



# **ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre**

## **ANTI BULLYING POLICY**

### **STATEMENT OF INTENT**

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at ASPIRE: Lifeskills Learning Centre. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a TELLING service. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff so it can be dealt with.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Forty per cent of parents who have a child with autism say their child has been bullied (Bullying and autism spectrum disorders – a guide for school staff – NAS 2009).

### **BULLYING AND AUTISM**

Children with autism have difficulty 'reading' social situations and knowing how to engage in ever-changing social contexts. They find it hard to predict other people's behaviour and to interpret their body language and expressions to guess what they are thinking or feeling. This makes it difficult for children with autism to understand other people's intentions, and makes them an easy target for bullies. Because children and young people with autism may be unaware that others 'judge' their behaviour they may be especially vulnerable to bullying in the community. In an ever-changing world cyber bullying, on-line or via mobile phones, is an increasing problem for all young people, and for the reasons described above even more so for those whose needs lie on the spectrum.

Due to impairments in social understanding and imagination bullying issues are perhaps even more complex for people with autism. For example, a vulnerable student may not recognise that they are being bullied and believe themselves to be part of the group because they are paying them attention or asking him/her to do things for them. Another example may be where a student with autism becomes obsessional about another student and targets them in either a positive or negative way.

Additionally, due to theory of mind impairments, most students with autism have very little understanding of the feelings of others. It is difficult therefore, to be sure that the behaviour was 'deliberately hurtful'. For example student A may frequently shout at student B not because he wants to upset him but because he is curious about B's reactions.

Young people with autism can make direct remarks but have no intention of causing harm. Such comments cannot be considered as bullying, but they need to be addressed so the student learns about the impact of their remarks and how to interact more appropriately.

Such issues will be explored through staff training and staff will be trained to understand and address these from an autism specific perspective

## **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

Bullying may be defined as "Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally" Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber - All areas of the Internet (such as email & internet chat room misuse), mobile threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of associated technology (i.e. camera & video facilities).

- **Peer on peer abuse – Refer to Peer on Peer Abuse Policy**

There is a large difference in power (for example age, size, ability, development) between the young people concerned, the perpetrator has repeatedly tried to harm one or more other children; or there are concerns about the intention of the alleged perpetrator. If the evidence suggests that there was an intention to cause severe harm to the victim, this should be regarded as abusive whether or not severe harm was actually caused.

## **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO RESPOND TO BULLYING?**

Bullying hurts and can have a long term and serious impact upon a person's life and well being. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

## **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

- All Directors, staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All students and parents should know what ASPIRE: Lifeskills policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a Learning Centre we take bullying seriously. Students and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will always be confronted.

## **AIMS OF ASPIRE: LIFESKILLS LEARNING CENTRE**

- To teach our students how to treat each other with respect
- To enable students to understand when they are being bullied and to give them strategies to be able to deal effectively with these situations, wherever they may occur.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF ASPIRE: LIFESKILLS DIRECTORS**

- To approve the ASPIRE: Lifeskills Anti-bullying policy and ensure all staff, parents/carers and students are informed of this policy.
- To ensure the policy is consistently implemented.
- Oversee the implementation of the policy with reference to the health and safety of children and staff and the ASPIRE: Lifeskills Safeguarding Policy.
- Keep themselves informed through regular meetings with staff.
- To scrutinise data reporting on bullying.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE HEAD TEACHER**

- To oversee the implementation of the policy, including inclusion in induction and ongoing training for staff, volunteers and students on placement.
- To ensure the ethos of a caring, respectful and safe environment is evident throughout ASPIRE: Lifeskills working practice.
- To ensure effective joint working with other schools and other agencies.
- To make recommendations to Directors for any amendments.
- To ensure appropriate learning opportunities, regarding bullying, are delivered to students.
- To oversee the monitoring and investigation of all allegations of bullying, ensuring

- parents are informed and that appropriate interventions are put in place.
- To analyse data and report to Directors on bullying.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

- To notify the Head Teacher of incidents of bullying and to follow the appropriate procedures.
- All employees have a duty of care that requires them to act in the young person's best interest and to treat all young people we support fairly, with respect and understanding
- All persons have a duty to report any concerns about practice to the Head Teacher.
- To respond to all young people in a calm and positive manner.
- To provide positive role models to all students ensuring that their behaviour reflects the Code of Conduct and good working practice of ASPIRE: Lifeskills.
- To value every young person even if their behaviour needs a high level of support.
- To enable and support students to understand what bullying is, how it may affect them and others and how to manage challenging situations.
- To work with the ASPIRE team, staff in other settings, students, parents and carers to ensure that strategies are developed together and that there is continuity of approach.
- To liaise with other schools and agencies regarding the prevention of bullying relating to students following inclusion programmes.

## **RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS**

- To keep ASPIRE: Lifeskills informed about concerns, problems and family circumstances which may affect their child's behaviour or well being.
- To work with staff to plan and implement individual support plans to recognise and combat bullying behaviours

## **MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REVIEW**

- All reported incidents of bullying to be recorded and investigated
- Incidents of bullying to be reviewed monthly
- Levels of bullying to be reported to Directors termly, or as requested

## **CRITERIA FOR SUCCESS**

- Students are able to demonstrate an awareness of what bullying is and what to do to stop it.
- Staff demonstrate understanding of this policy.

## **HELP ORGANISATIONS:**

Kidscape website [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

## **ANTI-BULLYING PROCEDURES**

1. All students are made aware of what bullying is, what to do if they are being bullied. This is an ongoing cross-curricular theme addressed in assemblies and pastoral sessions (see PREVENTION below).
2. Students are taught and encouraged to report bullying incidents to staff.
3. Staff will record and investigate all incidents of reported bullying promptly using the incident recording form.
4. Parents will be informed and, in serious cases, will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
5. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.
6. Where necessary interventions will be planned to help bullies understand the impact of and change their behaviour.
7. Interventions will be planned to enable students to recognise what bullying is and to develop strategies to overcome it.
8. Short and longer term monitoring will be used to ensure that strategies to overcome a bullying incident have been successful.

## **SUPPORTING THE VICTIM OF BULLYING**

It is essential that all individuals who have experienced bullying are provided with timely and appropriate support. This may include one or more of the following: -

- Active listening;
- Advice;
- Assertiveness training;
- Named student/ staff member to provide appropriate support; - regular checking with the student regarding their well-being.

## **OUTCOMES**

- The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise. Restorative justice strategies may be used. Other consequences may take place.
- In serious cases, the use of sanctions may be deployed
- If possible, the students will be reconciled
- After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not recur.


## **PREVENTION**

We will use the following methods for preventing bullying:

- Writing a set of rules
- Where necessary signing a behaviour contract
- Social stories about bullying
- PSHE curriculum
- Displaying signs saying what to do if students are worried, upset or being bullied
- Annual staff training

## **POLICY REVIEW STATEMENT**

This policy will be reviewed every year or earlier should legislative change or other event require it.

SIGNED:.... 

POSITION:.....DIRECTOR

DATE:.....1<sup>st</sup> May 2026

REVIEW DATE:....1<sup>st</sup> May 2027

FOR & ON BEHALF OF

ASPIRE: Lifeskills