ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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1.0   INTRODUCTION

1.1   Bullying

Bullying is an anti-social behaviour, which affects everyone. It is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated. Everyone in our community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that they see or become aware of. These reports will always be taken seriously.

1.2   Aims of this Policy

The aim is to prevent and address bullying of any sort and to ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. All members of our school community, including, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/ carers should have an understanding of what bullying is, and be familiar with our school policy on bullying. Therefore, the main aim of this policy is to help members of our school community to deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly, to prevent it.

1.3   A Safe and Secure Learning Environment

To protect the rights of all pupils to have a safe and secure learning environment, The Willows School will continuously work towards preventing acts of bullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence. This is because these behaviours are unacceptable and interfere with our school's ability to educate children, and a child's ability to learn. If such a case arises, the staff at The Willows School will follow the anti-bullying guidelines in this policy.

This will enable staff to:

- Identify pupils displaying unacceptable behaviour and know how to support them in order that they develop the necessary, knowledge, understanding and skills to contribute to our school community in a positive way;
- Keep all other children safe, happy and confident.

1.4   Legal Framework

This policy has due regard for all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education Act 2011
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Public Order Act 1986
- Communications Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act1998

1.5   Guidance

This policy has been written in accordance with guidance, including, but not limited to:

- DfE 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' Advice for Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies, July 2017
- DfE 'Keeping children safe in education', 2023
- DfE 'Behaviour in Schools – Advice for Head Teachers and School Staff, Feb 2024
- DfE 'Mental Health and Well-being Provision in Schools', 2018
- DfE 'Cyber Bullying – Advice for Head Teachers and School Staff, 2014

2.0   TERMINOLOGY

2.1   Definition of Bullying

For the purpose of this policy, 'bullying' is defined as persistent behaviour by one individual or a group with the intention of harming another person or group, either verbally, physically or emotionally. All children have disagreements from time to time, but these are not classed as bullying and are dealt with through the Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy.

2.2   Characteristics of Bullying

Bullying is generally characterised by:

- Repetition: incidents that are not one-off; they are frequent and happen over a period of time.
- Intent: the perpetrator(s) intend to cause harm deliberately, either emotional, verbal or physical; it is not accidental.
- Targeting: bullying is usually targeted at a specific individual or group.
- Power imbalance: whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relationships.

Vulnerable pupils are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people may have towards those who are different from themselves.

2.3   Definition of Cyber-Bullying

Cyber-bullying is the use of technology such as mobile phones, email, chat rooms or social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, X (formerly Twitter) or Tik Tok to harass, threaten, embarrass, intimidate or target someone.

Unlike physical bullying, cyber-bullying can often be difficult to track as the cyber-bully (the person responsible for the acts of cyber-bullying) can remain anonymous when threatening others online, encouraging them to behave more aggressively than they might do face-to-face.

2.4 Types of Bullying

➢ **Physical Bullying:** deliberately physically hurting certain children on a regular basis.

➢ **Verbal Bullying:** deliberately hurting feelings through name-calling etc.

➢ **Ostracising**: making someone feel left out and different by deliberately setting out to exclude them.

➢ **Racist Bullying:** bullying another person based on their skin colour, ethnic background or religion. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.

➢ **Homophobic Bullying:** bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. People may be a target of this type of bullying because of their appearance, physical traits, behaviour or because they have friends or family who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning or possibly just because they are seen as being different. Homophobic bullying is the most frequent form of bullying after name calling.

➢ **Transphobic Bullying:** bullying based on another person's gender variance or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.

➢ **Sexist Bullying:** bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.

➢ **Sexual Bullying:** bullying behaviour that has a psychological, verbal, non-verbal or physical sexual dimension/ dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

➢ **Prejudicial Bullying:** bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics, e.g. special educational needs or disabilities, or mental health issues.

➢ **Relational Bullying:** bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone, usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

➢ **Online or Cyber Bullying**

The Willows School has a separate policy relating to online/ e-safety addressing the use of mobile technology, social media, appropriate online activity, security, access and monitoring procedures in place.

Staff will work with pupils to draw up and reinforce **an ICT Code of Conduct**, which will be displayed prominently around school and is explained and discussed with pupils on admission to our school, in Tutorials, Assemblies, PSHCEE and I.T./ Computing lessons.

2.5   Types of Cyber-Bullying

- Flaming: online fights usually through emails, instant messaging or chat rooms where angry and rude comments are exchanged.
- Denigration: putting hurtful online messages through email, instant messaging, chat rooms, or websites, set up to make fun of someone.
- Exclusion: intentionally leaving someone out of a group such as WhatsApp/ instant messaging, friend sites, or other online group activities.
- Outing: sharing secrets about someone online including private information, pictures, and videos.
- Trickery: tricking someone into revealing personal information then sharing it with others.
- Impersonation: pretending to be someone else when sending or posting mean or false messages online.
- Harassment: repeatedly sending malicious messages to someone online.
- Cyber-Stalking: continuously harassing and denigration including threats of physical harm.

2.6   Actions Not Considered as Bullying

- Not liking someone
- Being suspended from school
- Accidentally bumping into someone
- Making other children play games in a certain way
- A single act of telling a joke about someone
- Arguments
- Expression of unpleasant thoughts or feelings regarding others
- Isolated, one-off acts of harassment, aggressive behaviour, intimidation, or meanness

2.7   Reasons for Bullying

Some reasons why children might bully someone include:

- they think it is fun, or that it makes them more popular or look 'cool',
- they feel more powerful or important,
- they want to get their own way all the time,
- they feel insecure or lack confidence and are trying to fit in with a group,
- they are fearful of other children's differences,
- they are jealous of another child,
- they are unhappy,
- they are copying behaviours they have seen from other people,
- they are copying or repeating what has happened to them.

2.8   The Effects of Bullying

All forms of bullying cause psychological, emotional and physical stress. Each pupil's response to being bullied is unique.

Some key signs that might indicate a bullying issue are:

- depression and anxiety,
- increased feelings of sadness, helplessness,
- decreased self-esteem and loneliness,
- loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy,
- unexplainable injuries,
- lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, jewellery or other possessions,
- frequent headaches or stomach ache, feeling sick or faking illness,
- changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Children might return home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch,
- difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares,
- loss of interest in schoolwork and/ or declining progress or grades,
- not wanting to go to school,
- sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations,
- self-destructive behaviours such as running away from home or school, harming themselves, or talking about suicide.

3.0   ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1   Legal Responsibilities
The Education Act 2002 and Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and Education and Skills Act 2008, refer to a school's legal responsibility to prevent and tackle bullying. By law, all schools must have a behaviour policy in place, which follows anti-discrimination law. The policy must be displayed on the school website.

This means staff have a duty to act to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the school. The Willows School has developed a Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy and this Anti-Bullying Policy, copies of which are available from the school office and on the school website for parents/ carers, staff or pupils to access when they wish.

Our staff will be proactive in challenging perceived derogatory views about the legally **protected characteristics**, as set out in the **Equality Act 2010**, of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation, through exploration of, and development of mutual respect for those different to themselves.

3.2   Legal Powers
Schools have the legal power to make sure pupils behave and do not bully outside of school premises, for example on public transport to or from school, or in nearby public communal areas.

If seen as appropriate, the Head teacher or staff can choose to report bullying to the police or local council. During school hours, including while pupils are taking part in school visits, after school clubs and cyber bullying the school has direct responsibility to ensure children feel safe and secure.

3.3   The Role of School Governance

Prosperity Children's Services supports the Head Teacher with the evaluation, review and implementation of this policy. They ensure the school adopts a tolerant and open–minded policy towards difference and promotes an inclusive culture.

Prosperity Children's Services also supports the Head teacher in all attempts to eliminate bullying from the school. Our organisation will not condone any bullying at all in our school, and any incidents of bullying that do occur will be taken very seriously, and dealt with appropriately.

We record and monitor incidents of bullying. We also review the effectiveness of this policy regularly. Those responsible for governance, including the Chair, require the Head Teacher to keep accurate records of all incidents of bullying and to record them. At governance meetings, Head Teachers will provide updates on the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies.

A parent/ carer who is dissatisfied with the way the school has dealt with an incident of bullying should speak to staff in the first instance. If unhappy, parents/ carers can follow our Complaints Procedure.

3.4   The Role of the Head Teacher

It is the responsibility of the Head Teacher to ensure that:

- bullying at the school is prevented in so far as is reasonably practicable by the implementation of this policy and related anti-bullying strategy.
- this policy and strategy is regularly reviewed and updated.
- all stakeholders are aware of the school policy, and that they know how to identify and deal with incidents of bullying.
- the school keeps accurate records of all incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for data to be collected.
- there is analysis of the data in the bullying records at least on a termly basis, to identify any trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- all pupils know what bullying is and that bullying is wrong.
- all pupils know that bullying is not acceptable behaviour and will not be tolerated in our school.
- learning opportunities cover bullyng, e.g. in lessons, Tutorials, Assembly which will be used to explore and discuss with pupils why bullying is wrong.
- all members of staff receive sufficient training to be able to identify and deal with all incidents of bullying.

The Head teacher will set the school climate of mutual support and praise for success, so making bullying less likely. When children feel they are important and belong to a friendly and welcoming school, bullying is far less likely to be part of their behaviour.

The Head Teacher will also ensure this is a 'telling school', where pupils feel confident in reporting concerns, knowing they will be well supported.

3.5   The Role of Staff

Staff will:

- be alert to social dynamics and be vigilant about possible bullying situations, e.g. exclusion from friendship groups.
- report any concerns to the leadership team.
- do all they can to eradicate bullying; they will ensure that they know and follow this policy.
- receive training to equip them to identify bullying and to follow school policies and procedures to address behaviours appropriately.
- use a range of methods to help prevent bullying and to establish a climate of trust and respect for all
- use any and all available learning opportunities drama, role-play, stories etc. to help pupils understand the feelings of bullied children, and to practise the restraint required to avoid lapsing into bullying behaviour.
- be proactive in finding opportunities to praise, reward and celebrate the successes of all children, which will contribute to a positive atmosphere in school.
- will keep a vigilant watch on suspected 'bullies'; any incidents will be handled carefully.
- Ensure that the pupil responsible for initiating bullying is dealt with appropriately. Staff dealing with the incident will collect all relevant information, provide the Head teacher with a copy, to inform decision making about next steps.

All cases are individual and various strategies will be used by the Head Teacher and staff team to address the issue of bullying.

Teachers and support staff will do all they can to support a child who is being bullied.

3.6   Bullying in the Workplace

If a member of staff has been identified as bullying a child, it will be taken very seriously. The Head Teacher, with the support of the Human Resources team at Prosperity Children's Services, will deal with this, investigate and identify formal action where necessary. Such action will also be taken if it is deemed that a member of staff is bullying other members of staff. The organisation has a Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedures for dealing with staff conduct.

In the event of the Head teacher being involved in such incidents, reports will be given immediately to the Directors of Prosperity Children's Services who will investigate and take formal action as appropriate.

3.7   The Role of Parents and Carers

Parents and carers should

- be watchful of their child's attitude, behaviour and characteristics and inform the relevant school staff if there any notable changes.
- share concerns if they think their child might be being bullied.
- inform their child's Tutor if they think that their child may be a bully/ the perpetrator.
- speak to the Head teacher if they are not satisfied with how matters are dealt with.

If they remain dissatisfied, they should follow the Complaints Procedure. Parents/ carers have a responsibility to support the school's Anti-Bullying Policy by actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school.

3.8   The Role of Pupils

Pupils are encouraged to:

- tell somebody they trust if they are being bullied.
- keep on letting people know.
- follow strategies they are taught to help them to deal with this.
- avoid making 'counter threats' if they are victims of bullying. This can make matters worse.
- walk away from dangerous situations and avoid involving other pupils in incidents.
- keep any evidence of cyber bullying and inform a member of staff if they witness or become a victim of cyber bullying.
- participate fully in activities that raise their awareness about bullying to help them to clearly understand what to do if they, or another child, is being bullied.

3.9   Statutory Implications

The school understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, it has responsibility to:

- o eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- o advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- o foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Our school understands that, under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, it could have charges brought against it, if it allows the rights of children and young people at the school to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously.

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/ or communications **may be considered criminal offences**, for example:

- o the Malicious Communications Act 1988 makes it is an offence for a person to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or in a way which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or contains information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.
- o the Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.
- o Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message, or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information through any media, including internet sites.

Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to the police include:

- o violence or assault
- o theft
- o repeated harassment or intimidation
- o hate crimes.

4.0   REDUCING BULLYING

4.1   Strategies

The Willows School has adopted a range of strategies to prevent and reduce bullying, to raise awareness of bullying and support victims and those displaying bullying behaviour. Pupils will be involved in drawing up a Code of Behaviour and reviewing it annually. Strategies will include:

- consistent promotion of the school's Code of Behaviour which requires all pupils to respect the rights of others.
- reinforcement of the clear message that violence has no place at our school.
- consultation with pupils to gain their voice to inform appropriate action.
- taking part in national Anti-Bullying Week and other initiatives.
- training for staff on the Anti-Bullying Policy and strategy.
- close supervision of pupils by staff of all communal and play areas at lunch times and breaks.
- engineering friendship and teaching groups to ensure positive dynamics.
- careful timetabling, groupings and use of seating plans to help prevent instances of bullying.
- seeking opportunities to extend friendship groups, e.g. through social time, special events, drama productions, sporting activities, clubs and cultural groups.
- finding buddies for pupils who are new or particularly vulnerable.
- providing information to all parents/ carers on the signs of bullying and the steps to take if they suspect their child is being bullied or may be bullying others.
- enforcing our policy for mobile phones, which are not permitted to be in use during school hours.
- embracing and promoting diversity, difference and respect for others and seeking formal and informal opportunities to celebrate diversity.

- promoting diversity including the celebration of all pupils' backgrounds and cultures through lessons, Tutorials, Assemblies, topics or theme days.
- training pupils as Anti-Bullying Ambassadors.
- using assemblies and PSHCEE lessons to discuss and explore bullying with pupils.
- teaching about cyber bullying and how pupils can safely use technology (including mobile phones, email, internet).
- staff encouraging pupil co-operation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and paired work.
- screening websites accessed in school.
- using software to screen the language used in all documents, emails and websites.
- Referring rude or offensive emails, websites, documents to the Head Teacher for appropriate action to be taken and recorded.
- using reporting and recording systems effectively.
- working with multi-agency teams including police and children's services as appropriate.
- communicating promptly and effectively with the parents/ carers of both the child being bullied and the bully.
- challenging sexual content within verbal abuse especially challenging use of the word 'gay' as a negative term, and other homophobic language.
- being alert to and addressing any mental health and well-being pupils may have as these can cause vulnerability and also be a cause of bullying behaviour.
- investigating all reported instances of bullying.
- discussing all types of bullying and appropriate behaviours as part of the curriculum.
- supporting potential perpetrators appropriately, to reduce negative external factors influencing or impacting on their educational, emotional and social development.

4.2   Signs of Bullying

Staff will be alert to the following signs that might indicate a pupil is a victim of bullying:

- being frightened to travel to or from school
- asking to be driven to school
- unwilling to attend school
- truancy
- becoming anxious or lacking confidence
- saying that they feel ill in the morning
- decreased interest and engagement in schoolwork
- returning home with torn clothes or damaged possessions
- missing possessions or money, including dinner money
- asking for extra money or stealing
- cuts or bruises
- lack of appetite
- unwilling to use the internet or mobile devices
- becoming agitated when receiving calls or text messages
- lack of eye contact
- becoming short-tempered

o change in behaviour and attitude at home.

Although the signs outlined above may not always indicate bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating. Staff will agree a sensitive but proactive approach to pupils who display a significant number of these signs. This will help to determine any underlying issues, whether due to bullying or for other reasons.

4.3   Identifying Potential Bullies

Staff will be aware of the potential factors that might indicate a person is likely to have bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- the pupil has experienced mental health problems, which have led to more aggressive attitude and behaviours
- they have been the victim of abuse or violence in the home, wider family or community
- their academic performance has started to decline, which may cause additional stress.

5.0   REPORTING, SANCTIONS AND MONITORING

5.1   How to Report Bullying

Bullying can be reported to any staff member.

Staff will report bullying to the Head Teacher and/ Senior Leadership Team.   The Head Teacher is responsible for dealing with incidents of reported bullying and will oversee staff investigations and follow up actions.

5.2   Procedures

The following steps must be taken when dealing with incidents of bullying:

1) If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached, or who suspects/ or has observed the act of bullying.
2) The Head Teacher must be informed immediately.
3) A clear account of the incident will be recorded in writing either by the victim or by the member of staff recording the victim's own words.
4) The Head Teacher will interview all concerned and will record the incident via the school's reporting database.
5) Parents and carers of all parties will be kept informed by the Head Teacher and appropriate staff member(s) e.g. Tutors.
6) Subject teachers will be kept informed and asked to monitor the situation.
7) In the first instance we will seek a restorative and educative approach to bullying.
8) It may also be appropriate to select from a range of appropriate consequences which will be used as part of this approach. Typical consequences could include restrictions

of break and lunchtime activities, reparation, and in the event of persistent bullying fixed-term suspension.
9) Where appropriate the Head Teacher may inform the police.
10) There will be regular audit and analysis of incident reports and interventions to continually improve practice.

Our school has set procedures to follow in implementing consequences where a bullying incident has occurred. As described above consequences are applied and are proportionate to the event. In the most serious cases of bullying that lead to a suspension, the Head Teacher will examine all actions and strategies implemented to identify next steps to effect a positive change in the bullying behaviour. Permanent exclusion is available to the Head Teacher and would be used as a very last resort.

5.3   Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- Prosperity Children's Services, the Head Teacher and relevant staff will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.
- Pupils will be consulted, including as part of a School Council when set up. They will be encouraged to review the effectiveness of the School's strategy and policy annually, with their views informing refinements to practice or procedures.
- Questionnaires will be given to pupils every year and these will include questions about bullying, attitudes and behaviour. Data and responses will be considered in the annual policy review and reported to those responsible for school governance.
- A record of all incidents of bullying will be kept both centrally and on relevant pupil files.
- The numbers of incidents will be recorded and available to those responsible for school governance and Ofsted, at any time on request.
- Bullying data will be analysed to inform the development of strategies and to help improve procedures.

6.0   USEFUL WEBSITES

www.bullying.co.uk

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

www.childline.org.uk

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.each.education

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.youngstonewall.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.stoptextbully.co.uk

www.beyondbullying.com

www.childnet-int.org

www.thinkyouknow.co.uk

www.cyberbullying.org.uk

www.eachaction.org.uk

www.stonewall.org.uk

www.thedianaaward.org.uk

www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/

7.0.   APPENDICES

None