



BRUTON SCHOOL FOR GIRLS

Countering Bullying

At Bruton School for Girls we are committed to creating an environment where everyone feels safe, respected and confident. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our school community.

If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a 'telling' school; this means anyone who knows that bullying is happening, whether in or out of school, is expected to tell an adult.

The aims of this policy are to outline what we believe to be inappropriate behaviour, to demonstrate that we take this seriously and will not tolerate it, to outline the measures in place to help prevent it, and what action will be taken should such behaviour occur.

Bullying is an emotive term which is often used to describe an extreme of inappropriate behaviour. Bullying is defined as the repeated attack – physical, social, psychological or verbal – by those in a position of power, defined formally or by situation, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or gratification¹.

It is intended to hurt, threaten or frighten another person. It is usually unprovoked and is often repeated or continues for a period of time. Such behaviour is aggressive, but may be indirect. Indirect aggression includes gossip, stealing friends, exclusion and malicious teasing. It may involve unpleasant emails, texts or messages left on social networking sites ('cyber-bullying'). Bullying may also be homophobic or centre on special educational needs or other disability; it may be religious, cultural, racial or sexual in nature. It makes the target feel unsafe and may affect her learning; it also makes others anxious and does no service to the aggressor. Bullying can cause psychological damage.

We aim to prevent such inappropriate behaviour in a number of ways.

The school Code of Conduct demands that everyone is treated with courtesy and respect. We discuss this issue with new parents and ask for their support in disclosing any such behaviour. Copies of this policy and notes specific to parents are included in the parents' Information Handbook. All members of staff are made aware of the material and procedures in this policy through training and the Staff File.

As role models, we demonstrate good manners and respect for the individual ourselves. Our opposition to aggressive behaviour and its consequences in the community is made clear. We actively recognise positive behaviour. Through the PSHE programme, we inform the girls what to do if they are aware of this behaviour going on, and remind them that their silence supports the aggressor. We strive to

¹ Besag V E (1992) 'We don't have bullies here!'

develop self-esteem in the girls at all times. We encourage younger pupils to sit with lots of different people and to join in Hall and other activities, clubs and societies. Our Hall groupings are taken across all years so that the younger girls are familiar with older ones. New girls are welcomed into the school by the Heads of Hall. Their induction includes guidance on countering bullying. We observe our pupils carefully, particularly if they are 'new' or vulnerable. We are alert to hostility.

If anyone suspects or observes inappropriate or aggressive behaviour, he/she should inform the Class Teacher/Tutor/Head of Hall/Head of Sixth Form, who will consult a Deputy Head or Head of Prep School. All allegations will be taken seriously and investigated. We will endeavour to solve the problem with the help of the girls and their parents.

In a serious case or where no progress is evident, such behaviour could lead to suspension or a student being asked to leave the school.

Procedures

Heads of Hall, Head of Sixth Form, Housemistresses, Head of Prep School, Deputy Head:

Be aware that bullying is usually carefully hidden from adults and difficult to detect. A girl who is directly accused may vehemently deny involvement. Provocation can be confused with retaliation out of fear. A problem-solving approach which avoids blaming can be more effective in clarifying the situation and achieving change.

All allegations of bullying behaviour will be investigated. Help will be offered to all parties. The girls involved will be interviewed by the relevant staff, such as Head of Hall, Head of Sixth, Housemistress, Head of Prep School or Deputy Head and Tutors will be informed.

- A record will be made of the circumstances and events and kept.
- The Head will be informed.
- If the allegations are serious, judged on severity, degree of intent or repetition, the parents will be informed and usually invited to the school to discuss the matter and the action to be taken. Both the girl and the parents will be warned that bullying can be seen as 'serious misconduct'.
- Each girl will be given guidance on what to do and will have a follow up review a month later.
- Staff will be told of the matter through the Staff Briefing meeting and asked to monitor the girls involved.

The outcome of the meetings may be apologies, detentions, changing groups, reports, community activity, discussion or counselling and further monitoring. It is hoped that the girls will be reconciled.

Teaching staff, Gap-year assistants, Support staff:

If you witness aggressive behaviour, make clear that such behaviour is unacceptable. Report it to the Head of Hall or Deputy Head/Head of Sixth or Head of the Prep School who will decide on the plan of action.

Look out for these signs:

- Deterioration of work, especially in class
- Lateness to lessons, especially if there is a pattern
- Spurious illnesses or visits to Sister

- Changing friendship patterns
- Isolation, most obvious at break times
- A desire to remain with adults
- Erratic attendance

Girls often use indirect aggression. Look out for:

- Name calling
- A whispering campaign
- Some form of exclusion
- Groups surrounding one girl
- Broken or strained friendships
- Vandalised or stolen property
- 'Missing' homework books
- Graffiti about a particular girl

If you suspect indirect aggression, please continue to monitor the situation and inform the Head of Hall or Deputy Head/Head of Sixth Form or Head of the Prep School.

It is important that if a girl feels bullied, even if she is hyper-sensitive, you must take her seriously.

Listen carefully. Reassure her that no-one has the right to intimidate her. Do not promise confidentiality but reassure her that no action will be taken that may make her situation more uncomfortable. If appropriate, ask her what action she would like to be taken.

Write careful notes: we will need to be clear on exactly what happened, who was involved, who saw it, how often it has occurred and where. We will also need to know if any action has already been taken and if the parents know. If this is a serious incident, ensure that the girl is protected in the short term, and report it to the Head of Hall or Deputy Head immediately or Head of the Prep School.

Boarding Staff:

As for teaching staff, but it may be appropriate for the Housemistresses to deal with minor incidents in House, reporting to the Deputy Head when dealt with or if the matter becomes more serious. The Deputy Head will ensure that Head of Hall/Head of Sixth Form/Head of Prep School is kept informed.

Pupils: (this section to be included in pupils' Information and Welcome Handbooks)

You are encouraged to tell teaching staff, your Tutor, your Head of Hall, the Head of Sixth Form, your Housemistress, the Head of the Prep School or a Deputy Head if you are suffering from or are aware of aggressive behaviour. You could go to any of the staff on the published list, and can be confident that action will be taken. You can be confident in your own worth and value to the community.

If you witness any bullying behaviour, you should tell someone.

You can help to stop bullying

If the girl being bullied is in any danger, fetch help. If she isn't, remain with her; your presence may ease the situation.

Show that you and your friends disapprove.

Give sympathy and support to other girls who may be bullied. It could be your turn next. Be careful about teasing people or making personal remarks. If you think they might not find your comments funny then don't say them. If you know of serious bullying tell someone. The victim may be too scared or lonely to tell.

When you are talking about bullying with an adult, be clear about

- What has happened
- How often this has happened
- Who was involved
- Who saw what was happening
- Where it happened
- What you have done about it already

Parental Involvement (this section to be included in parents' Information Handbook)

The involvement of parents has been found to be effective in deterring persistent bullying. Problem solving approaches to bullying which are school based alone may not always work without the support of the parents. Parents need to show their daughters ways of dealing with difficult situations without using violence or aggression. Making parents aware that their daughter has been involved in bullying demonstrates the fact that the school takes this matter seriously and seeks to change such patterns of behaviour. When parents are involved the Deputy Head and Head or Head of Prep School will always be informed.

If your daughter is being bullied

Parents along with peers will probably be the first to hear of a bullying incident. They should not dismiss it. Parents should contact their daughter's Housemistress, Head of Hall, Tutor, the Head of Prep School, Deputy Head or Head if they are worried. It is essential to stay calm, supportive and find out the facts of the situation. Reassurance will be needed in order to persuade your daughter that she has done the right thing by telling you. You may find it helpful to have the following checklist at your side to ensure that correct information is passed to school.

- Who was involved
- Where did it take place
- How often
- Why did it take place
- What form did the bullying take

When you inform the school of these details you will want to ask what you can do to support the school in the action taken to support your daughter. You will also want to make a note of the suggested strategy the school intends to take. Stay in touch with the school so that they can be kept informed of how things are improving and to establish further contact if necessary.

If your daughter is involved in bullying

It is important to work with the school to modify the patterns of behaviour which are causing your daughter to bully. It is helpful to recognize some of the reasons why pupils behave in this way from time to time. Children sometimes bully others because:

- They are not aware of how hurtful it is
- They are copying the behaviour of older siblings or people they admire
- They have a temporary difficulty integrating in their peer group
- They are bullying others because of encouragement from friends
- They are going through a difficult time personally and need help
- They have not yet learnt satisfactory ways for making firm friendships

To stop your daughter from bullying others

- Talk with your daughter and help her to understand that what she is doing is unacceptable as it makes other girls unhappy.
- Discourage other members of the family from using aggressive behaviour in order to get what they want
- Suggest ways of joining in activities with other pupils without bullying
- Liaise with the school: Housemistress, Tutor, Head of Hall, Head of Sixth Form, Deputy Head or Head or Head of Prep School.
- Make time to have regular chats about how things are going at school.
- Check that your daughter has identified an adult at school to whom she can go if she has a problem or a worry of any kind.

Induction and Training:

The Deputy Head is responsible for making this policy available to all staff, students, parents and governors and for instigating discussion on its implementation and efficacy. Teaching staff and governors are encouraged to inform themselves or undergo formal training in dealing with this issue.

Reporting, recording and review:

Records of incidents, interviews and outcomes will be held by the Deputy Head, and in the girls' files. The Deputy Head will provide an annual report to the Head. The Head of Prep School will do likewise for the Prep School.

This policy is to be reviewed annually with input from girls and staff.

References:

- Besag VE (2006) 'Understanding Girls Friendships, Fights and Feuds'
DfES (2002) 'Bullying: don't suffer in silence – anti-bullying pack for schools'
DCSF (2009) 'Safe to Learn; embedding anti-bullying work in schools'