

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Implemented: February 2018

Reviewed: March 2025

Date of Next Review: March 2027



WATERGATE SCHOOL

'I Can, You Can, Together We Will'

Anti - Bullying Policy

Rationale

Watergate is a special school for primary-aged children with a wide range of complex learning needs and disabilities, including physical disabilities. Our children function at levels significantly below that of their mainstream peers.

If the commonly accepted definition of bullying is:

“Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally”

then children with severe learning difficulties, autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties do not have the capacity to understand the concept of bullying or to premeditate and carry out incidents of bullying or prejudiced behaviour. Incidences of bullying are very unlikely at Watergate School, but staff remain vigilant to any signs of behaviour which could be interpreted as bullying and respond appropriately, trying to identify the function of the behaviour and following the school's behaviour policy.

At Watergate School we are committed to the principle of supporting children to achieve the very best of outcomes in all areas of their development. We place the wellbeing, safety and happiness of our children as its highest priority. We recognise that incidents of bullying, or incidents that could be perceived as bullying, must be addressed quickly and effectively to avoid them having a devastating effect on an individual's life which can last into adulthood. Watergate School will provide an environment that is safe and free from bullying. Bullying is not tolerated and staff at the school will act swiftly to deal with any situations which arise.

Watergate School has written this policy to ensure that best practice and procedures are carried out. This policy complies with legal requirements and is referenced to the Safeguarding and SEND policies.

Aims

At Watergate we are fully committed to:

- providing a safe, calm, nurturing environment for the whole community and a place where children are valued and celebrated for who they are
- teaching children to regulate their own behaviour
- teaching children how to recognise bullying and know that it is not acceptable
- making it clear that reports of bullying will be taken seriously; investigated, recorded and acted upon
- making sure that children know it is the right thing to tell someone about situations where they feel uncomfortable or unhappy and that they will be listened to
- listening to the concerns of parents and keeping them informed of actions taken in response to a complaint

- fully investigating any report of presumed bullying with detailed records kept of incidents, reports and complaints and taking appropriate action.
- formally recording incidents, or incidents interpreted as bullying, during each academic year: the Headteacher will monitor and ensure that detailed records are kept
- providing effective staff training in positive behavior support, so that all staff understand and accept the principles and purpose of this policy and know from where to seek support

Definition

The DfE say that there is no legal definition of bullying, but it is usually defined as behavior that is: repeated

- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation

It takes many forms and can include:

- physical assault
- teasing
- making threats
- name calling
- cyberbullying - bullying via mobile phone or online (for example email, social networks and instant messenger)

Bullying will fall into at least one of the following categories:

Emotional: This form of bullying occurs when a person is deliberately (or excludes another person by) overtly nasty or unkind. An example of emotional bullying is encouraging people not to play with somebody or making fun of somebody.

Physical: This form of bullying involves a deliberate physical act which results in injury or hurt feelings. Examples include punching, slapping or kicking.

Psychological: This is a very complex form of bullying which involves deliberate acts which cause fear or anxiety in another person. Social Media is sometimes used as a channel through which to bully another person – this includes the use of texts, photos or video.

Preventing Bullying Behaviour

- The Headteacher and the staff team will create a safe, secure and nurturing environment where children's needs are understood and met, and where they are enabled to learn and thrive in safety and where bullying is not tolerated in any form
- Close multi-agency working will ensure that information is shared and children kept safe because adults are working together around the child

- The curriculum will uphold the principles of this policy and ensure that issues around bullying are addressed before they materialise through (e.g.) the My Wellbeing curriculum, through circle time sessions, drama and role play in which pertinent issues are explored at a level appropriate to the needs of our children
- Children will be taught to respect and value differences in themselves and other people
- Staff will role-model, at all times, the positive behaviour and attitudes we aim to develop in our pupils
- At Watergate we have a principle of zero tolerance with regard to bullying. Parents will be made aware that, due to the needs of our children, their child may experience a behaviour which could be perceived as bullying, but which most probably has other reasons. Parents will be confident that the school will take complaints seriously and resolve issues quickly in order to protect their child
- Staff will receive ongoing training to make sure they understand the needs and abilities of our children principles of the policy and are committed to its implementation
- Concerns will be addressed as soon as they arise

Procedures for Dealing with Perceived as Bullying

The *Lewisham Safeguarding Partnership* states in its safeguarding Multi-Agency Anti-Bully resource that the management of bullying should be:

Efficient, Effective and Empathic

Lewisham Council's vision is that:

'Together with families, we will improve the lives and life chances of the children and young people in Lewisham'.

This is underpinned by 3 principles:

1. We will put children and young people first every time.
2. We will have the highest aspirations and ambitions for all our children and young people.
3. We will make a positive difference to the lives of children and young people.

This vision and underpinning principles are embedded in 4 key areas for impact. Watergate fully subscribes to this strategic framework for intervention:

- Making a difference through early intervention and targeted support. Ensuring that approaches are fully embedded and having direct impact for children
- Involving children, young people and their families in decision-making, service development and the evaluation of those services which affect their lives
- Closing gaps and securing access to social mobility, promoting the highest aspirations and ambition for all children and young people
- Ensuring that we have the best people working for our children and young people

https://www.safeguardinglewisham.org.uk/assets/1/lscb_anti_bullying_guidance_january_2018.pdf

At Watergate School, when dealing with incidents perceived as bullying, staff will be guided by the following principles:

1. Due to their learning needs it is unlikely that a behaviour exhibited by one child and experienced by another, is a pre-meditated act designed to intimidate, demean or deliberately hurt. Therefore, although the behaviour could be perceived as being bullying, it is actually the child exhibiting an unmet need. It is the role of the educator to understand and address the underlying function of the behavior, whilst ensuring that the child who experienced it is kept safe and that there is no lasting impact upon their well-being.
2. We will take all reports of incidents perceived as bullying seriously. Never ignore incidents where it is reported that a child has been distressed by another.
3. We will not make premature assumptions. Fully investigate the situation. Understand the needs of our children and the possible functions of their behaviour.
4. We will listen carefully to everyone – more than one person with the same version does not mean that the truth is being told.
5. We will adopt a logical approach that moves pupils forward and focuses on ensuring everyone's safety and well-being.
6. Once resolved, we will follow up on the issue - check that similar incidents have not recurred.
7. Record information in detail outlining any incidents and conversations.

Should an incident be identified as 'bullying' the following principles and procedures will be followed at Watergate School:

- Incidents reported as bullying at the school will be investigated thoroughly and sensitively following the school policy. Any reported incidents will be reported to the Headteacher immediately.
- Children will be encouraged and enabled to report any incident where they feel they have been targeted by another that they experience or witness. Staff will demonstrate to children that they are being listened to and taken seriously. Detailed notes will be made clearly stating the allegation the child has made – remembering that very few of our pupils are able to make spoken allegations.
- Next steps will be explained to the child in a way in which they can understand.
- With reference to safeguarding procedures, a form will be completed outlining the incident and any action to be taken - this will be copied to the parent and stored in the pupils' school file. The individual's Pupil Profile may also be updated as required e.g. to enable staff to support the child appropriately ensuring their wellbeing.
- Staff members will inform the Headteacher of any bullying incidents they witness or suspect involving children or adults at the school.
- A child who has had experienced a negative experience will be reassured and supported by members of staff. It may be necessary to implement a range of strategies to ensure the child regains their confidence and sense of safety and well-being, e.g. additional staff support, personalised timetables, Relational Support Plans, etc. Children will be closely supervised and their emotional well-being checked regularly.

- In the majority of cases behaviour perceived as bullying will be approached with reference to strategies set out in the Positive Behaviour Support policy and may involve updating a Relational Support and Co-Regulation Plans.
- The Headteacher, or a relevant member of the Senior Leadership Team, will talk to the parents/carers/guardians of all children in negative experience perceived as bullying to discuss the issues and engage their support in identifying solutions to the problem.
- If a staff member has been the perpetrator or victim of school bullying this will be dealt with by the Headteacher in accordance with the staff disciplinary procedures.
- Where behaviour perceived as bullying persists and has not been resolved by using the strategies outlined in the Positive Behaviour Support Policy, other interventions will be considered to develop the understanding and self-regulation skills of the child and to prevent harm to another child or adult
- If a parent or carer is unhappy with any aspect of the way, the school handles issues they perceive as bullying they may refer to the School's Complaints policy.

Disability Equality Impact Assessment

This policy has been written with reference to and in consideration of the school's Disability Equality Scheme. Assessment will include consideration of issues identified by the involvement of disabled children, staff and parents and any information the school holds on disabled children, staff and parents.

Any questions or concerns regarding this policy should be made to the Head Teacher

This policy will be reviewed every three years or as required by guidance/ legislation.

Related Policies & Documents

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Statement of Behaviour Principles
- Positive Behaviour Support Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Home/School Agreement