



RADLETT LODGE SCHOOL LOCAL PROCEDURE FOR: ANTI - BULLYING

Statement of intent

The aim of the anti-bullying policy is to ensure that students learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Bullying affects everyone and is unacceptable. We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. If bullying does occur, we encourage everyone in our community to report it. All incidents will be fully investigated and dealt with promptly and effectively.

Introduction

Autistic children have difficulty 'reading' social situations and knowing how to engage in ever-changing social contexts. They find it hard to predict other people's behaviour and to interpret and/or infer their body language and expressions to guess what they are thinking or feeling. This makes it difficult for autistic children to understand other people's intentions and inferences and makes them an easy target for bullies. The Government has made tackling bullying in schools a key priority and the Department for Education (DfE) has made it clear that no form of bullying should be tolerated.

Definition of bullying

The DfE defines bullying as:

"Behaviour by an individual or a group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or a group either physically or emotionally. Bullying is intentional and it often involves an imbalance of power. Most often, it is repeated over time" (Olweus, 2015).

Radlett Lodge School defines bullying as a behaviour that is intentionally hurtful and is repeated over a period of time. Bullying can be perpetrated by individuals or groups of students.

Bullying needs to be understood in a way that it involves a 'perpetrator' and a 'victim', and that a person may engage in bullying as a learned behaviour due to past experiences. Thus, a victim of bullying may be a perpetrator in the future, or in a different environment. Successful interventions need to consider bullying within the context of both: the perpetrator and the victim.

There is evidence that a substantial amount of bullying is fuelled by prejudice - racial, religious, and homophobic - and against children with special educational needs or disabilities or young people who are perceived as different in some contexts.

A single student who bullies can have a wide-ranging impact on the students they bully, students who observe bullying, and the overall climate of the school and community.

Types of bullying

Bullying can take place between children and young people, between children and staff, by individuals or groups, face-to-face or indirectly via one of several cyber bullying methods.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- **Emotional abuse**, such as ignoring or excluding someone, being unfriendly, threatening, intimidating or humiliating someone, hiding someone's belongings, undermining someone by constant criticism or spreading rumours.
- **Physical assaults**, such as hitting and pushing or taking someone's belongings.
- **Racial bullying**, such as racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual bullying**, such as unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic, Biphobic or Transphobic**, such as making comments about someone's gender or sexuality that deliberately makes them uncomfortable, making sexual comments or asking sexual questions.
- **Verbal abuse**, such as name-calling, insults, sarcasm, teasing
- **Online or Cyber-bullying**, such as creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos, trolling (the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games), shaming someone online, setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child, making silent, abusive or hoax phone calls or text messages.
- **Controlling or manipulating someone**, such as the 'bully' misleading the 'victim' or persuading them to carry out inappropriate activities, such as stealing from another person's bag, which either draws negative attention or gets the 'target' into trouble
- **Sexist bullying**, such as attitudes which when expressed demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. These attitudes are commonly based around the assumption that women are subordinate to men, or are inferior.
- **Disablist bullying**, which is motivated by a prejudice against people with any form of disability.

Bullying of Autistic Children

Radlett Lodge School understands behaviours in the context of the individual and differentiates between children and young people's behaviours which might be a sign of stress or an issue with social understanding, and those that can be described as bullying. In order to be classified as bullying the behaviour should have the characteristics of being directed, intentional, wilful and meant to cause harm or create stress in the targeted individual. Even though the child or young person may not be intending to bully, their actions are correctly described as bullying type behaviour and should not be tolerated. Children and young people displaying bullying type behaviours should be supported to develop their understanding and use of alternative coping strategies.

Some examples of bullying behaviours that may be displayed by pupils at Radlett Lodge School

- Hitting, kicking and any display of aggressive behaviour that is often directed towards a specific pupil.
- Persistently imitating the behaviours of another pupil.
- Persistently interrupting or obstructing another pupil thereby preventing them taking part in activities.
- Persistently taking possessions from another pupil without permission.
- Persistently uttering remarks and comments that another pupil finds hurtful.

Helping Autistic children develop an awareness of bullying

Autistic children and young people can be helped to distinguish between bullying and one-off incidents or misunderstanding by teaching them social skills through role play, problem-solving social scenarios or multiple-choice quizzes, in which they are taught to select appropriate responses to hypothetical situations.

Some children and young people may need very explicit explanations of bullying, and may benefit from a visual reference (set of photos or pictures) that illustrates the difference between scenarios that constitute bullying and those which are less serious peer conflicts or misunderstandings. Other students may prefer written or spoken explanations. The technique used to support individuals to develop an awareness of bullying needs to take account of their preferred learning styles and communication methods.

Signs that an individual is being bullied

An individual who is being bullied may display some of the following common responses:

- Increased anxiety (displayed through increasingly obsessive behaviours; hand movements, repetitive questioning and statements or short temper)
- Withdrawal
- Aggression
- Seeming over-sensitive or over-reacting to minor occurrences (being 'on-edge')
- Seeking revenge
- Repeatedly exposing him/herself to the same kind of bullying situation. (Although the pupil may know it as a negative interaction, they may still consider it better than no interaction at all. It becomes a scenario they are familiar with and which follows a predictable sequence).

Strategies to Deal with Bullying

- Staff support each student to develop a recognisable way to say 'No'.
- The Personal, Health, Social and Citizenship Education (PSHCE) curriculum provides opportunities for students to learn about what constitutes a good relationship/ friendship and supports them to develop their understanding of bullying.
- The school participates in Anti-Bullying week in November each year.
- Staff are provided with anti-bullying training within safeguarding training to help them recognise signs of bullying, how to support both the victim and the perpetrator of bullying and to ensure that they know the correct procedure for recording any instances of bullying.
- At Radlett Lodge School each student has an Individual (Behaviour) Support Plan (ISP) that is drawn up by staff who know the pupil well and is shared with their parents/ carers. Any behaviours that could be described as bullying will be included on this plan with strategies to manage them.
- Strategies for protecting pupils who are potential or actual targets of bullying will be identified on their ISPs.
- Any bullying behaviours will be recorded on CPOMS (school's reporting system). This will allow these behaviours to be monitored in both the short and long-term to ensure any strategies implemented following a bullying incident have been successful and that repeated bullying incidents do not occur.
- Parents will be informed if a bullying incident occurs and will be involved in strategies to manage instances of bullying type behaviour. Where necessary, parents may be asked to come in for a meeting to discuss the situation
- For some pupils it may be appropriate to use consequences. These would be discussed by a trans-disciplinary team including parents before being used.

Supporting the victim of bullying

It is essential that all individuals who have experienced bullying are provided with timely and appropriate support. This may include one or more of the following:

- Active listening
- Reassuring the student
- Advice
- Named staff member to provide appropriate support
- Regular checking with the student regarding their well-being

DECLARATION

The school will have regard for:

- The Human Rights Act, 1998,
- The Special Educational Needs and Disability Act, 2014,
- The SEND Code of Practice, 2015,
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2015.
- The Equality Act, 2010
- Children and Families Act, 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education, 2023

This policy has been written using the NAS “Anti-bullying in Schools and Children and Young People’s Services policy” SO-0193