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Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Bridge School Malvern Behaviour Policy and the Anti-radicalisation Policy.

At the Bridge we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a supportive and secure atmosphere.

Bullying of any kind is therefore unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

We are a TELLING school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

Objectives of this Policy

The Bridge follows the anti-discrimination law. This means staff must act to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the school.

- Bullying will not be tolerated.
- All governors, staff, volunteers, pupils and parents/carers should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All governors, staff and volunteers should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a school we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is when a person deliberately tries to exert power over another person, resulting in them being physically or emotionally hurt, intimidated or distressed. Usually, it is a repeated pattern of behaviour rather than an isolated incident.

It is also a form of discrimination where people are treated differently because of a perceived difference or prejudice. These perceived differences can include race, religion, educational achievement, height, weight, gender, sexuality, accent, appearance, socio-economic background, or name.

Some forms of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. These include:

- violence or assault
- theft
- repeated harassment or intimidation, eg name calling, threats and abusive phone calls, emails, messages or talk via gaming sites, social media sites or text messages
- hate crimes

Call 999 if you or someone else is in immediate danger.

Bullying differs from a falling out amongst friends. Of course this is sad, but differs from bullying because bullying is usually sustained, part of a pattern, and is deliberately designed to hurt and humiliate the victim. It is not a one off argument or fight.

Types of bullying include:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical – unkind or rude gestures; assault, 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 focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, making threats or noises
- Cyber – misuse of any technology such as the internet, mobile phones, social networking sites to hurt, intimidate or abuse
- Inappropriate or confusing banter (see below)

It should be noted that the Bridge has the statutory power to discipline pupils for any misbehaviour, including bullying, during a school-organised or school-related activity. This includes misbehaviour in proximity to the Bridge site and during the journey to or from school. Additionally, it can punish misbehaviour, including bullying, in other circumstances if it has repercussions for the orderly running of the school, poses a threat to another pupil or member of the public or could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

Banter

Banter at BSM is discouraged for the following reasons:

1. Many children and young people with SEN (eg on the ASC spectrum, FAS, PTSD, anxiety disorders, global learning delay etc) have experienced bullying prior to coming to the Bridge. For many it will have been a traumatic experience and they may carry the lasting impact of trauma with them.

2. Children and young people with SEN may interpret social interaction literally and struggle to infer meaning from context or tone.
3. Children and young people with SEN may not understand the rules or know how to respond to banter. Many will find this confusing and anxiety provoking,
4. Banter is not to be taken literally, may not be appropriate to repeat in different settings, may involve exaggeration. All of this is difficult for children and young people with SEN to interpret or understand.
5. Many very anxious children and young people will mask their pain if they are the target of banter. Some will dwell on hurtful experiences for weeks or months. The emotional harm they experience from banter is hidden.
6. Banter between staff can set a negative example for students and also be misinterpreted by other members of staff which could lead to an unhealthy and unsafe work environment and/or to disciplinarys.

Banter can often be used to mask hate speech and bullying. All offensive, threatening, violent and abusive language and behaviour is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at the Bridge. This includes any negative language or behaviour in relation to / referring to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation.

It is important to remember that:

- If someone uses a certain language to refer to themselves it doesn't necessarily mean it's acceptable for another person to use it.
- If one person thinks something is banter or a joke doesn't mean other people will.
- People won't always feel confident to speak up if they are offended by something. They might even go along with it so as not to draw attention to themselves.
- Third parties might be offended, even if they're not part of the conversation.

It isn't banter if:

- You would be upset if someone said it to you.
- It is hurtful.
- You are not friends or there is a power imbalance.
- You are asked to stop.
- The target isn't laughing.
- The focus is on someone's insecurities.

Banter can sometimes be claimed to justify harmful behaviour. However, it is important not to focus on whether the perpetrator of the banter meant to cause harm. A joke may be thrown at someone without negative intent but if this infliction sticks with the person then it is damaging to that person.

The emphasis must always be on respectful, professional and kind behaviour. Banter, like poor health and safety practice, is common in many workplaces. However, the standard of joking and playful interaction at BSM, like health and safety, must be set much higher. This will help to protect children and young people at the Bridge and help to achieve the Bridge [Mission Statement Core Values](#)

The nature of banter, how it can be used and where it is inappropriate or crosses invisible boundaries and how to deal with it, may be taught to pupils in preparation for the workplace as a specific piece of work and in a safe and appropriate manner.

Reference: *The Anti-bullying Alliance*:

<https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/what-bullying>

Why it is Important to Respond to Bullying

Bullying hurts and no one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying others need to learn different ways of behaving. Schools, and every member of the school community, have a duty to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Signs and Symptoms

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

- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- changes their usual routine
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- level/quality of schoolwork and engagement deteriorates.
- 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 unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes to school craving food
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received
- bed wetting

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

What to do if you are being bullied or suspect a pupil is being bullied

Pupils

If you are being bullied

- Talk to an adult or someone in school you trust.
- You will be taken seriously, and what you say will be passed to the Headteacher.
- The bullying will be investigated, and appropriate action will be taken.

If you're reporting cyberbullying, keep a record of the date and time of the calls, emails or texts - don't delete any messages you receive. Screenshot messages if necessary.

If you see someone being bullied at school

- If you feel that the victim is in immediate danger, and it is safe to do so, step in and take the victim to a manager and describe what you have seen.
- If you are in any doubt concerning your own safety, find any adult and ask for their assistance
- If the victim is not in immediate danger, report the incident to a manager.

Parents

- If you suspect your child is being bullied (see 'Signs and Symptoms' above) talk to them to gather as much detail as possible.
- Contact the Bridge and talk to a member of the Pastoral team.
- Do not let your child talk you out of contacting the school.
- If the bullying is taking place on the journey to or from school, or using any form of technology, please let the Bridge know.
- In some cases it may be appropriate to refer the bullying which is taking place outside school to the Police. However, the Bridge will always attempt to resolve bullying issues beyond the school, and staff will cooperate fully with any Police investigation.

Staff

- Any member of staff who receives a complaint will listen to the parent and / or pupil(s) and will take the matter seriously. They will fill in an incident form and pass it to the Safeguarding Officer/Headteacher.
- The parent / pupil should be reassured that they have acted correctly in reporting the bullying.
- The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the bullying stopped quickly.
- The Safeguarding Officer/Headteacher will, if appropriate, listen to all people involved in order, as far as is reasonably possible, to reach the true picture.
- The Safeguarding Officer/Headteacher will generally be responsible for investigating the incident(s) as fully as possible, although other staff may be involved if appropriate.
- Action will be taken as outlined in the school's Behaviour Policy, including a range of appropriate sanctions which may include the involvement of external agencies, an apology or exclusion.
- If appropriate the Police will be involved.
- If all strategies have been tried and failed, then permanent exclusion will be unavoidable.

- Work will be commenced to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour.
- Any bullying incident will be dealt with on an individual basis, and the Bridge reserves the right to respond in different ways to different circumstances, while ensuring that consistency is preserved as appropriate.
- Data on bullying will be recorded and monitored carefully by the Headteacher. Patterns and / or trends will be evaluated regularly, measured and action taken as appropriate.

Follow-up actions

The victim

- The victim should be offered advice on how to deal with the incident or any possible subsequent incidents.
- Staff should follow-up later to check on progress.

The bully

- After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, and any sanctions imposed, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.
- If possible, and appropriate, the pupils will be reconciled using mediation.

Prevention

- The Bridge has a zero tolerance to bullying
- Pupils will undertake a course about bullying as part of the Bridge Social Skills Programme.
- Positive behaviour is encouraged at all times as an integral part of promoting a healthy school.
- The importance of Respecting others, and respecting other people's differences is communicated throughout all aspects of school life: RSHE curriculum, GMB, Social Skills and games
- Any incidents of bullying are taken seriously, as gross misconduct, and are recorded on Bromcom.
- Conflict resolution is undertaken with support of staff.

Care and Respect

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a supportive and secure atmosphere. The expectations we have of all pupils, staff and volunteers at the Bridge, with regards to behaviour, are built on:

Respecting oneself, respecting others, respecting the environment.

Ways in which pupils can show care and respect:

- Please be kind to others and make new members of the Bridge feel welcome.
- Please respect each other's property.
- Please be honest and open about any incident of anti-social behaviour you have witnessed or experienced e.g. bullying, vandalism, smoking or drugs.
- If you are concerned please talk about it to someone you trust or write down what happened and give the account to someone you trust. You will be listened to and action will be taken immediately.
- In general: care for the environment – consider the needs and safety of others and yourself.