



Exeter Steiner School *Anti-bullying policy*

Statement of intent

This policy has regard to the Dept. of Education and Skills (DfES) Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence" which is available and should be referred to for reference. A list of other useful references is given at the end of this document. This policy also complies with the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000.

Note: This policy should be read and used in conjunction with the schools Behaviour and Discipline Policy. The DfES report Bullying: Don't suffer in silence (p.4), states. "A policy [on bullying] will only be effective if everyone in the school has discussed and understood the problem of bullying, and agreed on good and bad practise". The latter recommendation should be read in the context of our school's "low profile, high vigilance" anti bullying policy as outlined below.

The policy can be reviewed when any revised guidelines are issued by DfES, and in the light of further information or experience, and will in any case be reviewed annually.

This policy is to be kept in the Policy and Guidelines Binder within the school, and all staff must be familiar with the procedure. It is available on request to existing and prospective parents and guardians, and this is stated in the Parents Handbook.

Basic principles

As a Steiner Waldorf School we are committed to understanding and providing without exception, a secure and safe environment, which will enable our children to grow naturally, both as an individual and in the wider context of social integration and assimilation at all, levels.

We take our responsibilities as guardian of our children's intellectual, physical, spiritual and social development seriously. We ensure that at all times any difficulties that may arise both individually and within their social environment such as behaviour which can be termed 'bullying' are dealt with immediately and with the utmost care.

We want our children to grow naturally, feel secure, and approach themselves and each other confidently and without fear. We feel that we are laying the foundations for individuals to build upon. Individuals capable of fulfilling their destinies; taking part in, and upholding, a social structure. Each child's development is closely monitored, reviewed and researched within the context specific to that child and is considered deeply, with care and a desire to help

the child overcome any difficulties he or she may have, without fear, and with freedom for growth.

The educational experience that we offer, and its associated curriculum and school mores, actively cultivates the higher virtues of civility, co-operation and emotional maturity that are the hallmarks of a healthy social life.

We recognise that the personhood of those engaging in bullying behaviour as much as we recognise the personhood in all our school's pupils. In order to create a bullying-free environment, both the bullied and those who bully need help to challenge and transcend the damaging and invariably unproductive dynamics of abusive or bullying behaviour.

We aim to create an ethos where bullying behaviour is simply not an aspect of our school culture, and in which our children freely and unselfconsciously choose not to engage in bullying behaviour, not because they have internalised dialect instructions that it is 'wrong' but because that sort of behaviour simply does not exist and is unthinkable in our school's culture.

In the case of young children, we strive to provide strong role models of kind, considerate behaviour, with children freely observing adults and older children showing consideration and respect for others. In Steiner education, children will regularly receive examples in story form of people being mindful of each other's feelings, and images showing that it is bad to be destructive.

To this end our school has a low-profile, high vigilance anti bullying policy – that is, teachers and staff do not repeatedly draw attention to the issue of bullying through the curriculum, but all staff do undertake to be ongoingly vigilant that bullying behaviour is not occurring in our school – and all staff realise that this aspect of the policy is especially important given the low profile nature of the policy at curricular level. It is also important that all pupils are aware that we have a culture of complete openness about reporting any abusive behaviour, whether to self or weather observed amongst peers, and that it is everyone's responsibility to bring such behaviour to the attention of a trusted member of staff, who will always listen carefully, and take the matter further, while being sensitive to any confidentiality aspects that are deemed appropriate in each case.

Overall, the staff of our school undertake to strive at all times to provide a safe and secure environment for our children to grow, develop, and learn naturally according to their abilities, such that every child's potential is realised and no child has his or her potential stunted or compromised by abusive or bullying treatment, or through fear of the latter. This principle applies from the individual level of inter-personal relationships right up to the level of our general school culture. In our school, we place central importance on the development of healthy self-esteem, emotional maturity and self-expression – character qualities which, when well developed minimise the possibility of bullying or abusive behaviour taking root. Related to this, a central feature of our school is that every child's development is carefully observed, nurtured and celebrated, with care and a deep desire to help the child overcome or transcend any difficulties s/he may experience. In this context the very

possibility that any bullying behaviour would take root (either as perpetrator or victim) is also greatly reduced or eradicated.

In Steiner education, our aim is to create a learning environment of beauty and quality which pupils will quite naturally come to value and deeply respect – and the more we can succeed in maximising the aesthetics of our school environment, the less likely it will be that the ugliness of bullying behaviour will take root and develop.

Any difficulties, which do arise, which fall into the sphere of bullying or abusive behaviour will be responded to immediately, with firmness, and with the utmost care and sensitivity appropriate to each circumstance.

Definitions

Bullying is defined as persistent, intentionally hurtful behaviour towards another person or child who is younger, weaker, smaller or less powerful in some way. This form of behaviour may be repeated often over a period of time and difficult for victims to defend themselves against.

It is also defined as one or more individuals being exposed, repeatedly, and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. Within a Steiner Waldorf School this is viewed as consistent negative behaviour. We are aware of natural instinctual drives which with repetitive measures and procedures enable the child to be freed from this behaviour pattern and which are detailed within this policy in the sections Procedures, Outcomes, Prevention.

Types of bullying include:

- Emotional bullying: Being unfriendly, excluding or persistently ignoring, tormenting, threatening through gesture, ridiculing or humiliating the other, inciting others to bully;
- Physical bullying: Pushing, pushing, pinching, hitting, scratching, punching, biting, pulling, interfering with someone else's property or possessions.
- Racist bullying: Racial taunts, jokes and gestures, graffiti and racist insignia/badges, circulating racist literature, or 'picking on' behaviour of all kinds – recording all incidents of racist abuse.
- Sexual bullying: Unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive comments, stalking, homophobic victimisation.
- Verbal bullying: Persistent name-calling, systematic unwanted teasing or taunting, intimidation and threatening behaviour.
- Indirect bullying: Spreading nasty stories about someone, exclusion from social groups, being made the subject of malicious rumours, sending malicious e-mails or text messages on mobile phones.

Further information on types and forms of bullying is given in the DfES Bullying "Don't suffer in silence" pack.

Possible signs and symptoms

Tell tale signs of bullying can often be spotted through, or deduced from, behavioural disturbances in the child. All adults in the school need to be aware of these possible indications; and where there is well founded concern, they should investigate further or respond in line with the school's recommended policy procedure as outlined in this document (see earlier). Children's free play will very often be the medium through which a child attempts to 'work through' or heal bullying treatment when they feel unable to talk about it, so teachers and parents should always be alert to the content of free play and its possible re-enactment of bullying or revenge/retribution scenarios.

It should be noted that these indications should be treated with discernment, as such a symptom can easily be indicative of problems or difficulties other than bullying. Whilst a suspicion of bullying should always be appropriately investigated or acted upon, it is also important to remember that unfounded allegations or premature presumptions of bullying can also be greatly damaging to those children and parents involved.

Also refer to DfES Bullying: Don't suffer in silence pack.

- Changes in their usual routine.
- Unwillingness or reluctance to go to school or Kindergarten (sometimes clinically described as 'school phobia')
- Becoming withdrawn, experiencing anxiety or a diminishing level of confidence.
- Beginning to stammer or stutter or show other physical signs of anxiety – e.g. stomach aches, headaches, and trembling/shaking.
- Crying him or herself to sleep, nightmares or other sleep disturbances.
- Feeling ill in the morning before school.
- Beginning to perform poorly or out of character in tasks or projects, either at school or in the home. Coming home dishevelled or with torn clothes.
- Having unexplained or unexpected cuts, bruises, scratches or other injuries.
- Having personal possessions go missing without convincing explanation.
- Becoming aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Is observed bullying or treating badly, siblings or other children (which could be symptomatic of being bullied at school)
- Is considering or preoccupied with imaginary revenge or retribution (this could manifest in free play – see above)
- Has disturbed eating behaviour – e.g. stops eating or indulges in comfort eating.
- Seems to be (too) afraid to say what's wrong.
- Wets/soils in the bed/underwear.
- Offers improbable excuses/explanations for any of the above.

Policy objectives

- To communicate to everyone in our school community – through our behaviour and attitudes, and explicitly where appropriate – the central

importance of creating a culture in which civility and kindness towards one another are as natural as breathing; and that conflict, however and wherever it manifests, is best openly acknowledged and worked through, and always without resort to violence, intimidation or bullying of any kind. To this end, everyone – teachers, school staff, parents and children – have a responsibility not merely in helping create and nourish such a culture themselves, but to help each other to do so.

- To ensure that all trustees, committee members, teaching and non teaching staff and parents and others with an interest in the school, are aware of the school's definition of bullying, and that such behaviour in our school is completely unacceptable, and will be responded to immediately and firmly whenever observed are reported according to this policy and procedures.
- To encourage anyone engaging in bullying behaviour to feel able to seek help for their difficulties, and not to fear they will be labelled, harshly punished, shamed or humiliated in admitting their behaviour.
- To assure individuals and parents that they will be supported in any claims related to bullying or abusive behaviour, and know that our school does not tolerate such behaviour under any circumstances.

Procedures

Ongoing vigilance of school staff. Staff undertake to be vigilant, and observe children's peer relationships for signs of discord or interpersonal difficulty of any kind – and to make closer observation or investigation where there is cause for concern.

Staff undertake to be punctual at the start of all lessons, and preferably and wherever practicable to arrive at least 5 minutes before a lesson is scheduled to begin.

Children should be made aware, as unobtrusively as possible as is consistent with getting the message across, that any untoward incidents between children can and should be reported to any trusted teacher or member of staff.

Research has shown that the majority of bullying behaviour occurs in the playground, so all staff, and especially playground supervisors, are alerted to this fact. The schools Behaviour and Discipline Policy set out clear behavioural management guidelines for playground behaviour, which all playground supervisory staff should be familiar with. In general, there will be appropriate supervision of pupils during all unstructured school time.

Steiner (Waldorf)-specific approaches to bullying behaviour – intervention 'techniques'

There are a number of more Steiner-specific approaches, which will be variously invoked and drawn upon, the main ones being:

- Where impulsive reactions have led to hurt, we might encourage the child to be more consciously aware of limb engagement.

- We might indicate to the parents/guardians our view that it can be important to minimise child exposure to unnecessary nerve stimulation – e.g. through television, computer games etc.
- As stated earlier, children will regularly receive examples in story form of people being mindful of each other's feelings, and images' showing it is bad or anti-social to be destructive.
- Relatedly, we would tend to offer pedagogical stories to the child, in order to enhance the child's understanding of his/her behaviour, not least its results and consequences.
- WE might urge parents/guardians to shield the child from their own anxieties, and that as a general principle; children should not be unduly exposed to the intense emotional responses of their parents/guardians.

Responding to an observed specific incident/incidents

As a general principle, consistency of equivalence of response to bullying incidents is of paramount importance, while at the same time having sensitively and responding to the unique circumstances of each particular occurrence.

Any observes incidents of bullying behaviour will be stopped immediately, and any injuries investigated and dealt with immediately and appropriately. Concern and support will be offered to the victim, preferably in the presence of the perpetrator. The incident will be investigated further and thoroughly by talking with both parties (the bullied and the perpetrator|) at the earliest opportunity, and seeking where appropriate the perceptions of any bystanders – and if deemed appropriate, both children will be talked to together. The children's class teacher will also be informed.

The teacher/member of staff concerned will decide, with discernment according to the circumstances, whether it is necessary to record the incident in the confidential DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS BOOK (date and time, place of incident, names of children involved, description of incident, actions taken; which is kept under lock and key in the school's office) and will make an assessment as to whether this is a one off occurrence which merely needs a strong word and then subsequent check ins, and particular vigilance in the following days and weeks that everything is in order, or whether the children's class teacher(s) need(s) to be informed and the matter taken further following a more formal investigative procedure (see below)

(Again, as implied earlier it is important not to respond to harshly or too draconian a way if the specified circumstances do not warrant it. A teacher or staff member would be expected to consult with colleagues if s/he is uncertain whether a more formal procedure should be invoked or not)

ALL RECORDS KEPT WILL BE FULL AND ACCURATE AND WILL ALWAYS INCLUDE FULL DETAILS OF THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE; AND AS A MATTER OF PRINCIPLE, IT IS ALWAYS BEST TO INVOLVE PARENTS/GUARDIANS CONSTRUCTIVELY AT AN EARLY STAGE.

Formal procedures

If a more formal procedure is decided on the following course of action is followed:

- Once recorded in the Disciplinary Incidents Book, appropriate action will be considered, agreed and implemented, via consultations where appropriate with parents, teachers, assistant teachers, and school administrators/SENCOs. Parents/guardians of both the victim and the perpetrator will always be informed at this stage.
- The appropriate teacher's meeting will also be informed.
- A time or length of time would be agreed for the situation to be satisfactorily resolved.
- At any time within the course of this plan, a home visit can be arranged for further discussions to take place.

For more serious occurrences, and where pupils do not respond to prevention or other interventions, the school reserves the right to invoke more serious sanctions, and the schools exclusion policy may be invoked – for details, see our Behaviour and Discipline Policy. Quoting the DfES report *Bullying: don't Suffer in Silence* (p. 22), "permanent exclusion may be justified in the most serious and persistent cases, particularly where violence is involved"; and "Where serious violence is involved, the head teacher [read 'College of Teachers] can and should normally permanently exclude a pupil" (ibid p. 34)

Responding to a specific incident/incidents reported by a bullied child

As well as the above procedures, the following responses will be carefully adhered to:

- All will be done to ensure that the child feels safe and secure in the school.
- The child will be given appropriate physical and emotional support,
- The child will be encouraged to express his/her feelings in a safe and containing environment.
- There will be careful monitoring and, if felt necessary, monitoring of the child.
- Ongoing and frequent communication will be maintained by the class teacher with the child's parents/guardians, for as long as both feel it appropriate.

Help for the child who is bullying (sometimes called the perpetrator)

Adequate provision will always be made to help the child who is bullying. First and foremost it will always be made clear to perpetrators that bullying behaviour is always totally unacceptable, no matter how the perpetrator may be feeling themselves. We believe that bullying behaviour is very often, or nearly always, symptomatic of a child who is himself/herself suffering, and whose inner distress is expressed in bullying, abuse or oppression of others. Perpetrators are also commonly insecure, lacking in social skills or otherwise inadequate in some way.

As well as meetings and discussions between the child and his/her class teacher, held on a regular ongoing basis as is felt to be necessary and appropriate. We believe that the key to dealing with bullying behaviour resides in cultivating empathy – or the capacity to feel what someone else is feeling. It will again be made clear to all concerned that such consultations are treated with the utmost confidentiality.

In addition, where felt appropriate;

- There will be careful monitoring, and where appropriate, assessment of the perpetrator.
- It will be ensured that the child is given reinforcement of the desired behaviour in a way consistent with Steiner pedagogical principles – e.g. through role modelling, loving gesture and repetition.
- Staff will ensure that the child is kept in close proximity where deemed to be necessary and appropriate.
- Where appropriate, the perpetrator will be engaged in both devising and delivering reparation for the victim
- Ongoing and frequent communication will be maintained by the class teacher with the child's parents/guardians, for as long as both feel it to be appropriate.
- There could be a referral to an Educational Psychologist, on consultation with the child's parents/guardians.

Ultimately, It is the task of the school to do all that they can to help perpetrators feel more confident and fulfilled in their own lives.

Responding to a specific incident/incidents reported by a parent

In the first incidence, parents/guardians can approach their child's class teacher, the chair of trustees or the school administrator, as they prefer. Approached staff should know when and whom it is appropriate to refer the parent to within the school, in order to share and discuss their concerns further. It is essential that staff remain calm and understanding and listen carefully to the allegation(s) made, and that the schools policy on these matters is fully explained, and the procedures followed.

Parents/guardians will thus have their attention drawn to the school's Anti-Bullying Policy, together with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy (being given full copies where necessary); and reassured that allegations of bullying are treated with the utmost gravity, and that everything necessary will be done to protect the child from such behaviour, in accordance with the procedures set out in the Anti-Bullying Policy document (see above).

The parent/guardian will be asked for all available information about the alleged bullying behaviour, and record it appropriately and fully. The allegations will then be investigated in accordance with the procedure outlined earlier. The consulted member of staff will make a further; follow up appointment to explain any actions taken, and to find out whether the bullying has stopped. Finally a follow up with staff will be arranged to ensure that

appropriate action has been taken, and the school policy satisfactorily and appropriately implemented.

Vulnerable children

It is recognised that there will be some children who may be particularly susceptible to bullying behaviour – e.g. children with special needs or disabilities, new children joining a class, children of ethnic minority status, or children with either distinguishing and unusual characteristics, and so on. Teachers and staff are expected to be especially vigilant of the possibility of such children being subjected to bullying or oppressive behaviour. A ‘Circle of Friends’ approach for younger children (DfES, *Bullying*, pp. 26-7), or a ‘befriending’ approach (ibid, p.27) for children of 9 years and over may be utilised to help support vulnerable children.

Outcomes

Parents of both the bullied and the perpetrator are kept fully informed of any decisions, or changes with regards to the problem behaviour in question. In all cases except those in which special needs are present, thus precluding the following, the ultimate goal will always be full reconciliation between the children and, where appropriate, the parents.

Following the successful working through of a bullying procedure:

- A report will be written up by the class teacher, detailing the response to the problem behaviour and the outcome. Parents/guardians of both the bullied and the perpetrator will be offered the opportunity to read the report, and to offer any feedback on its content, except in cases where confidentiality concerns are paramount. Such reports will be treated with utmost confidentiality within the school.
- Staff will ongoingly monitor the behaviour of the children concerned until such time as it is felt confident, beyond reasonable doubt, that there will be no recurrence of the behaviour.

If there were to be persistent bullying problems in the school, an across the school survey would be carried out, informed by the indicators given in the DfES’s publication *Bullying: Don’t suffer in silence*, pp. 18-19.

Bullying off the school premises

The school is not directly responsible for bullying occurring off their premises (DfES, *Bullying*, 2000, p.7). However a good deal of bullying is known to occur on the way to and from school. The school’s general policy is that children should never, under any circumstances, feel they have to ‘suffer in silence’, and this applies equally to bullying out id school hours and grounds as it does within them.

This form of bullying should be treated seriously and a number of actions that could help resolve the problem are suggested in DfES, *Bullying*, 200, p.7.

Helpful contacts

Childline, Confidential helpline – freephone 080001111 or write to freepost 1111, London, N1 OBR.

General enquiries: tel 020 7239 1000, wbsite www.childline.org.uk

Parentline Plus, freephone 08088002222. Address: 520 Highgate studios, 53-79 Highgate Road, Kentish Town, London NW5 1TL

Kidscape tel. 0207 730 3300; bullying counsellor available Monday-Friday, 10-4. Address: 2 Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W ODH

Anti Bullying Campaign, 0207 378 1446 (9.30 till 5 p.m.) (advice line for parents and children)

Address: 185 Tower Bridge Road, London, SE1 2UF.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Dept for Education and Skills (DfES) (2000) *Bullying: Don't suffer in silence*, London, www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying/

Dept for Education and Skills with Parentlineplus (2004) *How to Cope with Bullying*, London.

Hall, J. (1993) *The Reluctant Adult: An Exploration of Choice*, Prism Press, Bridport [a path breaking book which elucidates the notion of victimhood and the complex archetypal and social dynamics which underline it]

Lewis, G. (2003) 'Bullying – 0 zero tolerance', *Freedom in Education*, 7 (July): 1, 3-5.

Oliver, C. and Candappa, M (2003) *Talking Bullying: Listening to the Views of Children and Young People*, Summary Report, Dept for Education and Skills, London.

Rawson, M. (2001) *Free your Child's True Potential*, Hodder and Stoughton, London.

Rigby, K. (2004) 'Addressing bullying in schools; theoretical perspectives and their implications', *School Psychology International*, 25 (3): 287-300.

See other school policies including Child Protection Policy, and Behaviour Policy for a list of other references.

Website: www.teachernet.gov.uk/childprotection includes useful references.