

## ANTIBULLYING POLICY

### REDUCING CONFLICT - INCREASING UNDERSTANDING

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#### 1. DEFINING BULLYING AT BRECKENBROUGH AND OUR APPROACH TO ADDRESSING IT

Despite all the publicity and research into the emotive subject of “bullying” during the last decade there is no precise definition of the term. It is generally agreed that bullying as opposed to conflict involves repeated orchestrated power over someone weaker either by an individual or more typically by a group through physical intimidation, verbal insults and threats, extortion and exclusion.

Typically, this manifests itself in schools where an individual orchestrates a group to intimidate and exclude an individual in order to build their own status, self-esteem and sense of power over an extended period of time. The definition we use for our more formal work on bullying in PSHE and through the Mentor System is;

**‘When a pupil or group of pupils say nasty or unpleasant things to another boy, or when a boy is hit, kicked, threatened, send nasty notes, etc. with the intention of intimidating or upsetting them.  
Bullying is also when a group or individuals deliberately ignore them.  
It is more serious when it happens repeatedly and the boy is either emotionally or physically hurt and finds it difficult to defend himself.’**

However at Breckenbrough it is often difficult to differentiate between planned intimidation and the constant rivalries, incessant insults, over reaction, deliberate provocation and occasional fights that characterises the behaviour of many of our pupils. Pupils are at Breckenbrough because they have had problems in their social interaction. The social dynamics are always changing so that it is unusual for anyone to dominate for long.

Our more aggressive boys, who might be labelled as “bullies”, tend to “bully” everyone. Their behaviour is learnt. In any social interaction they have to come out on top. They even try to dominate and intimidate those that they like, unaware that the behaviour is unacceptable. Sometimes they think they are being friendly. Our bullies are just as likely to be victims.

#### 2. OUR APPROACH – TO EFFECT LONG TERM CHANGE

The emphasis of much of our work is to break this cycle of rivalry and conflict, to encourage the boys to want to co-operate and care for each other. In examples of clear cut bullying the importance of this process being implemented skilfully and effectively is heightened.

##### *Reluctance to use sanctions*

We do not believe that punitive reactions to bullying has a long-term effect in reducing bullying, and could be argued to reinforce bullying as an approach for life. At best a sanction might relieve the victim for a short period of time, at worse it can increase the anger and resentment towards the victim. If bullying is based on power and intimidation then by imposing sanctions on a bully, they are in effect being over powered and intimidated, (all be it by those in authority and for the right motive.)

However for a violent or particularly vicious incident then a sanction will be applied for the school community.

##### *No use of Children’s Courts*

Similarly, we feel that Children’s Courts can be exploited, resulting in the accused “bully” suffering from a formalised group isolation and intimidation. In any case when investigating “bullying” incidents it is very difficult to get to the full truth due to pupils covering up, blurring the facts or lying to incriminate others.

Instead we prefer to examine the causes and the emotions behind the conflict. Much of our staff training involves understanding the nature of conflict and the development of skills that can prevent similar confrontations from repeating themselves. We try and produce a framework where individual pupils can change their behaviour in order to reduce the number of confrontations and bullying incidents. We firmly believe that through the systematic application of these skills to all conflicts but especially bullying, we can build constructively from negative experiences.

### **3. THE PROCESS OF RESOLVING BULLYING INCIDENTS**

This process is only a guide and should be applied with great flexibility. After an incident has occurred staff adopt the following guidelines.

#### *Talking with and supporting the victim*

The victim must be given time and the opportunity to speak and to express their frustration and anger. They are likely to want to concentrate on the facts and revenge. The member of the staff will allow the victim to 'off load' but will then lead the conversation towards talking about their feelings.

As the pupil calms there will be the opportunity for a more rational and constructive dialogue. If the pupil is becoming more open it might be possible to examine how the victim might have behaved or reacted differently in order to calm the situation, e.g. walking away, not responding to insults etc. It is often a good idea to talk about what they want to happen to the perpetrator. Should the perpetrator be punished? If so, what punishment should this be? What would it be trying to achieve?

The meeting should conclude with the member of staff reassuring the victim and saying that they will go to speak with the perpetrator. They should reassure the victim that they will come and discuss the issue again.

#### *Talking with the perpetrator/s*

The member of staff will then see the perpetrator. This meeting will be particularly effective if some time has elapsed since the incident has occurred. The perpetrator is more likely to be less defensive and more honest. It is important that this conversation does not get tied down investigating the facts. The conversation needs to move away from "he deserved it".

The conversation should move towards finding the reasons and in particular the emotions behind why the perpetrator acted aggressively or unkindly. The perpetrator should be asked if they feel that they should be punished and if so what. They should be asked how they can make amends to the victim.

The member of staff can offer to act as a mediator. Staff should try to get the child to think about how the victim feels. A useful strategy is to talk about the boy's relationships with other pupils, staff and or other adults and not just the victim.

The meeting should conclude with an agreement on how the boy should behave in relation to the victim and to others generally.

#### *Talking with a group*

If the bullying involves a group, staff can be tempted to talk to those involved individually, partly on the divide and rule form of control. However, staff should where possible have the confidence to talk to the group as a whole. The key is to concentrate not on the facts but on the feelings that resulted from the bullying.

This meeting in most cases should not include the victim, unless it is felt, that the perpetrators are genuinely feeling remorse and that the anger and or fear of the victim has subsided.

The meeting should conclude with an agreement on how the boys are going to behave towards the victim. They should be encouraged to suggest ideas on how they can compensate for the hurt that they have caused to the victim. This might start with just a simple but genuine apology.

*Follow up meeting*

It is essential that both the victim and the perpetrator/s are seen later to see if the issue has died down. It is particularly important to ensure that the victim feels secure and safe. It is essential that the situation is monitored after the event.

If there is a continuation of the problem then the dialogue needs to be started again. For things to progress, the same principle applies, concentrating on the reasons behind the bullying and not the bullying itself.

If the situation does not improve then the matter should be referred to senior staff.

**4. CYBER BULLYING**

A growing area of concern is cyber bullying where pupils are insulted and hurt through contact through mobile phones, the internet and social media. The majority of boys have access to mobile phones at home and at school. The majority have access at home to the internet and limited access at school.

Within school pupils are reminded about the responsibility of using technology appropriately and of the legal implications. Parents are also reminded of the issues around the use of the internet in school is monitored.

We take issues around cyber bullying very seriously. If there is an issue the pupil is seen and it is expected that they will not use their access to the internet and mobile phones again. If a child repeatedly offends, the pupil will be request that we will limit their access and to involve the police.

**5. DOCUMENTATION**

The outlines of the event will be recorded and serious incidents are logged on Schoolpod.

**6. PREVENTION - BUILDING AN ETHOS OF CO-OPERATION**

The majority of School anti-bullying policies state that bullying is taken seriously, will not be tolerated and that victims are encouraged to report incidents and that these incidents are dealt with firmly. Whilst these are worthy intentions, which we share, we believe that they can only be applied effectively by spreading the message of understanding and respecting others.

In all our dealings with the pupils, staff emphasise the importance of respecting the feelings and emotions of others. This is first mentioned even before a boy decides to come to Breckenbrough.

<b>Reviewing Schedule</b>		
Date	Name	Date of Ratification and by whom
Drafted by		