

# Hill House School Policy

## Anti-Bullying Procedures

*Hill House School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff to share this commitment. It is our aim that all students fulfil their potential.*

### Introduction

The procedures set out in this document are to be read in conjunction with the Hill House policy on Anti-bullying.

### Introduction to Prevention and Managing Bullying

Bullying can be a complex management problem in residential care homes where a range of children and young people with different problems are accommodated and group living dynamics can be difficult to foresee prior to admission. Other young people from outside the home may also be involved, and there may be allegations of bullying by teachers, or by staff working in the residential home itself. All reports and situations that arise will need to be looked into thoroughly and managed according to the concerns raised.

Often, Looked after Children by virtue of their presenting behaviours, are more at risk of being bullied and present with low self-esteem or value, this has been noted to inadvertently invite bullying. One of the main challenges for young people and staff can be supporting young people to develop the resilience to work effectively in order to manage bullying and report it when it happens so that staff can support them.

Bullying can have a life-long negative impact. It makes it difficult for children to learn and can have a lasting detrimental effect on their life chances. Young people who have been bullied can become anxious and withdrawn, depressed or aggressive. Some turn to substance misuse as a way of dealing with the emotional impact of bullying. At worst, bullying has been a factor in suicide.

### Principles

Bullying badly affects its victims and can seriously disrupt their lives.

All young people have an absolute right to be cared for and educated in a safe and secure environment and to be protected from others who may wish to harm, degrade or abuse them.

All young people have a responsibility to modify their behaviour so they do not infringe the right of others to be safe and secure.

There is no justification whatsoever for bullying behaviour and it should not be tolerated in any form, including name-calling. Differences of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and ability are absolutely repudiated as reasons for bullying.

Bullying behaviour is a problem for both the bully and the victim and should be addressed in pro-active and constructive ways, which provide opportunities for change, growth and development for the bully and victim alike.

It is wrong to deal with bullies in an oppressive (bullying) way as this merely reinforces the belief that "might is right".

The effective management of bullying is an adult responsibility. Best outcomes are achieved if carers, parents, education staff and placing social workers all work together to develop strategies to keep victims safe and deter bullying behaviour.

Information about policies and procedures in relation to bullying should be readily available in 'user friendly' form to young people and their parents / carers.

### **Signs of Bullying and Staff Awareness**

The term 'bullying' is commonly associated with acts of violence, but non-physical bullying is experienced by most pupils at some period. All staff must be alert to the signs of bullying. These may include:

- Truancy / school refusal / poor performance
- Changing route to school every day
- Bed wetting / soiling / nightmares / sleep problems
- Anxiety attacks; fear of going out; being left alone
- "Losing" property / having clothing or stuff destroyed
- Arriving home hungry (dinner money "taxed")
- Unexplained bruising / frequent "accidents"
- Poor peer relationships
- A tendency to be aggressive and bully others
- Unexplained / psychosomatic illnesses (stomach / headaches)
- Obsessive washing / stop eating (smelly/fat kids)
- Self-harming
- Children who are generally isolated and excluded
- Children who receive lots of negative attention (allegedly in fun)
- Unhappy, distressed and withdrawn children
- Substance misuse

- Carrying a weapon

### Countering Bullying

All young people need to be aware that staff / carers want to be informed of any incidents of concerns and that action will be taken when bullying is reported.

All staff / carers working with young people will be made aware of the issue of bullying and the need to apply the policy of 'zero tolerance' consistently when incidents of bullying are witnessed or reported. Staff / carers will reinforce the message to young people that bullying is unacceptable and will take positive action to prevent and control it.

The subject of bullying will be raised at both group and individual level. Young people will be given an opportunity to discuss the issue of bullying in group meetings (residential) and be invited to contribute ideas to how the 'zero tolerance' policy can be implemented. At the individual level young people who are felt to be at risk of bullying (or have suffered bullying in the past) will be offered additional support and guidance. Those young people who have bullied others will be given advice and support and provided with strategies to enable them to bring their unacceptable behaviour under control to prevent further incidents. Risk management plans will be completed and regularly reviewed for effectiveness on both victims and perpetrators of bullying.

It is acknowledged that there are particular times in the day when young people may be more vulnerable to bullying – breakfast, travelling to school, at the end of the school day and bedtime. Arrangements will be made to ensure that at such times adequate supervision is available to reduce the risk of bullying incidents. Risk assessments on mobile phones should outline the potential cyberbullying risks for each individual and all young people should be monitored closely following texts, messages which may have upset them. Young people should also be monitored closely when using the computer with regular sessions and home meetings outlining what forms bullying may take and how to address and report this.

Also there are locations about the setting in which incidents of bullying are more likely to occur (leisure areas, games rooms, shower rooms, bathing areas) and again arrangements will be made to ensure that they are properly supervised and young people's access to them is appropriately managed.

Young people will be encouraged to talk to staff / carers about incidents of bullying which they experience or of which they may be aware. In these situations staff / carers will respond positively, take the expression of concern seriously and ensure the matter is thoroughly investigated.

Others who believe young people are being bullied or are bullying others will be encouraged to talk to staff / carers about these concerns. Again the expression of concern will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

All of these proactive strategies operate within an ethos founded on equality, fairness and respect for others. In order to help young people learn and develop appropriate responses to others, all staff / carers at all times will treat each other (and young people, parents/carers and other professionals) with courtesy and respect and will model appropriate and acceptable behaviour.

Staff and young people living in the home should 'sign up' to an Anti-Bullying contract; if this is done at the point of admission, it gives a strong message about the culture and ethos of the home and makes everyone aware that bullying will not be ignored or tolerated.

It is particularly important that policies and strategies are developed and implemented to deal with bullying as it affects the children in residential care. It is also important that the policy on countering bullying is reviewed frequently with Staff and children and includes information on bullying by Staff and bullying that may occur elsewhere in the home and includes different aspects of bullying.

Training should be provided for staff in awareness of, and effective strategies to counter, bullying.

Many of these children have already experienced emotional abuse which has led to them being Looked After. Many also have psychological, emotional or behavioural problems related to the circumstances surrounding their admission to the home.

Bullying must be effectively addressed in order to achieve this aim, therefore the policy should be available and known to Staff and children, and should be implemented, monitored and revised where necessary

### **Pro-Active Prevention and Management of Bullying**

The subject of bullying should be an open one and there should be regular discussion held around the topic so young people are aware that staff / carers understand the nature of the problem. As such:

- Bullying should be discussed at both young people's meetings and staff meetings (residential)
- Discussions about bullying should be held informally over dinner, watching TV, during activities etc.
- Placement plan sessions and risk management plans should take place / be completed with those where there are concerns around bullying behaviour or being bullied
- Young People should be told that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated and will be managed in a timely manner
- Although it will be necessary to involve the police in some serious cases, it may be valuable to involve the police/PCSOs in other aspects of your anti-bullying work e.g. explaining to young people how bullying behaviour may constitute crime.

There should be posters up on the wall in the home (residential) detailing the steps that are taken by the home when an incident of bullying is either witnessed or disclosed, which may include:

- Opportunity to complain offered
- Meeting with the alleged victim to ascertain details of the behaviours
- Meeting with the alleged perpetrator of the bullying behaviour to raise concerns and discuss the homes zero-tolerance stance on bullying
- Increased supervision, where feasible, around the alleged bully and victim
- Involvement of Homes, Key-workers, Social Workers, Education staff, Parents (if applicable) and any significant others
- Potential consequences for the bully (separation plans, not earning rewards through the behaviour management system etc.)

Staff / carers should generally be observant around the home and report / record any concerns no matter how small they may seem.

Staff / carers should look for patterns in the child's behaviour to see if there is any indication of bullying / being bullied.

The residential homes staff should use young people's questionnaires to find out about bullying if it is not witnessed or disclosed.

All young people should have access to an independent visitor with whom they can share any concerns.

In children's homes, there should be numbers available on the walls in the phone area / dining room / games room should young people wish to share bullying experiences externally (i.e. Childline, Kidscape etc.)

Develop and share information packs with the young people, so they also become aware of the types of bullying behaviours and the impacts of bullying on both the bully and the victim alike.

The Manager should consider whether there are any specific training needs for the home in question such as cyberbullying.

### **Incident Management**

The organisation will take firm and decisive action to deal with any incident of bullying, which is witnessed by or reported to any member of staff / carer.

Bullying behaviour may involve criminal offences such as assault, theft, criminal damage, harassment offences, the misuse of communication offences, hate crime offences or sexual offences. Where bullying is particularly serious or persistent, it may be necessary, in order to protect the victim or get the bully to change their behaviour, to involve the police in dealing with offences that have been committed. The Manager/on call should make the decision as to whether to involve the police.

### Post Incident Responses - For the Victim

Staff / carers will offer a positive, sympathetic and supportive response to young people who are the victims of bullying. The exact nature of the response will vary according to the particular needs of the young person and may include:

- Immediate action to stop the incident and secure the young person's safety
- Talk to the young person, get the full story, listen to what's actually being said and empathise with how the behaviour has made them feel
- Reassure the young person they were right to tell you
- Explain to the young person the steps that will now be taken
- Reassurance that the victim is not responsible for the bully's behaviour (i.e. no justification for bullying)
- Strategies to prevent further incidents
- Support young people to learn and practice the skills of assertiveness so they can become more able to resist negative peer pressure.
- Practice assertiveness
- Help the Young Person with simple responses to the most frequent taunts, support them with strategies to help them resolve conflicts before relationships are damaged or ill feelings escalate.
- Inform all staff / other carer / supervising social worker and implement extra supervision / monitoring (where applicable)
- Ensure all information is recorded onto a bullying form, and placement plan if applicable
- Informing parents / social workers / teachers / significant others
- Adult mediation between the victim and the bully (providing this does not increase the victim's vulnerability)
- Arrangements to review progress
- Cyberbullying can be traced and tracked to find proof of the bullying, so it becomes less of a question about one person's word over another.

### Post Incident Responses For the Bullying child

Staff / carers take bullying behaviour very seriously and will adopt a supportive, pragmatic, problem solving approach to enable bullies to behave in a more acceptable way. The use of punishment is not helpful in managing this problem, but the positive use of consequences can be useful in demonstrating to bullies that their behaviour is unacceptable and in promoting change.

Be aware that many people who bully others have been victims at some point themselves and may still be one. These cases might be more complex and 'bully victims' may need more specialist help.

Staff / carers will respond to incidents of bullying in a proportionate way – the more serious cause for concern the more serious the response. When the application of consequences felt to be necessary they will be applied consistently and fairly.

In managing incidents of bullying the following options will be considered:

- Immediate action to stop an incident of bullying in progress
- Make it clear that it is the behaviour that is 'bad' and not the child

Talk to the young person, get the full story, listen to what's actually being said and empathise with the young person.

Reinforce the message that their behaviour is not acceptable; don't get into a discussion about the justifications for the behaviour. Adopt the approach that there is no justification for bullying.

Explain that bullying takes many forms, and isn't just physical aggression

- Time out
- Inform all staff / carers and implement extra supervision / monitoring (where applicable)
- The use of consequences
- Informing parents / (supervising) social workers / teachers / significant others
- Make an effort to understand the reasons for the bullying behaviour (The 3 Domains, Behaviour meets Need, Emotional Funnel)
- Counselling / instruction in alternative ways of behaving
- Adult mediation with the victim (providing it does not increase victim vulnerability)
- Give the perpetrator other ways to deal with the need to bully – redirect anger in a positive way (sports, boxing, punch bag\*, anger management counselling etc.)
- Rewards / positive reinforcement for young people to promote change and bring unacceptable behaviour under control (Confrontation / Collaboration)
- Ensure all information is reported & recorded onto a bullying form, and placement plan if applicable
- Placement plan sessions to reinforce inappropriateness of bullying behaviours take place
- Be prepared to implement separation plans if bullying is / becomes serious
- Review of viability of placement (for seriously violent young people)

\* Always provide boxing lessons on how to use a punch bag and appropriate equipment (i.e. gloves) to minimise damage or injury to wrists, fists and knuckles.

### **Procedure Guidance**

Recording of bullying incidents is managed by the following steps:

- When a bullying incident occurs the incident must be recorded on a bullying incident form (YP – Bullying Incident Form) outlining what has happened and any follow up action required. By this we mean risk management strategies reviewed and updated, planned individual work sessions around bullying, bullying competitions, education around bullying.

- Once the manager has signed this off the bullying incident form will be emailed to the social worker.
- The staff should then make a copy of it, filing the original in the child's case file and giving the photocopy along with copies of any follow up evidence to the manager for their central file.
- The bullying incident will be cross referenced from the Daily Report to the bullying incident form. Staff do not need to repeat the bullying incident in the Daily Report or an Information Record Sheet. The incident should only be recorded once on the form and signposted/cross referenced.
- The manager is responsible for their central file. They should place the copy along with the evidence in the Central Bullying File. All records relating to the Bullying Central File can be found listed as (OPS – Central Files – Bullying...). The central bullying file has an index and it is split into 12 monthly dividers. The incident form should be entered into the relevant month and entered onto the Bullying Log Sheet. Both initials of the perpetrator and victim should be recorded in the relevant date on the log sheet. As an example if JD bullied AF on the 12th and it was the first incident that month; the following should be seen on the log sheet - No 1 JD on AF in box number 12.
- The bullying record in the central file should tell the story from start to finish and all follow up work evidence should be behind the form in chronological order and regularly kept up to date until it is closed off.

**PLEASE ALSO REFER TO THE HILL HOUSE GUIDANCE ON PEER ON PEER ABUSE AND CHILD ON CHILD SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT**

### **Monitoring and Review**

- This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Principal.

Principal of Hill House;  
 Kate Landells  
 Hill House School, Boldre, Lymington, Hants. SO41 8NE  
 Tel: 01590 672147  
 Email: [kate.landells@cambiangroup.com](mailto:kate.landells@cambiangroup.com)

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