

Oxford International English Schools: Anti Bullying Policy

Purpose and Scope

The aim of OIEG's anti-bullying policy is to:

- Prevent bullying of any sort;
- Make it clear to all students and staff that bullying is always unacceptable;
- Ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied

Introduction

The seriousness of bullying cannot be emphasised enough. Bullying is among the top concerns that parents have about their children's safety and well-being at and on the way to and from the School. Bullying is also a top concern for students themselves. Bullying makes the lives of its victims a misery: it undermines their confidence and self-esteem, and destroys their sense of security. Bullying can have a life-long negative impact on some young people's lives. At worst, bullying has been a factor in student suicide. Bullying is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

We acknowledge that bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. However, we also recognise that the consequences of being allowed to 'get away with it' can be detrimental to them as well as to their victim. All students deserve the opportunity to be helped to understand what acceptable behaviour is.

Students who are being bullied will be supported, and students who may bully others will also be given suitable help and guidance. All members of the community, including the Directors, teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers, students, Educational Tour Operators, guardians and carers should have an understanding of what bullying is and be familiar with the School's policy on bullying; and all have a responsibility to help create an atmosphere in which students can report any incident of bullying knowing that these reports will always be taken seriously.

Many of our students come for a very short time however that is not in any way a guarantee there will not be instances of bullying. Sometimes we will host school groups where the children already know one another, and sometimes students may find being with students from other countries can create opportunities for bullying. Bullying is also not limited to children.

This policy is applicable to all students at the School. The policy is guided by the principles laid out in various guidance and legislation including the 2010 Equality Act and Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE August 2016).

Where bullying might be considered to be a safeguarding issue the DSL will treat the issue as one of child protection and may refer to the local authority.

Definitions

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, sexual orientation, homophobia, special educational needs or disabilities, appearance or health conditions, home conditions, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously our first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical and must not be downplayed. Bullying can take place between students, between students and staff, or between staff; by individuals or groups; face-to-face, indirectly or using a range of cyber-bullying methods. Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Physical (including sexual) assault, for example, hitting, kicking, spitting, removing belongings, damaging property
- Verbal abuse, by name-calling, teasing, 'banter', insulting, writing notes or making offensive remarks
- Cyber-bullying, which is defined as the use of ICT by an individual or group to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour intended to harm others. Examples include using social websites (such as Facebook or Twitter), mobile phones, text messaging, photographs, video and e-mail
- Indirect emotional tormenting, for example by excluding from social groups, spreading malicious rumours, threatening gestures, intimidation
- Sexual, which could include unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic, which would focus on the issue of sexuality
- Racist which could include racial taunts, gestures, graffiti
- Initiation ceremonies intended to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation

Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidatory but is often hidden and subtle.

What To Look For

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming withdrawn, shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences, or clinging to adults. They may lose their appetite, experience disrupted sleep or change their normal routines.

There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, or the quality or quantity of work produced, lacking concentration or showing attendance problems. They may be nervous when using their phone or the internet or be anxious about their possessions. Students may become defensive, unreasonable or aggressive. When questioned, a student may be frightened to say what's wrong or may give improbable excuses for the behaviour. There may be physical signs of abuse such as cuts or bruises.

All members of the community must be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with School's policy.

Surveys have shown that in the vast majority of bullying incidents, most people knew that what was going on was wrong. Sometimes people, either through lethargy, peer group pressure, or tacit support for what is going on, fail to take action.

Anti-Bullying Strategies

The best way to stamp out bullying is for people to be aware of the issues involved, to be involved in prevention and to be clear in their own minds what action to take should cases of bullying arise. In the procedures that follow, the word 'bullying' is used to cover all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying. Notable bullying strategies include:

The Method of Shared Concern This is basically establishing some 'ground rules' in classroom and activity lessons. Young people have the right to be taught and the right to safety and the right to respect when inside the classroom. Young people will need to feel particularly safe in a multi-lingual, multi-national classroom and activity setting, one they will have never experienced before. It would be good practice if all teachers and leaders could adopt a similar set of rules to follow. To also establish some simple routines will help the idea of 'shared concern'

The 'No Blame' Approach It may not be possible to prove what actually happened, both language and cultural differences making it more difficult. Blame may not be all on one side. Speaking to students on a one-to-one is a beginning. Peer negotiation and mediation also are useful strategies as is Co-operative group work to explore issues. Class 'circle time' to discuss issues and also at a later time consolidate the earlier work. Incidents should be resolved not smoothed over.

Circle of Friends This is also known as circle of support. The idea is to build relationships around a vulnerable student.

Mediation by Adults and Peers Staff can hold 'brief' non-confrontational 'chats' with each pupil in a quiet area without interruptions. In a structured way a neutral pupil can act as a mediator to help resolve the dispute.

Assertiveness Training There is a great opportunity here to do this through the medium of language teaching, role-plays, drama, simulations and various other practical teaching methods. Praise and congratulations also go a long way to building up self-esteem.

Working with Victims The behaviour of certain students can lead to bullying, though this no way justifies it. Hyperactive behaviour can irritate others in the classroom. Teachers should endeavour to identify such annoying behaviours and work with the pupil's social skills to try and combat this.

All effective anti-bullying strategies require efficient procedures for dealing with incidents. Often parents, students or monitors say 'nobody does anything' or 'nothing was done'.

Please remember the following:

- Incidents should be addressed not ignored.
- Incidents should be resolved, not smoothed over.
- Those who feel aggrieved and upset want to see justice done.

- Blame may not be all one sided.

When tougher measures are needed:

- Removal from the group.
- Withdrawal at break and lunch.
- Withholding participation in fun activities such as shopping or trips.
- Involvement of the parents
- Fixed period exclusion.
- Exclusion from programme to return home.

Prevention

The most effective way to combat bullying is by creating a community based on respect, with an ethos celebrating success and promoting good behaviour. Awareness and discussion of questions to do with bullying are also vital to prevention. OIEG will take the following approaches:

- Staff and student awareness will be raised at inductions, through training, posting notices in classrooms and other shared places and taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at the times and places where it is most likely to occur. This might mean (for example) supervising breaks.
- Student surveys will be used to facilitate an understanding of the level and type of bullying that students might have experienced
- The School Principal will review the record of any bullying offences to identify patterns and check that the policy is effective.

Prevention of Cyber-Bullying

In addition to the preventative measures described above cyber bullying will also be managed by making students aware of the importance of e-safety and sensible and safe use of Social Media. Students will be made of any restrictions (for example taking photographs in classes without permission) including raising awareness of any unintended consequences.

Responding to Bullying

If a student is the victim and if they feel able to, the bullied student should confront the bully by verbally making him/her aware that the bullied student thinks that what the bully is doing is wrong.

The bullied student should share their feelings with someone else. If possible they should talk to any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. Notices in classes indicate some of the members of staff students can talk to, but in cases of bullying students might feel more comfortable talking to their teacher or another adult – for example a Group Leader. If they would prefer not to they should talk to friends, older students or any trusted adult – this might for example be a homestay host. This person might be able to advise on an appropriate course of action or will be able to involve other people who can.

If a student witnesses bullying behaviour they should support the victim by offering friendship and making it clear that in their opinion what is happening to them is wrong. They should encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully themselves. They should accompany the victim to a trusted adult, or suggest that they see their teacher, the school Principal or one of the safeguarding team.

What should staff members do?

If a member of Staff witnesses an incident of bullying or it is reported to them they must reassure and support the students involved; advise them that they are required to pass details on to the relevant member of the school management and ask them to write down their allegation. The same procedures must be followed as for a Child Protection case; the member of staff must:

- Choose a place to talk where the talk will not be interrupted but also where the member of staff is safe from allegation.
- Listen carefully and patiently to the student, no matter how difficult the member of staff finds what they are saying.
- Show the student they believe in him/her and take his/her disclosure seriously.
- Stay calm and reassuring, and maintain neutral body language.
- Not promise to keep the conversation secret, no matter how insistent the student may be. The staff member must explain that they are ready to listen but that when they have heard the account there may be parts that they have to tell somebody else in order to get the help required.
- Not press for information, cross-examine or lead the student, as well-intentioned questions could prejudice further investigations. It is particularly important not to use leading questions or to put words into the student's mouth. If the member of staff needs to respond verbally, they should feed back to the student what they have said.
- Ensure the student's immediate safety.
- Make careful notes immediately after the conversation, giving an accurate and full account of what was said. These notes should include all relevant information regarding the setting and circumstances of the communication, including the time and the persons present.
- Inform the Principal / Safeguarding lead immediately of the disclosure, allegations or suspicion, give them a copy of the written notes and ensure that they are aware of any immediate medical needs. They will co-ordinate an immediate investigation into the circumstances of the complaint.
- Take no further action, including discussing their suspicions with the parent or anyone else involved in the care of the young person, until the decision has been taken on how to proceed. For students under the age of 16, their Group leader or Parent or Guardian will be informed and asked to accompany the student whilst they are questioned. Where this is not possible, another member of staff, acceptable to the student, will be asked to stand in. The victim will have the process for dealing with bullying clearly explained to them. The victim will also be given the opportunity to discuss his/her own reactions and behaviour towards the bully. The victim is given appropriate support and advice.

Once the Principal is satisfied that a bullying offence has been committed, the bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually and written notes will be kept of the accounts of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. If the complaint regards a group, every effort will be made to prevent collusion during the investigation.

The Principal will decide whether to involve parents in the next stages. It is the School's intention to try, in the first case, to resolve such issues by getting all the parties together, to discuss the events and their causes and to seek reconciliation. If the events are such that this is not considered appropriate, or where bullying has been repeated after previous attempts at reconciliation, sanctions may be considered appropriate.

Details of any sanctions applied will be sent to parents or the agent (ETO) in a letter informing them of the circumstances of the bullying incident and warning them of the consequences which might follow any further similar incidents. Details of the incident will be recorded on all the students' files.

It is the policy of OIEG to attempt to resolve such issues internally using our own disciplinary sanctions, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely. The Principal and Company Directors will be informed of any major bullying issues. If the bullying amounts to abuse, the Designated Person will contact Social Services or the Police within 24 hours, as for all Child Protection cases.

Criminal Law

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If OIEG staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

If bullying occurs outside the school premises, the expectation is that this policy will apply throughout the students' stay in the UK. Any incident that occurs outside the school premises which affects one of OIEG's students will be dealt with in the same way as if the incident had happened in school premises.

If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed. The DfE guidance and advice can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

Where to get further help

If a student, parent or member of staff is unsure about a situation or events, several organisations will speak in confidence to advise what would be the best thing to do:

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Childline: 0800 1111

HELP ORGANISATIONS:

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) 0808 800 5793

Children's Legal Centre 0845 345 4345

Kidscape Parents Helpline (Mon-Fri, 10-4) 0845 1 205 204

Parentline Plus 0808 800 2222 **Youth Access** 020 8772 9900

Bullying Online www.bullying.co.uk

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA): The ABA brings together over 100 organisations into one network to develop and share good practice across the whole range of bullying issues.

Kidscape: A charity established to prevent bullying and promote child protection. They offer advice for young people, professionals and parents about different types of bullying and how to tackle it. They also offer specialist training and support for School staff, and assertiveness training for young people.

Restorative Justice Council: Includes best practice guidance for practitioners.

ChildNet International: Offers specialist resources for young people to raise awareness of online safety and how to protect themselves.

CEOP: Gives advice on how to operate safely on the web, in particular the thinkuknow pages:
<http://ceop.police.uk/> Contact details of agencies outside the School

Emergency

If someone is in immediate danger always phone 999 or 112 and report the matter to the Police