

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY AND PROCEDURES

This policy, which applies to the whole school including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), is publicly available on the School website and upon request a copy, (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required), may be obtained from the School Office.

Legal Status:

- Complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force
- Prepared with reference to: Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017), Cyberbullying: Advice for Principals and school staff (DfE- November 2014), Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying (DfE- November 2014) and School support for children and young people who are bullied (DfE- March 2014), Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.
- Has regard to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty

Applies to:

- out of school care, the breakfast club, the afterschool clubs, and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- all staff (teaching and support staff), contractors, students on placement, the proprietor and volunteer working in the school.

Other related documents include:

- ICT-Based Forms of Abuse (including Cyberbullying) Policy, e-Safety Policy including ICT Acceptable Use
- Safeguarding: Policy and Procedures including Child Protection
- Anti-Bullying Code, The School Rules. What to do if you are Worried, Single Equality Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy (including Sanctions, Rewards and Exclusions)
- Personal, Social, Health, Economic Education (PSHEE) and Citizenship
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development.

Designated Member of Staff responsible for Anti-Bullying: The Member of Staff with overall responsibility for Anti-bullying in the whole school is: Christine Redgrave. She is supported by Emma Redgrave (DHT), Susan Gooding (Mental Health and Wellbeing Lead), Rayno Cloete (DSL) and Emma Redgrave (DDSL).

Monitoring and Review:

- This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement and audit by the Headteacher
- The Headteacher will undertake a formal annual review of this policy for the purpose of monitoring and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if significant changes to the systems and arrangement take place, or if legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed: *C. Redgrave*

Last reviewed: September 2023

Next review: September 2024

Principles – Aims and Objectives: Bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals. It can be a barrier to their learning and have serious consequences for their mental health. Bullying which takes place at school does not only affect an individual during childhood but can have a lasting effect on their lives well into adulthood. By effectively preventing and tackling bullying, we can help to create a safe, disciplined environment, where pupils are able to learn and fulfil their potential.

At Eastcourt Independent School we seek to create a culture in which bullying of any kind, either against pupils or adults is not accepted by any member of the school. Our school community is based on respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, physical threats, verbal taunts, violence, victimisation and any form of harassment so that every one of our pupils can develop their full potential. We are therefore strongly committed to the avoidance of bullying in all its forms. We provide a clear framework for dealing with incidents of bullying, ensuring that bullies are dealt with swiftly and firmly. Our straightforward procedures make it easy to report bullying, including cyberbullying and bullying outside of school.

We expect our pupils to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed, but orderly, atmosphere. All pupils should care for and support each other. Our school prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting Eastcourt Independent School in maintaining high standard of behaviour. It is essential that school and home has consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together.

Bullying in any form will not be tolerated. We are a 'TELLING SCHOOL'. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the school. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable.

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 rather 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.

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.

Keeping Children Safe in Education (2024) defines bullying as a form of abuse, 'child-on-child abuse'.

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 Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, any person who sends 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, is guilty of an offence if their purpose in sending it was to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient." *Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017, p.6*

Communications Act 2003

127 Improper use of public electronic communications network

- (1) A person is guilty of an offence if he –
 - (a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network a message or other matter that is grossly offensive or of an indecent or menacing character; or
 - (b) causes any such message or matter to be so sent.
- (2) A person is guilty of an offence if, for the purpose of causing annoyance, inconvenience or needless anxiety to another, he –
 - (a) sends by means of a public electronic communications network, a message that he knows to be false
 - (b) causes such a message to be sent; or
 - (c) persistently makes use of a public electronic communications network
- (3) A person guilty of an offence under this section shall be liable, on summary conviction, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months or to a fine not exceeding level 5 on the standard scale, or to both.
- (4) Subsections (1) and (2) do not apply to anything done in the course of providing a programme service (within the meaning of the Broadcasting Act 1990 (c.42)).

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2003/21/section/127>

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.

Signs of Bullying and Staff Awareness: The term 'bullying' is commonly associated with acts of violence, but non-physical bullying is experienced by most pupils at some period. All staff must be alert to the signs of bullying.

These may include:

- Unwillingness and reluctance to return to school, displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet with signs of distress and low esteem, a change in established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons)
- failure to produce work, or unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others, excuses for work not done and books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged;
- psychological damage, unexplained tearfulness; and diminished levels of self-confidence;
- frequently complaining of symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches and so on, or a pattern of minor illnesses and health problems, unexplained cuts and bruises, frequent absences, erratic attendance and late arrivals to class along with excuses for work not done;
- choosing the company of adults;
- missing property, being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone, nervous and jumpy when a cyber-message is received
- asking for extra pocket money or starting to steal money (to pay bully)
- displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact, difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares;
- talking of suicide or running away;
- verbal taunts, pupils sitting on their own, pupils left out of activity groups during lessons or play activities and giving improbably excuses for any of the above.

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers. It should always be acknowledged that on rare occasions some children set themselves up as victims, and the reasons for this should be thoroughly investigated and appropriate support given.

Child Protection Related Issues: Where there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern under the Children's Act 1989. Where this is the case, staff should discuss with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and report their concerns to their local authority children's social care and work with them to take appropriate action. However, external support can be given to pupils whether or not it is deemed a child protection concern. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue Eastcourt Independent School may need to draw on a range of external services to support the pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

The Procedure for Pupils: Pupils are encouraged to tell anybody they trust if they are being bullied, and if the bullying continues, they must keep on letting people know. We have a worry box in the classroom where children

can post messages if they wish to tell a member of staff something but do not want to initially talk directly to an adult. This box is opened daily, and the writing passed onto the class teacher or adult that the child has named they would like to share their worries with.

Advice for children

For children who are being bullied – Remember bullies thrive on silence

- If you are being bullied tell someone, preferably a trusted adult.
- If you can, write down everything that has been said or done to hurt you. Be careful to only write down things that have really happened.
- Do not blame yourself – it is not your fault.
- Make friends or stay around others.
- If worried, stay near a playground supervisor at break.
- Try not to show you are upset.
- Try to ignore it at the time of the incident – stay calm – walk away to safety.

For children who see someone being bullied

- If you see someone being bullied or in distress ACT. Watching or doing nothing can suggest support of the bully.
- Tell an adult immediately.
- Try to be a friend to the person who is being bullied.
- Ask if they feel they can talk to someone. If they won't talk to someone and you are worried about them, go to a trusted adult.
- Never join in with a bully – physically, verbally or by isolating another child.

For children who are using bullying behaviour

- Recognise that your behaviour is seen as bullying – physically, verbally, or by isolating; this is wrong and can have a long lasting effect on others
- Even if you think that bullying is just a laugh, children who are bullied and those who care for them, feel very scared and/or upset.
- If you are angry and upset about something, talk about it with a trusted friend or adult, instead of taking it out on someone else.
- A bully doesn't have many true friends.
- Change your bullying behaviour straightaway and become a 'hero' not a 'baddie'.
- Speak to an adult about your bullying behaviour.

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:

- try to move away from the aggressor
- frown or look unhappy or angry
- 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 or Miss Redgrave will be informed as soon as practicable.

Incidents reports 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 2017, “Frequently Asked Questions” P.15.

Cyberbullying

Eastcourt takes various measures to raise awareness of cyberbullying:

Emphasis on the dangers of cyberbullying as part of PSHCE and ICT lessons

Visits from the local police who give talks to older children and parents, e.g. on the illegality of cyberbullying

Instances of cyberbullying may be reported to staff by children or parents. While the seriousness of this form of bullying cannot be underestimated, rigid school procedures (See School Rules) should in every case indicate if such behaviour has originated in the home, or at least outside school premises. The advice noted above notwithstanding, it is beyond the scope of staff to take investigative action other than informing first Mrs or Miss Redgrave and subsequently, where appropriate, the parents involved.

The recommended age limits for various social media (e.g. Facebook, Whatsapp) preclude children of primary age from using them without contravening their terms of use. Eastcourt cannot take responsibility for children using or misusing social media in this way in their own homes.

Cyberbullying Preventative Measures – confiscation of devices: In accordance with legislative requirements we have a whole school approach to e-safety. This includes annual update training for staff. We expect all pupils to adhere to the safe use of the internet as detailed in our ICT-Based Forms of Abuse (including Cyberbullying) Policy.

The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person’s mobile phone.

If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must give the device to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable. Material on the device that is suspected to be evidence relevant to an offence, or that is a pornographic image of a child or an extreme pornographic image, should not be deleted prior to giving the device to the police. If a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, they can decide whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of school discipline.

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 and Miss Redgrave will often call on their help. The 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 he says – particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying has occurred; where it happened and what has happened
- reassure him 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 class teacher
- explain to the teacher the problems 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

Parents have a responsibility to:

- support the school's anti-bullying policy, actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school;
- contact their child's class teacher immediately if they are concerned that their child might be being bullied, or suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying;
- contact the Headteacher if they are not satisfied that their concerns have been dealt with appropriately.
- allow the school to resolve the problem with the bully/ies and their parents;
- encourage their child to behave responsibly and punctually on entering and leaving the school site. The school strongly urges parents not to incite their child to defend themselves through the use of inappropriate language or behaviour.
- be aware that bullies have often been victims themselves;
- in the case of cyberbullying, e.g. messages on MSN, chat rooms, emails and texts, pupils should be encouraged to keep a record of the date and time of any offensive message(s), save it and bring it to the Headmistress.

Complaints procedure: Parents and pupils are encouraged to use our complaints procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that their concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly. Parents should be aware that they have the right to refer a complaint directly to Ofsted if they are unhappy with the way in which their complaint has been handled. The complaints policy explains how to complain to Ofsted.

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 or Miss Redgrave has had recourse to Stepped Response levels 8 and 9 (PD03), the causes have inevitably 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.

Remember we are a 'TELLING SCHOOL'. Bullying in any form is not tolerated.