MEADOWCROFT SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Contents

1.0 Introduction

Children and young people in care are among the groups most vulnerable to bullying. Meadowcroft School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all children, young people and that foster carers receive support and appropriate information so that they can best help the child/young person to prevent and address bullying.

If bullying occurs, children, young people and staff must inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead, so appropriate action can be taken, and a strategy formed to help prevent further bullying.

If a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm, call the police.

It is important to be aware of the link between bullying, exploitation, going missing, and gangs and maintain awareness of relevant research, guidance and policies through support groups, team meetings and supervision. Comprehensive training on bullying and exploitation is available to staff and carers through OFG. Please see *Shine* for further information.

2.0 Objectives of this Policy

The objectives of this Policy are to:

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- Ensure that all pupils and staff have an understanding of what bullying is and their role in preventing;
- Outline the school's anti-bullying policy and the procedures to be followed when bullying is reported;
- Underline our commitment to take bullying seriously and ensure that pupils and staff will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Demonstrate that bullying will not be tolerated and that all children deserve our help to learn different ways of behaving.
- Achieve positive outcomes through tackling bullying effectively and consistently i.e.

  - Improved safety of young people
  - Improved standards of behaviour
  - Increased academic/work performance
  - Increased self-esteem and motivation
  - Improved attendance at school
  - Improved partnerships, communications and trust with all parties.

3.0 Defining Bullying

Bullying can be defined as: Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, which intentionally hurts another individual or group, physically or emotionally'.

Bullying is deliberately harmful, repetitive and persistent and involves an imbalance of power.

Bullying can occur offline and online and often occurs concurrently e.g. a child is being bullied at school and the bullying continues online outside of school hours.

4.0 Forms of bullying

Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence, making a child/young person do something they don't want to do or stopping them from doing something they do want to do. Taking belongings, damaging someone's belongings.

Emotional being unfriendly, excluding and tormenting, sending malicious emails, or text messages, intimidating glances and body language.

Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, insulting, blackmail and threats, making offensive remarks.

Discriminatory making offensive remarks and singling out for poor treatment based on someone's gender, race, gender re-assignment, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation.

Hidden or indirect bullying, lying and spreading rumours, negative facial or physical gestures, menacing or contemptuous looks, playing nasty jokes to embarrass or humiliate, mimicking unkindly, encouraging other to socially exclude someone, damaging someone's reputation.

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Cyberbullying See Section 13.0 .

5.0 Signs of Bullying

A lot of children who are being bullied and bully are very good at hiding their feelings. As appropriate, staff members may have to monitor bullying both overtly (discussion with young person) or covertly e.g. being aware of the signs of bullying, which can include:

- Falling out with previously good friends
- Being moody and bad tempered
- Being quiet and withdrawn
- Wanting to avoid leaving their family home
- Aggression with other pupils, siblings, other family members and staff
- Sudden, unexplained, changes to school attendance
- Persistent non-attendance at school
- Disengagement from lessons
- Doing less well at schoolwork, signs of struggling
- Insomnia
- Anxiety
- Claiming to be unwell on a regular basis
- Self-harm

Staff have to be extra vigilant of children/young people's behaviour patterns as it can be difficult to separate out behaviour that stems from the child/young person's background/attachment issues and behaviour that stems from being bullied.

Meadowcroft School recognises that it is essential for staff to have as much knowledge of background and behaviour from the moment a child comes on roll. All pupils should be aware of expectations of behaviour and about what is and is not bullying.

6.0 Information Sharing & Information Gathering

If a staff member thinks that a child/young person is being bullied or is bullying, then they must immediately discuss the issue with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Under instruction from the safeguarding team, staff members should put into place a plan to gather information to help build up a picture of evidence. Staff members may need to ask the following questions over a period of time during the school day:

- Tell me about your day at school yesterday?
- Describe what you enjoyed most/what you enjoyed less?
- Who did you spend time with/what did you do?
- What did you do at break/lunchtime today?
- Do you spend time with any other pupils outside school?
- Do you have any friends in school?
- Are you friends with/have contact with any other pupils on social media/online?

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- Is there anyone at school you don't like and why?
- Are they looking forward to coming to school tomorrow/next week?

Working in partnership with parents/carers, they may also be encouraged to ask these questions and feedback to school staff. The questions will depend on age and disposition of the respective child/young person.

To establish facts and support the implementation of the most appropriate intervention, staff members will also seek statements from any witnesses, examine behaviour records, academic reports and, where appropriate look at school CCTV.

7.0 Taking Action

If bullying is suspected/taking place parents/carers may be asked to meet with key staff. If the pupil is a looked after child or is open to children's social care then it is recommended that the child's social worker also attends the meeting and any other relevent professionals.

Suggested things to discuss in the meeting:

- Is the pupil a bully or are they being bullied
- How many incidents have there been
- What is the power imbalance
- What are the intentions of the pupil
- How the pupil is getting on with others in class
- Any issues of conflict with other pupils
- Emotional wellbeing of the pupil
- Pupil behaviours
- External influences
- What strategies will be put in place
- Next steps and follow up actions

If the issue is not resolved or the risks have increased, further meetings may be necessary.

If the parent/carer feels that operational staff are not addressing the matter satisfactorily they should contact the Senior DSL Donna Howard and/or the Senior Operational Lead for their child's specific school site. If parents and carers continue to feel unsatisfied they can contact the Head of School Noreen Cheema. Further concerns can be referred to the school's Board of Governors.

8.0 Supporting the Child

Staff should be available to support and comfort the pupil in the school setting. The process of dealing with bullying is very stressful for children/young people who may feel that they will get into further trouble with the bully or feel guilty for causing trouble for staff. It may be helpful for

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staff to arrange sessions with pupils with whom they have established friendships or trusted staff members to help their emotional wellbeing.

Meadowcroft School has a clinical team offering a variety of specialist support and pupils can be referred to these services at any time. Support can take a number of different ways including;

- One to one ad hoc sessions
- One to one specialist programme
- Group work

School staff will work closely with parents and carers to ensure pupils receive consistent and appropriate support within a timely manner.

9.0 Bullying outside of school.

Children and young people with special educational needs, and especially looked after children, are more vulnerable to bullying. Staff members must give consideration to this in relation to monitoring pupil behaviours both in and outside of school.

Parents and carers are asked to liaise with school staff regarding an issues or concerns at home, online and in the community. Staff members can make referrals/provide details of additional support services within the pupil's home locality.

Pupils can get bullied and picked on in the park, play areas, at the shops, at the end of the road or anywhere they are. It is crucial that bullying is followed up by sharing information, recording and working together with creating an action plan that best protects a child or young person.

10.0 Children who Bully

Children/young people sometimes bully others because:

- They don't know it's wrong.
- They are unaware of the impact of their behaviour.
- They are copying other pupils, older siblings or other people in the family whom they admire.
- They haven't learnt other ways of mixing with their peers
- Others encourage them to bully.
- They are going through a difficult time and are unable to verbalise their feelings
- They may be jealous of other pupils
- Attachment issues; lack of empathy, emotional age, inability to self soothe etc
- Feelings of powerlessness, opportunity to have sense of control.
- Peer pressure and/or wanting the approval of others
- Are being bullied themselves
- Being worried, unhappy or upset about something
- Lacking social skills or not understanding how others feel.

Staff members need to use all their skills, including:

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- Asking open ended questions
- Explaining e.g. describing risks of harm, of encouraging empathy
- Knowing when to encourage, knowing when to discourage
- Regular checking and where necessary vigilance
- Knowing when to take action

Bullying UK(part of Family Lives) provide further advice: [What to do if your child is a bully](#)

11.0 Stopping Children/Young People from Bullying

OFG provides training courses to help with this area that can be accessed through the *Shine* system. Some of the techniques involved include:

- Explaining that using aggression or force to get what they want is unacceptable.
- Explaining that what they are doing makes other children/young people unhappy.
- Discourage other pupils from bullying and aggressive behaviour.
- Encourage the pupil to interact with other pupils without bullying.
- Set up a meeting with parents/carers to discuss the problems the child is experiencing and how we can stop them from this type of behaviour.
- Regularly check with the pupil how things are going at home.
- Give the pupil praise and encouragement when they demonstrate an improvement in this behaviour.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) has a range resources, links and training resources for staff to access at any time. Meadowcroft School has signed up for the ABA Award for 23/24 and are committed to preventing and eliminating all forms of bullying.

12.0 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying and harassment using digital technologies. It can take place through social media, messaging, gaming, blogs, emails and websites using devices such as tablets, laptops, mobile phones. It is also called electronic bullying, SMS bullying, mobile bullying, online bullying and internet bullying. It can happen at any age, by any age.

All staff must also read the Outcomes First Group's *Staying Safe Online* Policy.

Different forms of bullying often happen concurrently. There is a strong link between cyberbullying and face-to-face bullying. Research has shown that 80% of victims of cyberbullying were also bullied face to face (Anti-Bullying Alliance, May 2019). The [Anti-bullying](#) [Alliance](#) identifies the following characteristics that make online bullying different to 'traditional' bullying:

- **24-7 nature** - the nature of online activity means you can be in contact at any time. There is the potential for a **wider audience** and bullying incidents can stay online, for example: a photograph being uploaded that you can't remove.

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- **Evidence** - a lot of cyberbullying incidents allow those experiencing it to keep evidence - for example, take a screen shot - to show to school staff or police if needed.

- Potential to **hide your identity** - it is possible for people to hide their identity or use a false identity online which can make cyberbullying incidents very scary.

- **Degree of separation** - people who cyberbully often do not see the reaction of those experiencing it so it can sometimes be harder for them to see the impact of their actions.

12.1 Digital Use agreement and risk assessment

Children and young people in school should have a Digital Use Agreement in place, setting out what they agree to do to keep themselves safe. Digital risks can be documented within the pupil's overall risk assessment, or a specific digital risk assessment can be carried out. (Please see *Staying Safe Online* Policy for further details).

12.2 Information and advice

Cyberbullying is always wrong and causes significant distress. It is important that foster carers have regular conversions about digital and online safety with children in their care to. The Group has produced a comprehensive guide for foster carers to help identify risks and support the children and young people they care for to stay safe online:
https://www.nfa.co.uk/story/story_category/keeping-children-safe-online-a-foster-carers-guideto-internet-safety/

The National Bullying Helpline also provides advice and information about cyberbullying: https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/cyberbullying.html

Meadowcroft School advises the following for children and young people:

Text / Video Messaging
- Do not reply to any text or video messages that are rude, nasty or intended to make you feel bad. The mobile service provider will have a number that you can call to report abusive messaging. Talk to staff and look at the provider's website.
- Be careful who you give your number to.

Social Media or Instant Messaging (IM)
- Do not give out personal information.
- Do not respond to abusive messages - ignore them or log off.
- Always think carefully about what you post online.

Web - If the cyberbullying is through school or community website, tell your teacher or a member of our safeguarding team.
Videoing and publishing a physical attack – This is where an individual is physically attacked while other individuals or members of a gang take videos on their camera phone, then circulate or post online. If this happens to you or someone you know, tell a staff member and your parents/carers. You can also contact the police.

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Interactive Gaming - Games consoles allow players to chat online with anyone they find themselves matched with in a multi-player game. Unfortunately, cyberbullies abuse other players and use threats. They can also lock victims out of games, spread false rumours, or hack into someone's account.

Email - If you receive a nasty e-mail:
- Do not to reply • Tell a staff member
- Save the e- mails as they will provide evidence in case
  we need to take action.

Guidance on what to do if you find that a child is cyberbullying others is available here: https://www.internetmatters.org/hub/expert-opinion/help-my-child-is-the-cyberbully/

13.0 Responding and Reporting

If you have reason to believe that a child or young person in our care is experiencing harm or is at risk of harm, the reporting process set out in the Safeguarding Policy must be followed immediately. **If a child or young person is at immediate risk of harm, call the police.**

If staff become aware of an online incident that is a cause for concern, they should:
- Provide reassurance to the child or adult
- Report the incident to the safeguarding team who will take immediate action to report any criminal offences to the police and the relevent social care team.
- Inform the pupil's parent/carer and, if applicable, their social worker
- Review the supervision and support arrangements for the pupil accessing the internet.
- Check the web filtering and security settings on the school's devices and account.
- Parents/carers are advised to check their child's personal devices.
- Agree what action will be taken to prevent recurrence and reduce risk, the risk assessment should be reviewed and updated. Consideration of further educating pupils on internet safety matters should be included.

14.0 Groups More Likely to Experience Bullying

Research shows that looked after children of all ages are more vulnerable to bullying, as are those with protected characteristics.

The UK Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against people with a protected characteristic, which includes race, religion and belief, disability, age and sexual orientation, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity.

Hate crime is defined through the law as a crime motivated by malice or ill-will towards individuals because of their actual or perceived disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or transgender identity. A hate crime can take a number of forms that are potentially criminal and should be treated as such.

The following part of this policy looks in more detail bullying and vulnerability to bullying of:

- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and young people

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- Disabled children and young people and with/or special needs •
  Unaccompanied asylum seekers and race and faith-targeted bullying.

14.1 Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and young people

Individuals who are perceived to be different are often more vulnerable to bullying behaviour based on prejudice and ignorance. Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and young people, or those perceived as LGBT+, are at an increased risk of being bullied and ridiculed at school and in the community.

In their 2017 study [School Report: The experiences of lesbian, gay and trans young people in Britain's Schools](#), Stonewall found that:

- Nearly half of lesbian, gay, bi and trans pupils (45 per cent) – including 64 per cent of trans pupils – are bullied for being LGBT at school
- Nearly one in ten trans pupils (nine per cent) are subjected to death threats at school
- Almost half of LGBT pupils (45 per cent) who are bullied for being LGBT never tell anyone about the bullying.

It is important that parents, carers, staff members and all professionals and people in the community play their part in creating a safe inclusive environment:

- Build strong connections/relationships, keeping the lines of communications open and observing the behaviours of others. It is important for individuals to know who they can turn to for support and to share concerns when they feel another person may not be safe.
- Establish a safe environment at school, in the home and in the community, celebrating diversity and sending the message that homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying will not be tolerated, creating an inclusive environment for all.
- Community clubs and organisations should have inclusive policies that help to prevent and address bullying and aid protection.
- Dealing with suspected and known bullying and bullies in an appropriate and informed manner that will help build a safer and inclusive environment.
- Protect privacy and confidentiality where appropriate.

14.2 Disabled children and young people and with/or special needs

Disabled young people and those with SEN (SEND), are significantly more likely to experience bullying, including online bullying than their peers. Children who have learning disabilities and autism are particularly at risk. ([Anti-bullying Alliance](#))

Research shows that:
- Primary school pupils with special educational needs are twice as likely as other children to suffer from persistent bullying. At age 7, 12% of children with special needs and 11% of those with a statement said they were bullied 'all of the time' by other pupils, compared to just 6% of their non-disabled peers. (Institute of Education 2014)

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- Fifteen-year-olds with statements were significantly more likely to be frequent victims of threats or acts of physical violence and theft, even when other factors that increase the risk of bullying were taken into account. They were also more likely to be excluded by a group of schoolmates or called names – a form of victimisation that is often referred to as "relational bullying". (Institute of Education 2014)

- 70% of children with autistic spectrum disorders combined with other characteristics, for example, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), have experienced bullying (Bejerot and Mortberg 2009)

The Children and Families Act 2014 requires a Local Authority to produce a Local Offer that sets out what parent, carers and children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) can expect in their local area. Within the SEND Code of Practice, it confirms that the Local Offer must demonstrate the arrangements schools have in place for emotional mental and social development of children and young people with SEND, one of those arrangements is to prevent bullying.

Contact, a Family and the National Network of Parent Carer Forums, as part of the Anti- Bullying Alliance *All Together programme*, have written Dealing with bullying, which gives guidance about bullying and the local offer.

Bullying can occur anywhere, in the physical world and online world and to people of any age. The term *Cuckooing* is used where vulnerable young people or adults (often with disabilities and special needs) are bullied by gangs and criminal individuals who use their homes as a base to sell or store drugs or stolen goods. This places the person at risk of being further bullied, subjected to continual violence and ridicule and further exploitation.

Please refer to the *Child Exploitation Policy* for further information.

14.3 Unaccompanied asylum seekers and race and faith targeted bullying

"Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity; it can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance." (Respect me, Scotland's Anti- Bullying Service)

Children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees may be at greater risk of bullying directly and indirectly. Stigma, due to lack of knowledge and understanding of asylum seekers and refugees, and reluctance to burden parents with extra worries can allow bullying to go undetected and continue. They may also be less likely to seek help from social workers, teachers or police as they may not know who to trust.

Bullying can be based on perceived differences in dress, communication, appearance, beliefs and/or culture as well as skin colour and accent. The status of the ethnic group a child belongs to (or people assume they belong to) in a school, community or organisation can often lead to a child or young person experiencing bullying behaviour. This can arise from a misguided and/or learned belief that they are less valued and 'deserve' to be treated differently, or with less respect.

Lack of knowledge and understanding about the traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths can lead to religious intolerance. Lack of awareness about the differences in practices of

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religions, such as, prayer times, dietary requirements, fasting and the wearing of religious clothing or articles of faith can result in misunderstandings and stereotyping, which may lead to bullying.

It is essential that actions are taken, and the safeguarding procedures must be followed (please see the Meadowcroft School Safeguarding Policy).

15.0 Useful Organisations

Anti-bullying Alliance - is a coalition of organisations and individuals that are united against bullying. They work in England and Wales. aba@ncb.org.uk

NWG Network - A charity and UK wide network of policy makers and researchers working with children at risk of CSE. Children, young people, parents, carers and staff should access NWG (purchased by NFG) so that they may receive advice and support on all forms of exploitation. www.nwgnetwork.org   Tel: 01332 585371

Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) Centre is the UK's national police agency set up to tackle child sexual abuse. If you are worried about someone's behaviour towards a child, online or offline, you can report it here.

Stonewall campaigns for the equality of lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans people across Britain and provides help, advice, and information https://www.stonewall.org.uk/   020 7593 1862 https://www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/   0131 474 8019   https://www.stonewallcymru.org.uk/ 02920 237767

Coram Children's Legal Centre Publications and advice line on legal issues Tel: 020 7713 0089

Kidscape Tel: 0207 730 3300   Anti-bullying Helpline: 08451 205204
Their vision is for all children to grow up in a world free from bullying and harm, with adults who keep them safe and help them to reach their full potential.

Bullying UK, part of Family Lives, is a leading charity providing advice and support to anyone affected by bullying.

Childline: https://www.childline.org.uk/get-support/ or call 0800 1111

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