ABBOTSHOLME

AN EDUCATION FOR LIFE

Anti-Bullying Policy

Overview and Aims of Policy

This policy is applicable to all pupils in the school including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage.

We strive to create a culture based on our core values of courage, honesty, humility, integrity and respect. Pupils must feel safe and respected if they are to learn efficiently.

We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment, free from disruption, in which all of our pupils can develop to their full potential without fear or harassment.

Bullying is unacceptable at Abbotsholme. We treat all indications or reports of bullying seriously and investigate and resolve concerns promptly. Bullying is viewed seriously and could lead to a perpetrating pupil being asked to leave the school. Our school community will not accept unkind actions or remarks, even when these were not intended to hurt. To stand by and do nothing when someone else is being bullied is to support bullying.

The values of our community are based on the Behavioural Charter, which includes the principle of respect. We expect all members of the community to treat others with respect, tolerance and courtesy, and to co-operate with, care for and support others.

We have an Anti-Bullying Code, which is displayed around school for existing pupils, included within the Employee Handbook, and published on the website for parents or prospective pupils and parents to see.

Context

This policy follows the guidance given in: 'Don't Suffer in Silence'; 'Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in School'; 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governors (July 2017)'; Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (2014)'.

We follow our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments for pupils with SEN and disabilities. All pupils are treated as individuals and issues are dealt with on an individual basis.

This policy and our Anti-Bullying Code have been shaped by suggestions from pupils and staff.

The policy is supported by the Policy for Acceptable Pupil Use of Mobile Phones and Other E-Devices and the ICT Acceptable Use Agreement.

Aims

We aim to safeguard the welfare and promote happiness of all pupils in the school by:

- Doing all we can to prevent bullying, including through:
    - Education of pupils to help understand, recognise and deal with it.
    - Training of staff to recognise and respond effectively to it.
    - Fostering a culture of positive relationships and raising awareness of the need for the whole community to treat others with respect, courtesy and consideration.
- Dealing with instances promptly and effectively, following appropriate steps for reporting incidents, responding to them, recording them and learning from them, including:
    - Providing help, advice and support to any pupil who is subject to bullying.
    - Providing help to a pupil who is bullying, as well as imposing sanctions.
    - Following the safeguarding procedures, if there is a reasonable cause to suspect a pupil is suffering or likely to suffer 'significant harm'.
    - Documenting incidents and continually evaluating our approach.

What is bullying?

Bullying is: behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another person or group, either physically or emotionally. This is serious and may cause psychological damage. It is often associated with a relationship which involves an imbalance of power. It make occur directly or through cyber-technology.

Harassment is: Unwanted conduct which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, or humiliating environment.

Bullying can take many forms; it is often hidden and subtle but it can also be overt intimidation. It can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone, including pupils, other young people, staff and parents.

Although bullying is not a criminal offence, some types of threatening behaviour, communications and harassment are, and the school may seek assistance from the Police. Bullying can be very serious, in causing physical and emotional and psychological damage and even provoking suicide.

Types of bullying

- **Physical:** e.g. pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching and any other forms of violence.
- **Verbal:** e.g. name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, persistent teasing, threats.
- **Emotional:** excluding or ignoring, leaving people out, tormenting (i.e. hiding books, threatening gestures), spreading malicious rumours, ridicule, humiliation, initiation

ceremonies intended to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation. It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone.

- **Cyber-bullying:** the use of ICT, social websites, mobile phones, text, email, to deliberately upset or hurt someone. This can take the form of threats, intimidation, defamation, exclusion or unauthorised publication of private information or images.

Bullying against particular groups

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, e.g.

- **Racist, religious and cultural:** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures; behaviour that makes a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded or worthless because of colour, ethnicity, culture, faith.
- **Sexual, sexist, homophobic/anti-LGBT:** unwanted physical contact, abusive comments.
- **Special Educational Needs and Disability:** actions and taunts regarding physical and learning disabilities.
- Children who are carers, in care or adopted.

Signs and Symptoms

One or more of the following (amongst other symptoms) may indicate that bullying is taking place. The pupil may be:

- Frightened of travelling to and from school.
- Unwilling to come to school.
- Becoming withdrawn or lacking in confidence.
- Reporting feeling ill in the morning.
- Visiting the Health Centre frequently.
- Missing some possessions.
- Suffering unexplained cuts and bruises.
- Becoming aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Not working as well or as hard.
- Afraid of saying what is wrong.

Measures to Prevent and Educate about Bullying

Pupils

- Pupils are told that bullying will not be tolerated and introduced to and reminded of the Anti-Bullying Code.
- Bullying is addressed explicitly in the PSHCE programme (including through visiting Drama workshops) and in tutorials.

- Pupils are encouraged to help each other, show consideration for others and treat each other with respect.
- Pupils are taught to understand and accept that people are different. No child should feel the odd one out, and therefore a potential victim.
- There are regular chapels for the whole school and year group presentations.
- Pupils are advised what to do if they encounter bullying, either seeing it or being subject to it - talk and tell:
    - Tell any adult (their tutor, their Head of School, any member of staff they can talk to, the Health Advisor or nurse) or senior pupil or prefect (who in turn would tell a member of staff). Trust the school to deal with the matter without anyone knowing they have reported it.
    - Talk to and support the person being bullied.
    - Report anonymously on My Concern.
- Pupils are made aware of the concept of the 'bystander' and their potential role in taking action, either to prevent an incident unfolding, support a victim or report the incident.
- Lessons in many subjects, such as Drama, English, History and Geography, look at differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice based language.
- There is an Anti-Bullying Week, in November.
- Pupils and staff are made aware that there are laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour and the School will report serious concerns to the Police.
- Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously.
- Support systems are in place to allow pupils to talk to anyone they feel comfortable with in order to feel safe. Boarders have access to the Independent Listener, amongst other trusted adults.
- Heavy reliance is placed on our tutorial system, through which children talk in confidence with tutors on a regular basis. Prep school children have circle time.
- Childline and advice numbers are displayed prominently around the school and in each boarding house.
- Support will be available for pupils who have been bullied and those who have bullied.

Staff

- All staff are advised and trained on measures to prevent, detect and deal with bullying, to ensure that:
    - The principles of this policy are understood.
    - Legal responsibilities are known.
    - Actions have been defined, for preventing and resolving problems.
    - Sources of support are available and known.

- House staff are on the alert to pick up an 'atmosphere', talk to children and note anything unusual.
- The Health Centre plays an important role in supporting pupils who have concerns and giving strategies to pupils on dealing with issues surrounding bullying.
- The School can draw upon more specialised support staff, as needed, to help understand the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs, LGBT pupils, or those questioning their own sexuality. We take advice from the Sex Education Forum, Stonewall and anti-bullying alliance.
- All staff are expected to:

    - Set a personal example, in never bullying a class or an individual or using prejudice based language.
    - Not allow any pupil to humiliate or criticise another child in a personal way.
    - Build positive self-images among the pupils and commend appropriate behaviour. The most important action staff can take is to make each child feel valued.
    - Discourage bullying in every way possible.
    - Listen to children and follow up their concerns.
    - Be alert for any change in a child's behaviour which may indicate he or she is being bullied, for example the child who is upset, quiet, not participating, producing unusually bad work, isolated, seems to have work spoilt or interfered with by others, is laughed at by others or obviously embarrassed when asked a question.
    - Praise all pupils in an even handed manner.
    - Bear in mind that the majority of victims are frightened of reprisals and that this is one of the main reasons why bullying so often goes unreported.
    - Be vigilant and ready to take appropriate action if they suspect a pupil is being bullied.
    - Report any unacceptable behaviour they witness, and children who seem anxious or unhappy.
    - Be vigilant, especially in areas where bullying may occur. These areas are highlighted during staff meetings. The main areas of the school are visited regularly by staff.

Class teachers (Prep), Tutors (Senior School) and House staff (boarding)

Those with specific pastoral responsibility have a special role in preventing and responding to bullying, in paying specific attention to the social development of children.

Without giving it too high a profile, tutors should make the general issue of bullying a normal topic of conversation. The more easy and matter of fact the discussion, the more likely it is that children will not be embarrassed to raise any concern they have. Fear of reprisal is one reason why victims do not report bullying; embarrassment is the other. Research shows that many victims come to believe the fault is with them and accept the bullies' definition of the situation. This has a devastating effect on the child, who can lose all self-confidence and want as few people as possible to know about the believed deficiency. It is vital that in any

conversations about bullying the inadequacies of bullies generally are emphasised, so that victims see matters in the right perspective.

EYFS Pupils and Staff

The very youngest children are encouraged to behave towards each other with kindness and consideration. They have to learn to look after their own possessions and respect others' possessions. We expect them to be honest, helpful, and polite and to work hard and listen to others. They are taught to respect everyone and to value difference and diversity.

Parents

- We encourage close contact between the class teacher/tutor and parents and we make contact if there is a concern about a pupil's wellbeing.
- Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the school in maintaining high standards of behaviour and ensuring that home and school co-operate closely together.
- Parents have an important role in helping to prevent bullying and guiding their children about what to do if they find themselves as bystanders when it is occurring.

Creating a culture of trust to tackle bullying.

- Showing courage and integrity by telling staff when bullying is taking place.
- If pupils who feel they are being bullied are to tell us about bullying we must work together to create an atmosphere of trust. 'Victims' must know that their concerns will be taken seriously and recognise that investigations take time.
- We must also make it as easy as possible to report bullying. Pupils must understand that these reports may result in a number of different outcomes and be familiar with the content of the process flow chart.
- If this is to happen, then everyone on the site has a responsibility to ensure that we live by our core values and that we all set a good atmosphere round school. We want to make it clear that this responsibility includes

    - promoting an open and honest ethos that ensures that all members of the school community know and agree with Abbotsholme's stance on bullying
    - ensuring that all staff exhibit positive behaviours, demonstrate our Core Values and become positive role models to students
    - treating other people with respect at all times
    - doing nothing that could be construed as bullying
    - doing nothing that could be construed as supporting bullying. This includes relaying distressing messages, relaying threats, laughing at bullying, watching a fight
    - reporting to the proper person any bullying we witness or any behaviour which we feel could escalate into bullying.
    - engaging students in reviewing and developing our anti-bullying practices
    - analyse available data to ascertain how the school environment and the

journeys to and from school can be improved

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying

- All reported incidents are taken seriously, recorded and investigated at once. There is a strong and experienced pastoral team who support each other and who are trained to handle incidents as a priority and are alert to signs of bullying.
- When a member of staff has learnt of a concern, this must be passed on to the relevant tutor/Head of School who will also share this with the Assistant Head Pastoral.
- Reassurance and support for the pupil should be given, by the member of staff hearing the concern (if directly from the pupil) and/or by the pupil's tutor.
- Incidents will be dealt with under a staged process. Third parties will not be informed of what steps are being taken in each individual case but at every stage, the following will occur:

    - Parents and guardians will be informed and may be invited into school to discuss the matter and give their support.
    - Documentation on incidents will be maintained in the Head of School (Head of Prep's) pupil.
    - The Assistant Head Pastoral will record all incidents and maintain a simple, standardised overall record of bullying incidents over the year.

Stage 1: **Discussion Stage**. The aim of this is to ensure that the bully realises the impact they are having and to ensure that bullying behaviour ends. Following liaison between staff involved (tutor, Head of School), discussion will take place. This will ideally (with agreement of both parties), be a discussion at which both parties are present, but may be two separate discussions. Such discussions will be held with any suitable teacher agreed by the pupils and staff involved (for example the tutor of the pupils), but a written record will be made and sent to the Head of School (or Head of Prep) to file. The victim will be supported and given strategies to help in the future.

Stage 2: **Disciplinary Stage**. In cases where bullying has continued after a Stage 1 discussion or in other instances of clearly intentional hurtful actions, the Head of School will investigate, seeking input as needed from tutors, Housemasters and third parties, interview the pupils as appropriate, making a written record using the words used by the pupils, and report findings to the Assistant Head Pastoral. Appropriate disciplinary sanctions, together with any other measures to help the way forward, will be agreed by the Head of School and Assistant Head Pastoral. The Headmistress will be informed.

- Sanctions are used as a punishment and to convey a deterrent effect.
- Sanctions are deployed in line with disciplinary procedures, reflecting the severity of the incident, on an escalating scale.

- Pupils will be held accountable for their behaviour and actions, and steps to repair harm caused will be agreed. They will be also offered support and advice, besides the sanctions given.
- The victim will be provided with support and guidance.

Stage 3: Cases of persistent or serious bullying will be investigated by the Headmistress. It may well be necessary to exclude a pupil, either temporarily or permanently.

- In some cases it may be necessary to report a matter to the Police, in cases where it is believed that a law may have been broken.
- If there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the matter will be dealt with as a child protection issue, as specified within the Children's Act, and the Safeguarding Team will report their concerns to the local authority child care services.
- In the case of EYFS pupils, we explain to children why some forms of behaviour are unacceptable and hurtful. We rarely use sanctions but on occasions we may remove a treat. Parents will be informed when any reproof has been needed. The Head of Pre-Prep is in charge of the management of behaviour and will deal with any incidents, consulting the Head of Prep as needed. Full details on the operation of the Pre-Prep Department can be found in the 'Pre-Prep Policies', maintained within the Department and on the school web site.

Cyberbullying Policy

At Abbotsholme School, we recognize that cyberbullying is a serious issue that can have significant impacts on our students' well-being. Our approach to addressing cyberbullying is as follows:

Investigation Procedures

- **Equitable Investigation**: Cyberbullying incidents will be investigated with the same rigor and thoroughness as any other form of bullying.
- **Evidence Collection**: Students and parents are encouraged to take screenshots of any cyberbullying messages or content. These screenshots should be provided to the school to facilitate a comprehensive investigation.
- **Record Keeping**: Submitted screenshots and related evidence may be stored securely along with other investigation records, in accordance with our data protection policies.

Education and Prevention

- **Student Education**: We provide regular lessons and workshops to educate students about the dangers of cyberbullying and strategies for staying safe online.
- **Parental Engagement**: To raise awareness among parents, we include information and recommendations on supporting their children in navigating various social media platforms in our weekly mailings from time to time and as we are made aware of updates or trends.

By implementing these measures, we aim to create a safe and supportive environment for all members of our school community.

Monitoring Bullying

The Assistant Head Pastoral, Head of Prep and the Heads of School have overall responsibility for monitoring bullying and in dealing with such occurrences and the impact it might have on pupils.

- Records of bullying incidents are kept so that the school can evaluate the effectiveness of policies and identify patterns. These are also scrutinised during school inspections.
- All concerns about and actions taken regarding bullying will be discussed at Pastoral Meetings, to enable a holistic picture to be seen, any patterns to be detected and to help the school to continually evaluate its approach to bullying.