is and be able to recognize it if it happens.

Ideally, conditions should be created which minimise the likelihood of bullying. However, it is important to know how to deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly, how to prevent it.

What to Look For

Bullying can consist of a wide range of actions and the following may give some idea of what to look out for:

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Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults.

There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school. All personnel with whom we deal must be vigilant and alert to the signs of bullying;

Indirect emotional tormenting by excluding from social groups or spreading malicious rumours

Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone.

It may be overt and intimidatory but is often hidden and subtle.

It can include actions or comments that are racist, religious or cultural, homophobic, transphobic, sexist, sexual or which focus on physical attributes (such as hair, skin colour or body shape) or any reference to Special Educational Needs or disability.

The seriousness of bullying cannot be overstressed as it is among the highest concerns that parents have about their children's safety and well-being.

Bullying is also a primary concern of children and young people themselves. Bullying makes the lives of its victims a misery, it undermines their confidence and self-esteem and destroys their sense of security.

Bullying may seriously impact on the victim's attendance and attainment.

All personnel should act promptly and firmly against bullying in accordance with this policy. Surveys have shown that in the vast majority of bullying incidents, most people knew that what was going on was wrong. However, sometimes people, either through lethargy, peer group pressure, or tacit support fail to take action.

Responsibilities of Reporting

The way to stamp out bullying is for people to be aware of the issues involved, and to be clear in their own minds what action to take, should cases arise.

If you feel you are the victim:

- Please remember that if an issue is giving you cause for concern, you should report it, not hide it. The issue needs resolving at the earliest opportunity to lessen the impact it may have on you.
- If you feel able to, discuss the issue with the bully by verbally making him/her aware that you think that what he/she is doing is wrong. He/she may not be aware of the impact their behavior has had on you.
- Share your feelings with someone else.
- Talk to an adult, either your Teacher, Tutor, Houseparent, Guardian or host family.
- There are also people outside School who would be willing to help, including Childline 0800 1111 and Children's Commissioner: 020 7783 8330

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RESOLUTION

OPDS' objective is to resolve the problem. This may include:

- Reassuring and supporting the pupils involved.
- Advising them that you are required to pass details on to a nominated person in the school(s) they attend.
- Accompanying the victim to see a nominated person in their school such that the incident can be brought to their attention.
- Reporting the incident to the school attended by the bully such that the incident can be brought to their attention.
- Requesting a written response from the school to explain how the incident has been addressed / resolved. This will be kept securely within OPDS records.

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