

GARSWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL



A Curriculum Policy statement for: Anti-Bullying

For all children, learning about relationships and making friends is a key part of their development. Conflict resolution, problem solving and maintaining friendships is all part of this journey. However, unfortunately for some children, they find themselves being the victim of bullying, whether this is face to face or online.

Bullying is a complex yet real issue. As with any displayed behaviour, it is important we understand what the child or young person is trying to communicate to us. Bullying is always unacceptable, and should never be tolerated, however by addressing underlying causes, we stand a better chance of making sustainable changes and ensuring our children have happy and healthy relationships.

When people hear of “bullying”, they are rightly shocked. Bullying has no place in our world but unfortunately it does happen – and it does happen in schools. Sometimes unpleasant things can happen, which are not bullying. We take great care to separate genuine cases of bullying from those incidents which are more about children learning how to deal with each other and manage their own behaviour and their own feelings or simple misunderstandings or ‘falling out’.

After much discussion, the staff and Governors of Garswood Primary School have decided to have a written Anti-Bullying Policy to show to all children, parents and staff that bullying, either physical or verbal, is NOT tolerated in school.

Following some key learning from St Helens Safeguarding Children Partnership this Policy was further updated to reflect some relevant contextual issues. Neglect is a prevalent issue across St Helens and remains a key priority area for the Partnership. Neglect can have devastating consequences on a child’s life, including on their relationships. If a child has not been nurtured or had the love and care that all children deserve, they can find themselves at risk of being bullied, or displaying bullying behaviours themselves.

What is Bullying?

A child is bullied when one or more children expose him/her repeatedly and ‘over time’ to physical or verbal abuse. STOP is a useful acronym to explain what is bullying – ‘several times on purpose’. The attacks or assaults need not necessarily be direct but may take a less visible and indirect form, such as isolation and exclusion from the group. Bullying knows no boundaries of age, sex or background.

Some children find it difficult to emotionally regulate or are diagnosed with a Special Educational Need relating to Social, Emotional and Mental Health. Care will be taken to ensure bullying is not confused with other behaviour or special educational need. In these instances, behaviours are often not targeted at individuals. However, support will always be provided to children who feel bullied even if the intent has not been to bully.

What are the Possible Signs of Bullying?

Children may:

- Be frightened of walking to or from school;
- Be unwilling to go to school;
- Beg a parent to take them to school;
- Begin doing poorly in their school work;
- Come home regularly with property or clothes destroyed;
- Become withdrawn;
- Start stammering;
- Become distressed;
- Stop eating;
- Cry themselves to sleep;
- Have nightmares and even call out “Leave me alone”;
- Have unexplained bruises, scratches, cuts;
- Have their possessions “go missing”;
- Refuse to say what’s wrong;
- Constantly complain of headaches, stomach pains or seem anxious;
- Give improbable excuses to explain any of the afore-mentioned.

Sometimes children may present with some of these behaviours for other reasons. Simply displaying these behaviours does not necessarily mean they are being bullied. Keeping an open dialogue and an open mind is the best approach.

The Safeguarding Board also highlighted that neglect may increase the risk of a child becoming a victim of bullying. This could be because:

- The child looks unkempt (i.e. unclean including unclean odour, poor dental hygiene, inappropriate clothing).
- A neglected child may (but not always) come from a low-income family and therefore may not be able to keep up with social pressures of having certain clothing/items.
- The young person may not have been shown love, care or warmth. This may mean that they were not shown the appropriate way to interact with other people, making it harder for them to do so in day to day life.
- A child who is neglected may have low self-esteem or anxiety which may make them vulnerable to being bullied.

- A child who is severely neglected, may develop additional learning or physical need, as the brain has not developed properly. Children with special educational needs and disabilities can be at an increased risk of being bullied.
- A child who is tired or hungry may behave differently, as their basic needs have not been met and this will affect how they can function.

Children Who Display Bullying Behaviours

No one wants their child to display bullying behaviours.

Parents will be contacted if we believe their child is bullying and/or displaying behaviour that could be perceived as bullying. This is so that we can work together to support the alleged perpetrator alongside supporting the victim.

There are numerous reasons why children bully. They could have been a victim themselves; they could have low self-esteem; they could be struggling to emotionally regulate and have difficulty managing certain triggers from an individual. They could be struggling with their own social group and/or social interactions.

Neglect and bullying

- A child who is severely neglected, may develop additional learning or physical need, as the brain has not developed properly. This could include social, emotional and communication difficulties which may impact on friendships.
- A child who has experienced neglect may lack the social skills to make friends. They may also have witnessed domestic abuse which can also distort their view on what a healthy relationship looks like.
- In addition, the consequential feeling of loneliness may cause them to present themselves as a more dominant force to other children.
- A child who has been neglected can feel anxious and out of control; they may therefore exert power over others to bring back the feeling of control.
- For any child who experiences abuse, including neglect, they may find themselves in 'survival mode'. The trauma they experience may place them in a state of heightened awareness (fight or flight) that can cause them to display instinctive irrational reactions, rather than the regulated response we often guide our children to make.

Opposing Views

There may be situations where there are opposing views as to whether a child is a victim or the one displaying the bullying behaviours. In these situations, it is important to not lose sight of the potential root causes of the behaviour. All incidents should be investigated thoroughly, and an impartial, evidence-based conclusion decided. However, it may be that following the outcome of the investigation, both the victim and the child displaying the bullying behaviour will need support.

What Can Parents Do?

Take a sensible approach. Listen and investigate. The child must be told that he/she is undoubtedly not the only victim and that there is nothing wrong with him/her. It is essential that parents are particularly loving and sympathetic towards their children. **Every opportunity should be taken to enhance their self-esteem. Victims of bullying should not be encouraged to hit back.** Children must be encouraged to tell their parents. The child or parent must inform the Class Teacher or Head Teacher.

What Can School Do?

Teachers will work to educate children on the difference between bullying and children being unkind/cross/upset or angry, falling out, disagreements and not being friends with someone. Children, especially the younger ones, do not always understand this. School follow the PATHS scheme by Barnardos in every class. This helps children to work through feelings, conflicts and relationships by promoting alternative thinking strategies.

If their child sees bullying, parents should encourage them to report this to a member of staff. By reporting the incident, they are helping the victim and the bully. It is not helpful for parents to communicate this to others as this can cause more upset. Informing the school is the most appropriate course of action to protect all children.

While it is distressing for most parents to discover that their child is the victim of bullying, it can be equally upsetting for the parents to learn that their child is bullying. A bully is usually an insecure person and he/she needs help. Teachers will work with children who are showing bullying behaviours in order to make them see how sad their behaviour makes others feel. We will always be positive, taking the view that “we can stop bullying behaviour”.

Further support for children dealing with bullying and harrassment

- There are notices on the Healthy Schools Notice Board giving children advice about bullying.
- There are positive posters around the school made by the children and children are encouraged to talk about bullying.
- School uses the ‘Stonewall’ resources as a means of supporting pupils and staff in discussing discrimination and in particular homophobia.
- Assemblies take place about bullying, including online bullying, where pupils are encouraged to speak to trusted adults.
- The school takes part in annual Anti-Bullying Week.
- We follow the Barnardo’s PATHs program from Reception to Year 6.

Procedure for Investigating Alleged Incidents of Bullying

1. All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by staff. A record of all allegations will be kept.
2. Parents of victims and parents of children who are accused of bullying will be informed so they will be able to help and support their children.
3. In any alleged incident of bullying, the Class Teacher, Head Teacher or Pastoral Lead will speak separately to the pupils involved and will make written notes of details given in an attempt to get both sides of the story. Questions will be asked such as:
 - “What has taken place?”
 - “Where did the incident(s) take place?”
 - “When did the bullying happen?”
 - “Who was involved?”
4. Should more than one person be involved, each child will be interviewed individually and then the group will meet with the Teacher or Head Teacher. Each member of the group will then be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear what everyone else said.
5. If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her that he/she is in breach of the agreed Code of Behaviour. The Head Teacher will contact the parents and ask them to call to the school to discuss the incident(s).
6. A course of action will be agreed between the Head Teacher, the parents and the child and a review date of this action will be set. Meetings will take place within two weeks with the victim and the perpetrator separately to ensure there is no further bullying.

We feel that by taking incidents of bullying (however rare) very seriously indeed, we can help our children realise that it is unacceptable. Working in partnership with you, the parents, Garswood Primary School will become an even better place for children to enjoy their years of primary education.

Approved by Governors Summer 2018
To be reviewed Summer 2021
By the Teaching & Learning Sub-Committee

Appendix

Developed by the St Helens Safeguarding Team

