



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy applies to Hymers College (7-18 years) and Hymers Hessle Mount (3-7 years). Hymers College incorporating Hymers Hessle Mount (hereafter referred to as ‘the School’) is committed to fostering a spirit of mutual trust between pupils and staff, and to creating and sustaining a friendly, supportive, caring and safe environment. We aim to ensure that pupils develop confidence and self-esteem, while at the same time showing consideration for the dignity, well-being, physical and mental health of others. Indeed this is a commitment that also extends to all adults and people within our school community.

With this in mind, all members of the community, including governors, teaching and support staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is and be familiar with the school policy on bullying. Bullying is an anti-social behaviour which can exist in any organisation and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that comes to their attention and these reports will always be taken seriously.

This policy has been written in consultation with Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023. As described in the School’s Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, bullying which causes or threatens serious harm is potentially a child protection matter. Therefore, the School takes a zero-tolerance approach to bullying.

The School’s commitment to tackling bullying is reflected in our support of the Diana Award Anti-Bullying programme and the appointment of a number of Anti-Bullying Ambassadors from among the pupil body. The Anti-Bullying Ambassadors raise awareness of the issue among staff and pupils alike and suggest ways to support students who may either be subject to or witness to bullying behaviour among the school community.

Definition

Bullying behaviour can take a variety of forms, but in all cases it is deliberately hurtful behaviour designed to frighten, intimidate, humiliate, embarrass or injure an individual or group.

Whilst one incident alone would not necessarily constitute bullying, a pattern of such behaviour over time undoubtedly would. Bullying is defined by the Department of Education (*Prevention and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies*, July 2017) as:

“behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientations, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences, or perceived differences.”

Bullying can be:

- physical (including sexual) assault
- verbal abuse, by name calling, teasing or making offensive remarks
- cyber-bullying, (or ‘virtual’) which is defined as the use of ICT to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. Examples include using social websites, mobile phones, text messaging, photographs, video and e-mail. The document *Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff* (2014) is a useful document for reference, as is the guidance for education settings published by the UK Council for Internet Safety (2020).
- bullying may involve extortion, or the stealing or misappropriation of another pupil’s belongings
- psychological bullying which may involve manipulating social networks (including electronic networks) with the intention of excluding, ostracising or marginalising individuals from their friends and normal relationships. Manipulative bullying may also involve the spreading of rumours, posting of electronic images without the other person’s consent or malicious accusations.

Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidatory, but is often hidden and subtle. It includes actions or comments that are racist, religious or cultural, homophobic, sexist, sexual or those which focus on disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape).

Bullying is a top concern of children, young people and their parents. Hymers College recognises that bullying can make the lives of its victims a misery and cause long-term psychological damage. It undermines their confidence and self-esteem, and destroys their sense of security. Bullying can impact on its victims’ attendance and attainment at school, marginalises those groups who may be particular targets for bullies and can have a life-long negative impact on some young people’s lives. At worst, bullying has been a factor in pupil suicide.

Bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and the consequences of ‘getting away with it’ can also be serious. All pupils deserve the opportunity to understand what acceptable behaviour is. There are criminal laws that apply to harassment, assault and threatening behaviour.

All members of the community must be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with School policy. Equally, any suggestion of retaliatory behaviour directed towards an individual who has raised a bullying allegation will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in accordance with the Behaviour and Sanctions Policy.

Signs of Bullying

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour. These may include:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Psychological damage and diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the medical centre with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

There may be other causes of some of the symptoms listed above. However, a repetition, or a combination, of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by teachers.

Preventative Measures at Hymers College

As described in Section 9.4 of the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy:

“All staff should understand the importance of challenging inappropriate behaviours between peers that are abusive in nature. They should be aware that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as ‘banter’, ‘just having a laugh’ or ‘part of growing up’. Downplaying certain behaviours, e.g. dismissing sexual harassment as ‘just banter’, can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.”

At Hymers we take the following preventative measures against bullying:

- We use appropriate assemblies – both to the whole school and to individual year groups and sections of the school - to explain the school policy on bullying.
- We ensure that staff are trained to be alert to the signs of bullying and know how to respond when they are detected.
- We give a platform to the pupil Anti-Bullying Ambassadors to raise awareness of the issue in the school community and suggest ways in which bullying behaviour can be tackled.
- Our PSHE programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. The programme is structured to enforce the message about community involvement and taking care of each other. It specifically tells pupils whom they should inform if they are being bullied, or are worried that another pupil is being bullied.
- Regular pupil surveys (at least biennially) are conducted to facilitate an understanding of the level and type of bullying that pupils have experienced. The results of these surveys are discussed at meetings of the Senior Leadership Team and shared with governors.
- Other lessons, particularly RS, English and Drama highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills.
- All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of the teaching or pastoral staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place. Every member of staff is trained on how to respond to such allegations as part of their induction training.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents.
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form Tutors and Heads of Year who support the Deputy Head (Pastoral). They are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying. In the Junior School, Team Leaders will support Form Tutors in dealing with cases of bullying.
- Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies.
- The school has access to a trained counsellor who can provide support and confidential advice to pupils.
- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class and patrol the school site, particularly areas where bullying might occur. They are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour.
- We operate a peer counselling ('Buddy') scheme, whereby trained older pupils are encouraged to offer advice and support to younger pupils.
- We reserve the right to investigate incidents involving our pupils that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips and that occur in the vicinity of the school.

- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.
- Every Form classroom in the school has a poster explaining the school's policy on bullying and gives advice to pupils on what to do if bullying takes place.
- Incidents of bullying are followed up to check that the problem has been resolved.
- The Bullying Log is regularly reviewed by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) with the Heads of Year meetings to look for patterns and check that the policy is effective. In the Junior School the Head of the Junior School will review the Bullying Log with Team Leaders.

How to tackle bullying

The way to stamp out bullying is for people to be aware of the issues involved, and to be clear in their own minds what action to take should cases arise:

If you are the victim....

1. If you feel able to, confront the bully by verbally making him/her aware that you think that what he/she is doing is wrong.
2. Share your feelings with someone else.
3. If possible talk to a teacher, your Form Teacher or your Head of Year (Team Leader in the Junior School). If you would rather not go straight to a member of staff, talk to your friends; talk to a buddy or one of the Prefects or any trusted adult. They may well be able to advise on an appropriate course of action, or will ask your permission to involve other people who can. There are also people outside the School who would be willing to help.

Childline: 0800 1111

If you witness bullying behaviour....

1. Support the victim by offering your friendship and make it clear that in your opinion what is happening to them is wrong.
2. Encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully yourself.
3. Accompany the victim to a trusted adult, or obtain their permission to involve their Year Head or Tutor.

If a member of staff witnesses an incident of bullying or it is reported to them....

1. Reassure and support the pupils involved.
2. Advise them that you are required to pass details on to the relevant member of the pastoral team. (Form Tutor, Head of Year, Deputy Head (Pastoral Care). In the Junior School, this information should be passed to a Team Leader or the Head of the Junior School.

3. Inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible. Heads of Year /Team Leaders must record all incidents of bullying and ensure that the Deputy Head (Pastoral Care) is informed. In the Junior School this information should be passed on to a Team Leader or the Head of the Junior School. Each week the Deputy Head (Pastoral Care) holds meetings with the Year Tutors at which pastoral issues, including bullying, are discussed. The minutes of these meetings are distributed throughout the school and will log all reported incidents of bullying and the way in which they were dealt with.

What will happen

- The victim will be interviewed on their own and asked to write an immediate account of events. Support and counselling will be offered.
- The bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually and asked to write an immediate account of events.
- Details of the incident will be recorded in CPOMS and on the pupil's file. The Deputy Head should also be copied in so that it can be recorded as a bullying incident. The pastoral team will decide on an appropriate course of action. In the first instance the Tutor will speak to the pupil and may also ask them to see the Year Head. If the Year Head decides to involve the Deputy Head the parents will be informed by letter or telephone.
- Depending on the seriousness of the situation, or for repeat offences, the following sanctions may be applied in accordance with the school disciplinary policy:

(i) Detention

The perpetrator(s) will be interviewed separately and it will be made clear why his/her behaviour was inappropriate and unacceptable. He/she will also be offered support and guidance on modifying their behaviour, together with appropriate disciplinary sanctions (Detention or Headmaster's Detention). An email or letter will be sent to parents/guardians from the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Head of the Junior / Lower / Middle School giving details of the offence and inviting them into School to discuss the matter. Their support for the School's actions should be enlisted.

(ii) Suspension (Temporary Exclusion) at the discretion of the Head, Deputy or Head of the Junior School (see the School's Discipline and Exclusions Policy).

(iii) Expulsion (Permanent Exclusion) at the discretion of the Head, Deputy or Head of the Junior School (see the School's Discipline and Exclusions Policy).

In the Junior School, once the incident has been discussed with the child, he/she will be given a D-Merit and parents are informed. Sometimes it is necessary for a child to be temporarily excluded.

These are minimum sanctions. In very serious cases it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or Social Services. However, it is the policy of the School to attempt to resolve such issues internally using our own Behaviour and Sanctions system, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely or the nature of the offence falls under the Prevent Duty that all schools have.

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