

Clifton Anti-bullying Policy

Foreword

Bullying in schools is an area of considerable concern to the whole community. Teachers are very familiar with this issue and work hard to minimise the incidence of bullying at Clifton. Research indicates that the early years of life are a crucial time for the development of an individual's health and wellbeing. This means we must learn how to address problem behaviours such as bullying as early in a young person's life as possible, to reduce the risk of long-term damage.

It is important for teachers, carers and parents to recognise bullying behaviours and work together to help children who bully and children who are bullied learn to live and play together in a healthy, positive way.

Clifton does not tolerate any form of bullying and adopts the no-blame approach when dealing with situations covered.

The document that follows is an attempt to clarify for staff, parents and community members what Clifton perceives bullying to be, how it should be addressed and in what formats. This is as a result of much work by the Staff in general and the management team in particular.

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Introduction

How young children interact with their peers can have important implications for the way they will behave in later years as adolescents and adults. While most young children live peaceably and happily with others, some persistently act aggressively or become targets for the bullying behaviour of their peers. These children need special help. Not only are they often unhappy and troubled children, but they are also likely to continue feeling that way unless effective means of prevention or intervention are applied. If we do not help them to change when they are young, it will be much more difficult when they are older. The task of countering bullying is everybody's business. Before a child starts school, bullying behaviour is largely the responsibility of parents. Later that responsibility is shared with teachers.

Questions Teachers Ask

Why focus on bullying and not simply on aggressive behaviour?

It is not easy to answer this question because bullying is an aspect of aggressive behaviour. Aggression often occurs between people of equal power. It may be expressed in all directions, not only towards those who are less powerful. Of course, aggression, also, needs to be addressed. However, bullying behaviour is unlike some aggressive behaviour in that it always happens where there is an imbalance of power. As with all aggressive behaviour, bullying can be expressed directly, as in physical and verbal attacks on a person, or indirectly, as in excluding someone. But bullying merits special attention. It involves a systematic abuse of power. Individuals differ in the power they can exercise over others and children need to learn not to abuse that power. As far as possible, children must learn ways in which they can prevent others from abusing them.

How much bullying actually goes on between children?

Bullying goes on in all schools. Assessing how often it happens is not easy, but research suggests that about one child in six is bullied in one way or another at least weekly. Boys tend to be bullied more than girls and also to engage more in physical bullying. Girls are more likely to engage in indirect forms of bullying such as deliberate exclusion. Of course, bullying varies in intensity and harmfulness. Most bullying consists of name-calling and verbal abuse. This does not greatly bother some children. But substantial numbers of children are very distressed, especially if the bullying is unremitting, goes on for many days or weeks and there seems to be no end to it.

Can bullying be stopped?

Many well-researched interventions have been carried out in different countries, and these have shown that bullying can be significantly reduced. Research also shows that interventions are much more successful when they are carried out among young children.

Bullies and Bullying

A common stumbling block in addressing problems of bullying among children lies in the way people use, and react to, the words 'bully' and 'bullying'. While most teachers are sensitive to these issues it is useful to discuss and clarify them.

Bully suggests to most people someone who is despicable and who deserves to be punished. Such labelling and treatment is counterproductive, whether we are thinking about young children, adolescents or indeed adults. People often feel affronted when a young child is described in this way.

Bullying behaviour is a different matter. We all know of individuals and groups who continually seek to hurt others who are less powerful than themselves, which they may do by physical or verbal means or by deliberately excluding them. This is generally called 'bullying behaviour', especially if it keeps going on and on. It occurs among people of all ages, from preschool to oldage.

In order to help with bully/victim problems, it is useful for educators to identify how bullying begins, who are commonly targeted and what the outcomes may be.

The stages of bullying

Beginnings

A child or a group of children is targeted by peers more powerful than they are. They may be bigger, stronger, more able to hurt another verbally, more popular or well supported and more able to exclude others.

The target

Although any child may become a victim of bullying, children are more likely to be bullied if they are physically weak, introverted, timid, anxious and unassertive, or if they belong to a group against which there is such prejudice that they can be isolated.

Outcomes

How or whether the bullying continues depends on a number of factors. These include:

- **The degree of imbalance between the person doing the bullying and the victim.** It is especially difficult for a child to resist a group or a more powerful individual. Even so, with appropriate advice and support for vulnerable children the imbalance can often be reduced.
- **The strategies available to the victim:**
 - being able to respond assertively or (if appropriate) nonchalantly
 - being able to avoid threatening situations
 - seeking (and receiving) effective help from others. Teachers can help children acquire such skills.
- **The way bystanders behave in the situation,**
 - by encouraging the bullying
 - by passively standing by and seemingly condoning the bullying
 - by actively helping the victim. Teachers can discuss with children how to act to discourage bullying.
- **Whether staff recognise what is happening and intervene appropriately.**
- **The actions subsequently** taken by teachers with those who have been involved in the bullying.

The impact of bullying

Bullying can have serious consequences for children who are repeatedly bullied and for those who persist in bullying others. Those not directly involved in bully/victim problems at school can also be affected.

Those children experiencing repeated bullying can suffer these effects:

- **loss of self-esteem** which can persist for years after the bullying stops
- **increasing isolation**, without friends, alienation and distrust of others
- **depression** and, in extreme cases, thoughts of suicide

- **absenteeism** commonly increases; the ability to concentrate may be reduced and school work may deteriorate
- **families may be affected**; they may become distraught, hostile towards the school and desperate to find a solution
- in some cases, the bullied child may **contemplate revenge** and feel justified in attacking others.

Those who bully others

- unless helped to change, **may persist in abusing their power** over others in their adolescent and adult years and become a danger to others in the workplace and in their homes
- are **deprived of the satisfaction and happiness** that comes from cooperating with others on an equal basis.

Other children

- Children who neither bully nor are victimized often **feel threatened and insecure** when they observe bullying occurring.
- **Their freedom is limited** as they must be on their guard from being attacked themselves, and they may feel saddened or upset by what they see going on around them. Verbal bullying such as name-calling and indirect bullying, such as exclusion, can be at least as harmful as physical bullying.

Educating Children about bullying

Educating children about bullying can be planned under four headings: knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours. Teachers may seek to develop in children:

Knowledge and understanding

- what is meant by 'bullying' and what forms it can take
- what harm it can do
- why bullying behaviour is unacceptable
- what can be done to stop it.

Attitudes and values

- sympathy for children who are bullied by others
- feelings of abhorrence at the idea of people bullying others
- a sense of shame at being instrumental in bullying anyone
- empathic feelings towards others, especially those who are victimised
- a sense of responsibility for helping those who are unfairly treated
- acceptance of people different from themselves.

Skills

- the capacity to protect children from those who bully
- the capacity to control negative emotions such as anger
- the ability to challenge bullying behaviours used against others
- conflict resolution skills that can be employed to help children to resolve differences peaceably.

Behaviours

- refraining from bullying others
- helping to resolve disputes that could lead to bullying
- restraining or discouraging those who would bully others

- providing help, acceptance and support for children who have been bullied.

Educating children about bullying can be done most effectively when there is a readiness on the part of children to share their thoughts about bullying with others in their class or group

Improving Social Skills

We can identify skills that are helpful to:

- prevent children from being bullied
- enable children to help others who are being bullied or have been bullied
- make it less likely that children will turn to bullying to get their own way.

Skills to prevent children from being bullied

No one can be completely 'bully-proofed' but risk can be reduced by becoming more skilful in the following ways:

- acting assertively when necessary
- reacting nonchalantly when it is appropriate to do so
- making friends who will give support
- cooperating effectively with others.

Skills to help others

Possessing these skills can be useful, especially for the older primary school child:

- making good judgments regarding when and how to help children who are being victimised
- standing up for children who are being victimized
- being perceptive, and understanding how others are feeling
- offering support by being a good listener.

Skills to avoid bullying others

Children bully for many reasons, sometimes because they lack the following skills:

- being able to handle feelings of anger when they arise
- thinking before they act
- getting what they need from others by using cooperative means rather than by resorting to force or threats.

Some children who bully others may not be inclined to get angry, act impulsively or lack social skills, just as some socially skilled children may get bullied. But in many cases improvements in these areas do help to reduce bullying.

Promoting positive behaviour

Children's knowledge of the reasons for and the effects of bullying may be excellent, attitudes to victims exemplary, social skills highly developed, yet children may continue to be involved in bully/victim problems. And, after all, it is behaviour that matters.

Teachers should therefore ask themselves the following question:

How can we best ensure that the knowledge, attitudes and skills that have been developed through class activities actually result in children behaving so that bullying is reduced?

Some suggestions

Children are more likely to stop their bullying behaviour or to act to reduce bullying when they experience social and moral pressure to do so from people who most matter in their

lives and whose opinions they respect. These normally include other children, parents and teachers. The teacher can often encourage and assist children to formulate rules about how they would like each other to behave.

These rules sometimes emerge:

- We will not bully other children.
- We will help children who are being bullied.
- We will include children who are left out of our games.

Such rules can have considerable force, coming from the children themselves, and they greatly encourage children to behave positively. A teacher's influence with parents is commonly less powerful. Nonetheless, discussions with parents or parent groups can lead to their recognising the need to encourage their children to act to counter bullying.

Sanctions, positive reinforcement and modelling

Direct methods of influencing children's behaviour may be justified. These include the imposition of rules and consequences that apply to more extreme or continually repeated bullying behaviour. Non-physical sanctions, penalties or consequences and serious talks with parents may occasionally be necessary. These, however, should be kept to a minimum, as controlling bullying behaviour exclusively by force or the threat of force can breed resentment and be counterproductive. Reinforcing positive and constructive actions by children to counter bullying is greatly preferable.

But perhaps the most telling form of influence is through teachers modelling positive behaviours towards others in the presence of children. Children's knowledge of the reasons for and the effects of bullying may be excellent, attitudes to victims exemplary, social skills highly developed, yet children may continue to be involved in bully/victim problems. And, after all, it is behaviour that matters.

Empowering bystanders

Most bullying goes on when others are around, and the role of bystanders may be crucial in determining whether the bullying continues or stops.

Discuss with children the kinds of things that bystanders typically do when they see bullying taking place. Describe the roles that bystanders play and the effects they have upon the bullying behaviour. These roles can be listed as:

- the supporters of the victim
- the supporters of the bully
- passive observers
- those who go to get help
- those who leave the scene.

Examine with the children why each of the above acts as they do, and then explore ways in which bystanders can discourage, and help stop the bullying without taking unreasonable and unacceptable risks. Expressing displeasure at what is happening may be less dangerous than physically intruding and is often very effective. Different kinds of bullying – verbal, physical and indirect – occurring in different situations can be described, and children can explore in discussion or through role play how bystanders could behave – and with what outcomes.

Approaches to intervention

When bullying is witnessed

An adult's presence will normally prevent some forms of bullying from occurring or continuing. Physical and violent verbal abuse commonly stops, however more subtle and insidious bullying may continue. Teachers often feel obliged to admonish children on the spot, but it is sometimes wiser, if possible, to speak with the perpetrator and the victimized child afterwards. This may allow the child who has engaged in bullying to 'cool off', and avoids embarrassing the child who was targeted.

Dealing with cases

There is no standard or universally accepted way of dealing with incidents of bullying. Some suggested approaches are to:

- Speak informally with children who have bullied someone and encourage them to act more politely and constructively, pointing out the advantages of doing so.
- Adopt a direct approach in which a judgement is made about the magnitude or seriousness of the offence and an appropriate sanction applied. As far as possible, the offence is related to 'school rules' and the sanction is seen as a 'consequence'.
- Help the victim learn to cope more effectively with the situation and offer appropriate advice or counselling.
- Define the problem as one in which both perpetrator and victim have a need to re-adjust their relationship and are capable of being helped through a process of mediation.
- Seek to change the perpetrator's behaviour through a counselling or problem-solving approach designed to motivate responsible behaviour.

It is good to be aware of each of these approaches, their strengths and limitations, and circumstances in which they may be justified. It is not always easy to decide which approach to use in a bully/victim situation. Assessing the seriousness of the bullying is the first step. In some cases this matter may be discussed with other staff members in order that consistent responses can be made in accordance with Clifton's anti-bullying policy. Here are some suggestions that may be helpful:

- **Informal approaches** may be appropriate in many cases where the bullying behaviour is of low severity. The effectiveness of these approaches will depend on the adult-child relationship. With repeated and more serious offences a more formal approach may be necessary.
- **Consequences** may be applied where an infringement of well-publicised rules is clear.
- In some cases of bullying a clear rule is hard to specify or interpret, and its misapplication can result in feelings of injustice, resentment – and complaints from parents. Still, where the bullying is severe and repeated, there may be no alternative.
- **Helping the victim develop more effective ways of coping** is sometimes sensible, for example, through giving advice on acting more assertively. However, in many cases the odds are greatly against the victim being able to solve the problem alone and intervention by an adult is necessary. A minority of 'victims' are seen as provocative, and they need help to change **their** behaviour.
- **Mediation** can sometimes help, particularly when the bullying is sustained by an unresolved – yet resolvable – dispute. In many cases, however, this method is inappropriate, because it is the perpetrator's behaviour alone that must change.
- **Counselling and problem-solving approaches** can often be effective.

Anti-Bullying Policy

The aim of the anti-bullying policy is to ensure that children learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Bullying is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed will children be able to fully benefit from the opportunities available at Clifton.

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The three main types of bullying are:

- physical (hitting, kicking, theft)
- verbal (name calling, racist remarks)
- indirect (spreading rumours, excluding someone from social groups)

Children who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school. Children must be encouraged to report bullying in schools.

Schools' teaching and ancillary staff must be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it in accordance with school policy.

Implementation

Staff

The following steps may be taken when dealing with incidents:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached. The "No blame" approach is used.
 - The victim is interviewed
 - A meeting is convened with the people involved
 - The problem is explained to the group
 - Responsibility is shared
 - The group is asked for their ideas
 - The group carry out ideas
 - The group meets again later to review progress
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded and given to the head of department
- The head of department will interview all concerned and will record the incident
- Tutors/class teachers will be kept informed and if it persists the tutor/class teacher will advise the appropriate subject teachers/coaches
- Parents will be kept informed
- Punitive measures will be used as appropriate and in consultation will all parties concerned

Clifton has adopted the whole school approach to bullying. Control by staff is extended over all areas where bullying is likely to occur. Rules are in place to cover areas where children may be without staff.

Bullying is dealt with as part of the Life Orientation/Life Skills programme. At this stage video, interactive and group work resources form the basis of discussing bullying as an issue. "On the bus" Circle of Friends" and "Shared Concern" are some of the methods of coping with and understanding bullying that are dealt with in the classroom.

Children

Children who have been bullied will be supported by:

- offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a tutor/class teacher or member of staff of their choice
- Following the no blame approach
- reassuring the pupil
- offering continuous support
- restoring self-esteem and confidence

Children who have bullied will be helped by:

- discussing what happened
- discovering why the pupil became involved
- establishing the wrong doing and need to change
- informing parents or guardians to help change the attitude of the pupil
- counselling through professionals

The following disciplinary steps can be taken:

- official warnings to cease offending
- detention
- exclusion from certain areas of school premises
- minor fixed-term exclusion
- major fixed-term exclusion
- permanent exclusion

Within the curriculum the school will raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in Life Orientation, tutor/class teacher time, assemblies and subject areas, as appropriate, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

Clifton will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Grade 6 & 7 Social Pledge to Clifton Prep School

- We do not accept any form of taunting at our school but support the principles of helpfulness and care.
- We will set a positive example for our school and in our community.
- We will respect the differences of others.
- We will include everyone in our daily activities.
- We will not tolerate bullying and will stand up against it.