



ACORN HOUSE COLLEGE

Anti-Bullying Policy Acorn House College

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Aims and Objectives

The College as a whole aims to teach the value of integrity, morality and a concern for others and to develop pupils' self-confidence and independence so that they are well-equipped to play an active role in society. We expect our pupils to show courtesy, respect and consideration for others. All members of the college community, pupils or staff, should be free from the fear of bullying.

To that end the principles of the school policy on bullying are shared and discussed through staff training to ensure all members of staff understand legal responsibilities and are aware of the procedures to resolve and prevent problems. Students and staff are also made aware of sources of support. For example, all classrooms have clear information displayed regarding contact numbers relating to safeguarding and child protection.

Everyone should feel able to speak out and report any concerns about bullying in the knowledge that they will be listened to and that the matter will be investigated. Bullying has not been and will not be tolerated at Acorn House College.

Acorn House College does not tolerate bullying in any form. The College recognises that bullying amongst any members of the college community is unacceptable. This covers incidents involving pupils, parents and staff – in any combination. It is the aim of this policy to help staff and pupils deal with bullying issues effectively but more importantly to work to prevent bullying taking place.¹

The policy ultimately aims to help create an environment of good behaviour and respect with helpful examples set by staff and older pupils and through celebrations of success.

Guidance from the Department of Education, *Preventing and Tackling Bullying*; published in October 2014 says that:

'A school's response to bullying should not start at the point which a child has been bullied. The best schools develop a more sophisticated approach in which school staff proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place.'

'Schools which excel at tackling bullying have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment and are reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest.'

¹ This policy has regard to the DfE Advice, *Preventing and Tackling Bullying; Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies*, October 2014

‘Schools should apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly their behaviour is wrong. Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly, consistently and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs of vulnerable pupils.’²

² *Preventing and Tackling Bullying; Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies*, October 2014, 7

Definition of bullying, cyber bullying and 'hurtful behaviour'

Bullying

'Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice towards particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, homophobia and biphobia, special education needs, and disability or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority, but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical.'³

'Bullying makes the lives of its victims a misery: it undermines their confidence and self-esteem and destroys their sense of security. Bullying impacts on its victims' attendance and attainment at school; marginalises those groups who may be particular targets for bullies and can have a life-long negative impact on some people's lives. At worst, bullying has been a factor in pupil suicide.'⁴

Bullying may cause serious psychological harm to its victims. In some instances, it may also be treated as a criminal offence under the laws concerning harassment and threatening behaviour. Incidents of bullying must be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering from (or is likely to suffer from) significant harm. In such cases, the procedures detailed in the College's Child Protection Policy should be followed.

Cyber bullying

'The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.'⁵

'Cyberbullying can be an extension of face-to-face bullying. It differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity; and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target.'⁶

³ *Preventing and Tackling Bullying; Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies*, October 2014, 6

⁴ *Executive Summary – Safe to Learn*, 2007

⁵ *Preventing and Tackling Bullying; Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies*, October 2014, 6

⁶ *Executive Summary – Cyberbullying*, 2007

Hurtful Behaviour

The College recognises that there are also instances of ‘hurtful behaviour’ which need to be addressed and taken seriously but which would not necessarily be identified as bullying because there was not the intent to cause harm. By addressing these instances promptly and effectively, the College seeks to avoid the occurrence of bullying.

Peer on peer abuse

Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via peer-on-peer abuse. This is most likely to include but is not limited to bullying (including cyber bullying), gender based violence, sexual assaults and ‘sexting.’

Recognised forms of bullying⁷

Direct

Physical : taking belongings, hitting, kicking, pushing.

Verbal : name calling, taunting, mocking, insulting, making offensive comments.

Cyberbullying : repeatedly sending unwanted text messages (SMS), instant messages (eg Whatsapp) and pictures or comments via instagram or similar sites. It can also take the form of indirect (but no less severe or hurtful), intimidation, threats, impersonation, manipulation of an individual.

Indirect

Gossiping, spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours, exclusion from groups; inappropriate text messaging and emailing, sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet; vilification/defamation; manipulation of others; producing offensive graffiti.

Specific types of bullying

Appearance or Health Conditions

Those with: visible physical differences; mental differences; social differences including apparent affluence or poverty, can become targets.

Race, Religion or Culture

Racist or faith-based bullying.

Learning Difficulties or Disabilities

Those with a learning difficulty or physical disability.

Sexual Orientation

“In schools, homophobic bullying can directly affect any young person whose life choices, interests or needs do not conform to accepted gender norms, as well as adult members of the school community who are LGBT. This can, in

⁷ *Government Guidelines for Schools on Bullying. Safe to Learn & Cyberbullying, 2007*

turn, affect the whole school community who are LGBT and anyone who may have friends or relatives who are LGBT... This can, in turn, affect the whole school community by giving out the message that bullying is tolerated, and that the school environment is safe.”⁸

Sexist or Sexual

Typically involves ‘name calling, comments and overt looks about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty. In addition uninvited touching, innuendos and propositions, pornographic imagery may be used.’⁹ Boys may be the victims of girls’ bullying as well as vice versa. Both sexes may become victims of same sex bullying.

Class/socio-economic status

May involve bullying of students who do not pay full fees or on account of the way in which parents pay fees. May also be based on the possessions students have access to for example clothing, electronic gadgets including mobile phones, cars and accessories.

Procedures for dealing with Bullying

Students

If you are being bullied or suspect someone else is being bullied it is very important to tell someone who may be able to help. This may be a friend, a member of your family, a sixth former, a teacher, your Head of Year, the Principal or anyone else you feel you can confide in. It is important to share with another person any concern about bullying, which is worrying you. You should never just be a ‘bystander’; let someone know what is happening. There is also a confidential Suggestions Box, situated in the Study Room that is checked regularly. You may use this confidentially and anonymously to make suggestions and raise matters of concern.

Staff

Staff who have concerns about bullying should tell an appropriate person (in most cases this will be the Head of Year, Vice-Principal or Principal).

Parents

Parents who have concerns about bullying should tell an appropriate person. In most cases this will be the Head of Middle School or Principal, but, where there is a cause for serious concern, or if the problem continues, the Principal must be informed in writing. Further guidance for parents is produced by the Department of Education entitled ‘School support for children and young people who are bullied’. The college can provide copies of this documentation if required.

Whole College

⁸ *Department for Education and Skills, Stand up for us, challenging Homophobia in schools (2004)*

⁹ *Safe to Learn, 2007, p.42*

Action in Cases of Suspected Bullying within the College and Outside of the College Including Cyber-Bullying

Cases of suspected bullying will be investigated thoroughly and carefully. All those involved will be given the opportunity to talk about the matter with an appropriate person who will then take the necessary action. A record of the investigation and its outcome will be kept in the appropriate student's file and notes will be kept in the files of all parties concerned, as well as a central file containing records of all suspected bullying. We will try to identify any patterns of bullying behaviour and ensure that we obtain relevant background information from appropriate parties when necessary, in order to gain insight into the possible causes. Significant incidents of bullying will be placed on the agenda for discussion during the termly governors' meeting, allowing the governing body to monitor the College's management of such occurrences and the correct implementation of this policy.

Where a crime may have been committed the police will be informed and if a child is at risk of significant harm and danger the relevant agencies at Ealing Council Child Services will be informed in accordance with the Welfare and Safeguarding Policy.

Records are kept to evaluate the effectiveness of the implemented procedures to identify and resolve bullying incidents.

Bullying incidents are treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

Sanctions

The College will support victims of any form of bullying. All sanctions available to the College will be used to correct, punish or remove those who bully fellow pupils or harass staff, in or out of college. In keeping with our Behaviour and Sanctions Policy, these sanctions may include disciplinary meetings, detentions and suspensions for fixed terms. In extreme cases, our response may involve permanent exclusion and the college will also work with the police, if appropriate. Details of our procedures and the circumstances under which parents are involved are given in the College's Behaviour and Sanctions Policy.

The College is committed to supporting all its members. In cases where, following investigation, the perpetrator of the bullying behaviour is deemed to be suffering from underlying problems, the College will do its best to provide adequate guidance, counselling and other forms of support, as appropriate. Cases of Cyber bullying are taken very seriously and the College has a proactive attitude towards dealing with such incidents. Our management of Cyber bullying includes:

(a) Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for online safety as part of the school's wider safeguarding strategy and how this links with other safeguarding policy;

(b) Clear guidance on the use of technology in the classroom and beyond for all users, including staff, students/pupils and visitors that references permissions/restrictions and agreed sanctions;

(c) The College has wifi throughout the college and encourages its use for educational purposes only, however there is also a firewall in place to limit access to certain sites and types of content;

(d) The thorough provision of adequate information and education, in order to build resilience amongst students to protect themselves and their peers;

(e) Regular INSET for staff, to ensure safeguarding and professional development that includes online safety;

(f) Students are encouraged, particularly via the PSHE programme to report any concerns to a member of staff and all staff are required to pass on issues and concerns to their line manager and/or the designated safeguarding lead;

(g) The College uses events such as parents evening and regular correspondence with parents to educate them in on-line safety;

(h) The management of personal data in line with statutory requirements;

(i) Strict rules governing the use of the computer room for students studying ICT and /or computing.

Raising Awareness of Bullying

PSHE sessions, other appropriate curriculum subjects, projects such as *Pride* for y10, meetings of the student council and assemblies will be used to raise pupils' awareness of the differences between people and the importance avoiding prejudice-based language.

Newly appointed staff will discuss the School's anti-bullying policy as part of their induction and other staff training will be provided as appropriate, including training to understand the needs of pupils with SEN or disabilities, as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender pupils. All staff will remain vigilant in identifying places and occasions where any incidents might be most likely to occur. Records will be kept of incidents and information will be passed on from year to year as appropriate.

For further information about dealing with bullying we refer to the DfE (advice *Preventing and Tackling Bullying (2014)*).

APPENDIX

Advice on Gathering Information on Bullying/Hurtful behaviour and Containing Incidents of Cyberbullying

1. If an offensive message has been received on a mobile phone, a member of staff or a parent needs to see the original message. A note must be made of:

- the date and time the message was received
- the person who sent the message
- the message itself

2. Ask the recipient of the message and a witness to sign and date the note to confirm its accuracy.

3. Internet messages/pictures should be printed out and given to the member of staff dealing with the incident.

4. When reporting an incident to a member of staff, an individual needs to feel that it is safe to talk i.e. without being seen by others or overheard. At the same time staff must adhere to the Code of Conduct for Staff and ensure they follow the guidelines on appropriate conduct in relation to pupils etc.

5. When a report has been given by an individual of an incident or series of incidents, he/she should be asked to write it down or type it up. The member of staff who has listened to the report should check that the essential details of the written record match his/her understanding of the incident and should clarify anything that is not clear. The individual should then be asked to sign the account which should then be signed and dated by the member of staff. This process should be used for every account given by all parties involved in an incident.

6. Cyberbullying: the quickest method of stopping the spread of inappropriate material is to get the person who originally posted it to remove it.

- If possible, contact the host (e.g. a social networking site), to make a report to get the material taken down. The material may be in breach of the service provider's terms and so can be removed.
- Confiscate phones containing offending material.
- Ask pupils to delete offensive material and say who they have sent it to. Staff can confiscate a phone as a disciplinary penalty but can only search through a phone if the pupil is reasonably suspected of involvement in cyberbullying which is of a sufficiently serious nature. Staff must not search through a phone or computer if there is a possibility that images exist of a

sexual nature.