

GREAT BARR SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying Policy

“Every student has the right to live each day in school without fear. Bullying, threats, name-calling, racial or sexual harassment, interference with property and any other action designed to frighten, humiliate or embarrass are unacceptable.”

This belief is so important to us in our work here that every student carries that statement around every day in the student organiser. **Bullying takes place in every school in the country, and at all ages.** It is unfortunately a part of our culture, and can be seen in families, friendships, and the workplace. To recognise that it happens is not to accept it.

We must recognise and acknowledge it so that we can clearly define our responsibilities in working with our students to create a community in which everyone feels comfortable and accepted, and in which everyone is able to get on with the job of learning and growing.

What is bullying?

There is no single definition with which everyone will agree, but the following points are useful in identifying its key elements:

- Bullying takes place over a period of time; a one-off incident is not bullying.
- Bullying need not be physical; it can be verbal, psychological or social, e.g. isolating individuals.
- Bullying involves the use of power in a relationship. It can be seen in many interactions between students, parents and teachers for example. Any student can use bullying behaviour. It is misleading to think there is a clearly identifiable type of person, “the bully”. Nice children bully at times, too.

It is a complicated subject. Some students who might be seen as bullies actually bully everyone, including friends who they like. It is a learnt behaviour; in any social interaction they have to dominate and be seen to come out on top. Their intention is not to cause pain for others but to protect their own status.

Our Beliefs and Approach:

We undertake to:

- Produce a caring ethos in the school so that bullying is less likely to occur;
- Encourage discussion of bullying so that it does not become a hidden activity, a situation in which it can thrive;
- Listen to students when they talk about or report bullying, responding sensitively and decisively according to this policy so that we can help them and end the bullying;
- Provide good adult role models as staff, never misusing our authority as power to humiliate or dominate.

Prevention:

Our best prospect of reducing or even eliminating bullying is through constantly encouraging and helping pupils to understand and respect others. Our staff will lead by example and will skilfully handle discussion about bullying, using tutorial time, PSE lessons, assemblies, School Council meetings and curriculum time where appropriate.

Differences of opinion are central themes for our assemblies, in particular. They provide the opportunity to highlight for whole house groups important issues on which they can reflect, and to offer models of responsible behaviour. They also aim to offer students a vocabulary and a common currency, which can be drawn on subsequently.

The role of staff is important in three ways:

1. **Staff behaviour** sets the tone of the School's day-to-day life. Bullying is more likely to occur in schools where staff adopt authoritarian or dominating styles. This gives students the message that a teacher's authority comes from her or his power rather than from legitimacy.
2. **Students' self-esteem** should be supported. A strong sense of self-worth helps build strong relationships, which in turn both reduce the likelihood of bullying and, if it does occur, reduces its harmful impact.
3. **Spotting signs** that a student might be the victim of bullying is important. There are many indicators of possible bullying; loss of or damage to possessions, physical injury, change in disposition, isolation from usual friends, tearfulness, deterioration of work, for example. Staff are on duty in playgrounds and around the School at break-time for the safety and reassurance of students. Staff will never ignore any form of bullying if they observe it in class or elsewhere.

The School has a number of routes through which victims or witnesses of bullying can alert staff to potential problems. These are as follows:

- **A texting service**, where pupils can use a 'safe' number to call and report possible incidents
- **A 'Peer mentoring' system**, where all tutor groups have a designated and trained pupil who can support those affected and report potential incidents through the appropriate channels.
- **A 'Peer listening' service**, where trained Sixth form students are available to listen to issues that a pupil may be experiencing.

Dealing with Incidents:

Where prevention has failed, and bullying has taken place, we will deal with it carefully, calmly and thoughtfully and do all we can to support all of the young people affected and to prevent a repeat of the behaviour. We will seek to:

- Protect the victim's self-esteem and self-confidence, and to keep her or him safe in future.
- To modify the attitude and behaviour of the perpetrator(s).

Procedures:

Every case is different and staff dealing with incidents will use their professional judgment and accumulated experience to determine the strategy which they believe will work best in the circumstances. The procedure below provides a framework within which most cases will be dealt, though this might be amended, dependent on the circumstances of a particular case, in the best interests of students.

The Form Tutors and Heads of House of the pupils involved must be informed. The event must be logged on e-portal using the code 'BBUL'. All staff who identify an incident of potential bullying will take responsibility for this.

In most cases the Form Tutor, Head of House, a more senior member of staff will take responsibility after the referral is made. They will:

- **Talk with the victim** – he or she must be treated sensitively and given the time and encouragement to talk, not just about the details of what has happened, but also about their emotional response. He or she should feel supported and an agreement should be made about meeting again to review the situation.
- **Talk with the perpetrator** – although details of what has happened will be needed, it is important to focus on the feelings which are at the heart of the issue. The student needs to be encouraged to consider and understand how the victim feels. It might be appropriate to talk about her or his personal relationships with others in general. In any case the perpetrator will be required to come to an agreement about how to behave in the future towards the victim and others.
- **Consider setting up a support group.** In some cases, a small group of students who have been affected by bullying will be brought together and provided with ongoing practical and moral support. This is useful in cases which prove difficult to resolve, perhaps because of the longevity of the problem. Members of this group will be encouraged to suggest ideas about how they can help the victim. Where this option is not taken up, the peer mentoring or peer listening could be used as an alternative.
- **Consider using 'Peer mentoring' or 'Peer listening'.** Each tutor group should have at least one 'older' pupil who has been trained in peer mentoring and many sixth form students have had training in peer listening skills. These could prove very helpful, but the situation must continue to be monitored by the member of staff in charge of the situation.
- **Consider setting up a victim/bully meeting.** This is a useful strategy in some cases, but not all. It can help the victim recover from the incident and give the bully a better insight into the hurt he or she has caused. It can also help create a new relationship. These meetings should never be imposed upon a victim who is not ready for it and pressure should not be put on them they are nervous or worried about a face- to-face meeting with the bully.
- **Parents should be informed.** However, unless it is thought necessary, parents will not be directly involved in handling the problem. Experience suggests that most incidents can be more rapidly solved between the students themselves.

- **Follow-up meetings** with both the victim and the bully will be arranged, to confirm that the problem has been solved. Where it has not, further work will be done by the original member of staff responsible. The parents of either or both sides are likely to be involved at this stage.
- **External agencies** will be invited to become involved in cases which call for continued work over a period of time. These could include Victim Support, Social Services, the Police, Connexions or any of a range of support agencies used by the school. Where ongoing support is needed by either the bully or the victim, counselling will be arranged to underpin the work done in school by the Student Support team.
- **Documentation** will be kept by the teacher responsible for handling the case. This means a written record for each student's file and an event log entry. The Pastoral Deputy will also keep a log of all reported bullying incidents so that whole-school evaluation is possible.

Sanctions:

As our aims are the resolution of the situation, support for the victim, and the prevention of recurrence, the option of punishment must be carefully considered. Natural justice dictates that some sort of sanction should be imposed.

Bullying is a hurtful anti-social behaviour undertaken by those who get excitement, status or material gain from it. In that sense it is done by those who have a sense of inadequacy, even if this is only a passing phase in their lives. They probably feel that they have no socially acceptable way of gaining those things.

Punishing a bully is likely to increase her or his alienation and anxiety, and will not help them adopt better forms of behaviour. If our response to an incident of bullying only causes resentment and hostility, we will not achieve our aim of resolving it in the long term.

The individual needs the opportunity to acknowledge their problem, to understand the distress caused, and to recognise their ability to change. Where the bully is genuinely remorseful, and shows signs of having gained insight, an apology to the victim together with a promise about future behaviour may suffice. Sanctions will be imposed where they are thought to be necessary and appropriate. In some cases, the bully can be encouraged to take responsibility for their actions by helping to decide on the sanction.

The possibility of fixed-term or permanent exclusion remains. These are only likely to be considered after previous attempts at resolution have been thoroughly explored without success or where the severity of the bullying incident warrants such action. The principal motive for exclusion will be the protection of the school community and the safety of the victim(s). It is recognised, however, that exclusion by itself will not necessarily prevent the bullying behaviour.

Staff Training:

We will ensure that our staff, through internal and external courses, receives regular high-quality training in this complex area.

FINALLY.....

Bullying causes pain. At the very least it causes distress, and at the worst it ruins lives. Its legacy lives on into adult life. Students, teachers and support staff will never ignore or accept bullying in any form, but will speak up and take action. For students and support staff, this means telling a member of the teaching staff. For teachers it means following the procedures set out in this document.

Reviewed by Pastoral Deputy – September 2009
Adopted by Governors' Discipline Committee – October 2009
Adopted by Full Governing Body -