# Anti-bullying Policy

**Fairley House**

| Date of issue | February 2022 |
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| Date for renewal | February 2024 |
| Person responsible for review | Deputy Head |
| Approved by | Education Committee |

**Policy Changes**

| Date of Amendments | Update |
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**Aims**

Bullying is unacceptable at Fairley House School and will not be tolerated. The primary aim of the policy is to prevent bullying. The secondary aim is to address any bullying that occurs effectively so that it is as short lasting as possible, and effects are minimised.

The school also recognises that it must take note of bullying perpetrated outside school which spills over into the school. The school will do what is reasonably practicable to eliminate any such bullying.

Fairley House aims to promote Emotional Literacy, defined as people being able to 'recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express their emotions' (Sharp, 2001). We therefore take a strong stance against bullying of any type since it indicates a lack of appreciation for the feelings of others. Bullying will not be tolerated and will be addressed. Bullying can cause deep distress, to the extent of victims refusing to attend school or even, in extreme cases, attempting, or committing, suicide.

We are aware that many of our children have been bullied in previous schools due to their learning difficulties and this can make them more prone to bullying or to becoming the victim of bullying. Some of our children have poor gross motor skills and motor planning and this may make them more vulnerable in the playground, or aggressive, when they knock into people. Some of our children have speech and language needs which may result in social interaction difficulties, again making them more vulnerable in social situations.

We do not take a 'no blame' approach to bullying, since sometimes a strong message of disapproval must be conveyed to the bully and the disciplinary system invoked. This could include fixed term exclusion or permanent exclusion in the case of persistent bullying with no mitigating factors. The Behaviour Policy sets out detail on sanctions. However, we do take a solution-focused approach with the aim of stopping any bullying.

**Definition of Bullying**

There is no legal definition of bullying. However, it is usually defined as behaviour that is:
- repeated;
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally;
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation, SEN, or disability.

Bullying may be carried out by an individual or by a group of children.

**Signs and Symptoms**

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these signs, and they should investigate if a child is:
- unwilling to go to school;
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence;
- stammering;
- attempts or threatens self-harm;
- cries themselves to sleep at night/bedwetting;
- regularly feels ill in the morning;
- begins to do poorly in schoolwork;
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged;
- has possessions go missing;

- has unexplained cuts and bruises;
- stops eating;
- frightened to say what is wrong
- frightened of walking to and from school
- changes his or her routine

All staff should be aware of these possibilities and report promptly any suspicions of bullying to The Head or Deputy Head Teacher.

**Bullying related to special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities**
Research shows that children and young people with SEN and disabilities are more at risk of bullying than their peers. Public bodies have new responsibilities to actively promote equality of opportunity for all disabled people and eliminate disability-related harassment.

Children and young people with SEN and disabilities, whether in mainstream or special schools, do not always have the levels of social confidence and competence, and the robust friendship bonds that can protect against bullying. This is particularly relevant at Fairley House. Where children with SEN and disabilities are themselves found to be bullying, in most cases (except those related to
specific conditions) we should expect the same standards of behaviour as apply to the rest of the school community, having made the reasonable adjustments necessary.

**Bullying related to appearance or health conditions**
Those with health or visible medical conditions, such as eczema, may be more likely than their peers to become targets for bullying behaviour. Perceived physical limitations, such as size and weight, and other body image issues, can result in bullying, and obvious signs of affluence (or lack of it) can also be exploited ruthlessly with severe consequences.

**Bullying related to sexual orientation**
Evidence of homophobic bullying suggests that children and young people who are gay or lesbian (or perceived to be) face a higher risk of victimisation than their peers. Homophobic bullying is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported, since disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying. The pupil may not want to report bullying if it means 'coming out' to teachers and parents before they are ready.

**Bullying of young carers or looked-after children, or otherwise linked to home circumstances.**
Children may be made vulnerable to bullying by the fact that they provide care to someone in their family with an illness, disability, mental health, or substance misuse problem. Young carers may be taking on practical and emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. Research has highlighted the difficulties young carers face, including risks of ill-health, stress, and tiredness, especially when they care through the night. Many feel bullied or isolated. Children in care may also be vulnerable to bullying for a variety of reasons, such as not living with their birth parents or because they have fallen behind in their studies. Some pupils are heavily influenced by their communities or homes where bullying and abuse may be common. Some bullying at school may arise from trauma or instability at home related to issues of domestic violence or bereavement, or from the experience of being part of a refugee family. Siblings of vulnerable children may themselves be the subject of bullying by association.

**Sexist or sexual bullying**

Sexist and sexual bullying affects all genders. Boys may be victims as well as girls and both sexes may be victims of their own sex. Sexual bullying may be characterised by name-calling, comments and overt 'looks' about appearance, attractiveness, and emerging puberty. In addition, uninvited touching, innuendos and propositions, pornographic imagery or graffiti may be used. Pupils identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria (feeling that they belong to another gender or who do not conform with the gender role prescribed to them) can also be targeted by bullies.

### Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying includes bullying via text message, via instant-messenger services and social network sites, via email, and via images or videos posted on the internet or spread via mobile/smart phone. It can take the form of any of the previously discussed types of bullying. Technology can be used to bully for reasons of race, religion, sexuality, disability, etc. Bullying by mobile phone or the internet can have an impact at school, even if it originates at home. Parents are offered training and support so that they can be aware of the issues. Staff are given training about the risks of bullying through new and changing technologies and will be vigilant. Phones are locked away in a secure box each morning. Internet blocking technologies are regularly reviewed and updated, and harmful sites are blocked. Official guidance is considered and appropriate changes implemented.

As a school, we recognise that some forms of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. These include:
- Violence or assault.
- Theft.
- Repeated harassment or intimidation, for example name calling, threats and abusive phone calls, emails, or text messages.
- Hate crimes.

### Preventative Strategies

We aim for a school ethos which promotes kindness and respect towards others. This ethos is promoted in school assemblies, through House Competitions, through modelling by staff and by the way in which conflict between children is addressed.

Bullying is specifically addressed in assemblies and in PSHEE. Children are urged to report bullying, confident that it will be addressed. Bystanders are encouraged to challenge bullying. They should point out to the bully the unacceptability of what is being done, then report bullying to an adult if this is unsuccessful. Role plays can be especially helpful in promoting bystander challenge.

We are a small school and children are closely supervised, so that bullying is less likely to occur compared with some schools with less easily managed sites. The playground is small and the whole of it is visible. Duties are heavily staffed. For younger children (Junior Department) there is a no contact rule for the park. Bullying can be a manifestation of social problems, which may be more prevalent amongst children with specific learning difficulties. Social skills/Interpersonal skills training are offered for children who have difficulties in this area. This may include work on friendships. These sessions may take place within the whole class setting and may involve a therapist and the class teacher. Assertiveness training, negotiation and dealing with conflict are all areas that are covered, according to need.

Developing skills in these areas help children to resist bullying. However, some children who bully are, in fact socially skilled, but lack empathy. We aim to help children to develop empathy by encouraging children to treat others as they would like to be treated themselves.

Confidence and self-esteem building are a central tenet of the school's purpose. This is done through recognition of achievements and good behaviour, including descriptive praise and rewards. We consider that children with strong self- belief are less likely to bully others or to allow others to bully them. Children's Emotional Literacy is developed by teaching them a wide vocabulary of words for emotions, through The Zones of Regulations. We believe that this makes them better able to express their feelings, helping them to resist attempts at bullying. We also consider that being able to understand and express emotions reduces conflict between children and makes them less inclined to misinterpret others' actions, which can be a factor in bullying.

All classes begin their PSHEE work for the year with Circle Time or similar activities, which enhance group solidarity and helps children to generate solutions to interpersonal problems.

New parents are informed of the school's strong anti-bullying stance and urged to report bullying. We post the anti-bullying policy on the website. Children are also encouraged to report bullying to staff, especially technological bullying that might not be noticed by a member of staff.

Where appropriate, staff members will act as mentors for pupils. Children can discuss issues with a mentor of their choice and the issues may include bullying.

**Procedures**
All incidences of bullying reported are logged and investigated. We adopt a solution focused response to reports of bullying. Investigation may reveal that the child who reported bullying has behaved in a way that provokes aggression from other children (the provocative victim). Alternatively, there may have been a misunderstanding or bullying may have occurred. Reference to the definition allows us to make a judgement on whether bullying has occurred. However, all reports are kept on file, regardless of whether actual bullying occurred. A note is made of whether the incident fits the definition of bullying. Bullying may be reported by a parent, a child, or observed by a teacher. The children concerned are interviewed separately to allow the interviewer to build as clear a picture as possible. Children are then brought together to state their view of the problem briefly to each other before being helped by the facilitating adult to generate a solution that they will personally carry out. Parents are informed if their child is found to be a victim of bullying or is found to be bullying. Contact with parents is deliberately non-judgemental and aims to engage their cooperation. Experience has shown that involving parents indicates to children how seriously we take the matter and changes behaviour.

**All actions taken are logged and the situation monitored.**
Actions may include:
- Informing all staff.
- Discussion of children involved in Solution Circles within staff meetings.
- Extra vigilance in the playground.
- Further meetings with parents and children to discuss success of solutions.
- Invoking the discipline system for the aggressor if there has been clear bullying or for both children if there has been inappropriate behaviour on both sides.
- The Bullying Investigation Form allows staff to log bullying, actions taken and follow up.

**Review**

Bullying Investigation Forms are monitored regularly by the Head to determine whether there are any patterns emerging which need addressing with new strategies. We aim to avoid complacency.