



## **Beacon Hill Community School**

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Date of Issue and approved by Governors: July 2014**

**Review Date: July 2016**

## Rationale

Everyone at Beacon Hill Community School has the right to feel welcome, secure and happy. Only if this is the case will all members of the school community be able to achieve to their maximum potential. Bullying of any sort prevents this being able to happen and prevents equality of opportunity. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent this happening and this policy contains guidelines to support this ethos.

Where bullying exists the victims must feel confident to activate the anti-bullying systems within the school to end the bullying. It is our aim to challenge attitudes about bullying behaviour, increase understanding for bullied students and help build an anti-bullying ethos in the school.

*Bullying is an antisocial behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at the School. If bullying does occur, all students should know who to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.*

This document outlines how we make this possible at Beacon Hill Community School.

## What Is Bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour which is perceived by the target individual, or any other person, as intending to hurt, intimidate, frighten, harm or exclude. It is usually persistent and an abuse of power, leaving the targeted individual feeling defenceless.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures, spreading rumours)
- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Racist:** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual:** unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic:** because of, or focussing on, the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber:** all areas of internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging and calls. Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.

Cyber bullying differs from other forms of bullying in that it can take place at any time and can invade previously safe places such as the home. The audience can be very large and reached very quickly. The perpetrator may never be in the same physical space as their target and may attempt to remain anonymous. Many cyber bullying incidents can themselves act as evidence and it is important that in all settings staff and adults know how to deal with incidents.

## Why is it Important to respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. We at Beacon Hill Community School have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

### **Aims of this policy**

- ✓ To create an ethos where all members of the community staff and students feel positive about attending school
- ✓ To make it clear that all forms of bullying are unacceptable
- ✓ To ensure everyone at Beacon Hill Community School feels safe
- ✓ To have procedures to deal effectively with bullying
- ✓ To support victims of bullying
- ✓ To help and support bullies to change their behaviour and attitudes
- ✓ To ensure that all members of the community feel responsible for combating bullying

### **Signs and symptoms of Bullying**

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that they are being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber-message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

### **In School:**

The following strategies have been put in place to reinforce the anti-bullying ethos at the school.

- ✓ Not to use teaching materials or equipment, which gives a bad or negative view of any group because of their ethnic origin, or gender.
- ✓ Encourage students to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This includes a review of what friendship really is.
- ✓ Encourage students to treat everyone with respect.

- ✓ At whole school level – through assemblies when students will be informed of the school's zero-tolerance policy and the actions that will be taken to prevent bullying taking place.
- ✓ Anti-Bullying Week in November will be used as an opportunity to raise the profile of this issue.
- ✓ Police work with the students to inform them of the consequences of anti-social behaviours (bullying, cyber bullying etc)
- ✓ At classroom level – especially through Personal Development lessons the focus will be on developing strong anti-bullying messages.
- ✓ Buddy or peer counseling system is available for students in year 7 & 8
- ✓ Vertical tutor groups will support the anti-bullying ethos

### **Advice to parents**

Beacon Hill Community School is firmly committed to working in partnership with parents and believes that the best outcomes emerge when professionals and parents/carers are able to work together when bullying occurs. We recognise the important influence which parents/carers have on their children and would wish to enlist their support when their child is involved in bullying – either as victim or a perpetrator. Parents will be informed about the schools anti bullying policy at the induction meeting held before the start of year 7.

Parents who believe their children are the victim of bullying should share their concerns with school at the earliest opportunity and be prepared to work with school to keep their children safe.

All expressions of concern will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. Where parents have concerns about with regard to bullying they should contact their child's tutor in the first instance.

Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard. Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunch time was spent etc.

If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.

It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse.

Make sure your child is fully aware of the school policy concerning bullying, and that they will not be afraid to ask for help.

### **Advice to Students**

#### **What can you do if you are being bullied?**

#### **Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon!**

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is wrong!
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Be assertive – shout "no!" walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- Fighting back may make things worse. If you decide to fight back, talk to a teacher or parent/guardian first.

• Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support. Teachers will take bullying seriously and will deal with bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse. It would be helpful to list some of the things that might happen.

### **If you know someone is being bullied**

- Take action! Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.
- If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult immediately. Teachers have ways of dealing with people who bully without getting you into trouble.
- Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with someone who is a bully.

### **Contribution to the anti bullying policy**

The students will have an opportunity to review and advise the Anti – bullying policy through the school council.

Peer mentor will have anti-bullying training as part of their role.

### **School Actions**

If bullying is suspected the pastoral team must be informed. They will talk to the victim, the suspected bully and any witnesses. The outcomes of these meetings will be recorded on individual pupil profiles if necessary.

If any degree of bullying is suspected the school will aim to use the support group approach as outlined below.

#### **Step one – meet with the targeted pupil**

After a bullying incident has been referred for ‘support group’ intervention, the Inclusion team will talk to the targeted student about his/her feelings. No questions are asked about the incidents but information is needed about who was involved.

#### **Step two – convene a meeting with the people involved**

The inclusion team will arrange to meet with the group of pupils who have been involved. This will include students who have been directly involved as well some bystanders or colluders and either friends of the target or good role models. A group of six to eight young people is recommended.

#### **Step three – explain the problem**

The Inclusion team will tell the group about the way the victim is feeling.

#### **Step four – share responsibility**

The Inclusion team will **not** attribute blame but emphasise the joint responsibility of all to help the victim feel happy and safe.

#### **Step five – ask the group for their ideas**

Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the victim could be helped to feel happier and safer. The Inclusion team will give out some positive responses but s/he does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

#### **Step six – leave it up to them**

The inclusion team ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. S/he arranges to ‘catch up’ with each of the group in a few days (or sooner if appropriate) to see how things are going.

#### **Step seven – meet them later**

A few days later and then regularly for a number of weeks, the Inclusion team discusses with each student, including the targeted student, how things have been going. In some situations a simple non-verbal signal can be used to indicate how well the plan is going such as thumbs up.

This allows the facilitator to monitor the bullying and keeps the young people involved in the process. This monitoring should continue until the facilitator is confident that the bullying has stopped. All monitoring needs to be recorded.

Help, support and counselling will be given as is appropriate to both the victim and the bullies:

**We also support the victims in the other ways:**

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their tutor, or another teacher if they choose.
- Informing the victims' parents/guardians.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it
- Arrange for them to be escorted to and from the school premises.

**CONSEQUENCES FOR THE BULLY**

- By taking one or more of the seven disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.
- We also discipline, yet try to help people who have been bullying.
- By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- Informing the bully's parents/guardians.
- By continuing to work with the bullies in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

**Disciplinary steps**

- They will be warned officially to stop offending.
- Informing the bullies' parents/guardians.
- They may be put in isolation (internal exclusion) .
- They may be excluded from the school premises at break and/or lunch times.
- We may arrange for them to be escorted to and from the school premises.
- If they do not stop bullying they may be excluded for a fixed period.
- If they then carry on they will be recommended for exclusion for a major fixed period or an indefinite period.
- If they will not end such behaviour, they will be recommended for permanent exclusion.

Alternative strategies are also used to help the 'bully' and the 'victim'. These include individual and group counselling, peer group monitoring, centres of refuge, circle time and home school agreements. Positive approaches to improve behaviour are also used.

While we are not complacent we feel that bullying incidents at Beacon Hill Community School are much less than the national figures quoted for schools. We also feel it is significant that many of the incidents reported have 'roots' outside of school which make resolution more time consuming. Family and local feuds can spill over into school and when this does happen parents will be asked to collect their child from the school at short notice to enable us to resolve matters. Parents must help us to ensure we have a culture of tolerance and respect at school by promoting this at home. We urge parents to contact their child's tutor or the Inclusion team as soon as possible should they have a concern about bullying.