



HIGHFIELDS SCHOOL

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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School context

Highfields School is a mixed, truly comprehensive school with students whose ages range from 11 to 19. They are drawn from a broad range of social, economic, ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds and cover the full range of abilities and needs.

Aims and Objectives

All students and members of staff have the right to feel safe in school and to be protected from bullying and harassment. All schools have a legal and moral duty to take bullying seriously. We believe that challenging bullying effectively will improve the safety and happiness of students and will make it clear to bullies that the behaviour is unacceptable.

This will allow us to create a school environment in which every student can:

- be safe and feel safe
- be healthy and take responsibility for themselves and others
- appreciate and value themselves and others
- make a positive contribution to the school and wider communities in which they live
- be successful in school and beyond

What is bullying?

Bullying is *behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.* (Department for Education)

Bullying is any form of behaviour that is deliberately intended to hurt, threaten, or frighten another person or group. It is usually unprovoked, persistent and can continue for a long period of time. It always reflects an abuse of power.

Bullying can take many forms. It can be subtle or blatant. It can be:

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, destroying property
- **Verbal:** name calling, teasing, taunting, intimidating, gossiping, humiliating
- **Silent:** isolation, rude gestures, exclusion of students from group activities
- **Online:** abusive text messages, email, use of social media, rumours or images being spread online

Anyone can be bullied

Students who suffer bullying are often perceived by others to be different. Students can be bullied for a variety of reasons:

- ethnicity, race, religion or culture
- special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or academic ability
- physical appearance or health conditions
- sexual orientation (LGB – Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual)
- gender identity (T – Transgender)
- young carers or looked-after children or otherwise related to home circumstances
- sex or gender
- socio-economic background
- friendship group

Although there is no single indicator that a child is being bullied, there are a number of warning signs that we all need to be vigilant of:

- torn or damaged clothing, books or other property
- loss of belongings
- sudden mood swings that do not usually occur
- requests to be accompanied to and from school and between lessons
- wishing to change routines such as the journey to and from school
- appearing upset, unhappy, tearful, distressed
- suffering from psychosomatic illness, stomach / headaches etc
- physical marks: bruises, scratches or cuts
- refusing to say what is wrong
- refusing to eat
- nail biting, nervous tics, flinching
- sleep walking
- underachievement at school
- school refusal
- temper flare-ups

Specific forms of bullying

Online Bullying or Cyber Bullying

Online bullying refers to the use of digital devices, particularly mobile phones, the internet and social media to deliberately to upset someone else.

Online bullying can take different forms, most often using social media sites:

- threats and intimidation
- harassment or online stalking
- vilification/defamation
- exclusion or peer rejection
- impersonation
- unauthorised publication or promotion of private information or images
- manipulation

Online bullying can differ from other forms of bullying. It can lead to the invasion of home and personal space and the audience of such bullying can be particularly widespread. There is also the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages and often the person doing the bullying can remain anonymous.

Racist Bullying

Racist bullying can be carried out by anyone of any ethnicity, race, colour or religion. The hallmark of racist bullying in schools is that children and young people or adults are attacked as representatives of a group or community, not as individuals.

A racist incident is any incident is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person. Racism is something somebody does or says that offends someone else in connection with their colour, background, culture or religion.

Homophobic and Transphobic Bullying

Homophobic or Transphobic bullying is any bullying behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, that is based on a person's sexuality or gender identity. Homophobic and transphobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people (LGBT).

Those who can experience homophobic bullying are:

- young people who are lesbian, gay or bisexual or are thought to be lesbian, gay or bisexual (LGB)
- young people who have gay friends or family
- young people who are transgender (who feel that their assigned gender and sex at birth conflicts with their true identity)
- young people who are different in some way – they don't act like other girls or boys

Sexual Bullying

Sexual bullying is any bullying behaviour, whether physical or non-physical, that is based on a person's sex or gender. This may be termed as sexual harassment, sexual violence or peer on peer abuse.

Sexual bullying can refer to:

- using sexual words to put someone down (like calling someone a 'slut')
- making threats or jokes about serious and frightening subjects like rape
- gossiping or spreading rumours about someone's sex life
- touching someone in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable
- touching parts of someone's body that they don't want to be touched
- forcing someone to act in a sexual way

Challenging Bullying

Bullying can be a significant concern for students that, if not sufficiently challenged, can have a negative impact on an individual's educational achievement, attendance at school, happiness, mental health, personal and social development and emotional health and wellbeing. Failure to challenge bullying effectively may also lead other students to feel less safe and threaten the safeguarding culture of the school.

We work to effectively challenge and combat bullying by:

- enabling students to feel safe in school
- creating a positive environment where all students are supported no matter what their differences
- providing students with opportunities to speak to other adults or students in school about their fears and concerns
- challenging inappropriate language
- educating students about how to treat others
- creating opportunities for students to take responsibility for themselves and for others
- enabling all students and groups of students to achieve
- raising students' self-esteem and confidence

Safe School Environment

We ensure that Highfields is a safe school environment for all students and staff to work in. The design of the school is open and transparent with constant remote supervision. Further monitoring is provided by

the comprehensive CCTV that is in place to prevent as well as monitor incidents. All school gates are locked throughout the school day and access to school premises is only possible through the staffed Reception area. Duty points around school are monitored by staff during break and lunch times. Safeguarding information is displayed in a variety of public areas. Students know where they can contact a member of staff in case of any problems they may have during these times.

Understanding and talking about bullying

We look to maintain anti-bullying as a high profile issue within school in order to enable both students and staff to discuss the matter in an open, mature and responsible manner. The school has a comprehensive Assembly and Citizenship programme that routinely addresses bullying issues and raises awareness of all types of bullying. Specific lessons focus on areas of bullying, such as online bullying, racism, homophobia, transgender issues and sexual harassment in order for students to understand consequences of bullying and also know where they can find support around this issue.

Wider Equality issues are strongly promoted through the same route. The variety of cultural and religious events that are celebrated at Highfields all contribute to the celebration of diversity, equality, cohesion and inclusion at the school. The Inclusion Team also work closely with students in order to educate them around the effects of bullying with the aim of challenging and changing negative behaviours.

Each year, through the Manager for Emotional Health and Wellbeing and the student Buddies, we promote Anti-bullying Week to highlight the detrimental effects of bullying. Students participate in a range of activities; designing and producing badges and posters, lunchtime activities, Drama performances and anti-bullying assemblies. We also routinely take small groups of students to workshops organised around the issue of bullying with a focus on the opinions of children and young people and what they feel can be done to address this. Anti-bullying information is shared with students via the digital display boards in school and the Safeguarding section of the section.

Reporting, recording and monitoring incidents of bullying

Students are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying and have a number of avenues in which to do so. They can go to their Year Manager, Student Welfare Manager or any member of the Safeguarding Team. They can also disclose to any staff member of their choice who will inform one of the above members of staff. Students could also report bullying by email to tell@hswv.co.uk or to a Peer Mentor or Buddy who can either accompany the student to report it to an adult or who will pass the information on themselves.

We have an ongoing survey where students have the opportunity to give their opinions on how well the school is dealing with bullying. It asks students if they have been bullied in the past year, how and where they have been bullied, and how the bullying was dealt with if they reported it. The survey also gives them the opportunity to name those who have bullied them and those students who may make them feel uncomfortable. We also monitor the issue through regular school Voices exercises and periodic external surveys such as the Health Related Behaviour Survey. Bullying incidents are reported to Governors' Pastoral and Community Committee as part of the termly Behaviour and Attendance Report.

Responses to incidents of bullying

There are a number of routes the school can take to support the victims of bullying. These are looked at on an individual basis dependent on the severity of the bullying, the length of time the bullying continued for, the type of bullying experienced and in what form it took place. The school will take into account the wishes of the student and will give them ownership over the type of response they receive. Parents/carers will also be informed about the response the school has provided to such incidents.

In regards to 'low-level' bullying the best response is often to get the students involved in the incidents together to discuss issues and a way forward. This can usually resolve an issue quickly and calmly.

Students can be referred to a Social Skills Group which aims to increase self-esteem and self-awareness within a safe environment. The small numbers of participants in these groups ensures that students feel comfortable enough to share their own experiences and get the individual support that they need. A variety of body image workshops are also offered to support those who have experienced appearance bullying or who have low self-esteem.

Students can also be referred to one-to-one counselling, which can focus on their feelings around the bullying and any other issues they may have. At present there are three counsellors working within school; one male and two female. Students are usually given the choice about who they would prefer to see. If a student feels uncomfortable about talking to a counsellor based at school, referrals can be made to outside agencies who offer the same service. The school offers a range of extra-curricular activities both at lunch time and after school, that provide the opportunity to make new friends and boost their self-esteem.

The school has a Year 12 and 13 Peer Mentoring scheme where students are able to talk about any issues they wish to their Mentor. Students may find it easier to talk to someone closer to their own age. Peer Mentors take part in a training scheme to provide them with the essential skills needed to support younger students in school. Students are then matched with a Peer Mentor who will support them with any concerns or worries they have. If a student does not bond with their Peer Mentor they are able to be re-matched. Peer Mentors are regularly supervised throughout this process.

There is also a Buddy System where Middle School students support Year 7 students. Similar to the Peer Mentoring scheme, Buddies can support students with any issues they have. Buddies support Year 6 students during induction and registration times through Year 7. The aim is that Buddies develop a positive relationship with those students in the form that they are attached to, are approachable and are available for students in the group to raise any concerns with.

Students can also approach a number of different members of staff about bullying or bullying-related issues for one-to-one support; the SENCO, Student Welfare Manager, Manager of Emotional Health and Wellbeing, Year Managers and Assistant Year Managers. The school also values communication with parents/carers in order to achieve a successful outcome when dealing with bullying issues.

Working with bullies

We have a responsibility for all students including students who bully as well as those who are bullied. Students who bully may have been the victim of bullying or other abuse and the implications of this may need investigating. They may also need intervention to change their behaviour. Bullies will be dealt with on an individual basis. Their parents/carers will be contacted to inform them of the situation and to discuss the implications of their actions.

Dependent on the situation, a student who has been found to be bullying others may be given detentions, isolation from lessons, isolation from break and lunch times, fixed term or permanent exclusions. However, alongside these sanctions a student who has been bullying others may also be referred to a Social Skills or Conflict Resolution Group in order to address and hopefully alter their behaviour. It may be necessary for them to receive individual counselling or even be referred to one of our partner agencies, such as Base 25, the Educational Psychology Service or the police, for extra intervention and support.

How this policy was formulated

The Anti-Bullying policy is formulated by consultation with students through the Bullying Survey, Voice of the Learner Survey and during various discussions with students working with the Manager for Emotional Health and Wellbeing. The policy is discussed by SLMT and ratified by the Governing Body.

Related policies and issues

- Safeguarding
- E Safety
- Behaviour for Learning Policy
- Equality
- Mental Health and Wellbeing
- Relationships and Sex Education
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

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