

## **ANTI BULLYING POLICY**

The school seeks to engender good relationships between pupils and will treat allegations of bullying seriously. All staff, pupils and parents should be aware of the negative effects that bullying can have on individuals and the school in general, and should work towards ensuring that pupils can work and socialise in an environment without fear. Students are encouraged to treat others with respect and abide by the expectations laid out in the school's behaviour policy.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable; it will not be tolerated at Aldenham and the school's anti bullying policy will be rigorously enforced. The school will also take note of bullying perpetrated outside school, which spills over into school and will do what is reasonably practicable to eliminate such bullying. The school will try to deal with cases of bullying through internal procedures which can involve significant disciplinary sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion.

In the event of harassment and/or threatening behaviour which is persistent, the school may pass information on to outside agencies to investigate whether or not a criminal offence has taken place. However, the school also understands that while some unpleasantness is clearly deliberate and aggressive, other incidents are known to be unintentional and the result of simply not thinking about the consequences. (ref. page 3, Safe To Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in Schools, DCSF 2007) In such situations, it may be more appropriate to support both victim and perpetrator through education and increased awareness rather than punishment.

### **Definition of Bullying**

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (<http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/>) applies the following three conditions to define incidences of harmful interpersonal behaviour as bullying behaviour.

Behaviour is bullying behaviour if:

- it is repetitive, wilful or persistent;
- it is intentionally harmful, carried out by an individual or group; and,
- there is an imbalance of power leaving the person who is bullied feeling defenceless.

At Aldenham we understand that bullying may take many forms: It takes place through means which can be verbal (e.g. name-calling), indirect (e.g. exclusion) and physical (e.g. hitting). We believe that every pupil has the right to pursue his/her educational career, free from adverse interference from others. Bullying usually prevents another individual from living at ease with other members of the school.

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils in the hope that each pupil can fulfil their potential, build self esteem and be uniquely valued by others.

## **Aims and Objectives of our Anti-Bullying Policy**

Our aims and objectives are:

- to demonstrate that the school takes bullying seriously and that it will not be tolerated
- To put in place measures to prevent all forms of bullying in school and on off-site activities;
- to encourage all staff and pupils to report incidents of bullying;
- to promote an environment where the school takes a collective responsibility to monitor and, as far as possible, eliminate bullying;
- to protect those who might be victims of bullying and to promote the safety and wellbeing of all pupils.

## **Examples of Bullying/Signs of Bullying**

### **Examples of bullying**

Bullying may take many forms, although sometimes occurring between two individuals in isolation, it quite often takes place in the presence of others. It takes place through means which can be verbal (e.g. name-calling, taunting, mocking and making offensive comments), indirect (e.g. taking/breaking belongings, producing offensive graffiti, gossiping, excluding people from groups in the knowledge that it will cause distress, spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours) and physical (e.g. kicking, hitting, pushing or physically intimidating someone).

Other forms of bullying include racial, religious and cultural bullying; homophobic, sexist, sexual or gender related bullying, bullying related to special educational needs and disability and cyberbullying (including inappropriate text messaging and emailing; sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet, posting hurtful descriptions or comments on social networking sites such as 'Facebook' or 'MSN'). See appendix for the **Aldenham anti cyber bullying policy**. We believe that every pupil has the right to pursue his/her educational career, free from adverse interference from others. Bullying usually prevents another individual from living at ease with other members of the school.

### **Signs of Bullying**

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour and staff, tutors and parent should be vigilant for this. Pupils may become shy or nervous, feign illness, take unusual absences, truant, show a change in work patterns or concentration or seek out the company of adults.

It is not bullying when:

- Two people have an occasional dispute;
- Senior pupils instruct younger pupils to carry out daily routines to ensure the smooth operation of the school as per their responsibilities.
- House or School Praes administer accepted sanctions fairly, openly and appropriately. Examples include tidying up, litter picking, writing lines. All such sanctions must be agreed with the relevant Housemaster beforehand and recorded in the House diary.

## **How can the school deal with incidents of bullying?**

### **Action by the School:**

Our initial concern is to prevent bullying rather than to punish the bullies. However bullying is a major offence and will be dealt with firmly.

In a case where bullying has occurred our action will be:

- To support the victim in any appropriate way
- To educate the bully, for the bully's own sake as well as for others
- To deter the bully. Any bullying offence will be recorded in writing centrally by the HSM/ Assistant Head (Pastoral)/Head of Prep School.
- To apply sanctions appropriate to the incident. These are likely to range from house detentions, to school detentions and suspension or expulsion for persistent offenders or very serious incidents of bullying.

Extreme or persistent bullying will be referred to the Headmaster or Head of Prep, who, if necessary, may suspend or even expel the offender.

### **Education**

It is not our intention to wait for bullying to happen before we act; we wish to pre-empt the problem. The following steps are taken:

- The skills required for building relationships and living in communities features as a central component of the Life Matters programme. Pupils learn how to recognise and manage their own emotions and respond to the emotional needs of others. They also learn how to build trust and resolve conflict.
- Pupils learn about appreciating others, the importance of altruism, disability awareness and sexual and racial tolerance through the Life Matters programme, RS lessons and school assemblies, amongst others.
- As part of their leadership and team building training, senior pupils learn to appreciate that they have a vital role to play in looking after the younger girls and boys.
- We have a system to select and train peer mentors who can be approached by their peers on any matter.
- The subject of bullying is a regular feature of whole school INSET training for staff. To further raise awareness, staff are encouraged to attend conferences and courses that include advice on the prevention of bullying and are invited to contribute to the anti bullying policy document.

## **Recording incidences of bullying**

In the Senior School, many incidents of unpleasantness may be dealt with by the teacher, on the spot and reported to appropriate HSM or Tutor. The Tutor should follow up reported incidents with the pupils involved and seek a resolution by education and discussion. The matter should be referred to HSMs by e-mail for their records. If necessary the Tutor will conduct interviews and ask pupils to provide written statements, including details of the circumstances, protagonists and witnesses, which will be referred to the HSM and kept on file. Serious or persistent incidents of bullying will be investigated by the HSM and reported to the Assistant Head (Pastoral) for disciplinary action as appropriate. Parents will be contacted and may be invited into school to discuss the matter further and may be involved in finding a solution to the problem. In extreme cases or habitual bullying, the Assistant Head (Pastoral) will refer the matter to the Headmaster who may ultimately permanently exclude the pupil.

In each case the Tutor/HSM will offer guidance, support and advice to both victim and perpetrator with the aim of eliminating further incidents. Additional support may be offered by the school Chaplain and the school Counsellor. Support may be given to the victim by reassuring him/her that they are not alone, building up self esteem, trying to analyse if there is something they do that causes them to be bullied, teaching them to be more assertive and resilient. Once a resolution has been reached, the Tutor and HSM will continue to monitor and review the situation.

In the Prep School, including the EYFS, all incidents of bullying are initially investigated by Form Teachers. Teachers are encouraged to make notes in class pastoral files. Serious or persistent incidents of bullying will be reported by the Heads of Key Stage and Deputy Head of Prep for disciplinary action as appropriate. Any proven incidents of bullying are recorded centrally by the Head of Prep who may also ultimately permanently exclude the pupil.

While the school will seek to resolve bullying incidents internally, in very severe cases the Headmaster or Head of Prep may choose to make a report to the police or to social services.

## **Boarders**

Both full and flexi boarders should feel safe and at ease in their boarding houses and should have free access to the HSM, matron or the member of staff on duty if they wish to raise concerns or report incidents of bullying. House tutors on duty should be an active presence in the House in the evenings and supervise and manage the behaviour of pupils to minimise any likelihood of unpleasantness.

House Praes and other pupils can also play an important role in monitoring behaviour and reporting concerns to the HSM. Boarders' access to the internet via the school network is restricted by the school's electronic filters, in order to safeguard pupils from potential harm via means of communication. All boarders are provided with school's IT handbook and agree to abide by the school acceptable use policy. Boarders must never be subjected to any type of "initiation ceremony" and should be able to report any instances of cyber bullying, abuse and suspicious or dangerous behaviour to their tutor or HSM in confidence.

## Advice to parents

- Watch out for distress or a change of behaviour or attitude in your son or daughter. For example, there may be a reluctance to return to school and its cause may be bullying. **Persistent bullying** can result in:
  - Depression
  - Low self-esteem
  - Shyness
  - Poor academic achievements
  - Isolation
  - Threatened or attempted suicide
- Take an active interest in your son's or daughter's social life. Discuss friendships and how free time is spent. Be aware of their use of social networking sites and give advice about the type of information it is appropriate to share.
- Encourage your son or daughter to report bullying, either of themselves or others. If you think your son or daughter or any pupil is being bullied, contact your HSM at once. Try to be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened, give dates, places and names of other pupils involved.
- Prep school pupils should be encouraged to talk to their Form Teachers.
- Further information on dealing with bullying may be obtained from websites such as <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/> or <http://www.digizen.org/>

## Advice to pupils

### **What should you do if you feel you are being bullied?**

If you are being bullied, you may feel scared, vulnerable and quite alone but you owe it to yourself to try and sort out the situation so that the bullying stops. **Remember, no-one deserves to be bullied.**

Bullying will exist as long as you remain silent. If you are being bullied, or you observe someone else being bullied, there are various things you can do:

- Talk to someone you trust and get them to help you take the right steps to stop the bullying. In the Senior School this may be your Housemaster, your tutor; a Prae, another adult in the community eg the Chaplain, the Assistant Head (Pastoral), the Counsellor, a friend, a peer mentor, your parents.
- In the Prep School and EYFS, pupils can talk to their Form Teacher, Head of Key Stage, Deputy Head and Head of Prep. The Counsellor is also available to pupils in the Prep School.
- Write down the information, put it in an envelope and post it in the anti bullying box outside the medical centre or put it under the Assistant Head (Pastoral)'s office door.
- Send an e-mail to your HSM or the Assistant Head (Pastoral) [hwilson@aldenham.com](mailto:hwilson@aldenham.com). You can also forward inappropriate or unpleasant e-mails that you have received to this address. In the Prep School pupils may wish to send an email to the Head of Prep [vjgocher@aldenham.com](mailto:vjgocher@aldenham.com) or speak to the Head of Foundation Stage, Kate Watts.
- try to stay calm and look as confident as you can

- be firm and clear — look them in the eye and tell them to stop
- get away from the situation as quickly as possible
- tell an adult what has happened straight away or, if you do not feel comfortable telling an adult, tell another pupil.

**If you have been bullied:**

- tell a teacher or another adult in your school (Tutor, HSM or someone you can talk to)
- tell another pupil you trust (in the senior school this may be a House/School Prae. In the Prep School this may either be a House Captain or Vice-Captain)
- tell your family
- if you are scared to tell a teacher or an adult on your own, ask a friend to go with you
- keep on speaking until someone listens and does something to stop the bullying
- don't blame yourself for what has happened.

**Remember:**

- Do not be intimidated by a bully saying it will be worse for you if you report bullying.
- When someone else is being bullied or is in distress, take action. Watching and doing nothing may suggest support for the bully.
- Do not tolerate a bully in your circle of friends.
- Always treat others as you would like to be treated yourself. Remember that calling someone names or incessant teasing is in fact bullying. Do not become a bully yourself.

**If you witness another pupil being bullied**

- If you feel confident enough, tell pupils to stop what is going on and check the wellbeing of the victim.
- Try to remember the details of the event e.g. location, time, pupils involved, witnesses.
- Tell a teacher or your Tutor/HSM immediately. If no teacher is available, tell the Common Room Secretary or the School Secretary in the School Office. If no teachers are available in the prep, pupils should tell the secretary in the School Office.
- Write a statement of your observations while they are fresh in your mind.

**When you are talking to an adult about bullying be clear about:**

- what has happened to you
- how often it has happened
- who was involved
- who saw what was happening
- where it happened
- what you have done about it already.

**What can you do if you think you are a bully?**

If you feel you are bullying other pupils you should try to do something about it. There are many reasons why an individual might bully others. This theme is explored in the Kidscape document found at <http://kidscape.org.uk/assets/downloads/kschildrenwhobully.pdf>

Kidscape suggest people may be bullies because they:

- Are taking out their unhappiness on others
- Enjoy a sense of power achieved by hurting other's feelings
- Were bullied in the past and are getting their own back
- Are dealing with difficult circumstances which may add pressure to their lives and their relationships

### **Admit, Atone, Apologise**

Bullies may not be aware of the hurt of suffering that they are causing others. To tackle bullies it is important that the bully recognises the inappropriateness of his/ her actions and accepts that his/ her behaviour has been hurtful or unkind. He/ she should be prepared to make a verbal or written apology to the victim and seek to amend behaviour in future.

- Kidscape suggest some strategies to avoid hurting others:
- Think before you act or speak – a delay of even 10 seconds can help you to temper your behaviour
- Ask yourself if you would like to be treated in the way you are treating others
- Tell yourself that you do not need to be a bully – you can be nice
- Apologise if you bully someone. If you can't bring yourself to say sorry at first, then write a note
- Give yourself time – it takes a while to break the habits of a lifetime
- If the bullying is related to your habits or activities try to change these
- If someone in your life is making you miserable and causing you to act like a bully, then make a decision to tackle the problem by talking to someone or seeking help from a teacher or trusted adult.

**AMW 25/01/11 To be reviewed annually**

**Updated 12/3/12 , July 2012, July 2013, Reviewed February 2014, updated August 2015**