OAKFIELD PRIMARY SCHOOL

Anti-bullying Policy

Introduction

At Oakfield Primary School we work together to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding. However, bullying can exist in every school. It is unacceptable and, if an incident should arise, there are procedures in place, outlined in this policy, that will enable parents/carers, teachers and pupils to work together to find a solution. All children at Oakfield are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment. This means they should be free from all forms of bullying behaviour. We employ strategies, such as learning about tolerance and difference as part of the school's curriculum, with the aim of promoting an inclusive, tolerant and supportive ethos at the school.

All staff, parents/carers and pupils will work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at our school. There is a zero tolerance policy in place at Oakfield Primary School.

Aims

- To foster a caring and safe environment in which children can learn and grow
- To implement a Support Group approach to dealing with bullying which supports both the bully and the victim
- To be consistent in our practice
- To respond to and investigate all allegations of bullying from any source

We seek to achieve these aims by:

- Helping individuals celebrate and value their differences and to acknowledge and respect the differences of others.
- Encouraging everyone to view themselves as an important part of the school community where their participation is valued and views appreciated.
- Promoting in everyone a positive attitude and high self esteem.
- Helping individuals to understand and accept the consequences of their own actions.
- Helping everyone to feel secure in reporting incidents of bullying
- Carrying out whole-school procedures whereby all incidents of bullying and harassment are dealt with fairly and appropriately.

Legal issues related to bullying

Under the Equality Act 2010, the school has a responsibility to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Protected characteristics include

- age;
- disability;
- gender reassignment;
- marriage and civil partnership;
- pregnancy and maternity;
- race;
- religion or belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation.

Under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, schools could have charges brought against them if they allow the rights of children and young people at their school to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously.

A definition of bullying

Bullying is persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another. It is often difficult for a victim to defend themselves against bullying.

Bullying is generally characterised by:

- Repetition: Incidents are not one-offs but frequent and happen over a period of time.
- Intent: The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm. It is not accidental.
- Targeting: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.
- Power imbalance: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations.

Many different kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying. Bullying can be related to almost anything. It may relate to

- appearance
- religion
- ethnicity
- gender
- sexual-orientation, sexism, or sexual bullying, homophobia,
- home life
- culture
- disability
- special educational needs.

Categories of bullying include:

- Verbal – name calling, imitating, teasing, insulting, spreading rumours, swearing, making threats.
- Physical – any unwanted or inappropriate touching, physical intimidation, hitting, pushing and shoving, kicking, pinching, poking, damaging or taking of belongings, threats of violence and extortion.
- Emotional – spreading rumours, deliberate exclusion from groups, tormenting, ridiculing, isolating, refusing to work with another pupil, revealing personal information, threatening, inciting others to treat an individual in a manner that could be considered bullying.
- Cyber – online threats and intimidation, harassment/'cyber-stalking', defamation, exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation and unauthorised publication of private information or images. (It can include messages intended as jokes, but which have a harmful or upsetting effect.)

The school acknowledges that there are other forms of bullying. However, we must recognise that not all aggression or name calling is bullying. **It becomes bullying when it is exercised through the use of power rather than an exchange between equals.**

Prevention

We seek to prevent bullying in our school in a number of ways:

- Circle time activities
- Whole school 'anti-bullying' focus week
- Teaching through PSHE
- Individual and group work with the Pastoral Team
- Peer Pals mentoring
- Positive approach to behaviour management
- Promoting a 'Get Help' culture – more positive than 'telling' which can be perceived by the children as "grassing"

The 'Support Group' approach to bullying

At Oakfield Primary School, we adopt a 'Support Group' approach to dealing with incidents of bullying. This approach does not blame or label children. It deals with the unacceptable behaviour. Our policy strategies focus on supporting both victim **and** bully. Bullying hurts all those involved. Blaming a child and labelling them a bully does not help. The majority of victims just want the bullying to stop, and this approach seeks to do that, by giving the bully the support required to change their behaviour. There is no attempt to question, seek explanation or apportion blame, as this is often a fruitless exercise that distracts from the main issue and wastes time.

When an instance of bullying involves violence towards an individual, this will be dealt with in the context of the school's behaviour policy.

The strategy follows a seven step approach:

1) Meet with the victim

The teacher talks to the victim about his/her feelings. Details of specific incidents are not required. The teacher only needs to know who is involved.

2) Convene a meeting with the people who have been involved (six to eight pupils)

The teacher arranges to meet with the group involved. It may include bystanders, colluders, people who joined in and a friend of the victim.

3) Explain the problem

The teacher tells the group "I have a problem…" and then outlines how the victim is feeling, possibly using a piece of writing or a picture that the victim has created to emphasise their distress. The teacher does not discuss the details of the incidents or allocate blame.

4) Share responsibility

The teacher does not attribute blame, but states that he/she knows that the group are responsible and can do something about it.

5) Ask the group for their ideas

"What can we do?" Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the victim could be helped to feel happier. The teacher responds positively, but does not extract promises of improved behaviour.

6) Leave it up to them

The teacher thanks the pupils for their help. He/she passes the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. He/she arranges to meet up with them again to see how things are going.

7) Meet them again

The teacher meets up with each of the group members and the victim individually to find out how things are going. These meetings are an opportunity to praise and be positive, keep the group involved in the process and to monitor the situation. The teacher uses his/her judgement as to the timing of these meetings.

Roles and Responsibilities

The role of the headteacher includes:

- Listening to all reports or allegations of bullying
- Keeping a record of incidents and actions taken
- Monitoring records of bullying
- Liaising with parents/carers as appropriate

The role of staff includes:

- Always listen to a pupil who feels they are a victim of bullying.
- All staff must take immediate action where bullying is reported or suspected.
- Address the problem through use of the seven step Support Group approach as outlined.
- Inform the Head Teacher so that the incident and actions can be recorded.
- Undertake preventative measures, as outlined, to avoid incidents of bullying
- Encourage pupils to 'Get Help' if they, or someone they know, are being bullied.

Involving Parents/carers

When an incident of bullying has been reported and the Support Group approach is employed, the parents/carers of all parties involved will be informed as soon as possible.

When incidents of bullying are brought to the attention of the school by a parent/carer, then the school procedures will be explained and the parent/carer assured of supportive action for the victim.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The headteacher and deputy head share the responsibility for monitoring the implementation and effectiveness of the policy. This is done through regular reviews of incident records, discussions with staff and children, and through consultation with parents/carers.

Heather Farrell