

Imberhorne School Anti-bullying Guidance



Statement of Intent Imberhorne School supports the stance taken by Ed Balls the Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families:

“Every child should be able to learn in a school environment free from bullying of any kind and in which they feel safe and supported. There is no place for bullying in our schools and communities and each of us involved in education has a role in creating a culture in schools where bullying is not tolerated. No child deserves to suffer the pain and indignity that bullying can cause. We recognise the negative impact it has on the educational experiences and wider development of so many of our children and young people. Bullying has no place anywhere in the school community, and this applies both to the bullying of students and adults”.

(Extract taken from ‘Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in Schools’ DCSF 2007)

What do we perceive bullying to be? Bullying may be defined as:

‘Behaviour by an individual or group usually repeated over time, which **intentionally hurts** another individual or group either physically or emotionally.’

More specific examples of this would include;

- **Physical**: any unwanted physical contact (i.e. punching, kicking, hitting or any use of violence.)
- **Emotional**: excluding from groups, tormenting (i.e. hiding books, threatening and intimidating gestures), humiliating.
- **Racial**: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
- **Sexual**: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
- **Verbal**: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
- **Homophobic**: unpleasant comments, or gestures, attributed to the sexual orientation or perceived sexual orientation of an individual.
- **Religious/Cultural**: Unpleasant comments attributed to particular religious groups or other perceived minority groups.
- **Written**: unpleasant comments about someone or offensive use of text messages, message boards (e.g. MSN), emails or websites.

This is not meant to be a definitive list of examples of bullying behaviour. There are many more examples of behaviour which can cause distress and pain to others. It is also important to recognise that bullying is not a ‘static’ issue between the perpetrator and the victim.

Other students have been known to ‘opt in’ to bullying behaviour having seen the perceived status it has brought to the bully. Their victims may be shared or completely separate.

What makes people vulnerable to bullying?

Any child can be bullied but certain factors make bullying more likely:

- Lacking close friends in school.
- Being shy or introverted.
- An over-protective family environment.
- Being from a different racial, cultural, or gender group to the majority.
- Being different in some obvious respect e.g. wearing glasses, stammering, having a disability.
- Behaving inappropriately, intruding or being a 'nuisance'.
- Possessing expensive accessories e.g. mobile phones, computer games etc.
- Jealousy... where the victim is perceived to be very prominent due to a particular gift/talent (Such as sport or Music) or physical attraction.

(Extract taken from 'Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence').

How can we identify it?

There are many reasons why any of the examples, listed below, could happen. 'Torn clothes' can be attributed to over-exuberant football games at break time. By the same measure...a bullied child can use 'football games' as a cover to divert attention away from the bullying behavior which they are being subjected to.

In all cases, It is important that the child is given an opportunity to explain why the examples, listed below, have happened. The fear of disproportionate reactions, on the part of families, may make the child less likely to 'open-up' and discuss issues, such as bullying, which concern them. Paradoxically, children have been known to use 'being bullied' as an excuse for poor behaviour/performance/attendance on their part. In view of this, it is important that adults initially take a stance of believing the child making a disclosure, whilst at the same time attempting to establish factual evidence of who has been bullying the child, where this has happened and when this has taken place.

The following areas may indicate that a child is being bullied:

- being frightened of walking to or from school
- not wanting to go on the school/public bus
- change to their usual routine
- beg to be driven to school
- being unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- becoming anxious and withdrawn
- attempted or threatened suicide
- crying themselves to sleep at night/nightmares
- feeling ill in the mornings
- truanting
- beginning to do poorly at school
- coming home with clothes/books torn
- having possessions 'go missing'
- asking for money or stealing money
- unexplained cuts/bruises
- coming home hungry (money/lunch has been stolen)
- becoming withdrawn, lacking in confidence
- becoming aggressive and unreasonable
- bullying other children or siblings
- giving improbable excuses for any of the above

What should be done about it?

We would urge any victim of bullying to;

- Inform their family, who will contact the appropriate Head of Year, or inform a School representatives directly (Head of Year, form tutor, subject teacher, learning mentor etc.)
- Record instances of bullying as clearly as possible. A written account which includes dates, times, venues, witnesses and specific details is always extremely helpful to the member of staff investigating the problem.
- Ask a friend to support them in speaking to a member of staff if they lack confidence.
- Remain calm and trust that the school will do everything possible to support any victim of bullying and work continuously until the problem had been eradicated.
- Retain a sense of dignity and self-worth.
- Be assertive when faced with bullies, informing the person(s) responsible that you will be reporting what has happened.

What will the School do?

1. The Head of Year, or other appointed staff member, will investigate any accusation of bullying at the earliest opportunity. In almost all cases, this will be on the day the complaint is made.
2. Any allegations of bullying will be recorded by the Head of Year in the school's bullying register. The outcome of any investigation will also be recorded. The register will enable the school to monitor the number of reported cases of bullying and to evaluate the school's current procedures.
3. Following investigation and confirmation of bullying behavior, the normal school sanctions may be applied as appropriate. If applied, these will range from detentions to exclusion in accordance with the frequency and severity of the bullying behavior.
4. The results of any investigations will always be discussed with the person who has raised the concern and their family.
5. In most cases the results of any confirmed case of bullying will also be discussed with the family of the student(s) who enacted the bullying behavior.
6. We will seek the support and Guidance of outside agencies as appropriate.

Which strategies are employed by the school once bullying behaviour has been confirmed?

If possible, the students involved will be reconciled to the satisfaction of the victim without the use of sanctions. A sincere apology and reassurance of future good conduct can often repair a relationship more quickly. The examples below are usually employed as a first response to lower-level bullying:

- Mediation between the victim and the perpetrator(s) by adults.
- Mediation between the victim and the perpetrator(s) by peers.
- Restorative justice.
- Circle of Friends – Build relationships around vulnerable pupils.
- Befriending – Requesting the support of selected students to befriend vulnerable pupils. (This is also used to support all children who are new to the school.)
- Active listening.
- Working with victims to ensure that they feel protected, supported and empowered to address the possibility of future issues more confidently.

What are the Outcomes?

The most obvious outcome is that the bullying **must stop**.

1. If the initial strategies above do not prove successful or the extreme nature of the bullying behavior warrants more punitive measures. The Headteacher will not hesitate to apply sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion.
2. The victim may be offered the opportunity to speak to the School Counsellor if appropriate. This service may also be appropriate to the perpetrators of bullying behavior.
3. The Headteacher and Governing body will be regularly updated on the contents of the 'Bullying Register' on each site.
4. The victim and the bully/bullies will be informally monitored in the aftermath to ensure that there are no repercussions. This may involve confidential sharing of information between subject colleagues and other adult employees of the school to ensure a cloak of observation is built around the victim.

How can Bullying be Prevented?

We will ensure that positive interactions are always encouraged. This can be achieved in numerous ways such as:

- Adopting 'Circle Time' in 'Learning for Life' lessons to discuss anti-bullying strategies, supported by the form-tutor or Key Stage pastoral team.
- The curriculum is used to raise awareness of all forms of bullying, increase understanding for victims and build an anti-bullying ethos, and teach pupils how to constructively manage their relationships with others.
- Our assembly programme enables us to regularly promote the need for kindness, compassion, support, friendship and integrity.
- Our tutorial sessions promote a sense of security and develop relationships with members of staff who will support and mentor any student experiencing difficulties of any kind.
- We will carry out surveys to find out 'when and where' bullying takes place and then implement strategies for the prevention of bullying.
- We will continue to survey parents to ensure that their children are happy at school.
- We will discuss bullying issues with our form representatives and Student Council.
- We will regularly outline to students that nobody has the right to subject them to either physical or emotional cruelty and that they must not suffer this in silence.
- We will regularly monitor the bullying register to analyse specific patterns of behavior.
- We will provide supervised areas where vulnerable students can spend time without fear of being bullied.

- We will monitor the use of technology within school and address any concerns with the pupil(s) and parents as necessary.
- We will not permit pupils to use mobiles within the school grounds or on school organised trips.
- We will ensure security systems are in place to prevent images and information about pupils and staff being accessed improperly from outside school.
- We will ensure that staff are regularly trained to recognize and address bullying in accordance with this policy.

What if I feel that the situation has not been resolved?

There is a clear line of communication for parents or students to follow. We would urge parents not to 'leapfrog' different levels of responsibility and go straight to the Headteacher, as he would need a summary of the investigations made by earlier points of contact before he could proceed.

The points of contact are as follows:

The Head of Year

Mrs Croft (Year 7)
Mrs Solomon (Year 8)
Mrs Martin (Year 9)
Mr Swan (Year 10)
Mr Johnson (Year 11)
Ms Morison (Year 12)
Ms Brown (Year 13)

The Head of Key Stage

Ms Barr (KS3)
Mrs Jones (KS4)
Mrs Walker (KS5 – Sixth Form)

The Headteacher

Mr Jon Ford

The Chair of Governors

Mr Darvill – who can be contacted through the school