

The Birches Specialist Support School

Anti-bullying Policy



Date Reviewed: **March 2022**

Reviewed by: **Cat Shaw Associate Assistant Head**

Signed:
On behalf of the Governors

Signed:
Head teacher

Date of next review: **March 2025**

THE BIRCHES SCHOOL SPECIALIST SUPPORT SCHOOL

Anti-bullying POLICY

Statement of Intent

The Birches School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our children so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all the children should be able to tell a member of staff and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *TELLING* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

Children attending The Birches School can be very vulnerable due to their special educational needs. The children may not have sufficient social understanding or social awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying. Similarly, if the children are the recipients of such behaviours, they may be unable to express or communicate their aversion to such behaviours or to tell adults.

This means that all staff at The Birches School have a duty to not only be aware of such behaviours and of any child involved, but also to respond appropriately to instances of bullying behaviours. Staff at The Birches School can liaise with other professionals, to help devise strategies to manage and reduce bullying behaviours and their effects.

This policy, whilst taking into consideration the difficulties being experienced by children at The Birches, will include all aspects of potential areas of bullying. All staff must be aware of the severity of bullying and the categories they may have to address in different areas of their work. Bullying is not restricted to children but can also involve colleagues and staff must challenge any incident of bullying.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings; 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 focussing on the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal** - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber** - All areas of the internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging & calls. Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Children who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

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

Objectives of this Policy

- All children, staff, and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All children, staff and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported.
- The Birches School takes bullying seriously. Children, staff and parents should be assured that they would be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- does not want to go on the school bus
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away

- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what is wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber-message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated. Staff must be aware of the above signs and symptoms in the school environment and liaise with parents / carers if there are any issues in the home environment.

Procedures

1. Report bullying incidents to senior designated staff
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff
3. In serious cases, parents should be informed and will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem
4. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated, and the bullying stopped quickly
6. An attempt will be made to help the bully (bullies) change their behaviour

Outcomes

1. The bully (bullies) may be asked to genuinely apologise. Other consequences may take place.
2. In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion will be considered
3. If possible, the children will be reconciled
4. After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

Prevention

In all work with the children, staff emphasise the importance of developing social skills, including respect for the feelings of others. Where children have difficulties interacting appropriately with their peers or with adults, then staff aim to help them develop an awareness of why particular behaviours are valued socially and what is inappropriate.

The Birches School Curriculum builds on this through activities, which include PSHE, Circle Time, PE, Snack Time, Language and Communication sessions, and group work to develop an ethos of co-operation and respect for everyone. E-safety is taught across the curriculum and through assemblies and visual reminders around the school community. The EQUALS curriculum is used within PSHE and the issue of bullying is addressed through relevant units of work.

Staff are important role models for the children and young people. The behaviour of adults towards each other and towards the children is potentially a highly effective tool for preventing and for decreasing bullying behaviours in our children.

Parents' and carers' role:

- Listen and talk to your child about the situation and discuss and agree next steps
- Monitor social networks/computer use
- Reinforce the value of good behaviour

Complaints

If a parent or carer thinks the school has not resolved a complaint effectively then they should follow the school's complaints and complaint policy. This can be found on the school website.

Monitoring

Any incidents of bullying including incidents of racist bullying within school will be recorded and reported to the governing body and local authority on a termly basis or as needed should the situation arise.

Policy Information and Review

Review frequency: every 3 years

| Date | Version | Changes made | By whom (name and role) | Due date for next review | Reviewed & Ratified by Govs. (sign and date) |
|------------|---------|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| May 2018 | 1 | N/A | F Shah Deputy Headteacher | May 2021 | |
| March 2019 | 1 | Dates changed for ratification purposes – policy is the same just the dates altered | F Shah DHT | March 2022 | |
| March 2022 | 1 | Dates changed for ratification purposes Paragraph added about parents' roles Paragraph added about complaints | C Shaw AAH | March 2025 | |
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