



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Legal Status:

- Complies with Part 3 of The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations 2010, as amended 2019
- Prepared with reference to DfE Guidance (2017): *Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for school leaders and governors* and the relevant aspects of *Safe to Learn, embedding anti-bullying work in schools*.
- Having regard for the guidance set out in the DfE (*Don't Suffer in Silence* booklet)
- The Prevent Duty June 2015
- Keeping Children Safe in Education Statutory guidance for schools and colleges (KCSIE) (DfE, 2022)

Applies to:

- the whole School including the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), High School, out of school care, the after-school clubs and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours;
- All staff (teaching and support staff), students on placement, the proprietor and volunteers working in the school.

Availability

This policy is made available to parents, staff and pupils in the following ways: via the School website, and on request a copy may be obtained from Reception.

Read with related documents:

- The School Rules
- Behaviour Management Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Personal, Social, Health, Economic Education (PSHEE)

Monitoring and Review:

- This policy will be subject to continuous monitoring, refinement, and audit by the Head of School.
- The Proprietor (who is also the Head of School) undertakes an annual review of this policy and of the efficiency with which the related duties have been discharged, by no later than one year from the date shown below, or earlier if changes in legislation, regulatory requirements or best practice guidelines so require.

Signed: *S. Sims*

Date: May 2023

Sam Sims
Head of School

Aims and Objectives

At The Meadows Montessori School, our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that every one of our pupils can develop their full potential. We expect our pupils to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed, but orderly, atmosphere. All pupils should care for and support each other. Our school prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. The Head of School, Sam Sims has the overall responsibility for anti-bullying at The Meadows, assisted by Kristie Manser for the Early Years class and Matt Sims and David Green for the High School.

We are strongly committed to the avoidance of bullying in all its forms. We provide a clear framework for dealing with incidents of bullying, ensuring that bullies are dealt with swiftly and firmly. Our straightforward procedures make it easy to report bullying, including cyber bullying and bullying outside of school.

Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting The Meadows Montessori School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that both school and home have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. This policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on request from Reception. It is also available and known to staff, including recently appointed staff.

Bullying, harassment, victimisation, and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our pupils and their parents/carers fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate this towards each other, the staff, and the school. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable. This policy applies to all pupils in the school, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage and High School.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be defined as a deliberate, unprovoked and a repeated (over time) action to intentionally hurt, humiliate, threaten or frighten an individual or group physically or emotionally. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion and belief, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability (as defined in the Equality Act 2010). It may occur directly or through cyber-technology such as social media websites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and email.

Bullying can be:

- *Emotional (indirect bullying) including isolation of others by a refusal to co-operate with them and exclusion - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures), deliberately excluding from social groups or an activity by refusal to sit next to/ talk to/ work/ co-operate with others and refusal to follow staff instructions to do the above, or malicious rumours, e-mails or text messages, and also exclusion from play/discussions etc. with those whom they believe to be their friends.*
- *Physical harm or its threat including the abuse of personal property – jostling, serious fighting, pushing, kicking, hitting, taking or hiding belongings, punching or any use of violence; deliberately destroying or damaging work or possessions or removing personal property, use of weapons/threatened use of weapon (or any object which could be used as a weapon), intimidation through physical gestures and actions.*
- *Cyber – not occurring face to face but rather through electronic means including, but not limited to, social networking sites, internet websites, email, instant messaging, by mobile phone including through text messages and phone calls, photographs both real and manipulated and so on.*
- *Racist - Bullying directed at individuals of a certain race, culture, ethnicity, language, faith, community, national origin or national status. The distinctive feature of racist bullying is that the victim is attacked not as an individual but as the representative of a family, community or group.*
- *Cultural – focusing on and/or playing off perceived cultural differences and so on.*

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- *Sexist* – covers a wide range of behaviour from name calling to physical sexual assault. It is the use of sexual language or negative stereotyping on the basis of gender.
- *Sexual* - unwanted or inappropriate physical contact or sexual innuendo.
- *Homophobic*- directed towards people who are openly gay, bisexual, or perceived to be. Heterosexual young people subject to homophobic bullying are often less reluctant to report it, so sensitivity and positive support is required for victims.
- *Religious* – Attacking faith, belief, religious practice or custom.
- *Special Educational Needs and Disability* – remarking upon, drawing attention to, or discriminating against persons with physical disabilities or learning difficulties or other identified special educational needs such as emotional and behavioural disabilities and Specific Learning Difficulties- for example Dyslexia, Dyscalculia and Dyspraxia.
- *Verbal* - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, making snide comments, teasing, humiliating others, threatening others, inciting others to humiliate and threaten others
- *Written* – spreading rumours, writing or printing unkind or malicious comments on paper.

Bullying can take place between pupil and pupil, staff and staff and staff and pupil. We consider the pastoral care of the staff and children to be of prime importance. In class, this role largely rests with the class teacher. It is school policy that any misdemeanour will be dealt with by the member of staff present when it occurs, whether in the playground, classroom, lunch hall or any part of the school. A common code of behaviour is expected from everyone in the school (see Behaviour Policy). All staff and volunteers at The Meadows Montessori School are expected to treat each other with a professional level of respect.

The Risks of Bullying to the Victims: Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour. A feature of bullying in schools is that its existence is not always immediately known or suspected by those in authority. The school recognises the seriousness of both physical and emotional bullying in causing psychological damage and even leading to suicide. Although bullying itself is not a specific criminal act in the UK, some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could be a criminal offence; for example, under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 and the Public order Act 1986. If our staff consider that an offence may have been committed, assistance should be sought from the police. As part of our Behaviour Management Policy, the School believes that all children and adults have the right to live in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied. Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour. We treat bullying, including allegations of bullying, very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles. Bullying can be so serious that it causes psychological damage, eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide.

Signs of Bullying and Staff Awareness

The term 'bullying' is commonly associated with acts of violence, but non-physical bullying could be experienced by pupils too. All staff must be alert to the signs of bullying. These may include:

- Unwillingness and reluctance to return to school, displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet with signs of distress and low esteem, a change in established habits (e.g., giving up music lessons)
- failure to produce work, or unusually poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with, or spoilt by others, excuses for work not done and books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged;
- psychological damage, unexplained tearfulness; and diminished levels of self-confidence;
- frequently complaining of symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches and so on or a pattern of minor illnesses and health problems, unexplained cuts and bruises, health problems, frequent absences, erratic attendance and late arrivals to class
- choosing the company of adults;
- missing property, being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone and nervousness when a cyber-message is received
- asking for extra pocket money or starts stealing money (to give away)
- displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact, difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares;
- talking of suicide or running away;

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- verbal taunts and pupils sitting on their own and pupils left out of activity groups during lessons or play activities and gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers. It should always be acknowledged that on rare occasions some children set themselves up as victims, and the reasons for this should be thoroughly investigated and appropriate support given.

The Meadows Montessori School Anti-bullying Policy is dove-tailed with the Behaviour Policy (with support for the victim and the bully) and makes it clear what the sanctions are for bullying. At The Meadows Montessori School we implement disciplinary sanctions which reflect the seriousness of an incident and convey a deterrent effect. If necessary strong sanctions, such as exclusion, would be used in cases of severe and persistent bullying. It is incumbent on The Meadows Montessori School to have clear policies which are communicated to parents, pupils and staff, along with creating an environment of good behaviour and respect, with helpful examples set by staff and older pupils. Integral to our policy is involving parents and making sure pupils are clear about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders. Handling of a bullying incident is given much thought to ensure that the facts are fully known, agreed and understood by the bully/ies and the victim(s). Bullying instances are reported and recorded so that patterns can be identified.

Strategies

Prevention - Children

We use educational elements such as personal, social and health education (PSHE), assemblies, projects, drama, stories, literature, with discussion of differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice-based language. This gives pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. We also, within our curriculum, use social stories and drawings about bullying, making up role-plays, use historical events, current affairs and so on, to highlight the essential anti-bullying messages and maintain awareness of potential problems, striving to prevent any form of bullying through education. All children (including our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the school's expected standards of behaviour. They are told what to do if they encounter bullying. Lessons will be planned to highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that should bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills. At The Meadows we often work in mixed age groupings where older children are encouraged to offer advice and support to younger pupils.

Prevention - Staff

All staff are given guidance on the school's anti-bullying policy and in how to react to the allegations of bullying prior to commencing duties at The Meadows. They are required to read the school's policy a part of their induction. We aim to use appropriate assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. We raise awareness to staff through training, so that the principles of the school policy are understood, legal responsibilities are known, action is defined to resolve and prevent problems, and sources of support are available. Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class e.g the playground. Where appropriate, we invest in specialised skills to understand the needs of the pupils, including those with special educational needs and disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ) pupils.

Cyber-bullying Preventative Measures

In accordance with legislative requirements, we have a whole school approach to e-safety. This includes training for staff. The school also organises annually an awareness session for parents with regards to e-safety, PSHE lessons are used to teach the children about cyber bullying, and they are expected to follow our procedures on this.

Procedures for dealing with reported bullying:

The procedures we follow make it easy to report bullying, including cyber-bullying and bullying outside school and records are kept to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted or to enable patterns to be identified. *Members of staff to whom disclosures are made or who first discovers the situation should initiate the following procedures themselves and/or consult with the relevant staff as appropriate.*

- Control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved.
- Inform the Head of School and/or SLT as soon as possible.

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- Explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved.
- The victim will be interviewed on his/her own and a verbatim account of events will be written down on a school incident form and signed and dated.
- The incident should be recorded before it is given to the Head of School who is responsible for keeping all records of bullying and other serious disciplinary offences, securely locked in the filing cabinet.
- The Head of School will inform the teachers of both the bully/bullies and the victim(s) as soon as possible.
- The victim will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of staff separately from the alleged perpetrator. It will be made clear to him/her why revenge is inappropriate. He/she will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him or herself.
- The alleged bully will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of staff, separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why his/her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. The parent/ guardians of all parties should be involved and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions and counselling (where appropriate) should be agreed.
- The School Behaviour Policy is central to the school's stance against bullying and states that children who bully must face sanctions and/or exclusion. Implementing disciplinary sanctions which reflect the seriousness of an incident and convey a deterrent effect (strong sanctions such as exclusion may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying)

In the event of bullying taking place among the staff, the Head of School should be informed, and appropriate decisions made with possible reference to the external visitor if necessary. Accusations of bullying of a child (children) by members of staff will also be thoroughly investigated.

The Procedures for Pupils

Pupils are invited to tell us their views about a range of school issues, including bullying, in various pupil questionnaires. We have a worry box out at Reception where children can post messages if they wish to tell a member of staff something but do not want to initially talk directly to an adult. This box is opened daily, and the writing passed onto the class teacher or adult that the child has named they would like to share their worries with. This is discussed termly at an assembly for all children.

For children who are being bullied - Remember bullies thrive on silence

- If you are being bullied, tell someone, preferably a trusted adult.
- If you can, write down everything that has been said or done to hurt you. Be careful only to write down things that have happened.
- Do not blame yourself – it is not your fault.
- Make friends or stay around others.
- If worried, stay near a member of staff during lunch.
- Expensive items and large sums of money should be left at home.
- Try to ignore it at the time of the incident - stay calm - walk away to safety.

For children who see someone being bullied

- If you see someone being bullied or in distress ACT. Watching or doing nothing can suggest support of the bully.
- Tell an adult immediately.
- Try to be a friend to the person who is being bullied.
- Never join in with a bully – physically, verbally or by isolating another child.

For children who are using bullying behaviour

- Recognise that your behaviour is seen as bullying – physically, verbally, or by isolating; this is wrong and can have a long-lasting effect on others, a member of staff will help you with this.
- Even if you think that bullying is just a joke, children who are bullied and those who care for them, feel very scared and/or upset.
- If you are angry and/or upset about something, talk about it with a trusted friend or adult, instead of taking it out on someone else.
- Change your bullying behaviour straightaway with support.

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- Appreciate that everybody has the right to be treated with respect.
- Know that staff will support you with changing your behaviour.

Involvement of Parents (including clear policies communicated to parents)

We have clear policies communicated to parents, pupils and staff to create a helpful environment of good behaviour and respect, with helpful examples set by staff and older pupils and celebration of success. This will be achieved through staff members communicating with parents regularly and setting a good example for the pupils. Through the involvement of parents, the school aims to show pupils the part they can play in preventing and dealing with bullying. Parents have a responsibility to:

- Support the school's anti-bullying policy, actively encouraging their child behave responsibly and to be a positive member of the school
- Contact their child's class teacher immediately if they are concerned that their child might be being bullied, or who suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying
- Contact the Head of School if they are not satisfied that their concerns have been dealt with appropriately. Parents will be asked to come in for a meeting to discuss the problem
- Allow the school to resolve the problem with the bully/ies and their parents; the school strongly urges parents not to incite their child to defend themselves through the use of inappropriate language or behaviour
- Be aware that bullies have often been victims themselves and help their child to learn different ways of behaving
- In the case of cyber bullying, e.g., messages on chat rooms, emails & texts, social media websites pupils should be encouraged to keep a record of the date and time of any offensive message(s), save it and bring it to the Head of School and/or their parents/carers.

Action should then be taken with regard to each of the following:

- Advice and support for the victim is in accordance with the school's behaviour management policy.
- Sanctions imposed will be relative to the age of the child. These are recorded on an Incident Form. The bully must understand what they have done and why the sanctions are being applied.
- Support for the bully is in accordance with the school's behaviour management policy.
- Giving general information to all staff, through staff briefing and staff meetings, of incidents of bullying, mentioning the type of incident and the individuals involved.

The above process and sanctions should impress on the person instigating any act of bullying that:

- their action is totally unacceptable
- it is meant as a deterrent to enabling repeat behaviour
- it is a signal to other members of the community that bullying is not tolerated

Appreciating the Seriousness of Bullying

The School has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Classroom Management

Teachers' classroom management will link strongly to the Behaviour Management Policy. This includes a positive ethos with emphasis on the dignity of each pupil, on praise and reward, rather than punishment. The skills of self-discipline must be learnt early in life. All pupils will know that their teachers are the people to whom they can talk to in confidence. Pupils will be given the opportunity in class to discuss bullying and how to deal with it. Pupils will be encouraged to discuss how they get on with others and how to form positive attitudes towards them. This includes a review of what friendship really is and how to treat everyone with dignity and respect. Teachers will be aware that they can radically affect the incidence of bullying and that it must always be taken seriously. Discussions may also take place during the class meeting which happens every week. This is a form where the aim is 'Solution not blame' and an opportunity to support all children in changing their behaviour and sharing their concerns.

Playground Management

The staff on duty should be patrolling the playground areas and constantly monitoring the behaviour of pupils. In the case of minor misbehaviour – a pupil will be given the chance to apologise to the victim – this may stop the situation getting out of hand. The staff on duty will report bullying to the Head of School, who in turn will act in accordance with the agreed policy.

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Sanctions

These may include withdrawal from favoured activities or loss of playtimes. If bullying persists, the parents of the perpetrator and victim are called to discuss the situation separately with the Head of School. In rare cases, children who consistently bully may be excluded.

Anti-Bullying in the Early Years Foundation Stage

Even the youngest children are encouraged to behave towards each other with kindness and consideration. They learn to look after their own possessions and to respect other's possessions. We expect them to be honest, helpful and polite, and to work hard and to listen to others. They should respect everyone and learn to value differences and diversity. Kristie Manser has overall responsibility for the day-to-day management of behaviour for the Early Years class.

We explain to children why some forms of behaviour are unacceptable and hurtful to others. Pupils are encouraged to recognise that being a 'bystander' is not acceptable and to understand how their silence supports bullying and could make them in part responsible for what happens to the victim.

We rarely need to impose sanctions, but we will act appropriately for hurtful behaviour. Occasionally, a child may be sent to see the Head of School, who will explain the inappropriateness of a particular action, but such instances are rare. Parents are always informed by the class teacher when any sanction or reproof is needed and, in cases of repeated instances of hurtful or inappropriate behaviour, they will be invited into the school to discuss the situation with their child's Teacher at first and then with the Head of School if required. They then agree a joint way of handling the situation.

Complaints Procedure

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use our complaints procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that their concerns about bullying (or anything else) have not been addressed properly. Parents of EYFS children should be aware that they have the right to refer a complaint directly to Ofsted if they are unhappy with the way in which their complaint has been handled. The complaints policy explains how to complain to ISI for parents of children Year 1 – Year 11.