



omega
MULTI-ACADEMY TRUST

Anti-Bullying Policy

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Review Date and Summary of Changes

| Date of review | Summary of changes |
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Approved By:

Chief Executive Officer

Chair of Trustees

Date:

25th February 2025

25th February 2025

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Aims

The aim of this policy is to:

- Uphold a unified approach which is practised across our trust when dealing with incidents of bullying.
- Ensure everyone feels safe and happy in school and has the right to support when feeling insecure.
- Establish a culture where bullying is viewed as unacceptable, treated seriously and dealt with effectively.
- Communicate that bullying is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone.

Purpose

Our policy sets out the rights of all stakeholders in relation to bullying. It defines bullying and alerts staff, pupils and stakeholders to signs that someone may be or has been bullied. It also contains information on how to communicate concerns, procedures to deal with allegations and proactive and reactive strategies to combat bullying.

Our policy takes into consideration guidance that exists, data available and training undertaken. The policy will be subject to regular review to ensure it conforms to the latest guidance.

This policy reflects current practice within the schools in Omega Multi-Academy Trust and the implementation of the policy is the responsibility of all staff and stakeholders.

Definitions

Bullying is any behaviour which is deliberately intended to hurt, threaten or frighten another person or group of people. It is repeated and usually unprovoked and can continue for a prolonged period of time. It always reflects an imbalance and abuse of power. This can be face-to face or online.

Bullying is not typically identified by a single incident. It involves repeated behaviours over time.

It is essential to distinguish the term 'bullying' from typical age-related behaviors, such as childhood or teenage disagreements and arguments where individuals may have conflicts or 'fall out' with one another.

Some people intentionally bully others, while some do so unknowingly. Victims might also be unaware they are being bullied. Bullying subtly impacts a person's self-esteem, confidence and well-being. Regardless of intent, the victim's experience is paramount. Whilst the perpetrator may not consider their actions to be 'bullying', the wishes and feelings of the victim will always be considered.

Instances of bullying tend to have the following common characteristics:

- Repetitive and persistent. Bullying is usually experienced as part of a continuous pattern and it can be extremely threatening and intimidating even when very

subtle. Nevertheless, sometimes a single incident can have precisely the same impact as persistent behaviour over time.

- Intentionally harmful. The act of bullying intends harm to another individual although occasionally the distress it causes is not consciously intended by all of those who are present.
- Involves an imbalance of power. Bullying leaves someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it. In some case an imbalance of power may mean that bullying crosses the threshold into abuse requiring implementation of safeguarding procedures.

Bullying can be:

- Verbal/Emotional - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours and teasing.
- Physical – Pushing, shoving, tripping up, kicking and spitting.
- Electronic/Cyber – Incorrect use of social media platforms including but not limited to, social gaming platforms, mobile messaging platforms and email. This also includes the misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.
- Driven by a prejudice - This might be homophobia, racism, gender related or victimising those who have special needs or disabilities. It may be picking on a pupil because they are cared for away from home or it may be picking on a pupil who cares for a sick relative.
- Indirect - Spreading rumours whether true or not. The same person or group always leaves someone out or shuns them. Someone tries to cohere/force someone else to do something they do not want to do.
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.

Bullying can therefore constitute any of the above activities within the context of the definition provided and, in each case, the school will make an informed decision when dealing with such incident.

Although all of the above activities are serious and adults should always intervene, incidents may not always be regarded as bullying unless they are part of an on-going pattern of behaviour against the victim.

Bullying can happen to anyone, and this policy is inclusive of the bullying of school staff, whether by pupils, parents/carers or other staff. (Members of the school workforce suffering from or concerned about bullying may also contact their trade union or professional association for support and advice).

Signs of bullying

There is no definitive way of identifying that a person is being bullied. Staff should therefore be vigilant in order to identify any of these physical and/or behavioural changes in a person as soon as possible.

Bullying can seriously damage a person's confidence and sense of self-worth, and the victim will often feel that they are at fault in some way. Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as:

- Significant changes in normal behaviour or attitude.
- Appearing upset.
- Being withdrawn/ low mood.
- Appearing frightened or subdued, possibly in the presence of particular people.
- Flinching at actual or anticipated physical contact.
- Asking not to be hurt.
- Refusal to eat.
- Refusal to participate / Truancy to certain lesson / Lacking in concentration
- Unwillingness to travel on public transport.
- Not wanting to go to a certain venue.
- Starting to bully others.
- Incontinence.
- Vomiting.
- Unexplained illness / Feigning illness / Taking unusual absences.
- Claims of feeling unwell with no apparent signs or symptoms.
- Bruising or other physical marks.
- Torn clothing.
- Unexplained loss of money or possessions.
- Sleepless nights.
- Repeating words the perpetrator has said to them, e.g. "shut up or I'll hit you".

These signs and symptoms may indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

We also recognise the role of pupils and other stakeholders in reporting incidents and not taking on a role of bystander if they witness an incident of bullying. We aim to promote a positive, caring ethos in our schools.

Our schools take a proactive approach to supporting our vulnerable pupils. There are designated staff in school who are aware of our individual pupils' needs who work in partnership with external agencies to provide appropriate interventions.

In some cases, but not all, victims are more likely to have the following vulnerability characteristics:

- Lack of assertiveness, anxious or fearful and unlikely to fight back
- Solitary children with few friends
- Children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities
- Lack of confidence around appearance
- Ability
- Health issues, including mental health
- Home circumstances
- Social class

- Ethnicity
- Gypsy/Roma and Traveler Children
- Children in Care
- Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual or Transgender children
- Young Carers

Dealing with bullying

We encourage pupils to report any incidents of bullying to any member of staff in school.

Staff will deal with the incident as promptly and sensitively as possible; we strive to create an environment where all pupils can discuss any concerns with staff and feel listened to and supported.

In the first instance it is not a requirement for a member of the school to investigate whether bullying is occurring but rather to accept the pupil's perception and jointly agree a way to go forwards with them, which will reduce and ultimately eliminate their difficulties.

The following list of actions might be used by staff depending on the perceived seriousness of the incident:

- Remain calm and log incidents with victim using patience and understanding
- Speak to all parties involved in the incident
- Inform the relevant staff at the appropriate phase
- Listen carefully to all accounts of the incident and record events using exact wording at every stage, including actions agreed/taken
- Advise the victim not to hit out at the bully or bullies as they themselves may end up being accused of bullying
- Identify the perpetrator(s). Obtain witnesses if possible
- Obtain evidence where possible (witnesses, screenshots, CCTV etc)
- Gain a clear understanding of the victim's wishes and feelings
- Arrange to speak with the alleged perpetrator, to be able to define the experience from each person's point of view
- Make the unacceptable nature of the behaviour clear to the perpetrator(s), ensuring the act is separate to the person
- Try to enable the perpetrator(s) to see things from the victim's position and use a problem-solving approach
- Try to establish what type of bullying is taking place and where, how often the bullying is occurring
- Discuss options to resolve the situation, agree actions and advise the victim of what happens next
- Log the incident via CPOMS
- Think ahead about supporting both the victim and perpetrator(s) and make regular checks to ensure the bullying has ceased

- Discuss relevant documentation and resulting action with parents/carers and what they can do to reinforce and support the school's action
- All incidents of bullying are reported to the Governing Body on a termly basis through the Principal's Report

The following list of actions might be used as support for a pupil who may have been bullied:

- An offer of opportunity to discuss the experience with a member of staff. This maybe the pupil's Year Manager, Form Tutor, Progress leader or staff member of their choice
- An offer of continuous support and reassurance to the pupil
- An offer to discuss the experience with a school Anti-bullying Ambassador
- Counselling within school through the school's own counsellor
- Opportunities to restore the pupil's self-esteem and confidence
- An offer to take part in some form of mediation/restorative practice with the other party led by a member of staff
- A safe area to go if the pupil feels vulnerable at particular times of the school day

The following list of actions might be used as support for a pupil who may have bullied another pupil &/or in response to the incident:

- A discussion regarding what happened and how the pupil became involved.
- Opportunities to discuss their concerns with a member of staff of their choice .
- A discussion to clarify that bullying behaviour has not place at this school and it will be challenged.
- Establish their wrongdoing and need to change.
- Informing parents/carers to help change the attitude of the pupil.
- An offer to take part in some form of mediation/restorative practice with the other party led by a member of staff.
- Opportunities to discuss their concerns with a school-based counsellor.
- At the discretion of the school, sanctions deemed appropriate and proportionate, this may include but is not limited to:
 - Restorative Practice.
 - Parental Meeting.
 - Behaviour Agreement.
 - Seating/Class Changes.
 - Suspension.
 - Managed Move.
 - Permanent Exclusion.

Prevention

As a trust, we approach bullying with a serious attitude. Bullying is not tolerated in our schools. We employ various proactive strategies to prevent bullying. These include:

- Effective school leadership that promotes an open and honest anti-bullying ethos.
- Bullying is talked about openly and is everyone's responsibility.
- Improved supervision in potential problem areas.
- Use of curriculum opportunities, in particular tutor periods and SMSC where issues of diversity are discussed and anti-bullying messages are drawn out.
- Problem solving activities are employed effectively in many areas of the curriculum and pupils work together.
- Use of opportunities throughout the school calendar and at certain times of the school day to raise awareness of the negative consequences of bullying e.g. Anti-Bullying Week.
- Involving parents/carers and professionals in being proactive.
- Whole school assemblies to promote anti-bullying.
- Pupil surveys.
- Useful information and displays in the school to promote anti-bullying.
- New intakes are reassured that bullying is not permitted and it is a warning to potential perpetrators that such behaviour is unacceptable from the outset.
- Staff training reflects the anti-bullying policy and practice of the school.

We ensure that in all aspects of school life there is an emphasis on the importance of relationships, emotional well-being and a community ethos.

We ensure that key areas of the school are adequately supervised and staff are vigilant.

We recognise and ensure that staff receive the latest appropriate training and guidance on behaviour and anti-bullying legislation, responsibilities and strategies.

Links to Keeping Children Safe in Education

All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children (often referred to as child-on-child abuse).

This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying).
- Physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm.
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault.
- Sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be stand-alone or part of a broader pattern of abuse.
- Upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm.
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery).
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.

All staff engage in annual training sessions and will follow the school's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying, or online bullying, can be defined as the use of technologies by an individual or by a group of people to deliberately and repeatedly upset someone else.

With the increase of social networking sites, online activity and messaging apps, cyberbullying is on the increase.

Cyberbullying could occur online via platforms such as, Facebook, XBox Live, Instagram, YouTube, Snapchat, WhatsApp and other messaging apps, gaming sites or chat rooms.

There are many ways of bullying someone online and for some it can take shape in more ways than one. Some of the types of cyberbullying are:

- Harassment - This involves sending inappropriate or insulting messages and being abusive. It includes negative comments on posts, photos, and in chat rooms, as well as offensive behavior on gaming sites.
- Denigration – This is when someone may send information about another person that is fake, damaging and untrue. Sharing photos of someone for the purpose to ridicule, spreading fake rumours and gossip. This can be on any site online or on apps. We even hear about people altering photos of others and posting in online for the purpose of bullying.
- Flaming: Deliberately using extreme and /or offensive language to cause distress through online arguments.
- Impersonation: This occurs when someone hacks into another person's email or social media account to send or post harmful or embarrassing content. Creating fake profiles on social networks and apps is common and can be hard to shut down.
- Disclosure and Deception: This occurs when an individual shares another person's personal information or deceives someone into divulging confidential details, which are then forwarded to others. This can also be via video.
- Cyber Stalking: Repeatedly sending threatening or harassing messages, or other online actions that make someone fear for their safety. These actions may also be illegal.
- Exclusion: This is when others intentionally leave someone out of a group such as group messages, online apps, gaming sites and other online engagement. This is also a form of social bullying and a very common.

Pupils who are subject to cyberbullying should report it to the site/social media platform. Where possible, pupils should screenshot the bullying as evidence. Websites/Social media platforms have terms and conditions, the evidence can be used to prompt any of these sites to take their obligations seriously, investigate and take appropriate action.

Parent/Carers ultimately have the responsibility to monitor their child's online activity.

Parents/Carers should follow the guidance given by social media platforms, if they feel their child may be subject to cyberbullying, in some serious instances, this may involve contacting the police.

If a pupil feels uncomfortable and may be subject to bullying online, they should:

- Screenshot any offensive or harassing messages.
- Make sure privacy settings are set so only people who are known and trusted can access the posts.
- Avoid further communication with or retaliation to those sending the messages (block the perpetrator/s)
- Report the incident(s) to internet service providers' websites and/or social media sites
- Talk to a parent, carer, teacher or friend.

Involving the police - The police can review messages and content to determine if they are potentially criminal. Appropriate actions will be taken, which may include obtaining an apology from the involved party or, for more serious offenses, arresting or interviewing the individual under caution. Cases involving sustained abuse or threats to someone's life will be handled with utmost seriousness.

Hate Crime

A hate crime is any incident that constitutes a criminal offence that is perceived by the victim, or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate. It could involve physical attack, threat of attack or verbal abuse or insult around issues such as race, faith, homophobia, transphobia or disability.

A hate incident may or may not constitute a criminal offence but is perceived by the victim, or any other person as being motivated by prejudice or hate.

If an incident appears to be a hate crime incident, we recognise the need for this to be reported to the police.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed by the Trust Board every two years.