

The PLACE Independent School Countering Bullying Policy

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Outcome

Children build positive relationships built on mutual trust a respect, understanding of acceptable behaviour and positive responses to children and adults.

What we do

There is a strong culture within The PLACE Independent School of immediately addressing bullying. It is a clear aim within the school to actively address and challenge any form of bullying behaviours.

It is important that the children/young people's experience of education is as positive as possible. This means that clear guidance and practice regarding bullying is essential. A proactive approach is needed so that bullying doesn't add to the negative experiences that the children/young people have already been exposed to. Therefore the alternative provision operates a zero tolerance to bullying. A risk assessment regarding bullying is included in each young person's individual behaviour plan, which should be updated regularly.

Definition of bullying

- Repetitive and persistent: it is usually part of pattern of behaviour, it can be intimidating and threatening
- Intentionally harmful: it can result in a person being hurt
- Involves an imbalance of power: it can leave the person feeling powerless

Types of Bullying

There are different forms of bullying and varying behaviours, which may be observed within education:

Physical bullying

- Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, spitting, hair pulling
- Sexual assault
- Making people do things they do not want to do
- Stopping people from doing things they want to do
- Damaging someone's belongings
- Taking someone else's belongings

Verbal bullying

- Name calling
- Spreading rumours
- Saying or writing nasty comments
- Threats and extortion
- Making offensive remarks

Indirect/psychological bullying

- Being unfriendly, not talking to someone
- Tormenting
- Threatening gestures

Cyber bullying

- Misuse of all areas of the internet, e.g. chat room, e-mail
- Mobile phone threats
- Accessing e-mail addresses for individuals via Bluetooth and sending threats

It is important to note that some acts of bullying also constitute unlawful behaviour and can be classed as offences, for example, sexual or racial harassment and theft.

Who bullies

- Anyone can bully someone else, no matter what their age, gender, size, background, academic ability etc.
- The bully may be having their own difficulties at school and may be finding it difficult to play with friends
- A bully will often have low self-esteem. They may find it difficult to show their real feelings or be able to talk about their own problems
- A bully may be, or may have been, bullied by someone themselves, or they may have witnessed bullying of some form when living with their families
- A bully may feel worthless themselves and by bullying they are trying to feel in control of situations and present as powerful individuals.

Effects of bullying

The most common effects of bullying are:

- Anxiety, possibly depression
- Absence from school and lower standards of work
- Physical illness
- Low self-esteem, which can lead to the person having difficulty forming positive relationships with others
- Withdrawal from activities, both within school and outside of school
- For the bully, they may try and feel strong, but this can have the opposite effect. They themselves may have even lower self-esteem and not feel in control.
- The bully may feel worried about the consequences, although they may not show these feelings
- Other children/young people attending education may feel distressed and anxious as a result of someone else being bullied. They may have been threatened if they tell someone about it.

Indicators of bullying

Possible indicators that bullying is taking place are:

- Changes in the child/young person's approach to certain situations, e.g. they become angry/ upset when they didn't used to react in that way previously
- Unexpected illness
- Damaged or missing clothes or other belongings
- Unexplained marks on the child/young person's body, e.g. scratches, cuts
- Going to and/or from school using a different route
- Lower school performance
- Not attending school
- Becoming upset or angry very easily
- Running away from Home
- Self-harming behaviours
- Asking for pocket money early or asking for savings and wanting it immediately
- 'Lending' belongings to other children/young people living in the home
- Wanting to be nearer to staff for safety
- Difficulty sleeping or having nightmares
- Change in eating pattern

Cyber-bullying, Sexting and Hazing

From time to time it may occur that pupils contact each other through technological means outside of school hours in an unpleasant or bullying manner. We would expect parents or carers to take a lead role in assisting the school to combat any such behaviours and managing out of school use of mobile phones and the internet. However, where this is not resolved in the immediate first stages and therefore impacts upon education for pupils within school hours, we would take actions to combat bullying within school hours. Mobile phones are not permitted on school sites for pupils in any instance, and internet use and computers are supervised. All staff members are trained around E-Safety and the risks that technology can pose to young people. Young people will be supported to report any cyber-

bullying to trusted staff members and will work on an action plan with the staff member which can include mediation, restorative justice approach, amending timetables, letter writing and written or verbal warnings to other pupils.

Use of the internet and computers within the school is fully supervised and software is in place to restrict access to social media or harmful sites, and therefore cyberbullying on school site or in school hours is a reduced risk for pupils.

Pupils will be educated around the use of the internet and safety of this, including knowledge to keep themselves safe such as not posting photo's of themselves on websites, not sending picture messages through text or photo apps and the importance of remembering the 'digital footprint'. Young people will be educated around the law of passing on images, posting hurtful or offensive comments on the internet, internet bullying and using others accounts.

The PLACE Independent School responds to cyber-bullying in the same way as any other form of bullying and takes this very seriously.

Sexting is the exchange of self-generated sexually explicit images, through mobile picture messages, webcams or over the internet. Young people may also refer to it as: cybersex or sending a nudie/picture/selfie. Sexting is often seen by children as a form of flirting and they feel it is part of normal life and sexual development.

Should an incident of 'sexting' come to light the school will deal with this in a confidential and sensitive manner in order to safeguard the pupil/victim. The school will manage these incidents in a case by case basis based on the individuals involved, their development and understanding and their individual plans as well as historical information and any risks. Any incidents will be shared with parents/carers and social workers at all stages of the investigation and resulting outcomes will be shared with relevant agencies. Staff and the DSL will be involved in any incident of alleged or actual 'sexting', keeping in mind any risks around Child Sexual Exploitation which may be present. The PLACE does not find it appropriate to contact the Police on every occasion, however careful recording and evidence gathering will be completed by the school in liaison with the DSL. Staff will bear in mind:

- The age and developmental appropriateness of the action
- The background and context to the child(ren)
- Whether the child was willing or coerced
- The nature of any images
- The level at which pictures were disseminated
- The participant motive/intent
- The well-being on those involved
- Whether protection, education or therapeutic input is required
- The urgency and timing of the event

- Involvement of any other young people/schools/places

Where any indecent images are found of a young person the Safeguarding Policy must be adhered to, and the School DSL should be informed immediately. The device on which there are images should be securely stored where possible and a dynamic risk assessment made for the young people. A referral to social care may be required after liaison with the DSL or in their absence a referral can be made independently. The Police may be contacted where appropriate or where sexual abuse is suspected, and this decision will be made on conjunction with the Head and DSL. Immediate safeguards will be put in place as necessary and directed by DSL and parents/carers will be informed of the incident as appropriate. The Education Act 2011 gives teachers the power to search and seize electronic devices and staff will be reminded of this so that they are able to securely store and access devices if required in situations of safeguarding.

Any individual who participates in creating an image, storing, distributing, copying or printing can be found guilty of a criminal act (including the under-age person who took the picture of him or herself); therefore the school will be cautious around any indecent image they receive digitally or in hard copy. Staff will avoid viewing, copying, or distributing the image even if they believe they are doing so in the course of an investigation or they may be liable under child pornography laws.

Hazing

If school staff think there is a potential of hazing occurring, they should:

- Speak with YP on what constitutes hazing
- Make clear that having will not be tolerated at TPIS
- Take every opportunity to prevent hazing by promoting respect, teamwork and play in the school
- Keep a log in safe-guarding files of all hazing concerns

Investigating

Always take all reports about or rumours of hazing seriously.

Refer back to TPIS Safe-Guarding Policy to investigate all concerns.

If you are concerned about Hazing

Report all concerns about hazing directly to the DSL in writing.

Victims of Hazing

Ensure the victims are safe guarded under the Whistle Blowing Policy, whilst making clear the limits of confidentiality.

Dealing with bullying

The ethos of the school should be one where everyone values and respects people, whatever they look like or where they come from. The clear message should be that it is okay to be different.

Children/young people should be given clear information about different cultures, beliefs and lifestyles, and opportunities should be created to discuss these matters openly and honestly with staff and their peers.

When a child/young person first attends the school, they should be clearly advised that bullying is **not** acceptable and that bullying in any form is always taken seriously and addressed thoroughly.

Any incidents of bullying need to be taken seriously, the approach from staff should be “We know what’s going on”, as opposed to a particular child/young person “has told us that they are being bullied”.

All staff should exercise vigilance in monitoring the interactions between residents. Any incidents of bullying witnessed must be challenged immediately and recorded in the bullying log.

The issue of bullying should be raised at in during key drop down days and proactive approach adopted in dealing with the issue (see PHSCE and SMSC policy)

Where necessary, the head teacher should become involved in dealing with a bullying issue, for example, meeting with the person bullying and/or the person being bullied.

Each child/young person should be made aware of the complaint’s procedure within the provision. If a child/young person is experiencing bullying they have the right to speak informally to a member of staff, make a formal complaint, speak to their parent or social worker or any other professional who could help them.

Working with the child being bullied

All bullying must be challenged, and a consistent approach used by all staff:

- Take time to speak to the child/young person being bullied
- Gather information sensitively and record it accurately
- Encourage the child/young person to speak openly about what is happening, this message to be reinforce in Key Worker sessions
- Devise a plan alongside the child/young person in how to deal with the bullying, for example, what they could say or do, when the bully is near them
- Reassure the child/young person that it is not their fault that they are being bullied and that it is important to keep talking about the problem



Working with the bully

Despite best efforts, it is possible that some children/young people in the school will bully other children/young people living there. Alternatively, the bully may be someone at the child/young person's school.

- Inform the school of information received and arrange a meeting to discuss and agree an action plan. This needs to be done in conjunction with the child/young person's Social Worker and parents.
- Clear boundaries need to be set to each child/young person about what is not acceptable behaviour.
- Focus on key areas: child/young person admits and acknowledges their actions. They then apologise for their behaviours
- These areas need to be addressed in order to help stop the behaviour and encourage the child/young person to change.
- A key objective is to enable the child/young person showing the bullying to acknowledge that what they did was wrong
- Set short term, realistic goals with the bully, ones that they will be able to achieve with support.

Whatever has happened, the situation should be monitored closely, and any further negative behaviours challenged.

If there is no improvement, or the situation escalates, either within the school or elsewhere, the parents or social worker should be contacted, and a meeting arranged to discuss in detail what is happening and what action should be taken. Clear actions should be agreed with timescales set. These actions should be reviewed to ensure the matter is being taken seriously and progress is being made. It is important that both the person bullying, and the person being bullied are present, so they are clear the matter is being addressed.

All risk assessments should be kept up to date by the Education Lead, to ensure that bullying is dealt with proactively. All children/young attending the provision, wherever possible, should be involved in reviewing the bullying risk assessment element of their behaviour plans and also any policies in respect of bullying.

Bullying involving adults

It is possible that bullying can take place between adults and children/young people. Whilst high standards of practice are paramount there could be an occasion where a member of staff, or other adult, bullies a child/young person attending the school.

If there is reason to suspect that a member of staff within the school is bullying a child/young person this must be reported to the head teacher immediately. Safeguarding procedures are in place to deal with incidents like this. In cases where the allegation is about the head teacher then the information must be passed immediately to the school proprietor.

Where there is reason to believe that a child/young person is being bullied by another professional outside the school then the same procedures apply. The Head Teacher must be informed, along with the child/young person's Social Worker.

Where a child/young person is being bullied by a member of their family or another adult known to the child/young person, then a professionals' meeting should be arranged involving all those relevant people involved with the child/young person and who can help address and deal with the situation, e.g. Police.

Amendments: Cate Tumman

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