



Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership

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ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Midsomer Norton Schools Partnership Trust (Trust) holds the opinion that bullying is not acceptable in any form from any individual or group, including on-line bullying.

We set out to educate all pupils attending Trust schools about the issues surrounding bullying and to deal effectively with incidents when and where they arise. However, schools are not the only place where anti-bullying education can take place and we wish to work alongside parents/carers to ensure that the message to children is clear and consistent. Whilst it is not always possible to take responsibility for incidents of bullying which occur outside of school, we would aim to support and assist parents in their management of the incident. To be clear, the Trust and schools **may** determine to take action against perpetrators (including support in terms of education), if actions of others outside of school time cause issues for pupils in school hours.

All schools within the Trust will ensure all staff are educated/trained about child on child abuse and that any incidents reported are dealt with in a serious and efficient manner. Colleagues are also empowered to intervene where they come across any potential bullying, including that which would be seen as harmful sexualised behaviour.

2. DEFINITION

As guidance, the Trust schools recognises the definition as provided by the DFE in its document "Don't Suffer in Silence" (1994) and subsequent publications by other organisations, where bullying has three fundamental common traits:

- it is deliberately hurtful behaviour
- it is repeated often over a period of time
- it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves

and that bullying takes five main forms which are:

- Physical - hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- Verbal - name-calling, insulting, sexist, racist or homophobic remarks
- Emotional - spreading nasty stories, excluding someone from social groups; use of notes to start/continue "verbal"

& indirect bullying:

- Cyber – use of e-mail, social media, texts etc to start/continue "verbal" & indirect bullying, coercion
- Sexual – crude comments, vulgar gestures, uninvited touching, sexual propositioning, nude/semi-nude images
- Prejudicial – targeting others for being different and singling them out – race, religion, sexual orientation, SEN, appearance, health conditions.

3. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

- 3.1. To protect students from physical attack and other forms of bullying, including racial abuse, name calling, stealing, threats, malicious gossip, intimidation, LQBGQ+phobia, harmful sexualised behaviour and the use of mobile devices or ICT as a means of bullying (child on child).
- 3.2. To encourage all members of the Trust school community to have a positive self-image and educate on positive well being.
- 3.3. To help students to view themselves as part of a community and, by example, to nurture their abilities to sustain relationships with families, peers, and the world outside.
- 3.4. To encourage students to voice their concerns about others with confidence.
- 3.5. To work with parents and carers to build an understanding of the Trust school's responsibility to ensure the welfare of all students.
- 3.6. To establish and maintain procedures so that all students know how to act if they have concerns or need support.
- 3.7. To provide a means for open and effective communication between students, teachers, parents and other agencies working with young people.
- 3.8. To reduce and ultimately eradicate the number of incidents of bullying.
- 3.9. All students will know how to access support and “face up” to the bully using assertiveness.

4. RESPONSE

a) Education

The schools in the Trust have PSHE and/or Tutor/Teacher assemblies to teach children about the central issues related to bullying, child on child abuse, etc. These teaching materials and discrete learning episodes, run across and through the age range of each school. Our aim is to develop an understanding of the causes and effects of bullying and to provide opportunities for pupils to develop strategies to prevent and resolve bullying.

b) Support Structure

Secondary Provision

Pastoral teams work with their tutor teams on a regular basis to build understanding and skill in dealing with issues related to bullying. In turn this awareness is shared with and developed in the work undertaken by the student councils or similar focus groups. In some schools there are also peer mentors or community ambassadors who support children with issues related to bullying. Assemblies are used to remind pupils of the effects of bullying and how to report it and respond to it.

Primary Provision

Classroom teachers work together with SLT on a regular basis to build understanding and skills in dealing with issues related to bullying. In turn, this awareness is shared with and developed in the work undertaken by the student councils/forums etc.

Training for all key personnel in the Trust is provided by regular internal meetings and discussions. This also includes safeguarding updates, for example child on child abuse training and how to recognise harmful sexualised behaviour.

The Trust schools actively seek the support and help of all outside agencies in the resolution of these issues where appropriate. These will and do include:

- Specialist Behaviour Service
- Social Services
- Police
- Youth Connect
- GPs
- Play therapy
- Thrive training
- Team Teach approaches

5. ACTION

If bullying is suspected or reported, then the staff involved will talk to the victim, the perpetrator and any relevant witnesses. A written record should be made of the incident(s) on the school behaviour management system and any witness statements (dated and signed) should also be logged/filed as part of the behaviour management system.

It may be appropriate for the member of staff to involve classroom teacher, tutor, pastoral team or member of the SLT after initial appraisal of the incident. The principal aim is to deal with the issue in the most appropriate manner and to treat each incident individually. This allows staff to respond in a flexible and caring way to the feelings of the victim. It should be noted that in more minor cases of bullying the "heavy hand of discipline" is not always the most desirable approach.

If the member of staff involved is in any doubt of how to proceed then they should, without exception, discuss the matter with their pastoral team colleagues, a member of the SLT or the Headteacher. They should not work outside the school structure and should always ensure adequate records are kept. Each school must keep records of bullying incidents on their behaviour management information system.

In support to the victim staff should:

- Reassure the victim they will be taken seriously
- Avoid blaming the victim
- provide an immediate opportunity to talk about the situation
- respond to the feelings of the victim
- inform parents/carers
- offer continued support personally or through arrangement with the classroom teacher, tutor or pastoral team
- be seen to take appropriate action
- ensure that the incident is logged
- ensure the victim and parents/carers understand the actions that have been taken.

In discussion with the perpetrator staff should:

- aim to raise the perpetrator's awareness of the damage caused to their victim inform parents/carers
- provide continued support to ensure development of a more acceptable level of behaviour
- involve classroom teacher, Tutor, Pastoral team and SLT in the discipline process where appropriate
- investigate the involvement of outside agencies where appropriate in consultation with classroom teacher, tutor, pastoral team or a member of the SLT
- put in place a sanction in line with the behaviour policy
- a house change/timetable change for the perpetrator may be an appropriate step in support of the victim.

6. DISCRIMINATORY AND PREJUDICE-BASED HARM/ BULLYING

The Trust schools have a zero tolerance approach to the use of discriminatory language or behaviours including racism, faith-based prejudice, disablism, and targeted abuse regarding sexual orientation, gender or medical needs. The response to such behaviour will be robust and is likely to lead to a formal suspension from school as well as support for the perpetrator and victim. Repeated behaviour of this type may result in permanent exclusion from a Trust school.

Discriminatory language and prejudice-based bullying are potentially safeguarding issues capable of affecting a child's mental health, safety, and welfare. Those involved in managing such behaviours will need to refer issues such as this to the safeguarding team or DSL in school.

7. CHILD ON CHILD ABUSE AND BULLYING OF A SEXUAL NATURE

The Trust school have a zero tolerance approach to child on child abuse and bullying of a sexual nature. The response to such behaviour will be robust and is likely to lead to a formal suspension from school, as well as support for the perpetrator and victim. Repeated behaviour of this type may result in permanent exclusion from a Trust school. Please also see the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for further guidance on this matter

8. AI AND TECHNOLOGY-RELATED BULLYING

Staff should be aware that the rise of AI presents a further risk of increased cyberbullying. AI-generated content, deepfakes, and digitally altered intimate or mocking imagery are becoming more commonplace and represent serious and harmful bullying. Schools should respond robustly to incidents of this kind and where necessary inform relevant authorities

Staff and pupils working with children should be clear that generating or sharing malicious digital media or deepfakes targeting a peer constitutes severe harassment and child-on-child abuse.

9. DISCIPLINARY STEPS

Through raising awareness and developing a sense of mutual respect the Trust schools aim to deal with the majority of incidents of bullying through discussion and continued support for both victim and perpetrator.

It may be appropriate for the perpetrator to be suspended from normal school society at break and/or lunchtime for a period, or certain lessons, to act as a deterrent and/or punishment. Parents/carers should be informed of this action and may be required to attend a meeting at school to discuss the disciplinary actions and how a repeat of unwanted behaviour can be avoided in the future.

For repeated incidents of bullying or for incidents that involve physical attack, physical intimidation or prejudicial abuse, the school may wish to suspend the perpetrator for a fixed period of time or permanently exclude them from school. This decision will be made in consultation with the school SLT and the Headteacher.

10. REPORTING BULLYING OF ANY KIND

Pupils should report any bullying to a member of staff in their school. In some cases, it may be necessary to pass information or concerns on to the safeguarding team or DSL. Some bullying can be resolved using the school behaviour policy, but there may be times when bullying may also be a safeguarding concern.

11. BOARDING & RESIDENTIAL SETTINGS

In accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding, Standard 16.3; The school's anti-bullying strategy reflects that unlike at day schools, boarders who are being bullied (off line) cannot escape their bullies for long periods of time as they are not going home as often. Procedures to manage this are outlined at local school level in the Boarder/Residential induction, Handbook and Noticeboards.