

Vernon Park Primary School: Anti-Bullying Policy (September 2024)

At Vernon Park Primary School, we aim to provide all children, parents and the wider school community with a safe, caring and inclusive environment where high-quality learning experiences enable all children to be the best that they can be.

Kindness and Empathy, Friendship and Respect, Honesty and Responsibility, Tolerance and Fairness, Support and Inclusion, Challenge and Resilience.

Aims & purpose of the policy

At Vernon Park Primary School, we are committed to working with all stakeholders to create a school community where bullying is not tolerated.

Our school is a place where people have the right to be themselves, to be included and to learn in a safe and happy environment. Everyone at our school is equal and treats each another with respect and kindness.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at our school. The safety, welfare and well-being of all pupils, staff and wider community is a key priority. We take all incidences of bullying seriously and it is our duty as a whole school community to take measures to prevent and tackle any bullying, harassment or discrimination.

We actively promote values of respect and equality and work to ensure that difference and diversity is celebrated across the whole school community. We want to enable our pupils to become responsible citizens and to prepare them for life in our modern world. These values reflect those that will be expected of our pupils by society, when they enter secondary school and beyond in the world of work or further study.

We are committed to improving our school's approach to tackling bullying and regularly monitor, review and assess the impact of our preventative measures.

We define bullying as

The, willful, conscious desire to threaten, intimidate or hurt someone, which may be repeated over time and involves a real or perceived power imbalance.

Identifying and supporting vulnerable children

We work closely in school to identify individual pupils - whose personal circumstances identify them as vulnerable particularly vulnerable - and groups - who may be identified as minority ethnic groups, travellers, refugees, LGBTQ pupils, mid-term arrivals, pupils who transfer late into the school, children or young people in care, young carers, those with teenage parents and those with other special needs, who may find it more difficult to make or sustain friendships, or any other identifiable group.

As a school, staff plan positive actions to support these pupils and groups, providing additional support where necessary (for example ELSA and peer support through buddy schemes) and help them access clubs and out of school provision.

We recognise that anybody could be subject to bullying at any time in their life. It is not only something that affects children and young people.

A person is identified as being bullied when, either as an individual or part of a group, they suffer in any way from the direct result of intentional and persistent harassment and/or victimisation by another individual or group. A person who has been bullied may commonly find it difficult to combat victim behaviour or report their experiences to those who may be able to help them.

We refer to the Equality Act 2010 and the 9 protected characteristics¹ within it, when dealing with bullying related incidents.

Children and young people who are at most increased risk of being the victims or perpetrators of bullying are those who can be those who:

- are in foster care or residential homes (looked after children)
- are understood to be at risk from a range of safeguarding or child protection issues i.e. safeguarding / organised crime groups
- have specific special educational needs (especially on the autistic spectrum)
- have a disability or impairment
- are from minority ethnic backgrounds
- are refugees or asylum seekers
- start a school or activity group mid-term
- are, or are perceived to be, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning of their sexuality or gender
- speak a first language other than English
- are young carers
- have suffered bereavement
- have suffered domestic violence
- have experienced physical or emotional trauma
- have a parent that was a victim of bullying
- have experienced poverty or deprivation

Methods of bullying

There are a number of methods of bullying which can be summarised as:

- Physical aggression – hitting, kicking, tripping up, spitting, taking or damaging property, use of threat or force in any way, intimidation or demands for money or goods
- Verbal – name calling, insulting, teasing, ‘jokes’, mocking, taunting, gossiping, secrets, threats, reference to upsetting events e.g. bereavement, divorce, being in care
- Non-verbal – staring, body language, gestures
- Indirect – excluding, ostracising, rumours and stories, emails, chat rooms, messaging, phones, notes, inappropriate gestures
- Online – text messaging, internet chat rooms, the use of social media applications (such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram or WhatsApp), the misuse of camera or video facilities (including the self-generated inappropriate images), offensive questions and nasty inbox messages
- Parental incitement

We acknowledge that some acts of bullying will constitute a criminal offence and, in these cases, other organisations will need to be contacted e.g. the Police or Social Care.

No form of bullying will be tolerated and all incidents will be taken seriously.

¹ 9 protected characteristics are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; gender and sexual orientation.

Derogatory language

Derogatory or offensive language is not acceptable and will not be tolerated. It will be challenged by all staff and recorded and monitored on SIMS and follow-up actions and sanctions, if appropriate, will be taken for pupils and staff found to be using any such language.

Prejudice-based incidents (hate incidents)

A prejudice-based incident is a one-off incident of unkind or hurtful behaviour that is motivated by a prejudice or negative attitudes, beliefs or views towards a protected characteristic or minority group. It can be targeted towards an individual or group of people and have a significant impact on those targeted. All prejudice-based incidents are taken seriously and recorded and monitored in school, with the Head Teacher regularly reporting incidents to the governing body. These incidents are reported to the Local Authority. This not only ensures that all incidents are dealt with accordingly, but also helps to prevent bullying as it enables targeted anti-bullying interventions.

Possible indicators of bullying may include but are not confined to:

- disturbed sleep
- bed-wetting
- head and stomach aches
- problems with concentration
- changes in behaviour and attitude
- truanting
- bullying other children
- damaged or missing clothes / money / property
- asking for more money than usual or stealing money
- withdrawn or changes to usual behaviour patterns or attitude
- distressed or emotional
- difficulty articulating feelings
- changes in eating patterns
- changes in online activity
- evidence of self-harming or even for extreme cases potential suicide
- is unusually tired without a reasonable explanation
- has unexplained bruises or marks on their body
- refusal to change clothing in school, e.g. for PE
- repeatedly comes to school without dinner money or a packed lunch
- seems afraid to be alone and requires more adult interaction

School initiatives to prevent and tackle bullying

We use a range of measures to prevent and tackle bullying including:

- An up-to-date Anti-Bullying policy which is shared with all stakeholders and regularly reviewed
- An inclusive curriculum which inspires a positive sense of identity and belonging for all members of our community
- A PSHE curriculum (including Restorative Approaches, Circles and assemblies) which focuses on: understanding, addressing and preventing and seeking help for both perpetrators and victims of bullying
- Children are viewed as equal. Difference and diversity are celebrated across the school

- The school values
- Stereotypes are robustly challenged by staff and pupils across the school.
- Playground buddies and pupil-led programs (Restorative Champions) offer support to all pupils, including those who may have been the target of bullying
- Restorative Approaches for behaviour management, which provide support to victims of bullying and those who show bullying behaviour
- Pupils are continually involved in developing school-wide anti-bullying initiatives through consultation with groups (School Council, Pupil Voice etc.)

Reporting – Roles and Responsibilities

Staff

All school staff have a duty to:

- report bullying
- to be vigilant to the signs of bullying
- to play an active role in the school's measures to prevent bullying

If staff are aware of bullying, they should follow procedure identified in the school's Behaviour and Relationships Policy. They should reassure the pupils involved and inform their class teacher. All school staff have an equal responsibility to tackle and prevent bullying.

The Head Teacher and SLT have overall responsibility for ensuring that the Anti-Bullying Policy is followed by all members of staff and that the school upholds its duty to promote the safety and well-being of all young people.

Families

We encourage families to be aware of potential signs of bullying, (see previous list). We are a restorative school and we expect families to encourage their child not to retaliate; instead they should support and encourage them to report the bullying if it occurs.

Families should speak directly to the school if an incident occurs. We request that parents do not address issues with other family members or children, or post details on social media as this may affect and delay any investigations and outcomes.

Families can report an incident of bullying to the school either in person, or by phoning or emailing the school office. They must also give due regard to and follow the ethos of our school, our values and British Values in all interactions with any member of our school community

Non-school staff, volunteers and outside organisation (Sports Coaches etc.) are made aware of the school's policy and the reporting of incidents.

Children

Children should not take part in any kind of bullying and are encouraged to report signs of bullying among their peers. They should never be bystanders to incidents of bullying, but should address the bullying directly if possible, offer support to the victim and, if necessary, help them to tell a trusted adult.

Dealing with an Incident

When bullying has been reported, the following actions will be taken:

- Staff will investigate and record the incident centrally on SIMS (and hate incident reporting if appropriate)
- Restorative meetings will be offered for any incident where relationships have been or are in any danger of being damaged
- Designated school staff will monitor incident reporting forms and information recorded on SIMS
- The Head Teacher will include a summary of behaviour in the termly reports to the governing body
- Staff will offer support to both victim and perpetrator. Individual meetings will be held to devise a plan of action that ensures everyone feels safe. This may involve restorative meetings
- Staff will inform parents or carers and where necessary involve them in any plans of action
- Staff will assess whether any other authorities (such as Police or the Local Authority) need to be involved, particularly when actions take place outside of school

Safeguarding procedures must be followed when child protection concerns arise.

Bullying outside of school

Bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated, whether it takes place inside or outside of school. Bullying can take place on the way to and from school, before or after school hours, at the weekends or during the holidays, or in the wider community. The nature of online bullying in particular, means that it can impact on pupils' well-being beyond the school day. Staff, families and children must be vigilant to bullying outside of school and report and respond according to their responsibilities as outlined in this policy.

School will use their sanctions when it becomes apparent that any incident of bullying is having an impact on an individual and/ or the school community. Families may be advised to seek police support, if appropriate.

Reviewed: 5th September 2024

Next review: September 2025