



## OAK PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL

### **BULLYING (including cyber-bullying) and HARASSMENT POLICY and PROCEDURES**

Not required to be approved by School Council.

Tabled at School Council June 2015

#### **RATIONALE**

Oak Park Primary School is committed to providing a safe and caring environment which promotes personal growth and positive self esteem for all. The school **does not** tolerate bullying in any form.

Safe schools:

1. Are free from violence
2. Are nurturing, caring and respectful of everyone
3. Are physically and psychologically healthy
4. Promote sensible risk taking
5. Enhance the self esteem of all

**The Core Values of Oak Park Primary School are:**

**Respect,**

**Responsibility,**

**Resilience**

#### **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

At Oak Park Primary School, we believe bullying is:

Typically, but not necessarily, *repeated* 'attacks', verbal, psychological or physical, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group of persons. Often, the aim of the bully is to gain attention, or a feeling of strength and may stem from a lack of social skills and/or self esteem.

Bullying is where there is an imbalance of strength, physical or psychological, and where there is intent to hurt. It can take the form of physical attacks and threats, name calling, exclusion, rejection and any number of other behaviours which undermine the independence and self esteem of a child.

Bullying in its truest form is comprised of a series of repeatedly intentionally cruel incidents, involving the same children, in the same bully and victim roles. This, however, does not mean that in order for bullying to occur there must be repeat offences. Bullying can consist of a

single interaction. Bullying behaviour may also be defined as a criminal act if the bully is twelve years of age or older.

Bullying is an act of aggression causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort to another:

- It can take a number of forms: physical, verbal, gesture, extortion and exclusion
- It is an abuse of power
- It can be planned and organised or it may be on impulse
- Individuals or groups may be involved.

#### *What Bullying is Not*

- Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying:

#### *Mutual Conflict*

- In mutual conflict situations, there is an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for 'retaliation' in a one-sided way.

#### *Social Rejection or Dislike*

- Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
- Single-episode acts of nastiness or meanness, or random acts of aggression or intimidation
- Single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied.
- Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

**Cyber-bullying** consists of covert, psychological bullying, conveyed through the electronic mediums such as mobile phones, web-logs and web-sites, on-line chat rooms, 'MUD' rooms (multi-user domains where individuals take on different characters) and Xangas (on-line personal profiles where some adolescents create lists of people they do not like). It is verbal (over the telephone or mobile phone), or written (flaming, threats, racial, sexual or homophobic harassment) using the various mediums available.

**Harassment** is any verbal, physical or sexual conduct (including gestures) which is uninvited, unwelcome or offensive to a person.

Our school will actively promote a positive and welcoming personal environment for all members of the school community. When people are bullied or harassed some effects might be anger, embarrassment, fear and humiliation, loss of self-confidence and reduced function and potential. Bullying and harassment will be addressed, individual differences will be respected and students and staff will be enabled and supported in their pursuit of learning and teaching.

Some examples of bullying include:

- Any form of physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting on others
- Interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it
- Using offensive names, teasing or spreading rumours about others or their families
- Using put downs, belittling others' abilities and achievements
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others
- Making degrading comments about another's culture, religious or social background
- Hurtfully excluding others from a group
- Making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse
- Ridiculing another's appearance
- Forcing others to act against their will.

### **What are the effects of Bullying and Harassment?**

- poor health - anxiety, depression
- lower self esteem
- reduced study performance
- missed classes, social withdrawal
- reduced career prospect

### **Am I bullying or harassing someone?**

If you are not sure about your behaviour you can:

- check it out by asking if it is offensive or inappropriate
- stop it
- apologise
- take it seriously if someone says they are feeling uncomfortable
- talk it over with an adviser or somebody who has an understanding of the issues

## **What are some of the feelings victims of bullying or harassment may experience?**

- *"I will ignore it and it will go away."*

If anything it will make things worse - you will give the impression that you agree with the situation.

- *"I don't want to cause trouble."*

Most causes of harassment are sorted out quite simply. By speaking up, action can be taken to address the problem.

- *"Am I to blame?"*

Victims of harassment or bullying sometimes feel that it is their fault. Victims are made to feel guilty by the offender and often blame themselves. It is your right to have a safe environment free from harassment or bullying.

- *"Am I imagining things?"*

Often our hunches are correct. Rather than put up with nagging doubts, talk to someone about your feelings.

## **Bullying or harassment can often make people feel:**

- embarrassed or ashamed
- offended or humiliated
- intimidated or frightened
- uncomfortable

## **What should you do if you see another person being bullied or harassed?**

Tell the person that you witnessed the incident and advise them to report it to an appropriate person. However, if your friend is harassing another person, let them know that their behaviour is unacceptable.

Bystanders who do nothing to stop bullying may be contributing to the problem by providing an audience for the bully.

## **THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN WITH RESPECT TO BULLYING AT OAK PARK PRIMARY SCHOOL**

- To be, and feel, safe and accepted in the classroom and in the playground
- To be treated fairly and respectfully at all times
- To state beliefs and opinions without fear of put downs or repercussions
- To be listened to
- To be able to learn to the best of their abilities
- To develop positive relationships
  
- To have personal and school property respected
- To expect a resolution of their problems, to be able to tell their side of the story in a dispute within a supportive environment and to be taught strategies to solve problems.

## **THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CHILDREN WHO WITNESS INCIDENTS OF BULLYING**

If students who are witnesses to bullying have the courage to speak out, they may help to reduce pain for other potential victims.

At Oak Park Primary School, we encourage students to:

- report cases of bullying
- refuse to be involved in any bullying situation.

If a student is present when bullying occurs, we ask that they:

- take some form of action - if appropriate
- report the incident or suspected incident and help break the code of secrecy

## **WHAT THE SCHOOL WILL DO TO PREVENT BULLYING ON THE PREMISES**

Oak Park Primary School staff members will:

- work hard to develop positive relationships with all children
- model appropriate language and behaviour
- be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- follow up children's absences
  - if a child is absent the school will contact the parent as soon as possible
  
- make efforts to remove opportunities for bullying
- actively patrol the playground and designated 'hot spots' during yard duty
- arrive at class on time and, where appropriate, move promptly between lessons
- take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress without placing the victim at further risk
- report suspected incidents to the appropriate staff member such as class teacher, year coordinator, Assistant Principal, Principal, who will follow the designated procedures

The school recommends that parents:

- watch for signs of distress in their child, eg unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, requests for extra money, damaged clothes or bruising
- take an active interest in your child's social life and acquaintances
- advise your child to tell a staff member about the incident. If possible allow him/her to report and deal with the problem. The child can gain much respect through taking the initiative and dealing with the problem without parental involvement
- inform the school if bullying is suspected
- keep a written record (who, what, when, where, why, how)
- do not encourage their child to retaliate
- communicate to their child that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation
- be willing to attend interviews at the school if their child is involved in any bullying incident
- be willing to inform the school of any cases of suspected bullying even if their own child is not directly affected.

#### **EVALUATION:**

This policy will be evaluated annually through:

- The annual Parent Survey.
- Examination and analysis of the register of reported incidents.

## **STEPS TO BE TAKEN WHEN DEALING WITH BULLYING INCIDENTS:**

**\*All cases of bullying are to be reported to the Assistant Principal and/or the Principal who will then implement the following action plan:**

1. Investigate – attempt to gather as much 'background' to the incident as possible. This will include listening to all parties involved, including teachers on yard duty
2. Inform classroom teacher
3. Assess the situation and apply appropriate and relevant consequences. These may include any or all of the following:

### ***Apology***

An apology to the victim of bullying and a commitment not to repeat the behavior

### ***Isolation of student***

Removal of student from playground or classroom for an appropriate length of time. This may be in the office or the student may be sent home.

### ***Loss of Privileges***

These may include bans from school events such as excursions and interschool sport, bans from specified sections of the playground/equipment or the imposition of certain tasks eg. extra yard duty

### ***Contract***

Students enter into a contract which will specify the behaviour to be modified, time frame and consequences of breaking the contract

### ***Inform parents***

Parents contacted via letter or telephone and meeting time arranged in order to discuss the implementation of a behaviour modification plan

### ***Suspension***

This may be an informal suspension of up to 3 days where parents are asked to take the student home and support the school by ensuring appropriate supervision and consequences are imposed or an official suspension.

## **APPENDIX**

### **BULLYING – A note on the role of Bystanders**

The people who have the most influence in determining the amount and degree of bullying in a school are not the adults, but the students. The challenge is to change their reactions to bullying. From the student's point of view, bullying has a clear social purpose – impressing an audience of bystanders and raising one's own social status.

Stopping bullying requires changing the audience's response to it. We need to focus less on the rule-breakers and more on the majority of students who don't break the rules: the bystanders and the audience for acts of bullying.

A key step is for adults to avoid the tendency to attribute students' behaviour to 'the way they are' rather than the situation they're in. Bystanders who don't intervene aren't heartless and apathetic; they are subject to a common set of social pressures and haven't learned how to deal with them.

Just telling bystanders to 'stand up' to bullying makes little sense, no more sense than telling a child to be a good reader or become a good football player without first providing instruction, guidance, coaching and support.

Changes in behaviour will begin when students are shown how much influence they can have in making our school a better place. Here are some key points for consideration:

- The vast majority of our students don't bully and don't approve of bullying
- People want to do good and be helpful
- Students make mistakes and make poor choices – our school is not trouble free. Problems are part of life and learning.
- Viewing them as such will make discussing them a lot less emotional and students will be more open to sharing them.
- Students are subject to social pressures and need to think for themselves and problem-solve.
- Students shouldn't feel guilty if they don't act courageously in the face of bullying.
- Being compassionate towards bullies doesn't mean the behaviour is being condoned. Students who make mistakes need compassion and will accept guidance and direction when given respect, care and support.
- Students who bully aren't always bad kids or inherent troublemakers – some just need to learn how not to bully others and how to get on well with others.

Teaching children social skills is a lifelong process. They need ongoing reminders to think about the choices they make when interacting with people, including their choice of words, body language and facial expressions. Adults need to support children with understanding options and choices, but more importantly how to develop resilience to cope with other people's behaviours.