Jessie Younghusband School
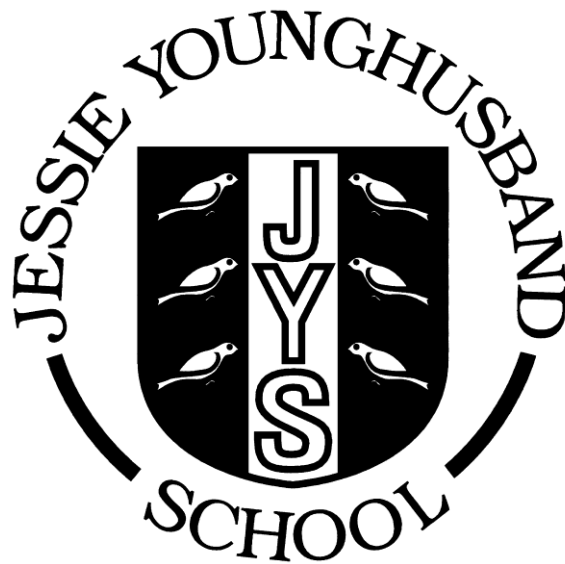

Anti-Bullying Policy

Agreed Spring 2024
Review Spring 2026

Aspire ~ Respect ~ Enjoy

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

At JYS we work to provide a secure and happy learning environment, in which everyone can achieve to their full potential. We strive to promote our pupil's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, together with their physical development, in order to equip them to be thoughtful, caring and active citizens in our school community and in the wider society.

We recognise that positive physical and emotional well-being is fundamental in enabling our pupils to thrive and we are therefore committed to following a clear policy against bullying.

All pupils, staff and parents should be aware of the negative effects that bullying can have on individuals and the school community, and should work together towards ensuring that pupils can learn in an environment without fear.

Bullying is unacceptable in this school and will not be tolerated.

Aims of the Policy

Whilst we strive to prevent bullying from occurring at JYS, we understand that bullying can happen anywhere. Therefore, the purpose of this policy is to ensure that all pupils and staff are clear about what bullying is and how we deal positively and promptly with incidents of bullying which do arise.

We aim to create an environment where the pupils can grow and flourish without fear. Each pupil has the right to be safe in and out of school and to be protected if they are feeling vulnerable.

At JYS we aim to:

- ensure that children learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment, without fear of being bullied;
- demonstrate that the school takes bullying seriously and that it will not be tolerated;
- take measures to prevent all forms of bullying in school and during off-site activities;
- support everyone in actions to identify and protect those who might be bullied;
- clarify for all pupils and staff that bullying is wholly and always unacceptable;
- demonstrate that the safety and happiness of pupils is paramount;
- promote an environment where children feel they can trust and tell adults if they are being bullied or know about any bullying;
- promote positive attitudes in pupils;
- ensure that all staff are aware of their duty of care over those in their charge and the need to be alert to signs of bullying;
- ensure that all staff are aware of procedures through regular training.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally (DfE 2014).

Bullying can take many forms and all should be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Bullying can take place between pupils, between staff and pupils, or between staff; by individuals or groups; face to face, indirectly or using a range of cyberbullying methods.

Four main types of bullying can be identified:

Physical – by being punched, pushed, hit, kicked or hurt; made to give up money or belongings; having property, clothes or belongings damaged, taken or hidden; being forced to do something they don't want to do.

Verbal – by being teased in a nasty way; called gay (whether or not it's true); insulted about their race, religion or culture; called names in other ways; having unkind notes or messages about them written or sent (including cyber-bullying); or having other offensive comments directed at them.

Indirect – by others being intentionally unfriendly, ignoring them or leaving them out/excluding them from groups; by others telling nasty stories or spreading rumours about them.

Electronic / 'Cyberbullying' – via text message; via instant messenger services and social media sites; via email; via images or videos posted on the internet or spread via mobile phones; via threatening phone calls.

Specific Types of Bullying

The school recognises that although anyone can be bullied for almost any reason or difference, some children and young people may be more vulnerable to bullying than others. Research has identified various different types of bullying experienced by particular vulnerable groups of children and young people. These include bullying related to:

● ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds;
● gender;
● gender identity;
● sexual identity;
● special educational needs and disabilities;
● being gifted or talented;
● appearance or health conditions;
● home circumstances e.g. young carers or looked–after children.

(See Appendix A - Specific Types of Bullying)

All staff should understand that bullying can be motivated by prejudice against particular groups. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Roles within Bullying

The school recognises that bullying is a complex type of behaviour occurring between individuals and groups, where there is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. Different roles within bullying situations can be identified and include:

● The ring-leader, who rely on social power and domination and who through their position of power can direct bullying activity;

- Assistants/Associates, who actively join in the bullying (sometimes because they are afraid of the ring-leader);
- Reinforcers, who give positive feedback to those who are bullying, perhaps by smiling or laughing;
- Outsiders/Bystanders, who are aware that bullying is taking place but who stay back or stay silent, feeling unable to do anything about it, and thereby appear to condone or collude with the bullying behaviour;
- Defenders, who try and intervene to stop the bullying or comfort pupils who experience bullying.

Some children and young people can adopt different roles simultaneously or at different times e.g. a bullied child might be bullying another child at the same time, or a 'reinforcer' might become a 'defender' when the ringleader is not around.

Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

The school recognises the fact that some children and young people are more vulnerable to bullying than others and we are sensitive to the changes of behaviour that may indicate that a child or young person is being bullied.

Pupils who are being bullied may demonstrate physical, emotional and behavioural problems. The following physical signs and behaviour could indicate other problems but bullying will be considered as a possibility:

- Regularly feels ill in the mornings;
- Being frightened of walking to or from school;
- Unwilling to go to school, development of school phobia and unusual patterns of non-attendance;
- Losing self-confidence and self-esteem;
- Being frightened to say what's wrong;
- Developing unexplained cuts, bruises and other injuries;
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious and losing concentration;
- Failing to achieve potential in school work;
- Becoming isolated and disengaged from peers;
- Developing changes in physical behaviour such as stammering and nervous ticks;
- Regularly having books or clothes destroyed;
- Having possessions go 'missing' or 'lost' including packed lunch and money;
- Starting to steal money (to pay the perpetrator);
- Becoming easily distressed, disruptive or aggressive;
- Developing problems with eating and food;
- Running away;
- Crying themselves to sleep at night; developing sleep problems such as nightmares; bedwetting.

All staff should be aware of these possibilities, investigate any suspicions of bullying promptly and liaise with parents and carers as well as other members of the staff team, for example the Learning Mentor, SENCo, lunchtime supervisors.

Recognising Reasons Why Children and Young People May Bully

The school recognises the fact that children and young people may bully for a variety of reasons. Understanding these reasons enables staff to intervene at an early stage to respond to incidents of bullying as they occur and to prevent the likelihood of repeated bullying occurring.

We believe that understanding the emotional health and wellbeing of a child who is demonstrating bullying behaviours is key to selecting the right responsive strategies and to engaging the right support either internal or external.

Possible reasons why some pupils may engage in bullying include:

● Struggling to cope with a difficult personal situation e.g. bereavement, changes in family circumstances;
● Liking the feeling of power and using bullying behaviour to get their own way;
● Having a temperament that may be aggressive, quick tempered or jealous;
● Having been abused or bullied in some way themselves;
● Feeling frustrated, insecure, inadequate, humiliated;
● Finding it difficult to socialise and make friends;
● Being overly self-orientated (possibly displaying excessive self-esteem) and finding it difficult to empathise with the needs of others;
● Being unable to resist negative peer pressure;
● Being under pressure to succeed at all costs.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff need to be aware of the:

● definition of bullying and the different types of bullying behaviours;
● signs and symptoms which may be displayed by pupils who are being bullied;
● reasons why pupils may demonstrate bullying behaviours towards others;
● importance of not having a prejudiced image of which children are likely to be bullied or to be carrying out bullying behaviours;
● importance of taking any incident of bullying seriously and dealing with it in a calm manner;
● necessity of listening carefully to children's reports and considering all points of view;
● need to know where bullying might occur and to be vigilant and mobile when on playground duty to reduce the number of lightly supervised areas;
● importance of no child feeling he/she is being 'picked on' or 'belittled' by an adult in the school;
● necessity of taking extra care with vulnerable children (including new children to our school or those who are different in appearance, speech or background from other children).

Midday meals supervisors verbally communicate any issues from lunchtime playtime with the relevant class teachers daily. There is also a log book for midday meal supervisors to report any serious issues or incidents in. This is seen by the Headteacher regularly and any necessary action is taken swiftly.

A briefing meeting is held each week before school, during which any vulnerable children, friendship issues or concerns can be discussed and communicated with the wider staff team as necessary.

We recognise that bullying behaviours can be perpetrated outside of school and may then spill over into school life. Staff will do what is reasonably practicable to eliminate any such bullying, through discussion with pupils and parents.

Anti-bullying Education in the Curriculum

Our school values of **Aspire ~ Respect ~ Enjoy** are revisited at the start of each academic year, and throughout the year, to ensure that all children know what is expected of them. Classroom displays celebrating these values are also up permanently in every year group. The Behaviour Policy and Code of Conduct are based around these values.

Individual class rules are also established at the start of each year, linking closely to the school values and promoting positive behaviour. These rules are referred to regularly.

At JYS we recognise the role of the PSHE curriculum in preventative work on bullying. Our PSHE curriculum supports the development of pupils' self-esteem and their emotional resilience and ability to empathise with others. The curriculum provides opportunities for children to learn and develop the skills to identify, manage and challenge incidents of bullying, as well as providing opportunities for them to learn about bullying in relation to the wider context of diversity and inclusion.

We adopt the Primary Cambridgeshire Personal Development Programme for PSHE and Citizenship in which learning related to bullying, diversity and difference is covered within themes such as 'Myself and My Relationships', 'Citizenship' and 'Healthy and Safer Lifestyles'.

PSHE learning and teaching activities enable pupils to develop positive skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that celebrate diversity and help to prevent bullying. They are taught to recognise, understand, handle and appropriately express their emotions. They learn to understand factors that contribute to positive self-esteem and explore strategies for working together with others in a variety of contexts.

'Friendship Week' (timed to coincide with National Anti-bullying Week) is revisited in November each year. This provides an annual intensive, focussed week on the subject of recognising and combating bullying. There is a whole school approach to this celebration with assemblies and planned class activities to raise the awareness of bullying issues. The children are reminded of the definition of bullying as "when someone (or a group of people) says or does something that is intentionally hurtful **s**everal **t**imes **o**n **p**urpose." The 'STOP' acronym is used to help the children remember this.

S – several

T – times

O – on

P – purpose

Children should use this and hold up their hand if a child (or children) is doing something they do not like or makes them feel uncomfortable. We also remind pupils that bullying is different from the small, one-off disagreements or minor fallings out that friends have with each other from time to time.

An 'Anti-bullying reminder' poster is displayed in each classroom, for the class teachers and pupils to refer to and discuss on an on-going basis. This clearly states our school's commitment to saying 'NO' to bullying of all forms and it reminds both staff and children that all members of our school community must work together to achieve this. See Appendix B – Anti-bullying reminder poster.

The School Council are involved in developing the school's Behaviour Policy and Code of Conduct. The Anti-Bullying Policy will be discussed with them and their views on how to address the issue of bullying with the children across the school will then be taken forward in response to the policy.

Internet Safety is part of the Computing curriculum throughout the school and the children are taught age-appropriate strategies for keeping safe in the virtual world. In upper Key Stage 2 this includes discussions of how the use of mobile phones and social media websites can be used as a tool for bullying. Pupils explore strategies for preventing cyber-bullying and are taught how to deal with incidents if they do arise. In addition, when possible, a police liaison officer visits school to talk with the children about Internet Safety issues. The school also gets actively involved in the annual Locality e-Safety week which has a focus on safe use of the internet to include the effects of cyber-bullying.

Children are not allowed to bring mobile phones into school, either during the course of a normal school day or for a special event such as a school disco. In exceptional circumstances, parents may ask the Headteacher to give permission for their child to bring a mobile phone to school, and if this is granted, the phone is then kept in the office throughout the school day.

Children are well-supervised by adults at school, so as to minimise the possibility of bullying occurring. There are structured games and activities organised as well as resources provided for more self-initiated play the aim is to promote good levels of activity and to promote team work and positive friendship skills.

Through class and group discussions, as well as talking with individuals, any problems that do arise either in the classroom or in the playground are tackled quickly by adults in school.

Dealing with Bullying Behaviour – A Restorative Approach

Where appropriate and in most cases of bullying, at JYS we will initially consider the use of a Restorative Approach to resolve the situation.

We believe that all bullying is unacceptable but that many children who display anti-social behaviour and lack empathy for others can be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and change their behaviour for the long term.

The Restorative Approach involves perpetrators of bullying focusing on their unacceptable behaviour in an emotionally intelligent way and ensures that they are held to account for their behaviour by enabling them to:

- accept responsibility for the harm caused to the individual being bullied;
- recognise that harm may also be caused to others associated with the individual who has been bullied (for example staff, friends or family);
- recognise the need to take action to begin to repair the harm caused;
- agree a range of helpful actions to repair the harm caused, which will be monitored over an agreed period of time.

This learning process may happen in the form of one-to-one conversations with the class teacher or another member of staff, or within a 'support group' setting (see Appendix C – The Support Group Method).

Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

The Headteacher must be advised of any incidents where bullying or suspected bullying is reported.

The following steps should be followed:

1. A child reports bullying, or reports behaviour that is suspected of being bullying, as defined in this policy. The child may be reporting an incident of bullying towards themselves or someone else. The adult receiving the information should acknowledge their concerns, record the details and report these to the class teacher.
2. The class teacher should then discuss this with the child who reported the bullying and find out as much about the situation as possible. This includes discussions with other children who may be involved or may have seen some or all of any incidents reported.
3. The class teacher should then discuss the report with any other adults who have been involved or may have directly witnessed the incident or behaviour.
4. The class teacher, or another nominated person, will meet with the child whose behaviour has been reported and they will be given a chance to respond to the report and to share their point of view. The 'Anti-bullying reminder' poster will be used to remind the child of the definition of bullying and they will be told that bullying is not tolerated at this school.
5. If, at the end of this conversation, it is still believed that bullying has occurred, the child's parents will be informed and the class teacher, or nominated person, will decide the most appropriate way of helping the child who is demonstrating the bullying behaviour, using the restorative approach. They may meet with the child whose behaviour has been reported individually or within a 'support group' setting. The child will encouraged to accept responsibility for the harm caused to the individual being bullied and to recognise the need to take action to begin to repair the harm caused (for example by writing a letter of apology). The member of staff will work with the child to agree some helpful actions to repair the harm caused, which will be monitored over an agreed period of time.
6. The Headteacher should be informed and a brief note compiled for future reference in respect of any reports of bullying as soon as possible. This should be followed up as the process above evolves. Notes should be made by the adult dealing with the situation of key points arising and any actions taken. These notes will be handed to the Headteacher and retained in the file in the Headteacher's office.
7. If this behaviour continues, the child involved and their parents may be asked to meet with the Deputy Headteacher or Headteacher.

Dealing with Bullying Behaviour - Sanctions

Depending on the outcome of the actions in steps 1 to 5 above, sanctions may be appropriate. These will be applied fairly and proportionately, in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy, taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities that children may have and taking into consideration the needs of vulnerable children.

Bullying by children with disabilities or SEN is no more acceptable than bullying by other children. However, for a sanction to be reasonable and lawful, we will take account of the nature of the child's disability or SEN and the extent to which they understand and are in control of what they are doing. It may be appropriate to consider an individual response in these situations but bullying behaviour will not be tolerated.

Disciplinary sanctions are intended to:

- impress on the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable;
- deter him/her from repeating that behaviour;
- signal to other pupils that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

The consequences of bullying should reflect the seriousness of the incident. At JYS, we take verbal and indirect bullying as seriously as physical bullying.

When deciding upon appropriate sanctions for bullying we will ensure that the sanctions address bullying behaviour in a way which does not lead to an escalation of the behaviour but instead supports a resolution to the problem. In line with our restorative approach, sanctions for bullying are intended to hold the pupil to account for their behaviour and ensure that they face up to the harm they have caused and learn from it. They also provide an opportunity for the pupil to put right the harm they have caused.

The following sanctions may be appropriate:

A. Following the sanctions set out in the Behaviour Policy, if this is determined to be the most appropriate action. This may be the case if this is the first reported incident or, in discussions with those involved, this is felt to be enough.
B. If it is found after further investigation that bullying has happened, may have happened or if the outcome is unclear, the class teacher will meet with the parents of the child whose behaviour has been reported, to 'flag up' the concern.
C. The class teacher should give a reminder to the child whose behaviour has been reported to help them to make better choices with their behaviour. This could include informing the child and their parents that if that sort of behaviour occurs again it will be considered as bullying (if appropriate to the situation).
D. If it is found that there has been on-going behaviour which is bullying, it will be made very clear that this behaviour is unacceptable. The parents of both the victim and the child who is demonstrating bullying behaviours will be contacted and asked to meet separately with the class teacher or if this is a serious on-going problem with the Deputy Headteacher. Where ever possible this will happen on the day the incident is reported or by the following day if parents are not available.
E. Links to advice provided by the Anti-Bullying Alliance and Kidscape will be provided to both sets of parents (see Appendix D – Useful Links). The appropriate support (dependent on the nature of the bullying) will be identified and followed up by the school. This may be through the Learning Mentor or through targeted intervention.
F. In meeting with the parents of the child whose behaviour is of concern, the school will seek to set out the nature of the concern but will not share any specific information about any other children involved. It will be made clear that bullying is not tolerated and that the school will need to put strategies in place to prevent this from happening again.
G. The school will consider what available pastoral support may be useful in supporting the children involved; this could be friendship groups, agreeing plans for break times (such as accessing lunch club or having nominated adult(s) to confide in).
H. If there is a further incident or the situation does not improve, the child who is showing the bullying behaviour will be put on a weekly report card as a reminder about the behaviour which is expected. This should be used in a positive way to recognise where good choices have been made and to identify reasons where unacceptable choices have been made.

I. In addition to the use of a weekly report card, the child who is showing the bullying behaviour may be removed or separated from other individuals or peer groups for certain activities or key points in the day (such as break times or lunch times). They may also have privileges withdrawn.

J. A referral to the LBAT (Leaning and Behaviour Advisor Team) or other agencies, if the criteria for referral are met.

K. In the case of more serious or persistent bullying, where the perpetrator has not responded to the restorative strategies (see above) or sanctions, this could lead to an exclusion from school. Should this be considered, the WSCC Policy and guidance for exclusions will be followed.

Further relevant information can be found in the school's:

- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Appendix A - Specific Types of Bullying
- Appendix B – 'Anti-bullying reminder' Poster
- Appendix C – The Support Group Method
- Appendix D – Useful Links

Bullying Forms and Types

Forms of Bullying

Bullying behaviour across all types of bullying can represent itself in a number of different forms. Children and young people can be bullied in ways that are:

Physical – by being punched, pushed or hurt; made to give up money or belongings; having property, clothes or belongings damaged; being forced to do something they don't want to do.

Verbal – by being teased in a nasty way; called gay (whether or not it's true); insulted about their race, religion or culture; called names in other ways or having offensive comments directed at them.

Indirect – by having nasty stories told about then; being left out, ignored or excluded from groups.

Electronic / 'cyberbullying' – 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 phones.

Types of Bullying

The term 'prejudice-related' bullying refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, physical or emotional or both, which causes someone to feel powerless, worthless, excluded or marginalised, and which is connected with prejudices around belonging, identity and equality in wider society – in particular, prejudices to do with:

❏ ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds

❏ gender

❏ gender identity

❏ sexual identity

❏ special educational needs and disabilities

The above are defined by the Equality Act 2010 as 'protected characteristics' and children and young people can have or be perceived to have more than one 'protected characteristic' and as a result may be bullied because of a number of prejudices.

Schools are advised to log all incidents of racist, sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic (HBT), faith- and disability-related bullying and report them on a regular basis (termly) on the PRIDE website: https://pride.learntogether.org.uk/

This enables the local authority to monitor the occurrence of incidents and identify underlying trends in prejudice-related bullying so that appropriate and relevant training and support can be provided to schools. It is important to note that all incidents that are identified as potentially prejudice-related must be recorded, reported and investigated as such. The definition of a prejudice-related incident is derived from The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (1999) definition of a racist incident: ". any incident which is perceived to be prejudice-related [racist] by the victim or any other person."

In addition to prejudice-related bullying linked with one or more of the 'protected characteristics', children and young people can be made to feel worthless, excluded or marginalised because of other prejudices relating to their home life, for example in relation to issues of care, parental occupation, poverty and social class.

Bullying related to ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds

Racist or faith-based bullying is bullying based on a person's ethnic background, colour, religion or cultural heritage. Some surveys and focus groups have found that a high proportion of bullied pupils have experienced racist or faith-based bullying. Recent political and social issues also appear to have been a factor in the rise in this type of bullying and harassment. There is research to support the suggestion that where Black and minority ethnic (BME) children experience bullying, it is more likely to be severe bullying. Moreover, bullying incidents can be a subset of the indirect and direct racist hostility which BME children, children of different faiths and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller (GRT) children can experience in a number of situations.

When racist or faith-based bullying takes place, the characteristics singled out not only apply to the individual child but also make reference to their family and more broadly their ethnic or faith community as a whole. Racist and cultural dimensions in bullying can be seen to heighten the negative impact on a child's sense of identity, self- worth and self-esteem.

Bullying related to gender

Sexist and sexual bullying affects all genders. Sexist bullying is based on sexist attitudes that when expressed demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Gender stereotyping can also have a negative impact on children and young people in that it can limit their aspirations and can make them feel they should not or cannot do certain things, e.g. 'boys don't do ballet' or 'girls can't play football'. 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.

Bullying related to gender identity

Children and young people who do not conform to gender stereotypes or who do not identify with the binary construct of gender (i.e who identify as non-binary), those identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria (feeling that they belong to another gender or do not conform with the birth sex ascribed to them) can become targets of transphobic bullying. Gender identity is often confused with sexual identity and so children and young people who do not conform to their perceived gender can also be subjected to homophobic and biphobic bullying. For this reason, homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying are commonly linked together as 'HBT' bullying.

Bullying related to sexual identity or orientation

Homophobic and biphobic bullying involves the targeting of individuals on the basis of their perceived or actual sexual orientation. Evidence of homophobic and biphobic bullying suggests that children and young people who are gay, lesbian or bisexual (or perceived to be) face a higher risk of victimisation than their peers. Homophobic and biphobic 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 young person may not want to report bullying if it means "coming out" to teachers and parents before they are ready to.

Homophobic and biphobic bullying includes all forms of bullying but in particular it can include:

- Verbal abuse - the regular use, consciously or unconsciously, of offensive and discriminatory language, particularly the widespread use of the term 'gay' in a negative context; biphobic abuse such as 'don't be greedy' or 'make your mind up'; also spreading rumours that cause an individual's perceived sexual orientation to be ridiculed, questioned or insulted
- Physical abuse – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault and threatening behaviour
- Cyberbullying – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. Can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

Bullying related to special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)

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 special educational needs 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. Where children with SEN and disabilities are themselves found to be bullying, in most cases (except those related to specific conditions) schools should expect the same standards of behaviour as those which apply to the rest of the school community, having made the reasonable adjustments necessary.

Bullying related to gifted and talented children and young people

Children and young people who are gifted and talented can be vulnerable to bullying. Their achievements, different interests and advanced abilities can set them apart from their peers and can lead to a sense of not 'fitting in' and feelings of isolation. Their talents and abilities may cause feelings of resentment and jealousy among their peers which may make them targets for bullying behaviour.

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.

Bullying of young carers or looked after children or otherwise linked to home circumstances

Children and young people 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 their not living with their birth parents or because they have fallen behind in their studies. Some children and young people 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.

At JYS we are working together to say 'NO' to bullying.

We define bullying as 'The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power'.

Repetitive — Intentional — Hurtful — Power imbalance

Several Times — On Purpose

We use the 'STOP' acronym to remind us that bullying is 'the intentional hurting of a person Several Times On Purpose' and that it is different from a one-off disagreement or falling-out between friends.

STOP

CHANGE STARTS WITH US

Cambridgeshire Primary Personal Development Programme Toolkits - Anti-bullying

5A The Support Group Method

The Support Group Method, developed by Barbara Maines and George Robinson, was first outlined in **Educational Psychology in Practice** (1991). The approach addresses bullying by forming a support group of children and young people who have been bullying and/or have been involved as bystanders. It uses a problem-solving approach, without apportioning blame, giving responsibility to the group to solve the problem and to report back at a subsequent review meeting.

The process does rely upon the 'discovery' of an incident. Schools should concentrate on openness and an ethos that supports peers in seeking help for targets without suffering the stigma of 'telling'. When bullying has been observed or reported, then The Support Group Method offers a simple seven-step procedure, which can be used by a teacher or other facilitator.

The Support Group Method is a well recognised approach used in many schools and local authorities across the country. The approach was originally called 'The No Blame Approach' but has recently had a change of name due to misconceptions regarding the process because of the use of the words 'no blame'. The process does in fact enable those that bully to acknowledge the damage caused to others by their behaviour and supports those that are bullying to develop empathy for others and take responsibility for changing their behaviour. It is suggested that schools keep as closely as possible to the steps outlined in the process as this is a proven process and alterations to the protocol may jeopardize the positive effects of the process. However, after having piloted this process, schools may feel that some small adjustments are required to ensure that the programme suits the needs of their school and individual children and young people.

Step one – talk with the targeted pupil

The aim of this step:
1. To understand the pain experienced by the person who has been bullied;
2. To explain the method and gain permission to proceed;
3. To discuss who will make up The Support Group;
4. To agree what will be recounted to the group.

When the facilitator finds out that bullying has happened, they start by talking to the person who has been bullied. During this conversation the listener encourages them to describe how they feel with reflective comments such as, *That must be very hard for you ... So you have felt really upset.*

The purpose is not to discover factual evidence about this or other events; if the person wants to include evidence in the account this is always reframed to establish the resulting distress. For example a comment like, *They have all been ignoring me, nobody will talk to me*, might be replied to with a response like, *So, you felt really lonely and you were upset that you had nobody to talk to*. At this point the facilitator will have enough of the picture to be able to recount a story which will illustrate the harm experienced by the person who has been bullied.

It is important that the person being bullied understands and gives consent to the process. Sometimes there may be a fear that it could lead to further torment but when the non-punitive aspect is fully explained they usually feel safe, and relieved that something is being done. They may want the perpetrators to understand how much distress has been caused. Talking to someone else who has been through the experience might give further reassurance.

The person who is being bullied will help the facilitator to select the group members by asking who has been causing the harm and subsequently inquiring for names of colluders, observers and potential rescuers. The questions might be:
Who has been doing this to you?
Who else joined in?
Who watched and knows this is happening but did not join in?
Who is a friend or somebody really popular who would want to help?

It is very important to build the group to include all these roles. The facilitator should end the meeting by:
• Checking that nothing confidential has been discussed which should not be disclosed to the group.
• Inviting the person to produce a piece of writing or a picture which will illustrate their unhappiness.
• Offering the person an opportunity to talk again at any time during the procedure if things are not going well. This could be arranged by ensuring some easy contact point at the same time each day or by agreeing how a message could be delivered.
A discreet and useful way of monitoring how the targeted person is feeling is to introduce them to a secret thumbs up or thumbs down signal which they can use to convey how they are feeling. It is important that, although no meeting is planned until the follow-up, the person does have access should something go wrong in the intervening period.

The person who is being bullied is not invited to join the group to present their own account, as it is possible that they will make accusations, provoke denial or justification and undermine the problem-solving approach. It is up to the facilitator to act as the advocate for the target.

Step two – convene a meeting with the people involved

The facilitator arranges to meet with the group of pupils who have been involved and suggested by the person who has been bullied. A group of six to eight works well. This is an opportunity for the facilitator to use their judgement to balance the group so that helpful and reliable young people are included alongside those whose behaviour has been causing distress.

The aim is to use the strengths of group members to bring about the best outcome.

In order to establish a welcoming environment atmosphere the meeting should be arranged in school time in a comfortable room, and the facilitator should greet the participants and thank them for coming. Refreshments can be offered to emphasis that this group is important.

Step three – explain the problem

The facilitator starts by telling the group that they, the facilitator have a problem – they are worried about 'John' who is having a very hard time at the moment. By asking the group to listen to the facilitator's worries, the facilitator can divert some suspicion or irritation which might be directed towards the target. The facilitator has a duty of care and this meeting is called to help the facilitator fulfil that duty.

The facilitator recounts the story of 'John's' unhappiness and uses the piece of writing or a drawing to emphasise their distress. At no time does the facilitator discuss the details of the incidents or allocate blame to the group.

Step four – share responsibility

When the account is finished, the listeners may look downcast or uncomfortable and be uncertain about the reason for the meeting. Some may be anxious about possible punishment. The facilitator makes a change in the mood here by stating explicitly that:
• No-one is in trouble or going to be punished;
• It is the facilitator's responsibility to help 'John' to be happy and safe but this can not be achieved without the group's help;
• The group has been convened to help solve the problem.

Step five – ask the group members for their ideas

Group members are usually genuinely moved by the account of their peer's distress and relieved that they are not in trouble. No-one has been pushed into a defensive corner by accusations and the power of the group has shifted from the "bully leader" to the group as a whole, whose members withdraw consent for the behaviour to continue.

Each member of the group is then encouraged to suggest a way in which 'John' could be helped to feel happier. These ideas are stated in the "I" language of intention. *I will walk to school with him*; *I will ask him to sit with me at dinner*. Ideas are owned by the group members and not imposed by the facilitator. The facilitator makes positive responses but does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

The facilitator may want to record the group's ideas in order to validate the efforts made by the group member. The facilitator may want to use some prepared certificates that record appreciation of each group member and allow for a space to record the suggestion.

Thank you to .... for joining a group to help support a peer who is unhappy, and making the suggestion:
'I could ... '

Step six – leave it up to them

The facilitator ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. The facilitator thanks the group members, expresses confidence in a positive outcome and arranges to meet with them again to see how things are going. As a way of monitoring ongoing progress, the facilitator may want to introduce the group members to a secret thumbs up or thumbs down signal as a discrete way of enabling them to communicate any concerns that may arise regarding the targeted pupil's welfare.

Step seven – meet them again

About a week later, the facilitator discusses with each pupil, including the person who has been bullied, how things have been going. This allows the facilitator to monitor the bullying and keeps the young people involved in the process.

These meetings are with one group member at a time so that each can give a statement about their contribution without creating a competitive atmosphere. It does not matter if everyone has not kept to his or her intention, as long as the bullying has stopped. The person who has been bullied does not have to become the most popular person in school, just to be safe and happy.

The above description of The Support Group Method is taken from **Bullying: A Complete Guide to The Support Group Method** Robinson and Maines 2008 SAGE Publications Ltd.

Appendix D - Useful Links and Advice

https://childline.org.uk

Freephone: 0800 1111

It is a confidential helpline and the phone call is free.

Other useful links:

Advice from the Anti-Bullying Alliance - http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/advice/children-young-people/.

Don't Bully Me! – Advice for Primary Age Children by Kidscape (2015) – downloadable from https://www.kidscape.org.uk/media/1390/don_t_bully_me_web_version.pdf

Useful Links to Information for Parents and Families

Advice from the Anti-Bullying Alliance - https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/advice-parents

Advice from Kidscape - https://www.kidscape.org.uk/advice/advice-for-parents-and-carers/.