

# Anti-bullying Policy

## Anti-bullying Policy for both the Junior School and Senior School

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## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### Policy Statement

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Freemen's. If bullying does occur, at or outside school but involving members of the community, pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Freemen's is a "telling" School. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of staff.

The purpose of this Policy is to help to prevent bullying at Freemen's as far as reasonably practicable. It achieves this by informing all members of the School community of what bullying is, how to identify it, how serious it is and what they should do if they experience, witness or suspect it.

This Policy is mindful of the non-statutory DfE advice *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* (July 2017) and *Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff* (November 2014). It should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Behaviour Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Searches and Confiscation Policy

### Definition of Bullying

Bullying is aggressive or insulting behaviour by an individual or group, often (but not necessarily) repeated over time, which hurts or harms another pupil or group physically or emotionally. Bullying has the potential to cause serious psychological and physical damage and, in the most extreme cases, suicide. It is often motivated by prejudice against individuals on the basis of protected characteristics or other groups to which they belong such as race, religion, culture, sex, gender, sexuality or gender identity (LGBT), special educational needs and disability or because the child is adopted, is looked after by the Local Authority or is a carer. All bullying is unacceptable, and bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously by the School.

Bullying can happen face-to-face or remotely, often involving technologies ('cyber-bullying'); it can happen on the School premises or off the premises. Bullying may involve: name-calling; taunting; mocking; making offensive comments; kicking; hitting; pushing; punching or any use of violence; unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments; taking belongings; producing offensive graffiti; gossiping; excluding people from groups; spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours through any medium; inappropriate text messages and emailing; inappropriate messaging on social networking sites such as Facebook, Snapchat or Instagram; sending or spreading offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet; the misuse of associated

technology such as cameras, camera phones or video cameras; initiation rituals or other ceremonies. Although sometimes occurring between two individuals in isolation, it quite often takes place in the presence, or with the knowledge, of others.

Sometimes actual bullying is passed off as “banter” or “horseplay”. We are alert to this possibility and do not tolerate the masking of hurtful behaviour by it being called by a different name.

Bullying by Freemen's pupils which occurs outside school premises is taken as seriously by the School as bullying that happens on them. Sections 90 and 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 allow us sanction our pupils for bullying outside school premises if it is reasonable for us to do so. We interpret the scope of “reasonable” to include, *inter alia*, bullying incidents on school trips or during other off-site school activities, on school or public transport to and from school, in Ashted or its vicinity, or any bullying which somehow implicates or make reference to the School itself.

Freemen's recognises that some episodes of bullying can amount to peer on peer abuse.

## The seriousness of bullying

In addition to any physical harm caused, bullying can seriously damage a young person's confidence and sense of self-worth, and he/she will often feel at fault in some way. It can lead to serious and prolonged emotional damage of an individual and, in some cases, leads to suicide. Those who perpetrate bullying or witness bullying can also experience emotional harm. Although not a criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

## Possible Signs of Bullying

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and they should investigate if a child

- is frightened walking to or from School
- does not wish to travel by bus and may ask to be driven instead
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to School or truants
- becomes anxious or lacking in confidence, develops a stammer
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- is unsettled at night and has nightmares
- feigns illness
- begins to do poorly in school work
- has torn clothes or whose belongings are damaged or “go missing”
- starts asking for money or starts stealing money

- loses their money
- has unexpected cuts or bruises
- is hungry because lunch/dinner money has been stolen
- begins to bully other children or siblings
- changes his/her eating habits
- is frightened to voice concerns
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use, or obsessively checks, social media and mobile phone messages

## **Reporting and investigating bullying / suspected bullying**

- Pupils or parents should report bullying incidents to any member of staff, but preferably their Form Tutor or Form Teacher.
- Staff always intervene when they witness bullying.
- If it is suspected with good reason that a pupil is using his/her mobile telephone or any other personal digital device to bully, the device may be seized in accordance with the School's Searches and Confiscation Policy.
- A written record of the incident or disclosure is made promptly and is lodged as a Secure Note in SchoolBase.
- Teachers always inform the relevant Form Tutor(s) and Head(s) of Year of any bullying or suspected bullying.
- Depending on the apparent severity of the incident, the behaviour / alleged behaviour is investigated either by a Head of Year or by a Head of Section. The aim of any investigation is to establish the facts of the matter.
- If pupils need to be interviewed, a second person, usually a Form Tutor or Head of Year is typically present both to act as a support for the child and to take a note of the meeting. Written statements are subsequently produced and the pupil given the opportunity to verify them.
- The parents of pupils who are interviewed are always informed of this, typically shortly after the interview has taken place.
- If the investigator is a Head of Year, he/she will report to a Head of Section; if a Head of Section, he/she reports to the Deputy Head. The person receiving the report then decides on any further action.

## **Responding to a confirmed incident of bullying**

- Other than given the most extreme of extenuating circumstances, bullying is met with a serious sanction. Any insight and/or remorse shown by a pupil in relation to his/her wrongdoing is taken into account. Aggravated bullying, which is where there are factors present that make the bullying particularly morally offensive, is typically punishable by a Head of Section Detention or suspension or, for the gravest incidents, permanent exclusion.

- The School works with social networks to take down any offensive content related to the incident.
- If necessary and appropriate, the Police are consulted.
- A bullying incident is treated as a safeguarding concern and as possible peer on peer abuse when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In these circumstances, our standard safeguarding procedures are followed.
- Parents of both the victim and the bully are informed. Both are asked to help with monitoring and to inform a nominated member of staff if the situation does not resolve itself. The situation is also monitored by staff in school to ensure that repeated bullying does not occur.
- If possible, pupils will be reconciled but the victim must be consulted before a meeting is arranged.
- Support will be given to help the bully or bullies change their behaviour.
- All incidents of confirmed bullying or of suspected yet unsubstantiated bullying are recorded in the whole-school Bullying Log, including whether or not it was on the basis of protected characteristics.

## **The School prevents bullying and promotes an anti-bullying ethos in the following ways**

- By treating all reports of bullying seriously.
- By reminding pupils that it is wrong to be a bystander who witnesses bullying but does nothing about it.
- By focusing in assemblies on different aspects of behaviour and by reminding pupils of the need to report any suspected bullying.
- Through the PSHE programme and the general curriculum by:
  - a) dealing with the topic of bullying in a way which explores why it happens and gives alternative ways of behaving and dealing with difficulties
  - b) using specialist trainers to teach pupils about using technology responsibly
  - c) using teaching methods which encourage co-operative work and a variety of groupings so that pupils extend their relationships beyond a small group of friends.
- By assessing the extent and nature of bullying from time to time through an anonymous questionnaire.
- By annually reviewing this policy, including at Governor level, and amending it if appropriate.
- By keeping pupils, parents, and staff aware of the policy and training staff in how to prevent bullying, how to spot it and what to do when it is suspected. There is further guidance in the Staff Handbook on how to deal with bullying and allegations of bullying.
- Given that bullying can amount to peer on peer abuse, the regular safeguarding agenda in Staff Briefing is sometimes given over to anti-bullying training.
- By keeping a Bullying Log that is reviewed at least annually by SLT so that patterns can be identified and strategic interventions made. Findings are shared with Governors.

- By promoting our pupil prefect system in all sections of the School and encouraging pupils to use the peer mentors. All prefects and peer mentors receive appropriate training.
- By restricting pupil internet access so that social networking sites are not accessible using school devices.
- By participating in nationwide campaigns such as the Diana Award's Big Anti-Bullying Assembly 2020.
- By enabling an Upper School Head of Year to be trained by *Girls on Board*, an anti-bullying organisation specialising in girl-on-girl bullying. This colleague is qualified to train other teachers in how to prevent and address such bullying, something which is being rolled out in 2021.
- Sponsoring an Enquiring Schools Project on causes of and strategies to counter bullying at Freeman's. This will give time and resources for an in-depth analysis by a colleague, together with a platform for her findings to be fed into our anti-bullying strategy.