

ANTI- BULLYING POLICY

At Parkgate Primary School we understand the term bullying to mean the abuse of power by intimidation which is persistent and is personal to the individual child. A one off act of random violence against a child who happens to be in the wrong place at the wrong time is different (though clearly unacceptable). Bullies choose victims for a reason; because they are vulnerable or because of a characteristic of that child or both. This means that bullying can take many forms according to the dynamics of that interaction.

The definition of bullying adopted by Parkgate Primary School is taken from the Cheshire Anti-Bullying Strategy 2008-2011.

The government defines bullying as:

- Repetitive, wilful and persistent behaviour intended to cause harm, although one off incidents in some cases can also be defined as bullying.
- Intentionally harmful behaviour carried out by an individual or a group.
- An imbalance of power leaving the person/child being bullied defenceless and vulnerable.

Bullying can take many forms but the main types are:

- Physical e.g. hitting, kicking, pinching, theft
- Verbal e.g. name calling, racist remarks
- Emotional e.g. spreading rumours, excluding from groups.
- "Cyber Bullying", where technology is used to hurt an individual e.g. text messaging; posting messages on the internet. (refer to DCSF Childnet). This form of bullying can occur 24/7. Refer to page 5.

Strategies a bully may use:

- physical attack
- verbal abuse
- extortion of money or property/threats
- psychological abuse (e.g. spreading rumours, isolation)
- racially motivated bullying
- targeting of perceived weakness (e.g. disability)
- individual bullying
- group bullying
- sexual harassment/sexist bullying
- 'imported' bullying (e.g. where families are in dispute)
- ICT, particularly mobile phones and the internet, to deliberately upset someone else, eg negative comments, threats online.

All forms of bullying are a challenge to our school's commitment to equal opportunities and ethos.

The children who are most likely to be at risk of becoming a victim are those who:

- lack close friends
- are shy
- come from an overprotective family
- are in a minority racial/ethnic group
- have special educational needs
- behave provocatively

Symptoms of bullying – what to look out for

The bullied child is a worried child who may display some of the following behaviour:

- reluctance to come to school
- quiet and withdrawn
- lack of appetite
- sleeplessness (information from parents)
- pale and tired
- change of mood
- preference to stay in at playtimes
- affected speech
- reluctant to tell of intimidation (because of reprisals)
- bruises on body
- continual loss of dinner money/lunch box items
- poor attitude to work in class
- unwilling/secretive about online activities & mobile phone use

What to do when bullying is suspected

Bullying is serious and unacceptable in our school. The Headteacher or Deputy Headteacher should be informed immediately if any child is thought to be a victim of bullying or if a member of staff has evidence that a particular child is bullying others. A full investigation will follow and appropriate sanctions taken. Parental involvement will be sought as part of the follow up procedure. All incidents that are regarded as 'bullying' are recorded in order to provide evidence if further action needs to be taken.

To prevent bullying

From time to time the issue of bullying will be highlighted through assemblies and aspects of the curriculum (e.g. drama, history, R.E., P.S.H.C.E and S.E.A.L.). The emphasis will be on stressing that bullying is unacceptable and what to do if a child feels he or she is being bullied.

Our detailed analysis of day to day routine implements many of the recommendations of the Elton Report (1989). Included below are the recommendations for securing good standards of behaviour and this many be useful for new or inexperienced teachers.

Although there are some differences in detail, there is a high degree of agreement in the literature about the main features of good practice. There is also general agreement that well organised and delivered lessons help to secure good standards of behaviour. Some of the clearest messages are that teachers should:

- Know their pupils as individuals. This means knowing their names, their personalities and interests and who their friends are.
- Plan and organise both the classroom and the lessons to keep pupils interested and minimise the opportunities for disruption. This requires attention to such basics as furniture layout, groupings of pupils, matching work to pupils' abilities, pacing lessons well, being enthusiastic and using humour to create a positive classroom atmosphere.
- Be flexible in order to take advantage of unexpected events rather than being thrown off balance by them. An example would include the appearance of the window cleaner or a wasp in the middle of a lesson.
- Continually observe or 'scan' the behaviour of the class.
- Be aware of, and control their own behaviour, including stance and tone of voice.
- Model the standards of courtesy that they expect from pupils.
- Emphasise the positive, including praise for good behaviour as well as good work.
- Make the rules for classroom behaviour clear to pupils from the first lesson and explain why they are necessary.
- Make sparing and consistent use of reprimands. This means being firm rather than aggressive, targeting the right pupil, criticising the behaviour and not the person, using private rather than public reprimands whenever possible, being fair and consistent, and avoiding sarcasm and idle threats.
- Analyse their personal classroom management performance and learn from it. This is the most important message of all.
- Promote a culture of discussing concerns or worries.

Responding to Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying, and therefore all schools should already be equipped to deal with the majority of cases through their existing anti-bullying policies and procedures. This section outlines key steps to take when responding to cyberbullying.

Supporting the person being bullied

- Give reassurance that the person has done the right thing by telling someone, refer to any existing pastoral support/procedures and inform parents.

Advise on next steps:

- Make sure the person knows not to retaliate or return the message.
- Ask the person to think about what information they have in the public domain.
- Help the person to keep relevant evidence for any investigation (eg by not deleting messages they've received, and by taking screen capture shots and noting web addresses of online cyberbullying instances).
- Check the person understands simple ways to prevent it from happening again, eg by changing contact details, blocking contacts or leaving a chatroom.

Take action to contain the incident when content has been circulated:

- If you know who the person responsible is, ask them to remove the content;
- Contact the host (eg the social networking site) to make a report to get the content taken down.
- Use disciplinary powers to confiscate phones that are being used to cyberbully. Ask the pupils to tell you who they have sent messages on to.
- In cases of illegal content, contact the police, who can determine what needs to be kept for evidential purposes.

Investigating incidents

All bullying incidents should be properly recorded and investigated. Cyberbullying can be a very serious matter and can constitute a criminal offence. In UK law, there are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment or threatening and menacing communications.

- Advise pupils and staff to try and keep a record of the bullying as evidence. It can be useful to show parents, teachers, pastoral care staff and the police, if necessary, what has happened.
- Take steps to identify the bully, including looking at the school systems, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, and contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary. The police will need to be involved to enable the service provider to look into the data of another user.

Working with the bully and sanctions

Once the person bullying is identified, steps should be taken to change their attitude and behaviour as well as ensuring access to any support that is required.

Factors to consider when determining the appropriate sanctions include:

- The impact on the victim: was the bully acting anonymously, was the material widely circulated and humiliating, how difficult was controlling the spread of the material?
- The motivation of the bully: was the incident unintentional or retaliation to bullying behaviour from others?