



# Bullying

Policy Document No. 8

**Eastcourt Independent School**

**August 2016**

**Last reviewed: August 2016**

**Next review: August 2017**

## BULLYING AT EASTCOURT

### From Eastcourt Policy Document 3. “Behaviour”:

**The behaviour of pupils at Eastcourt seldom gives rise to problems. We ask for and receive the support of parents to reinforce our code of conduct, and this has resulted in the caring, non-aggressive atmosphere for which we are known.**

While we are proud of our pupils’ behaviour at Eastcourt, we are aware that such misbehaviour as does occur may often fall into the category of bullying, and that in the nature of bullying a certain amount will go on that escapes our attention. It is our policy that there is no tolerance of bullying at Eastcourt, and that we treat all instances swiftly and firmly.

The sanctions taken against instances of bullying where they have been satisfactorily proved are those which appear in PD3 “Behaviour”. However, we are aware that the nature of bullying is such that the following measures may be taken in addition, and earlier in the response than later:

- stages 2 and 3 [minor sanctions] may be dispensed with and stage 4 [report to Mrs Redgrave] moved to more quickly
  - discussion and investigation may be more prolonged or detailed
  - personal circumstances may be taken into greater account
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## SOURCE MATERIAL

This PD has regard to the following documents:

*Bullying – Don't Suffer in Silence (DfEE 2000) [DSIS]*

*Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools (DCSF 2007) [STL]*

*Independent Schools Standard Regulations 2010*

*The Equality Act 2010*

*Preventing and tackling bullying (DfE 2014)*

*Cyberbullying – Advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE 2014)*

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## AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of this policy document are:

- to ensure that all staff at Eastcourt have an agreed and standard response to incidents of bullying, whether reported or personally witnessed
- to make clear any variations of the nine Stepped Response stages (v. PD3) which may apply in cases involving bullying
- to reassure and possibly advise parents that we take these matters seriously, and that they may well have a part to play in their resolution

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## DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Following the DCSF booklet *Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools* [hereafter *STL*] the Government defines bullying as:

Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.

Such behaviour might include, but not be confined to:

- name calling and nasty teasing

- spreading malicious rumours
- leaving pupils out of social activities deliberately and frequently
- damage to belongings
- threats and extortion
- physical violence
- cyberbullying \*
- racist bullying
- homophobic bullying

\* see separate section below

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## CRIMINAL LAW

“Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence... For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a **person to send electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety** or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.”

*Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2014, p.5, emphasis added*

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## AWARENESS AND PROCEDURES: CHILDREN

Even before bullying incidents are reported to or witnessed by staff, pupils should know that their own response is important:

- victims report all instances to the nearest supervisory, support or teaching staff
- witnesses do the same, either in support or where victims cannot or will not

- all pupils are aware of the nature, seriousness and consequences of bullying

Teachers and others instil awareness and proper procedure from the earliest ages at Eastcourt, by formal and informal means and throughout the career of each pupil. It is the subject of a whole-school PSHCE topic and forms part of the Eastcourt Links programme.

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## AWARENESS AND PROCEDURES: STAFF

Incidents witnessed, or reported by children

Staff at Eastcourt keep an eye open for the following [from *The Staff Handbook*]:

- children on the ground
- simulated combat, esp. kicking (“martial arts”)
- crowds or knots of children
- chanting or rhythmical shouting

as warning signs that all may not be well. They are also aware [from *STL*] that “apparent fighting or bullying can simply be rough-and-tumble play or ‘play-fighting’, which some children enjoy.” They distinguish, on the one hand, between behaviour involving:

- smiling or laughing
- ‘mock’ blows or kicks which do not connect - or do so only softly
- taking turns at being on top, or chasing each other,

which may require no more than careful surveillance, and on the other those children who may:

- frown or look unhappy or angry
- try to move away from the aggressor
- do not take turns, the aggressor remaining dominant throughout
- attract other pupils’ attention

and thus be genuine actual or potential victims of bullying.

Furthermore, they are aware that:

when primary children incorporate fantasy themes into play-fighting, they commonly adopt angry-looking facial expressions rather than smile. This often leads supervisors to assume they are acting aggressively. Asking participants in a friendly tone about what they are doing should clarify matters. Boys traditionally engage in this more than girls, but the difference may be decreasing and supervisors should avoid assuming that all fighting among girls is aggressive. In most cases, play-fighting does not escalate into aggressive fighting. The majority of children and adolescents appreciate the difference and are skilled at keeping their interactions playful.

[from DfES booklet *Bullying – Don't Suffer in Silence*]

Teaching, support and supervisory staff take care to ascertain degrees of seriousness of reported or witnessed bullying, and take appropriate action immediately.

In the case of support or supervisory staff this may mean immediate referral to the class teacher of the alleged perpetrator, or to the Headteacher. In the case of teaching staff they will also gauge appropriate action to be taken immediately. This will involve ascertaining:

- whether a bullying incident has taken place
- who are the perpetrator(s)
- who the victim(s)
- who, if any, the witness(es)

If the incident cannot be dealt with on the spot and at class level, Mrs Redgrave will be informed as soon as practicable.

Incidents reported by parents

Staff follow these guidelines (from *DSIS*):

Good practice includes:

- recognising that the parent may be angry and upset
- keeping an open mind - bullying can be difficult to detect, so a lack of staff awareness does not mean no bullying occurs
- remaining calm and understanding

- making clear that the school does care and that something will be done
- explaining the school policy, making sure procedures are followed

When a case is referred to them, teachers should also:

- ask for details and record the information
- make a further appointment to explain actions and find out if it has stopped

Many of the same points apply when the school has to tell the parents that their child is involved in bullying. Parents are more likely to accept a calm approach, following the agreed guidelines of an anti-bullying policy they are familiar with. This helps to defuse anger and resentment. Specific requirements depend on whether the child in question is the victim or the bully.

#### Bullying outside school premises

“Q. Should I discipline pupils for bullying outside the school?

A. Yes. If an incident of bullying outside the school premises is reported to the school, it is important that it is investigated and appropriate action taken. This will send a strong signal to pupils that bullying will not be tolerated and perpetrators will be held to account.”

*Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2014, “Frequently Asked Questions” p.9*

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## AWARENESS AND PROCEDURES: PARENTS

It has been found easier to achieve solutions to bullying problems by involving parents of both perpetrators and victims, and Mrs Redgrave will often call on their help. This advice (from *STL*) may be given in whole or in part:

- discourage your child from using bullying behaviour at home or elsewhere. Show how to resolve difficult situations without using violence or aggression.
- watch out for signs that your child is being bullied, or is bullying others. Parents and families are often the first to detect symptoms of bullying. Common symptoms include headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and irritability. It can be helpful to ask questions about

progress and friends at school; how break times and lunchtimes are spent; and whether your child is facing problems or difficulties at school. Don't dismiss negative signs. Contact the school immediately if you are worried.

- **If your child has been bullied:**

- calmly talk to your child about it
- make a note of what s/he says - particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying has occurred; where it happened and what has happened
- reassure him/her that telling you about the bullying was the right thing to do
- explain that any further incidents should be reported to a teacher immediately
- make an appointment to see his/her class teacher
- explain to the teacher the problems s/he is experiencing

- **Talking to teachers about bullying:**

- try and stay calm - bear in mind that the teacher may have no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of an incident
  - be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened - give dates, places and names of other children involved
  - make a note of what action the school intends to take
  - ask if there is anything you can do to help your child or the school
  - stay in touch with the school - let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue
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## CYBERBULLYING

### *advice for staff*

1. do not leave your personal computer or other device logged in when you are away from your desk
2. keep a check on your online presence – e.g. by typing your name into a search engine.
3. be aware that your reputation could be harmed by what others share about you on social media, e.g. friends tagging you in inappropriate posts
4. do not accept friend requests from pupils past or present
5. do not give out personal contact details – always use the school's contact details where necessary
6. staff who are bullied online (whether by pupils or parents) report immediately to Mrs Redgrave; save evidence by taking screen prints, recording time and date. Never respond or retaliate.

*[extracted from Cyberbullying: advice for headteachers and school staff, 2014]*

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## MONITORING

In practice it has been found at Eastcourt that the procedures followed above successfully contain bullying to a manageable level. On the rare occasions when Mrs Redgrave has had recourse to Stepped Response levels 8 and 9 [PD03], the causes have invariably been wider than bullying *per se*. Nevertheless, careful note is taken of all bullying episodes with a view to prevention of further and more serious incidents.