

POLICY FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Definition

Bullying can be described as being 'a deliberate act done to cause distress solely in order to give a feeling of power, status or other gratification to the bully. Bullying can range from ostracising, name-calling, teasing, threats and extortion, through to physical intimidation, assault on persons and/or their property. It can be an unresolved single frightening incident that casts a shadow over a child's life, or a series of such incidents.'

Staff, parents and children at Brook House work together to create a happy, caring and safe learning environment. Bullying, whether verbal, physical or indirect, is not tolerated. It is everyone's responsibility to try to prevent occurrences of bullying and to deal with any incidents quickly and effectively.

Bullying may be brought to the attention of any member of staff by the victim(s), their friend(s), their parent(s) or other interested people.

Aims

- ◆ To provide a safe, caring environment for the whole school community, especially the children in our care.
- ◆ To instil in children that bullying is unacceptable and that reports of bullying will be taken seriously, recorded and acted upon.
- ◆ To reassure children that they will be listened to and will know that it is all right to tell.
- ◆ To heed parents concerns and keep them informed of actions taken in response to a complaint.
- ◆ A full investigation will follow any report of bullying with detailed records kept of incidents, reports and complaints.
- ◆ To take appropriate action, including exclusion in cases of severe bullying.
- ◆ To monitor incidents of bullying during the school year by the headteacher and report to Governors on a termly basis.
- ◆ A separate list of any racist incidents will be kept.

Help for victims and bullies.

The whole purpose of this policy must be to provide help for both the victims of bullying and also for those who are carrying it out. Whilst it may be necessary to impose the sanctions described later in this document to help resolve matters it must always be held in mind that our key aim in all strategies is not that of punishment but of help. It is our intention to ensure that bullying should stop and especially that the perpetrator should understand the hurtful nature of their actions and not reiterate similar bullying behaviour in the future.

Strategy for Dealing with Bullying

In dealing with bullying, staff at Brook House follow these fundamental guidelines.

- ◆ Never ignore suspected bullying.
- ◆ All adults who work in the school have a responsibility to act on any bullying they witness by either dealing with it themselves, informing the class teacher or for higher level bullying informing the school's Senior Leaders.
- ◆ Ensure there is a 'worry box' in all classrooms (and children can easily access it and are aware of its purpose) where children may write anything that concerns them and put it into the box in the knowledge that it will be treated by the teacher with discretion. Teachers have a responsibility to check and act on the contents of any disclosures placed in the worry box on a regular basis.
- ◆ Do not make premature assumptions.
- ◆ Listen carefully to all accounts – several pupils with the same version does not mean they are telling the truth.
- ◆ Adopt a problem-solving approach that moves pupils forward from self-justification.
- ◆ Follow up proven cases to check bullying has not returned.
- ◆ Keep detailed records.

Strategies have been embedded at Brook House to reduce bullying. These strategies cover raising awareness about bullying and the Anti-bullying Policy, increased understanding for victims and teaching pupils how to manage relationships in a constructive way.

Staff should apply one or more of the strategies below, depending on the perceived seriousness of the situation. The emphasis should always be one of showing a caring and listening approach.

In response to a complaint of bullying, the discipline procedures of Brook House should be followed, with staff making a full investigation, keeping detailed records and applying sanctions as necessary.

The procedures should be followed by the Head Teacher or a member of the Senior Management Team.

1. Discuss the nature of the bullying with the 'victim' at length, recording all the facts. This will require patience and understanding.
2. Identify the perpetrators and any witnesses.
3. Interview witnesses.
4. Discuss the incident(s) with the child alleged to have bullied and ask them to tell the truth about the situation/incident. Make it clear that this is only an investigation at this stage.
5. If the perpetrator owns up, make it understood that bullying is not acceptable at Brook House and what effect it has on the education of the victim and the rest of the children in the class/school. Apply sanctions relevant to the type of bullying alongside support work to support them in reflecting on their behaviour and how it can be changed.
6. If the allegation of bullying is denied, investigate further. If there is sufficient evidence that the bullying occurred, apply relevant sanctions.
7. Hold separate discussions with parents of perpetrator and victim.

8. Sanctions the school can potentially use for the bully include:
 - Withdrawal from favoured activities, for example school visit
 - Loss of break or Lunch times for a period to be determined by the Headteacher or Senior Leader.
 - Take part in 'Time Out' sessions at lunch time with the Learning Support Coordinator who will hold discussions with the child to reflect on their behaviour.
 - Barred from school during lunchtimes for a period to be determined by the headteacher.
 - Fixed period of exclusion from school.
9. Provide a Pastoral Support Programme for the victim with a mentor/named person (this could be any named member of Staff) monitoring and observing at break times and lunchtimes, and through discussion to make sure there is no repetition.
10. Provide a Pastoral Support Programme for the perpetrator. This will be led by the Learning Support Coordinator and could include a Behaviour Support Programme and opportunities in friendship groups for the child/ren to discuss relationships, feelings and the effect bullying can have on individuals.

In order to reduce incidents of bullying and recognise bullies, at Brook House, all staff watch for early signs of distress in pupils. We listen, we accept, we act.

The School Council should be another forum in which children can report bullying.

Bullying off the School Premises

Brook House is not directly responsible for bullying off the school premises; however, if both the victim and the bully are from our school action will be taken to inform the parents and play our part in addressing the alleged incident by carrying out a thorough investigation. The school will then share its finding with the respective parents. The school will not issue sanctions as the alleged incidents are occurring outside school and the school believes it is the responsibility of parents to apply what they see as appropriate sanctions in this situation.

If a child from Brook House is involved in a bullying incident with a pupil from another school we will liaise with the other school to ensure that there is no reoccurrence. Where possible, Brook House will support pupils, who have been bullied, especially on their way to or from school, by pupils from another school or by other persons.

The following steps should be taken.

- ◆ Talk to the Head Teacher of another school whose pupils are bullying off school premises.
- ◆ Talk to the Police if necessary.
- ◆ Talk to pupils about how to avoid or handle bullying situations.

Bullying Directed Towards Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation or Disability

Brook House will not tolerate bullying against anyone because of his or her race, gender, sexual orientation or disability. The school will take preventative action to reduce the likelihood of bullying incidents of this nature occurring. Stereotypical views are challenged and pupils learn to appreciate and view positively differences in others, whether arising from race, gender, ability or disability.

Cyber Bullying

Our school would not expect to see Cyber bullying occurring on the school premises as access to electronic devices, such as mobile phones, in school is prohibited as is access to social chat sites that can lend themselves to bullying taking place.

Brook House is not directly responsible for Cyber bullying occurring off the school premises. However, if both the victim and the bully are from our school action will be taken to inform the parents and play our part in addressing the alleged incident by carrying out a thorough investigation. The school will then share its finding with the respective parents. The school will not issue sanctions as the alleged incidents are occurring outside school and the school believes it is the responsibility of parents to apply what they see as appropriate sanctions in this situation.

The school has an 'E' Safety Policy that outlines in a comprehensive way the school's policy on keeping our children safe in the use of all electronic devices.

Racial Bullying/Harassment

Racial bullying will not be tolerated at Brook House and will be treated severely. If a child receives verbal abuse, physical threats or attacks, or if a pupil brings racist literature into school, incites others to behave in a racist way or writes racist insults, then the school will act quickly. This will take the form a full investigation being carried out; recording incidents in the school racist incident log and on Sheffield LEA forms. Brook House has a duty to develop children's understanding of ethnic diversity issues and explore racial tolerance in PSHE and Citizenship lessons, in Religious Education lessons and in school assemblies.

Racial incidents are reported to the Governing Body on a termly basis and LEA as required.

Sexual Bullying

Sexual bullying has an impact on both genders. Sexual bullying is characterised by abusive name-calling, comments about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty, inappropriate and uninvited touching, sexual innuendoes and propositions (i.e. sexual harassment).

Brook House strategies to deal with sexual bullying include:

- ◆ recording incidents in the Bullying incident book
- ◆ developing understanding of gender relations
- ◆ exploring sexism and sexual bullying in PSHE lessons
- ◆ using single-sex groups to discuss sensitive issues
- ◆ ensuring the school site is well supervised, especially in areas where children might be vulnerable
- ◆ Implementing appropriate discipline procedures as appropriate.

Sexual Orientation

Sexual bullying can also be related to sexual orientation. Children do not have to be homosexual or bi-sexual to experience such bullying.

Strategies to deal with such bullying include:

- ◆ recording incidents in the Bullying incident book
- ◆ awareness by staff that homophobic bullying can occur
- ◆ challenging homophobic language and explore pupils' understanding – they might not understand the impact
- ◆ Implement discipline procedures if the bullying warrants it.

Special Education Needs or Disabilities

Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities might not be able to articulate experiences as fluently as other children. However, they are often at greater risk of being bullied, both directly and indirectly, and usually about their specific disability.

Brook House makes sure the behaviour of staff does not trigger bullying unintentionally. They should avoid undue attention towards SEN children compared with others, and should not make comments based on pupils' appearance or perceived character.

We try to make classroom activities and lessons sensitive to such children's needs. We teach assertiveness and other social skills and teach victims to say 'No' and 'tell an adult'. A named mentor/friend may be appointed for the pupil to confide in.

If the bullying is serious, Brook House undertakes a full investigation, including a full discussion with witnesses, recording incidents in the incident book and contacting parents. Discipline procedures are implemented.

High attainers, gifted or talented pupils can also be affected by bullying. Teachers should treat this as seriously as any other type of bullying.

Role of Parents

Parents have an important part to play in our anti-bullying policy. We ask parents to:

- ◆ Look out for unusual behaviour in your children – for example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their usual standard.
- ◆ Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, etc.
- ◆ If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, please inform school. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- ◆ If you feel your child has been bullied by another child, please do not approach that child or the child's parent on the playground, please inform school immediately.

- ◆ It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse!
- ◆ Tell your child that it is not their fault that they are being bullied.
- ◆ Reinforce the school's policy concerning bullying and make sure your child is not afraid to ask for help.

Mark Hinchliff

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