

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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Background

This policy sets out BeyondAutism Schools' procedures for dealing with bullying and is informed by *Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Department for Education,* (July 2017). This policy should also be read in conjunction with BeyondAutism School's Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding policy.

The Policy

Rationale - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The nature of their disability means that pupils with ASD may not have sufficient understanding or awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying. Similarly, children and young people with ASD who are the recipients of such behaviours may be unable to express or communicate their aversion to such behaviours or to tell adults. This means that all staff at our schools have a duty to not only be aware of such behaviours and of any pupil involved, but also to respond appropriately to instances of bullying behaviours.

Ethos

BeyondAutism Schools follow ABA/VB methodology, which is designed to approve desired behaviours rather than disapprove undesired behaviours. The curriculum is designed to emphasise teaching through positive reinforcement. The system uses the principles of positive reinforcement by identifying effective forms of reinforcement and the manipulation of intermittent and other schedules of reinforcement. The creation of pupil motivation is essential to the implementation of the principles of positive reinforcement. Our schools draw from a scientific research base to devise strategies to manage and reduce bullying behaviours and their effects.

Policy Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Our schools aim to promote a consistent approach and create an environment in which all types of bullying are considered unacceptable.

BeyondAutism Schools aim to:

- involve parents, carers, pupils and staff in the prevention of bullying
- regularly update our approach to take account of developments in technology
- intervene wherever needed

- create an inclusive and safe environment in which differences which could motivate bullying are openly discussed
- use specialist organisations and resources for help whenever needed
- provide effective staff training involve the wider community such as the police and children's services whenever needed
- make it easy for pupils to highlight if they are being bullied or feel uncomfortable with the actions of others towards themselves.

What is Bullying?

Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Department for Education, (July 2017) defines bullying as behaviour by an individual or group, 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, social media, gaming or the internet, which can include the use of videos and images), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between children.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways - it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone) derive from an intellectual imbalance or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Cyber-bullying:

Cyberbullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times in the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content with one click.

The Behaviours of Children and Young People with ASD and the Characteristics of Bullying Behaviours

Pupils with ASD are likely to be unaware that certain behaviours have the characteristics of bullying and are socially unacceptable. It is possible that one pupil may develop an obsession with another which may cause distress or anxiety. Such behaviours might include wanting to be near the 'target' pupil or having an interest in making physical contact with him/her, such as touching a particular part of his or her body or potentially harmful behaviours such as kicking, pinching or throwing objects.

Staff have a duty to be vigilant and alert to these behaviours. For example, the pupil who is the target may show fear or anxiety when he/she sees the child/young person who targets him/her. This information must be shared amongst all members of the class team, and also shared with other members of staff as soon as possible, particularly with those on duty during playtimes and lunchtime. All incidents of challenging behaviour, including behaviour that involves pupil to pupil incidents are tracked on SchoolPod, and efficiently dealt with.

The Targeted Child

It is important to support the target of bullying behaviour, particularly as he or she may have difficulty communicating their experiences. The pupil should be able to communicate in their preferred mode, e.g. PECS, Makaton, signing, speech or an AAC. Social skills training may help him or her to become more assertive, to show less anxiety, and say or sign, “No”.

Attention seeking behaviours

Some pupils with ASD may seek attention. For them, to use a behaviour directed against another pupil is a way of achieving this attention. Adult intervention could potentially reinforce this potential bullying behaviour.

In these circumstances, the strategy should be to break this cycle to eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour. This could involve:

- Differential Reinforcement of Other Behaviour (DRO)
- Non-Contingent Reinforcement (NCR): providing the child with a thicker reinforcement schedule over playtime to prevent attention-seeking behaviour from occurring in the first place;
- Redirection: adults deliberately diverting the pupil’s attention away from one behaviour to a new activity;
- Time out: giving the pupil time away from the classroom or playground. “Time out” can be an effective way of withdrawing adult attention. It is important that the pupil is helped to develop understanding that the reason for being given “time out” is his or her behaviour.
- Assigning a one-to-one adult to monitor the bullying pupil at playtimes.

Intrinsic Reinforcement from behaviours

Some pupils with ASDs emit behaviours in order to receive sensory input. For example, a pupil may bite another because they are reinforced by the sensation of biting.

A tactic to decrease this behaviour could involve:

Introducing the pupil to an activity that provides him/her with the same sensory input, e.g. biting into a stress ball.

Conditioning playground equipment: pairing positive reinforcement with using playground equipment so that the pupil learns to gain reinforcement from other activities.

Prevention

In all work with children/young people, staff emphasise the importance of developing social skills, including good behaviour and respect for the feelings of others. Where children/young people 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. BeyondAutism Schools' Curriculum builds on this through activities which include PSHE, PE, Break Time, Language and Communication sessions and group work to develop an ethos of co-operation and respect for everyone.

Staff are important role models for the pupils. The behaviour of adults towards each other and towards the pupils is a potentially highly effective tool for preventing and decreasing bullying behaviours in pupils with ASD. Staff will also be trained on the importance of anti-bullying strategies, and reminded where they can seek support if they require it.

Staff will gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. This might involve direct teaching on issues of difference, in lessons, through dedicated events, projects or assemblies. Where necessary we will call on the expertise of specific organisations to draw on their expertise, for example, Childnet for Online safety.

The schools will also involve parents in discussions about the prevention of bullying. Parents should feel confident in raising any concerns about bullying, as it will be taken seriously and will be resolved in a way that protects their child.

Intervention

The nature and level of support will depend on the individual circumstances and the level of need. School staff will support all pupils who are being bullied. As children with ASD can lack the social or communication skills to report such incidents, staff will remain alert to the potential bullying the pupils could face.

The schools should apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly that this behaviour is not appropriate. Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly, consistently and take into account the SEN of the pupil. It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the child engaging in bullying may support themselves (please see above) – what does this mean?.

It may be the case in exceptional circumstances that the pupil's bullying behaviour continues even though a variety of strategies have been employed. In such cases the school may request the pupil's LA to sanction a change of provision, or it may be necessary to consider sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion.

Last review: March 2018

Next review: March 2021

Review group: Full Governing Body