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Written/reviewed by:	Andy Moughtin (Director of Services)	
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Anti-Bullying Policy

Handling situations of Bullying (With regard to DfE Guidance: Preventing and tackling bullying (latest version))¹

Introduction

Acorn is committed to offering a safe and healthy environment for the young people who attend activities in our centres and as a consequence of wider engagement with the organisation. Challenging bullying and early signs of bullying behaviour effectively will improve the safety and happiness of young people, show that the organisation cares and make clear to all that this type of behaviour is unacceptable.

Safeguarding young people

Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse. This is most likely to include but not limited to: bullying (including cyberbullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults and sexting and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying. Under the Children Act 1989 and 2004 (latest versions), a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection 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, centre staff should report their concerns to the local authority children's social care. In any case where staff are concerned that a pupil is being bullied, a CPOMS form should be completed.

We may need to draw on a range of external services to support the young person who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a young person engaging in bullying.

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, there are certain instances of harassment or threatening behaviour that could be deemed as such². If staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally and that is difficult for victims to defend themselves against.

Bullying can take many forms, but the main types are:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, taking belongings

¹

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

² Protection from Harassment Act 1997; the malicious Communications Act 1988; the Communications Act 2003; Public Order Act 1986 (All latest versions in force)

- Verbal – directly by name calling, insulting, making offensive, prejudice-based, discriminatory or homophobic remarks either directly or indirectly, being made the subject of malicious rumours, threats
- Emotional – exclusion from social peer groups, isolation from games and activities
- Cyberbullying – sending malicious emails, messages or text

Bullying may occur in relation to individual characteristics or situations, such as appearance, a health condition, or home circumstances. Bullying can be in relation to the 'protected characteristics' as set out in the Equality Act 2010 (latest version). These are: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

There is no 'hierarchy' of bullying – all forms of bullying should be taken equally seriously and dealt with appropriately.

Early signs of bullying

Although the definition of bullying refers to the repetition of bullying behaviour over time, it is crucial to recognise, challenge and record all single incidents of bullying behaviour, including where a young person makes malicious, derogatory, prejudice-based or discriminatory remarks about another person. This allows bullying behaviour to be nipped in the bud. Where young people do not respond to early sanctions or interventions and bullying behaviour is repeated, staff can quickly recognise and respond to emerging patterns of behaviour. Sanctions can then be escalated in line with the behaviour and sanctions chart, as detailed in the Behaviour Policy.

All such incidents should be recorded and reported on CPOMS (for both the perpetrator and the victim) along with the sanctions imposed and interventions put in place. Logs must indicate (using the appropriate tick boxes) that the behaviour being recorded is 'bullying' and specify its 'type'. This allows for effective monitoring and analysis of bullying or potential early signs of bullying.

Identifying where bullying can occur

Although in-person bullying can occur during the journey to or from school, e.g. extortion or theft of possessions such as mobile phones, most typically it takes place in school. At the Acorn Centre, there is constant supervision of young people, and staff must be vigilant in identifying and dealing with any incidents of bullying as they occur. The centre has the right to regulate the behaviours of young people (as far as is reasonable) when they are off the centre site, so staff are empowered to impose sanctions for inappropriate behaviour that takes place on the way to or from school, or in the case of cyberbullying, over the internet or phone.

Both boys and girls bully others. Young people who bully others can come from any kind of family, regardless of social class or cultural background. Any young person can be bullied, and certain factors can make bullying more likely:

- Lacking close friends at school

- Being shy
- An overprotective family environment
- Being from a different racial or ethnic group to the majority
- Being different in some obvious respect (e.g. stammering)
- Having Special Educational Needs or a disability.
- Behaving inappropriately, intruding or being an 'nuisance'
- Possessing expensive accessories such as mobile phones or computer games

As well as maintaining a high level of vigilance during the supervision of young people, staff who suspect that bullying is taking place outside of these times or online, should bring any concerns to the weekly staff meeting.

Although the primary purpose of this policy is to protect and defend the young people who come to Acorn, it is important to note that bullying can take place not only between young people, but also between young people and staff, parents/carers and staff, or between staff.

Effects of bullying

Victims may be reluctant to attend school and are often absent. They may be more anxious and insecure than others, having fewer friends and often feeling unhappy and lonely. Victims can suffer from low self-esteem, low self-confidence and negative self-image, looking upon themselves as failures – feeling stupid, ashamed and unattractive.

Victims may present a variety of symptoms to health professionals, including fits, faints, vomiting, limb pains, paralysis, hyperventilation, visual symptoms, headaches, stomach aches, bed wetting, sleeping difficulties and sadness. Being bullied may lead to depression or, in the most serious cases, attempted suicide. It may lead to anxiety, loneliness and lack of trust in adult life.

Raising and reporting concerns

Young people may raise, and report concerns they have about bullying by speaking directly to any member of staff at any point during the school day. The Acorn Centre website contains a form that can be used by young people or parents/carers to alert staff to concerns. Young people may also report a concern using the interactive 'My Day' system, accessible while at the centre or remotely, via the internet. Using this system, young people can request to speak privately to staff about an issue they are concerned about. Staff check each young person's 'My Day' daily and can act on concerns immediately. As Acorn introduces other means of raising concerns, we will keep students, and their parents/carers informed. At Acorn we aim to create a safe environment where young people can openly discuss the cause of their bullying, without fear of further bullying or discrimination. Staff must ensure that they do not offer to keep any concerns raised confidential but work with the young person to address their concerns in an appropriate manner.

Parents/carers and members of staff may also raise concerns and where this occurs, a staff member should speak to their line manager in the first instance. For further support, they may wish to contact their trade union or professional association for support and advice. Any parent/carer who feels that their concerns are not being sufficiently dealt with may follow the 'Complaints Procedure', details of which are on the website and also available on request.

Dealing with bullying – prevention and intervention

Bullying will be discussed as part of the curriculum and will be directly challenged and discussed with young people by staff. Participation in the national annual anti-bullying initiatives may inform part of the taught curriculum. The Anti-Bullying Charter will be discussed with all pupils at the start of their time with us and revisited at the start of each term. Staff will actively encourage young people to talk about bullies and bullying and about any bullying issues affecting them. Bullying in any form will not be tolerated. All young people will be challenged on behaviour that is tantamount to bullying from low-level persistent put-downs, to physical, mental and verbal attacks. The 'Behaviour Policy' outlines the specific strategies and sanctions that exist in Acorn for dealing with misbehaviour and bullying. Guidance for appropriate ways to listen to young people is given in the Acorn 'Child Protection – Code of Conduct' Policy. Where our strategies do not resolve the problem, permanent exclusion may be justified in the most serious and persistent cases, particularly where violence is involved.

All incidents of bullying must be recorded on CPOMS. For young people that are being bullied, a concern should be raised. For pupils that are bullying, the behaviour report should be used. The entry should include the type of bullying; the sanctions and interventions put in place and the outcome. This information can then help us to monitor and review occurrences of bullying and the effectiveness of sanctions in place to address them.

Monitoring

By using information from CPOMS we will be able to monitor the effectiveness of our Anti-Bullying policy. Success will be measured by:

- The number of incidents of bullying being recorded on CPOMS declines as each term progresses
- The number of repeat offences of bullying are significantly less than first offences
- There are no unresolved cases of bullying

Heads of Centre should access, and review occurrences of bullying recorded on CPOMS on a regular basis and act on any concerns. Discussion of this should be built into the monthly staff team meetings. Heads of Centre will report key information and analysis of bullying incidents to the Centre Support Team on a termly basis.

Maintaining a High Anti-Bullying profile

- All new staff read and understand the Anti-Bullying policy
- The 'Acorn Anti-Bullying Charter' is displayed in all centres

- All staff are encouraged to maintain a high level of vigilance around the likelihood of bullying taking place and to challenge and report all incidents
- Staff training is undertaken on a regular basis
- Opportunities are given for staff to discuss concerns during regular staff meetings
- Opportunities to discuss possible issues of bullying with schools, young people, parents/carers and referring agencies are encouraged at all times
- Heads of Centre analyse behaviour records relating to bullying, discuss with the staff team monthly and report to the Centre Support Team termly.

Links to other policies

Behaviour Policy

E-Safety Policy

Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding – Staff Code of Conduct

Complaints Procedure

Anti-Bullying Charter



At Acorn AP we are committed to working together to create an environment where no form of bullying is tolerated.

At Acorn we will:

- Encourage and help young people to treat each other with respect and kindness.
- Supervise young people at all times and challenge any bullying that we see or hear.
- Impose appropriate sanctions for bullying.
- Record all incidents of bullying and if necessary, discuss concerns with parents / carers and schools.
- Talk about bullying as part of our planned curriculum and at other times.
- Discuss, monitor and review our Anti-Bullying Policy on a regular basis.

If you feel you are being bullied, you can:

- Speak directly to any member of staff at any time.
- Let us know in confidence, that you have a concern that you want to discuss by saying so on your 'My Day' check in, or by reporting via the 'Is something wrong' poster.

If you tell us you are being bullied, we will:

- Deal with all bullying concerns quickly, sensitively, and effectively, and help ensure that the bullying does not continue.
- Support you while the issue is being dealt with and afterwards.

If a parent/carers or school has a concern about bullying, they can contact us to discuss it at any time. All concerns will be dealt with in line with our Anti-Bullying Policy, copies of which are available on request.