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Birchwood High School Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

Birchwood High School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a secure and positive atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Birchwood but, if bullying does occur, all students should be able to talk to someone, secure in the knowledge that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Birchwood believes that the whole school community should work together to reduce bullying as part of our efforts to promote a positive and inclusive whole school ethos and create a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. Alongside the school's responsive strategies for dealing with incidents of bullying, the school adopts, as part of our pastoral support system, a whole school approach to implementing proactive and preventative interventions at a school, class and individual level to reduce bullying.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, **repeated over time**, which intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance; cyber-bullying via text messages or social media), and can be motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, pupils' sexual orientation (LGBT), homophobic, biphobic and transphobic, culture, special educational needs and / or disability (SEND), appearance or health conditions or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It is important that the school is aware of the Equality Act 2010 with regard to bullying incidents. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.

It is vital that all staff challenge any incidences of bullying they encounter. It is also important that staff model good anti-bullying behaviour at all times. Students are made aware through the curriculum and pastoral activities that bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

A bullying incident should be addressed as a safeguarding concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, staff should report their concerns to the DSL who may make a referral to Children's Services.

Students themselves must be party to discussions on bullying. The most obvious vehicles for this are through PSHE lessons, pastoral assemblies and the curriculum we offer which provides opportunities to contribute views in a mutually supportive environment.

There are five recognised features of bullying:

- It is deliberate, hurtful behaviour;
- It is repeated over a period of time;

- It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves;
- It is difficult for those who bully to learn new social behaviours;
- Those who bully have and exercise power inappropriately over others.

All forms of bullying can be damaging to the development of both the person being bullied and the person bullying. Bullying can take many forms, but the main types are:

Physical	Pushing, hitting, kicking, punching, taking belongings or an act of violence with intent to harm;
Verbal	Name calling, insulting, threats/intimidation or making offensive remarks;
Indirect	Spreading nasty stories about someone, exclusion from social groups or being made the subject of malicious rumours, coercing someone into doing something they don't want to do;
Cyber	Tormenting, threatening, harassing, humiliating, embarrassing or otherwise targeting using text messaging, e-mail, instant messaging or any other type of digital technology e.g. social networking sites (Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook, WhatsApp). Misuse of associated digital technology such as camera and video aids.

Bullying is *not* a one off falling out between friends.

Preventative Measures

Bullying is most likely to occur outside lessons and particularly before school or at break and lunch time. The facilities available to students are also important, and relationships within peer groups often have a bearing on whether or not bullying is likely to occur. It is not enough that the adults need to believe a culture of bullying is unacceptable – the students need to feel similarly strongly. In order to try to remove the conditions which can sometimes lead to bullying we strive to:

- celebrate diversity through the Birchwood ABC – especially the second value of 'Belonging'.
- develop a culture of openness so students can talk about bullying incidents
- develop the curriculum with a strong emphasis on the role of form tutors in promoting quality relationships and developing a positive ethos within each form group
- invest in developing more student friendly environments
- value the provision of extra-curricular activities for students before school, at lunchtimes and after school
- use School and Year Councils to bring concerns of students to the attention of school leadership, student leadership groups and staff in general
- monitor students at break and lunchtimes efficiently through duties
- use mentors and multi-agency services
- use buddies to support integration of new students
- offer PLC and the library as alternative provision for vulnerable students at unstructured times
- adopt positive behaviour management strategies including the use of restorative conversations
- provide information on support agencies such as ChildLine, Kidscape and BullyingUK, including telephone numbers for help lines and addresses for supportive websites.
- work with community groups to respond to and help eradicate anti-social behaviour in the community, liaising with members of the community e.g. PCSO, transport service providers.

Incidents of Bullying (including those outside the school premises)

We have to recognise that bullying may occur at Birchwood High School, as it may in any organisation and it is therefore important that all staff recognise this and act swiftly, effectively and appropriately when it does.

We must act whilst recognising that our action will not necessarily bring about an instant end to the concerns.

When a student makes a disclosure that they are being bullied, to a friend, a parent/carer, or directly to a member of staff they do so because it is a serious problem to them and because **they want us to take action to stop it**. Despite this, they will often fear that we will be unable to stop it and that our intervention may make matters worse. Thus they very frequently say that they do not want us to take action. This is not necessarily true (or they would not be making the disclosure).

Responding to Incidents of Bullying

All staff have a responsibility to tackle bullying. The school endeavours to ensure that teachers and other adults working with students are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to identify and address all types and forms of bullying effectively and safely.

When a member of staff receives information, either directly or indirectly, that a child may have been the victim of a bullying incident, this report will be taken seriously and investigated. If bullying is suspected staff will talk to the suspected victim, the suspected bully and any witnesses and take written statements. It is recognised that in some situations 'victims' may exaggerate or invent bullying incidents and members of staff need to be aware of this.

The school will offer a proactive, sympathetic and supportive response to children who are the victims of bullying. The exact nature of the response will be determined by the particular child's individual needs and may include:

- Immediate action to stop the incident and secure the child's safety
- Positive reinforcement that reporting the incident was the correct thing to do
- Reassurance that the victim is not responsible for the behaviour of the bully
- Informing parents/ carers at the earliest opportunity
- Strategies to prevent further incidents
- Sympathy and empathy
- Counselling where appropriate
- Befriending /creation of a support group
- Extra supervision/monitoring
- Peer mediation
- Assigning a buddy
- A designated safe place where student can go
- Time out card
- Advice and meeting with parents/carers
- Tutor group change if appropriate
- Circle time
- Adult mediation between the perpetrator and the victim (provided this does not increase the victim's vulnerability)
- Arrangements to review progress.

Social networking websites are sometimes used for bullying and any threats made on such a site and acted on in school will be classed as pre-meditated and are likely to result in a more severe sanction. It should be acknowledged that it is very difficult for the school to take action on cyber bullying which has occurred outside of school time. In serious or persistent cases, the victim and / or their parents may wish to report the incident to the police. It is important not to delete any

messages, as these can be used as evidence.

For the bully:

- Talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved
- Informing the bully's parents/guardians
- Continuing to work with the bully in order to modify attitudes, this can include changes to class groupings or school travel arrangements
- Following the school sanction system if appropriate

Adult on student bullying

If a student makes an allegation against a member of staff or other adults in school, a statement should be taken by the person the allegation has been disclosed to. This statement should then be passed on to the Principal.

Student on adult bullying

If such situations occur, the person(s) involved should inform an appropriate member of staff so that action can be taken to deal with the concerns. Depending on the circumstances it may be a Head of Faculty, Form Tutor, Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team.

Adult bullying on adult

There may be incidents where adult on adult bullying occurs. Again any incidents should be reported to the line manager. Staff could also contact their Union.

The alleged bully

The main objective in dealing with the alleged bully is to ensure that the victim feels safe and supported around school. We also need to bring about a genuine understanding of the effect the alleged bullying action has on the student who has raised concerns. A further action might be to bring both alleged bully and victim together to facilitate reconciliation. This is highly desirable but not always possible.

The effects of bullying

Young people who are being bullied are being denied the opportunity to reach their full potential. Effects may be long term and include:

- Absenteeism
- Fall in academic performance
- Poor self-esteem
- Health problems
- Isolation and failure to develop socially

- Depression and suicide
- Relationship difficulties.

Signs of bullying occurring

These may include:

- Change of friendship groups
- Lack of friends
- School rejection
- 'Illness' at certain times or on certain days
- Change in standard of work
- Withdrawal/sudden lack of confidence
- Severe cases of depression.

Although the above list is most likely to apply to victims, changes in behaviour could indicate that someone has developed anti-social traits and may be bullying. People who bully also have ongoing problems with relationships, friendships and self-esteem and need help to break out of the cycle of making themselves feel better by humiliating others.

Reporting – Parents/Carers

Concerns and routine queries should be raised with the Form Tutor. We place great emphasis on the role of the Form Tutor. It is the Form Tutor who has the most regular contact with your child, monitoring attendance, academic performance and the general welfare of your child. **If you have a query or a concern please contact the Form Tutor first.**

Staff at the school will make every effort to respond to your call/letter within 48 hours. More serious issues will be responded to within 24 hours. Due to the complex nature of some issues it is not always possible to resolve matters within this time frame, but staff will at the very least acknowledge your concern and indicate who is dealing with the matter.

When telephoning, please be aware that most staff will be teaching and that on many occasions you will be asked to leave a message. **Please note it may not be possible to come into school without a prior appointment and expect to see a member of staff.** To avoid disappointment, please book an appointment with your child's Form Tutor in the first instance.

Recording

Bullying incidents will be systematically recorded and used to identify patterns of behaviour. The Behaviour Policy has 'Bullying' as a C4 offence and 'Persistent Bullying' as a C5 offence and all incidents are recorded as one these on the school's management information system (SIMS). The sanctions for engaging in bullying range from a day of internal exclusion (isolation) up to a permanent exclusion.

Data is used to identify trends with specific groups (e.g. cyber-bullying) or within particular areas of the school site to allow preventative programmes to be planned. By taking the positive action of recording incidents of bullying we are giving a clear message to parents, staff and the wider community that we take these incidents seriously and can become essential evidence if there is a dispute between the parties about how an incident of bullying has been handled.

Data regarding bullying will be monitored and acted upon by the pastoral team at the school.

Appendix 1

Anti-Bullying Policy - Advice for Students

Bullying can ruin a student's school life and education, so we treat it very seriously. It is a form of anti-social behaviour that has no place at Birchwood. Bullying can take many forms: physical, psychological or verbal. It can affect the happiness and achievements of the victims, the on-lookers and the bullies themselves. Remember that there may be others being bullied so you will be helping them as well as yourself by reporting any bullying that you may experience or witness.

The following advice has been suggested and approved by Birchwood students:

- Try to ignore the person who is attempting to bully you.
- Tell someone what has been happening, even if you have been warned not to. You may go to any adult in school, but particularly your Form Tutor or Head of Year or your parents. They will want to know and to help.
- Do not retaliate (try to get even) in a physical or verbal way. Walk calmly away from the situation.
- Do not blame yourself.
- If you see someone else being bullied find an adult in school (possibly your Form Tutor or Head of Year) and explain what you have seen and heard.
- Do not just ignore bullying. Think about how you would feel in the victim's position.
- Remember that bullying doesn't go away by itself.
- Make sure that you do not get involved in the bullying as an 'easy' option out of the situation – don't help the bully, help the victim.

Some advice on how to stay confident:

- Be friendly. Friends help you avoid these situations.
- React calmly, walk away to avoid further reaction.
- Think positively about yourself.

Some advice on how to avoid being a bully:

- Talk about problems, rather than taking them out on someone else.
- Don't make unpleasant remarks about anybody – even if you intend them as a joke.
- Try to avoid confrontations: find some way and somewhere to cool down.

We all have a responsibility to make sure that bullying has no place at Birchwood.