

COUNTER BULLYING POLICY

1.Statement of intent:

1.1 All pupils at Cirque have a basic right to education in a secure, friendly and caring environment and we are committed to ensuring all pupils can learn in a safe and relaxed setting. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable within the three schools at Cirque, and it must be combated by a collective team approach, involving staff, parents, and pupils, in order to enable all children to have the best possible educational experience.

1.2 If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to recognize it, inform a member of staff and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

1.3 Our counter-bullying policy has a dual aspect, seeking to both protect and prevent, and also to promote well-being.

1.4 Cirque therefore recognises its duty to minimise the risk of bullying to children by evaluating the effectiveness of educational and preventative measures and implementing effective procedures and safeguards.

2.Aims and objectives:

2.1 We are proud to say that we are a TELLING school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

We have the following aims:

- to build a harmonious community that is intolerant of bullying and strive to foster a culture of kindness throughout the school;
- to be alert to, and to minimise, all forms of bullying;
- to deal firmly with all such behaviour;
- to protect and support victims;
- and to ensure that all pupils, teachers, parents and adults within our schools have a common understanding of what constitutes bullying, what the school policy is and how to follow it when bullying is reported or observed.

Our aim must be to eradicate bullying and to promote an environment in which it cannot thrive.

Bullying is unacceptable and it is vital that such behaviour is seen as wrong within the social consensus of the school.

2.2 Pupils have a right not to be bullied and a list of external agencies and contact numbers are displayed at each of the schools and are available in diaries and other materials that all pupils use, indicating our belief that bullying will not be tolerated and that support is at hand if required.

2.3 Any incident where a pupil's conduct adversely affects another's ability to enjoy their education is taken very seriously, especially where a pupil repeatedly or persistently acts in a way to affect another's happiness or commits a single act of significant violence or harm.

3.Definition:

3.1 Bullying is the wilful, conscious desire or use of aggression to hurt, to distress, to threaten, to frighten, and to socially exclude another by word or deed. It may be repeated often, over a period, by an individual or a group. It involves behaviour when it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. It can also involve thoughtless behaviour which causes pain, fear and distress to the victim and which ignores community standards in a careless fashion.

3.2 Be aware that bullying can take many forms and reject them:

- Emotional being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting
- Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, use of violence
- Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Body Language looks, glares, disapproval, negative messages, ignoring
- Racial/racist taunts, graffiti
- Religious/Cultural non-acceptance of people's religious and cultural affiliations
- Sexual/sexist unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic, because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Disability because of, or focusing on a disability or:
- Special Educational Need due to a greater difficulty in learning
- Cyber - the use of e-mail, the internet, social websites, mobile telephones, text messaging or photographs to communicate any of the above.

4. Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

4.1 Bullying hurts.

The seriousness of bullying in causing psychological damage cannot be stressed too much. In severe and/or prolonged cases, bullying may lead to suicide. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

4.2 Staff and pupils have a responsibility to respond promptly, appropriately and effectively to issues of bullying. Pupils should attend to the message of pastoral lessons and think about how their behaviour can ensure that they are a positive member of the community.

4.3 Remember that as a member of the community you have the right:

- To be respected by others,
- To express yourself and learn/ teach/ work effectively
- To have your contribution valued
- To have your property respected
- To feel safe and content in the community.

4.4 As a member of the Cirque community you have the duty:

- To be respectful to others,
- To be considerate in your behaviour,
- To avoid offensive material,
- To use electronic media with good sense,
- Not to tolerate bullying. Never support bullying in any form. Think about your actions. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

5. The Culture of Kindness and the Prevention of Bullying

5.1 Our first plank in our strategy of proactively countering bullying must be to strengthen the culture of kindness. The cohesion of our communities and the ethos of the schools are our first line of defence; powerful weapons to advance kindness and, conversely, to prevent bullying.

5.2 The pastoral time-slots offer an opportunity to counter bullying through the development of patience, acceptance, trust, empathy, co-operation and understanding.

Across the organisation, a range of activities suited to the age of the pupils are adopted to help develop sensitivity to the issue of bullying: Tutor time, PSHE lessons, Council system, projects, questionnaires, circle time, drama, stories, literature, historical events, class comments box, current affairs.

5.3 Further support is offered by the Medical Centre, Chaplain, Counsellor, Tutors, Teachers, Senior Pupils, and external helplines.

5.4 A variety of techniques should be used to increase awareness and to stress disapproval of such behaviour and enhance social skills. Children will be taught strategies to help them deal with bullying situations which they may encounter. We must attempt to help both 'potential bullies' and 'potential victims', by enabling all pupils to understand their behaviour and its impact. Discussion in tutor/ class groups combined with explanation of school procedures and the standard of behaviour expected is strongly recommended.

5.5 Good rapport with pupils and favourable conditions for individuals to talk to an adult must be created. Insistence on good order and sound discipline will do much to discourage bullying and is the second plank in our approach, challenging unacceptable behaviour whenever it appears. Horseplay, idle banter and aggressive behaviour must not be tolerated. We must strive to promote personal confidence and balanced attitudes in our pupils and foster self-esteem, celebrate diversity and rejoice in the unique talents of every individual. Success, in whatever area of school life, should be praised and appreciated by others. Our positive teaching approach must embrace all aspects of school life.

5.6 Again, the promotion of understanding of others, praise for co-operative and non-aggressive behaviour, and explanation of standards required are essential. Attempts to produce individuals who feel that they are achieving and who grasp the standards of the school are central to success. We celebrate diversity and this broadminded acceptance of others should be nurtured.

6. Staff Training

6.1 We will raise the awareness of staff through frequent discussion of the topic as part of the CPD provision and PDP programmes at all three schools. Induction for new staff ensures that key issues such as bullying, and child protection are covered and a whole staff rolling CPD program also includes bullying awareness topics.

6.2 From time to time, outside agencies will be used to help with training. In house training includes focusing on where and when bullying may occur. Awareness of potential times and places can help with action to reduce the risk, as well as building a strong teacher-parent relationship during parent and open evenings.

6.3 The system must operate and be driven by the staff/ pupil community. To be seen to act is as important as taking action, as this in itself signals our disapproval: silence and secrecy can only nurture bullying. Any incident of bullying must be taken seriously, no matter how trivial it may seem at first glance, and action must be considered but speedy and sensitive, being careful not to worsen the situation (remember pupils will fear recognition and also fear being blamed if a pupil is expelled or suspended).

7. Signs and Symptoms

7.1 A child may indicate by signs of behaviour that he/she is being bullied. Some particular signs to be aware of would include:

- frequent absence or isolation
- does not want to go to school/ erratic attendance
- becomes anxious or withdrawn
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- being persistently late to class, games or prep
- mystery illnesses
- unexplained cuts/bruises
- torn and damaged clothing/belongings
- mislaid books/belongings
- under-achievement
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what is wrong

- personality changes, swings of mood
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs and behaviour could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

7.2 Vigilance by teachers is crucial in countering bullying as well as education around the issue of bullying. Be aware of areas where bullying behaviour might occur, such as changing areas or distant dormitories and patrol them.

Do not think in stereotypes about 'big tough bullies' and 'natural victims'.

Look for wider evidence. Try to be tuned in to your tutor group/ class/ form, conversing regularly, and above all be approachable and willing to listen with a sympathetic ear.

Consider patterns of attendance, academic achievement (especially when discussing merits and conducts), be aware of physical appearance and alert to mood swings.

8.Counter-bullying

8.1 The encouragement of all lines of communication between pupils and staff is essential. Pupils should make good use of the strong pastoral system and other available staff (including senior management and administrative staff) and raise any concerns you may have.

Pupils must also be aware of outside sources of advice (the Outside Contact Person and Childline numbers are displayed). We have an ethos that encourages people to speak up and we must listen with care.

8.2 The school's behaviour policy is crucial to a consistent approach to anti-bullying and details support systems for both victim and the bully, alongside the sanctions which may be applied for bullying.

9.Action: a clear response

9.1 Despite all attempts to be proactive we are likely to encounter bullying. Please remember that bullying may occur in a variety of ways and do not walk away from it. Any incident of bullying must be taken seriously, and action must be considered but speedy. However, action must be sensitive, seeking not to worsen the situation.

10.Procedures (A checklist of action) - Please see appendices

10.1 This policy is also applicable to the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and age appropriate methods of resolution will be used in the first instance.

10.2 Staff should also use the words of this document and the Counter-Bullying statement to reinforce the common stance at all schools and to help pupils understand the impact of their behaviour.

10.3 It is hoped that sensible discussion will end most incidences of bullying. However, punishment will also be applied where necessary, in line with our Rewards and Sanction Policy, as we cannot tolerate individuals who will not respond to correction.

Where the happiness of other pupils is involved, we will act punitively to protect the individual and the community.

Beyond attempts to educate, pupils will lose privileges, and this may involve suspension, a request to leave the school or expulsion.

10.4 Action may include informing parents and working with the parents to ensure a consistent approach to the problem. It should be made clear to the perpetrator what the sanctions are and what the consequences of repeated actions or failure to improve behaviour will be.

11. Conclusion

11.1 We aim to create an environment intolerant of bullying and in which each individual is valued, by generating a culture of kindness and being active in preventing bullying. When we detect bullying, we respond in a planned fashion. We hope to help pupils involved in bullying to mature and move forward. We would expect suitable and meaningful apologies to be made. Every child has the right to enjoy all aspects of his or her education. In the final analysis, the Headmaster would take serious action against those who undermine the community and threaten the happiness of its members. We will continue to promote respect for the individual and take a firm stance when this is threatened.

11.2 A linked policy focuses further on Cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is the use of ICT to harass and upset. Any such actions are wrong, are a breach of the Acceptable Use Policy, and they may be illegal actions. Any Cyber-bullying will be dealt with in line with our Counter-Bullying Policy, but actions may need to be referred to external agencies if they involve harassment, publication of obscene material and illegal activity. The DHM coordinates the work of E-Safety Officers to safeguard the community at the College, this role is fulfilled by the ICT Co-ordinator at the Preparatory School and Head of ICT at The Paragon.

11.3 In all areas we aim to foster a culture of kindness, foster a belief in the worth of every individual and counter unacceptable behaviour. Where breaches occur, we will act in a measured fashion to counter them. Other related policies:

Complaints; Behaviour; Rewards and Sanctions; Equal Opportunities, Cyber-bullying, E-safety. [For further reference see DCSF Guidance on the prevention of bullying – Safe to Learn – Embedding anti-bullying work in schools.]

APPENDIX 1. PROCEDURES (a checklist of action)

You come across an incident that causes concern. What do you do?

- a) Intervene. Stop the incident/interaction. Make it plain that you are concerned at what you have witnessed. Do not leap to any conclusions. Remain calm, you are in charge. Do not make the situation worse, for example by humiliating the bully (as this may lead to reprisals). Take stock of the situation and defuse it.
- b) Make it plain that you disapprove of what you have witnessed. Indicate that you will be reporting the matter (If you are responding to information alleging bullying, use an Incident Form to initiate the process and tell the informant of progress.)
- c) Record the incident. This is important to enable patterns to be identified. Use an Incident Form to state what you saw and your impressions. Give this to the tutor and Deputy Head and provide any additional (verbal) explanation. Do this promptly. The key is to pass the information on and be confident that it will be handled sensitively.
- d) Each allegation of bullying will be carefully investigated with open discussion:
 - Once an action plan is agreed, the pupils involved will be interviewed separately and asked simple questions about the incident. Staff should listen carefully, recording everything, asking appropriate questions without leading the pupil.
 - It is likely that a second meeting, where the pupils discuss the issues together with you and a colleague present, would be helpful. Explanation and discussion may prevent further problems, as we try to effect change and raise necessary self-awareness.
 - Try to achieve some mutual recognition of the problem and identify a way forward.
 - We recognise that all parties will need support if we are to move forward and this may take some time to be successful.
- e) Senior staff should be informed of the outcome of the investigation and a copy of the form should be kept in the School Office.
 Parents should be included in the process - ensuring they are both informed of the behaviour and aware of the school's response.
 The teacher reporting the incident will also be informed of the outcome.

- f) After the investigation is complete and the incident dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeat bullying does not take place.