

Anti-bullying Policy

Updated May 2021. Next review due May 2022.

This Anti-Bullying Policy document gives guidance to the staff on how to deal with bullying. It is to be read in conjunction with the schools Good Behavior Policy.

This policy is applicable to all pupils to comply with our obligations under the Education (Independent Schools' Standards, England) Regulations 2003 SI1910/2003 (as amended), DCSF Guidance Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools (DCSF 00656/2007) and DfE guidance Behavior and Discipline in Schools- a guide to Head teachers and school staff, 2011 (Preventing and Tackling Bullying-Advice for School Leaders, staff and Governing Bodies).

The London Acorn School values the safety and well-being of all members of our school community. Our strong positive ethos relies on promoting moral values and a sense of self-worth among our pupils. Pupils are aware that they deserve respect and caring, and in turn are expected to respect others in our school community, and beyond, regardless of gender, ethnicity, class, disability, age, sexual orientation and religion.

Every pupil and member of staff, or visitor has the right to be safe and happy in our school, and to be protected if he or she is feeling vulnerable. Bullying is not trivial. It is a very serious problem, which can cause extreme emotional distress and has even led to suicide of school age children

WHAT IS BULLYING?

The term means that a child or children are made to feel insecure or teased in a way that makes them feel unhappy. This can be deliberate, such as an act of aggression from another student that was instantaneous, or it can be an act of aggression that has come about over a longer period of time as a result of ongoing problems between pupils.

Bullying can also be continual over a long period of time that may not necessarily have involved physical acts. It can also mean spreading stories about another pupil, denigrating them to others, telling direct lies or any similar underhand attitude towards another pupil.

Children can also feel upset or anxious because they are called names; perhaps pupils of ethnic origins become the victims of racial abuse or other children receive homophobic comments or personal remarks on appearance and physical ability, which can be more hurtful than many acts of physical aggression.

Bullying is not necessarily direct and may also happen by remote means, letters, notes or electronically by phone texts, over the internet on social networking sites or via email. These remote communications may be indirect i.e., not addressed to the child that is being bullied, but may have an intention of creating toxic gossip aimed at them. Apart from the inappropriate use of electronic media which goes against our school charter, any bullying by remote means must be treated seriously as the victim can find this deeply personally undermining because it potentially exposes them to group attention.

Definition of Bullying:

- Bullying is a willful act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain, or discomfort to another
- It is an abuse of power
- It can be planned and organized, or it may be unintentional
- Individuals or groups may be involved
- It can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, or by electronic means i.e. cyberbullying

Examples of Bullying Include:

- Any form of physical violence such as hitting, kicking, pushing people around, spitting
- Interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging, or destroying it
- Using offensive names, teasing, taunting, insulting, homophobic or racist remarks, remarks about a person's disability or spreading rumors about others or their families
- Cyberbullying - the use of information and communications technology (ICT) particularly mobile phones and the Internet deliberately to upset someone else. (See cyber bullying: safe to learn: Embedding Anti-bullying Work in Schools (DCSF 00658/2007), guidance issued by the Department for Children Schools and families)
- Making degrading comments about another's culture or religion or social background
- Hurtfully excluding others from a group
- Making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse
- Ridiculing another's appearance
- Forcing others to act against their will

TEACHER AWARENESS

Teachers should be constantly vigilant to possibly bullying at school, creating daily opportunities for discussion with students.

Teachers are role models in word and behavior at all times and will model respectful conversation throughout the school to other staff members and pupils.

The London Acorn School will encourage teachers in continuous professional development relevant to understanding and managing bullying, including specific training in child protection and approaches to behavior management.

Transition times (mealtimes, in the corridors between lessons, in the changing rooms, in the playground at breaks) can be a significant time for bullying to occur. Class teachers and designated helpers should watch very carefully during these times to be certain that every child is cared for and able to experience play in total safety.

Pupils are reminded regularly to approach their class teacher, or any member of staff that they trust, if they are unhappy at school, or if they feel they are being bullied.

In the school's Monday assemblies and in class teacher lesson blocks, children are presented with all the elements that they should be made aware of under the heading 'bullying'. For example, in assembly discussion with older children, the school community will discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying (religion, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexuality); explore the responsibilities of every individual who witnesses others behaving unacceptably and learn to work

with the wider community (for example discussing the role of the police, if bullying occurs outside school)

Pupils are encouraged to speak up on behalf of others, including in matters of bullying. Ample opportunity is made available for discussion appropriate to all stages of child development throughout the school. We are ever vigilant to ensure that we are fully aware of the wellbeing of every child in our care.

Children are discussed at each teachers' meeting, which means a review of possible bullying or behavioral issues at least fortnightly, even in the absence of overt concerns. Indeed, it is a feature of every meeting that the entire school community is reviewed as a group, including any cases of unhappiness or bullying arising there, with details of action taken. Details of any parental concerns are also brought to the meeting.

OPPORTUNITIES TO HEAR OF BULLYING FROM CHILDREN OR PARENTS

Throughout the school day the teachers can gain insight into the child's life at home and in school. This is an opportunity to consider the children's relationships with each other, with their parents, and with other adults. It may be that specific issues can be addressed during these times, such as anger, fear, conflict and bullying. There is bullying of some degree in all schools and The London Acorn School must deal effectively with any incidents or reports. Bullying of any sort must not be tolerated, but it must not be met without thought and skill, otherwise it can make situations worse.

The nature of The London Acorn School is such that children are taught in classes where they are able to speak openly, at regular times, throughout each day. Details of cases of bullying or behavioral difficulties can be raised there. It is also a feature of our community that parents are in regular formal meetings with teachers, and also have daily informal contact with the class teacher. On admission to the school, and in regular parents' meetings, teachers inform parents that they are warmly encouraged to speak to the class teacher about anything troubling their child, and this would specifically include bullying.

Children are encouraged to report any unhappiness at school, which may be the result of bullying. They develop a close relationship with their class teacher. However, they also often become close to other subject teachers they see regularly. Pupils are told they can go to any teacher (or to another trusted member of staff, for example the after-school leader, the craft teacher, the woodwork teacher, the Forest Skills teacher- all of whom they see regularly) if they feel unhappy with any aspect of school life, including bullying.

All members of staff at The London Acorn School will have an understanding of our Anti-bullying Policy and Safeguarding policy.

What is very clear is that at The London Acorn School, there are many opportunities for children and parents to voice concerns about bullying. By the very nature of the class teacher system, concerns can be heard at both a formal and informal level.

In the event of a report of bullying, the parents and the class teacher will meet with the Head of School and other nominated members of staff, to fully and carefully investigate and reflect. No case of bullying must go unreported.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN ON REPORTS OF BULLYING

- Due to the nature of our school, children are likely to speak to their class teacher if they feel bullied.

- If another member of staff is first spoken to by the child, this member of staff will speak to the class teacher, or Head of School, as quickly as possible.
- Class teachers must then immediately speak with the Head to fully investigate any reports or concerns of bullying.
- Class teachers must make concise notes of all incidents of bullying on child records of all concerned and keep the head teacher informed. The teacher should actively contact and involve the child's family.
- Where bullying may be occurring remotely, written evidence should be assembled where possible, including notes and computer screenshots.

Summary of procedures For Dealing with Alleged Cases of Bullying:

- Act as quickly as possible
- Report the possibility of bullying to any teacher (for teachers the Head Teacher)
- The bullied pupil will be given a safe opportunity to talk about what has happened and reassured
- The alleged bully (ies) will be interviewed
- Written statements may be asked for
- At every stage, support and mentoring will be provided for both the victim and the bully
- Staff must remain objective, taking neither side
- It is important to establish the truth
- Where appropriate, both parties may be brought together to clarify facts
- In all cases the children are taught the skills of emotional literacy and are given opportunities to learn new behavior and social skills
- In all cases parents of participants will be informed
- All sanctions will be considered depending on the particular case, in accordance with the school's Good Behavior Policy
- The follow-up is vital – the situation must continue to be monitored to ensure that things have improved.
- All reports of bullying will be monitored and evaluated to improve our systems.
- Teachers and staff at the school are all aware of the school's Child Protection and safeguarding policy and will be alert to any safeguarding issues connected with bullying.

The School Recommends that Parents Should:

- Watch for signs of distress in their son/daughter and for an unwillingness to attend School.
- Be suspicious of a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, request for extra money, damages clothes or bruising.
- Take an active interest in their son/daughter's social life and acquaintances. Be aware of your son/daughter's use of email/internet chat rooms if relevant.
- Advise their son/daughter to tell a member of staff about any incidents. If possible, allow him/her to report and deal with the problem themselves. They can gain much respect through taking the initiative and dealing with the problem without parental involvement.
- Inform the School immediately if bullying is suspected.

- Keep a written record (who, what, when, where, why, how). Not encourage their child to retaliate.
- Communicate to the child that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation.
- Be willing to attend meetings at the school if your son/daughter is involved in any bullying incident.
- Be willing to inform the school of any cases of suspected bullying, even if your child is not directly affected.

Formal Complaint:

If the victim or his/her parents are not satisfied with the action taken, they should discuss this with the Headteacher in the first instance, and may make a formal complaint, according to the School's complaints procedure.

Bullying between Parents and Teachers:

Where a parent or a colleague is suspected of bullying a member of staff, staff should speak to our Head Teacher or Director of Administration as soon as possible. All reported incidents will be investigated with appropriate support given and action taken. Counselling and mentoring, as appropriate, will be offered and, where necessary, disciplinary action will be triggered for accused/offending members of staff – this may include a warning or dismissal. Where a parent is bullying a member of staff, appropriate investigations will be made and, where appropriate, action may include terminating a place at the school.

Monitoring and evaluation

- The staff will monitor the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies on a day-to-day basis and report and bullying incident at once to the senior management team.
- The senior leaders will monitor the records of poor behavior, bullying and racial incidents every term and evaluate whether the strategies are implemented correctly and whether they are sufficiently effective.
- The evaluation will also include feedback from pupils and parents collected via annual surveys of their views on various aspects of the school's work.
- The annual evaluations will be reported to the School Board and used to further improve procedures.

January 2014

Reviewed January 2015

Reviewed January 2016

Reviewed January 2017

Reviewed May 2018

Reviewed May 2019

Reviewed May 2020

Reviewed May 2021

Next Review 2022

The Headmaster of The Acorn School, Nailsworth, helped The London Acorn School develop the original draft of this policy.
