



Policy Statement & Aim

Belmont House School should be a school free from bullying. All members of the school community are encouraged to work towards this aim and bullying behaviour of any kind will not be accepted, tolerated or condoned.

Definition

There is a need for an accurate definition of 'bullying' as every incident/disagreement involving pupils is not bullying. This is an emotive term used very frequently in the school situation. However, it is also very misused. Without a clear understanding and agreement on the use of the word it can (and has) lead to misunderstandings and disagreements.

A recent research paper clarified the definition of bullying. In summary bullying involves all the following:

- a desire to hurt
- hurtful action
- a power imbalance between the individuals concerned
- repetition
- unjust use of power
- evident enjoyment by the aggressor and a sense of oppression by the victim.

This does not mean that actions that do not come under these headings are any less important or hurtful. It just means we should use different terms and possibly different strategies for dealing with them.

The element, which underpins all instances of bullying, is the desire of an individual or group of individuals to use their power or strength to cause upset to another individual or group of individuals.

Bullying behaviour includes:

- verbally abusing someone by insulting them, name-calling, making threats, spreading Malicious rumours, using sarcasm
- physically abusing someone by hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping up, spitting etc
- damaging personal property
- encouraging others to engage in bullying behaviour
- writing offensive remarks using graffiti, notes, text messages, letters, e-mails, social networking sites etc [the School will act on evidence provided of bullying between pupils conducted outwith School]
- ostracising an individual and encouraging others to do so
- humiliating someone because they are perceived to be "different" in any way because of their values, cultural or religious background, additional support needs or disability
- racist and homophobic behaviour of any description.

It would not normally be considered bullying if two individuals of approximately the same emotional, physical and psychological strength have a disagreement or physical altercation.

Dealing with allegations of bullying in School

Identification

Reports of alleged bullying can come from a wide range of sources including pupils, staff, parents and the public. All reports of alleged bullying are treated seriously, fully investigated and appropriate action taken as necessary.



To facilitate the early identification of bullying the School system involves staff watchfulness and must encourage pupils to talk openly and in confidence about their fears and experiences.

Staff must be vigilant both in their classrooms and in their general movement about the School. Duty staff & Senior 6 Prefects should make a point of visiting the high-risk areas of the School - basement, rear of buildings, changing rooms, toilets etc

Staff should immediately investigate any incidents themselves and then should refer the pupils involved to the Vice-Principal [Director of Studies & Pastoral Care], Vice-Principal [Head of Junior School] or Senior Vice-Principal as appropriate.

Pupils are advised by their Tutor and via PSD classes about the steps to be taken regarding the reporting of incidents to Staff. The normal points of contact will be Senior 6 Prefects trained in the *No Blame Approach to Bullying*, Tutors, Vice-Principal [Director of Studies & Pastoral Care], Vice-Principal [Head of Junior School] or Senior Vice-Principal as appropriate. It should be stressed that in practice any pupil can speak to any member of staff if they feel they are being bullied.

If a pupil speaks to their parents in the first instance the parents are encouraged to:

- listen to their child
- be patient and sensitive
- keep a note of everything that the child reports
- agree the next step with the child [often the child asks parents not to do anything]
- contact the School as early as possible
- be honest and focus on the facts.

Parents are, however, encouraged NOT to:

- interrogate or increase the stress on an already anxious child
- make promises that cannot be kept, particularly in the context of confidentiality
- allow an situation to be prolonged before contacting the School
- exaggerate or form conclusions
- make direct contact with the parents of any alleged bully.

Parents should raise any concerns with

- in the Junior School, their child's class teacher or the Vice-Principal [Head of Junior School]
- in the Senior School, their child's Tutor, the Vice Principal [Director of Studies & Pastoral Care] or the Senior Vice-Principal.

Investigation

The member of Staff to whom the incident is initially reported should take steps to check out its authenticity and should deal with the matter appropriately. This will usually mean referring it to the Vice-Principal [Director of Studies & Pastoral Care], Vice-Principal [Head of Junior School] or Senior Vice-Principal.



Action

To be seen to act is as important as the action itself. All bullying behaviour will be challenged and the fact that the School disapproves of it made clear.

The School will endeavour to support pupils involved in an incident so that the person who has been bullied feels safe, feels that they are being listened to and that appropriate action will be taken. They must be reassured that reporting a fellow pupil for bullying is acceptable and the correct action to take, and that

the School will take all necessary steps to ensure that the bully does not attempt to achieve retribution with the pupil who reported him /her.

The peer group should be used to provide support for pupils who feel threatened.

The No Blame Approach to Bullying

At Belmont House School we use "The No Blame Approach to Bullying" to resolve issues between pupils. It is a simple 7-step process that has the following four essential ingredients:

- The absence of blame
- The encouragement of empathy
- Shared Responsibility
- Problem Solving.

The steps involved are as follows:

- **Step 1 - Talk with the victim**

A facilitator trained in the approach talks to the victim to establish the impact that the bullying has had on them. It is not designed to gather "facts" about who said or did what to whom. The victim is encouraged to suggest the names of people to form a group who should help solve the problem. These will include those involved, colluders and perhaps friends of the victim. The victim is also asked to produce a piece of writing or a picture to express how the bullying is affecting them.

- **Step 2 - convene a meeting of the group**

The facilitator gathers the group together ensuring that there is a balance between helpful and reliable students and those whose behaviour has been causing a problem.

- **Step 3 - explain the problem**

The facilitator explains that there is a problem and that a particular pupil is experiencing certain difficulties. Without discussing specific incidents or accusations the facilitator explains how the pupil is feeling using the piece of writing from the victim to illustrate this.

- **Step 4 - share responsibility**



The facilitator points out that no one is going to be punished and that the group has been convened to help solve the problem because there is a shared responsibility for the individual pupil's happiness.

- **Step 5 - Ask for ideas**

The facilitator asks the group to suggest ways that they may be able to alleviate the suffering felt by the victim. Members of the group are encouraged to use "I" language (I will sit next to the pupil in lessons, I will walk to school with them etc) so that they take ownership of the solutions. These ideas are not imposed on the group by the facilitator.

- **Step 6 - leave it up to them**

The facilitator ends the meeting by passing responsibility for the problem over to the group, thanks them for their support and arranges a meeting to see how things are going.

- **Step 7 - meet them again**

The facilitator meets each of the group individually a week later to see how things are going.

The Senior Vice-Principal and Vice-Principal (Director of Studies and Pastoral Care) are trained in using this method and Tutors are fully familiar with it. Senior 6 pupils volunteer, on an annual basis, to offer support to younger pupils and are trained to conduct meetings using the "The No Blame Approach to Bullying".

Bullies should be encouraged to admit their misdemeanour and should be made to face up to the fact that their behaviour is anti-social and unacceptable. They should be encouraged to see the victim's point of view.

Sanctions

When deciding the School's response to a particular incident, the following factors will be considered:

- the age of the individuals involved
- the nature of the incident
- the existence of any behavioural/additional support needs which could affect an individual's behaviour towards others
- whether the individuals concerned have been involved in any previous incidents
- the School's overarching duty of care to all pupils and staff.

In addition to the full range of disciplinary sanctions available, the School will, as appropriate, make use of the following approaches:

- support of Tutors/class teachers
- mediation – establishing the "rules" between those involved in a situation to help them to co-exist in the School
- peer-support
- active listening/counselling.

For the avoidance of doubt, disciplinary action will be taken as deemed appropriate against the bully and this may include:

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- withdrawal from class
- detention
- an informal one-day suspension from School
- withdrawal from participation in any School trip or sports team
- formal suspension from School.

As with any disciplinary matter, the Principal has the right to insist upon the withdrawal of a child from the School if all other sanctions are exhausted or the matter is, in his opinion, sufficiently serious to warrant this course of action.

Bullying outwith school

The School cannot be held directly responsible for bullying which takes place outwith the School's premises and outside of School activities. However, where this takes place between Belmont House pupils, the School will endeavour to act, with the assistance of parents and external agencies as required, to resolve matters.

For avoidance of doubt, pupils are considered to be "at school" on their journey to and from the School whether on School buses or public transport and, as such, subject to the disciplinary sanctions of the School.

Prevention

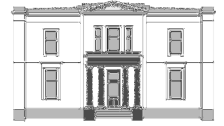
The School will take all reasonable steps to ensure that bullying does not take place. Therefore:

- staff and Senior 6 Prefects should ensure that they know the School and:
 - identify problem areas
 - carry out spot checks
 - keep records of incidents.
- staff and Senior 6 Prefects should support the pupils and ensure that:
 - pupils know that the School cares
 - pupils know that they can speak out
 - relevant staff are accessible.
- new pupils must be appraised of the School's attitude to bullying
- new pupils should be speedily integrated into the School's systems
- bullies must be trained to be more empathetic
- other pupils should be encouraged to help both bullies and victims
- the PSHE Programme must deliver a clear and unequivocal message.

Useful contact numbers:

- **Anti-bullying Network**
0131-651-6103 and www.antibullying.net
- **ChildLine Bullying Line for Young People in Scotland**
a free, confidential and anonymous helpline on 0800-441111 for any child or young person concerned about bullying
- **ChildLine**
0800-1111 and www.childline.org.uk

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- **ParentLine Scotland**

A free, confidential and anonymous helpline for parents, provided by ChildrenFirst, on 0808-800-2222