

# ANTI-BULLYING

## The School's Statement of Intent

The aim of the staff at Meadows School is to create an environment where young people can be supported in addressing their educational, emotional, spiritual and social needs and strive towards their full potential. All forms of bullying interfere with achieving this aim. Therefore, such behaviour will not be ignored. The staff team will be proactive in their use of the strategies and systems in place to address bullying at all levels while providing opportunities for change for those who are bullying and those who are bullied.

## Definition of Bullying

Bullying happens when one person exerts some form of power, in a negative and/or oppressive way, over another person for their own popularity, status or material gain. Their gain is at another person's expense and sense of well being. Bullying is an abuse of power, which can manifest in any or all of the following.

- Direct or indirect use of threats or actual physical violence.
- Direct or indirect insults and/or offensive remarks about a person or their family.
- Direct or indirect insults and/or offensive remarks based on difference, for example, race, gender, disability or sexuality.
- Direct or indirect ridicule, sarcasm and put-downs.
- The systematic ignoring or exclusion of someone from everyday events, activities and discussion.
- The deliberate destruction of another person's property.
- Group manipulation of others.

This list is for guidance and staff need to use their professional judgement to decide if observed or reported behaviour constitutes bullying and act accordingly.

Young people joining the school should be introduced to Meadows Code of Conduct to ensure that an understanding of expected and acceptable behaviours is gained.

The instigator of bullying is often someone who believes the only way to be/feel powerful is to make someone else less powerful. Those who bully often hold deep-down feelings of inadequacy and insecurity. Some may have been victimised themselves and have developed bullying behaviours as a means of survival or as a defence.

The unacceptability of bullying behaviours must be identified and acknowledged by staff as well as those being directly bullied. Sometimes the victims do not complain of feeling physically and/or emotionally hurt. This may happen for a number of reasons which can include fear, internalised oppression or a sense that any form of attention however negative or abusive is better than no attention at all.

Therefore the measure of whether a person's behaviour is bullying in nature is determined by either the person being bullied and/or by others who can give an objective and honest view of the situation. An explanation, for example, that "it was only a joke" will not be acceptable as justification for bullying behaviour.

From research findings it is a common theme that victims of bullying are more interested in the bullying being stopped than any sanction the person bullying may receive. This provides greater opportunities for the staff to work constructively with the perpetrator through the use of positive reinforcement for reducing/stopping bullying behaviour. Although this approach is proved to be more productive than sanctioning negative behaviour they are not mutually exclusive. Each situation needs to be assessed as to the severity of the bullying behaviour and treated accordingly.

It is important to note that not all forms of bullying can be managed within the school. The nature of some bullying behaviours may constitute a child protection referral and/or police involvement (see Meadows Child Protection Policy and Barnardo's Safeguarding and Protecting Children documentation).

It is also important to recognise that bullying behaviours are not exclusive to young people. It is therefore imperative that as a staff team we remain vigilant and address any indication of bullying by colleagues through the Harassment Policy or the Whistle Blowing Policy.

Young people joining the school should be made aware of the complaints procedures and be provided with information on how to access independent advice and support ( See Young Persons handbook, Unit/School notice boards).

## **Procedure**

Meadows School utilises a levels structure for managing various issues within the school (see Levels System Policy). Staff should strive to deal with incidents of bullying at the lowest level appropriate to the severity of the incident. It will often be the case that incidents can be managed without evoking the levels system.

On observing or having reported to them a bullying incident the member/s of staff should assess the severity of the incident, with colleagues where possible, and decide on the best response. For example, a minor incident may be best managed by facilitating a meeting between the parties involved, working through the incident, agreeing an action plan and how this plan is to be monitored. At the other extreme it may be necessary to involve the senior management team who, depending on the nature of the incident, may evoke a child protection inquiry or have course to exclude. If in doubt consult with your line manager or a member of the Senior Management Team.

## **Recording**

This is an extremely important element in effectively managing bullying behaviour. All staff hold a responsibility to ensuring that recording systems are maintained. This means that monitoring systems can effectively work to protect victims of bullying and persistent bullying behaviour can be highlighted and managed.

The young people at the school can report bullying in any way that suits them. It is the staff's responsibility to ensure that each incident is constructively dealt with and that the appropriate recording takes place.

All incidents of bullying should be recorded on a Bullying Record. These should be readily available within each classroom/unit and the Administration Block. Where possible the young people involved should be part of this process and have their views recorded. If the young people involved refuse to take part then this should be recorded with the reasons why.

Where an Action Plan is agreed it is necessary to indicate how this will be monitored and by whom with a date set to evaluate the outcome.

All completed Bullying Records are to be held by Department Heads i.e. Key Stage Co-ordinators and Team Managers. It is their role to ensure that all incidents are being appropriately managed at the correct level while overseeing any Action Plans and monitoring outcomes. Any concerns as a result of this should be shared with a member of the Senior Management Team. Bullying Records that have been resolved are placed in the individual's main file. Department Heads are also responsible for carrying out a risk assessment for their department around areas that provide opportunities for bullying behaviour.

A record of each incident will be entered in the bound and numbered Central Bullying Record Book within 24 hours. This is kept in the Staff room at the school.

### **Format for Central Bullying Record Book**

Date and Time

Name of Victim/s

Name of Perpetrator/s

Name of Staff Member Reporting

Incident Sheet No (where applicable)

Nature of bullying

Outcome

The Central Record Book will be monitored daily by the On-Call and once a week by the Principal.

It should be recognised that “bully” and “victim” are labels that describe behaviour and not the whole person. Bully and victim behaviour is learned and so can be unlearned.

Monitoring will highlight individuals who are persistently bullying and being bullied. This will allow the staff team to incorporate work that will help individuals to change behaviours that are negative for them.

This may be done in several ways, for example, Individual education/care plans, key-working, groupwork.

Meadows School has developed a culture that celebrates success and established systems and practices which encourage, acknowledge and reward positive, supportive and friendly behaviour.

These include:

- Direct verbal acknowledgement and praise
- Special mentions which are celebrated in Assemblies
- Inclusion in school reports, review reports, letters to family/carers
- Certificates for achieved targets, celebrated in Assemblies.
- Prize Giving
- Verbal acknowledgement and praise at parent evenings

Having the courage to change bullying or victim behaviours that may have been learned out of need must be acknowledged and celebrated in the same ways.

The two main resources required to effectively manage bullying behaviour is time and ourselves.

The processes outlined above will require a commitment to prioritising time to ensure systems are seen through to a constructive conclusion, and above all staff must lead by example and behave in a manner that promotes equality and respect for others, openness and honesty while showing a will to challenge behaviour that undermines these values.

The better we get at effectively managing bullying and victim behaviours the more confident the young people will become in using us and the systems in place to combat bullying.

## **MEADOWS SCHOOL-BULLYING RECORD**

**Date/Time**

**Place**

**Name of Victim/s**

**Name of Perpetrator/s**

**Name of staff**

**Nature of Bullying**

**Action Taken**

**Action Plan Agreed**

**Signatures of participants**

**Outcome**