



PERFORMERS THEATRE COMPANY

Anti-Bullying Policy 2024

Date of Policy: **16th December 2023**

Policy Responsibility: **Sam Gibbs (Principal)**

Updated or reviewed: **Annually**

Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy should be read alongside the Performers 'Safeguarding Policy' and the 'Social Media Policy'.

Principle

At Performers Theatre Company, we believe that all students have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied.

All institutions, both large and small, contain some numbers of pupils with the potential for bullying behaviour. If a school is well disciplined and organised, it can minimise the occurrence of bullying.

Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It also affects those other children who watch, and less aggressive pupils can be drawn in by group pressure. Bullying is not an inevitable part of school life or a necessary part of growing up, and it rarely sorts itself out. It is clear that certain jokes, insults, intimidating/threatening behaviour, written abuse and violence are to be found in our society. No one person or group, whether staff or pupil, should have to accept this type of behaviour. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed, will a child best be able to benefit from the opportunities available at the School.

It is important therefore that the School has a clear written policy to promote this belief, where both pupils and parents/carers are fully aware that any bullying complaints will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly. Bullying is wrong and will not be tolerated at Performers Theatre Company.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour towards another pupil or group repeated over a period of time. It is difficult for victims to defend themselves against it. A Bully is defined as 'a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those whom they perceive as vulnerable'.

It is important to make the distinction between bullying and friends falling out with each other. Falling out is an inevitable part of a student's life that they need to learn to cope and build resilience to prepare for adulthood. Bullying, however, is neither inevitable nor acceptable.

The focus of bullying can be anything that distinguishes and represents a deviation for a presumed 'norm' - for example:

- size, body shape, hair colour, skin, eye-sight, dress, language or mannerisms
- gender or gender reassignment

- physical or mental disability or special educational needs or learning difficulty
- prowess, or lack of it, in learning, sport or other activity
- personal backgrounds, including parents/carers, adoption or foster status, jobs, houses and lifestyles
- sexual attractiveness, or lack of it, health or appearance
- sexuality, based on homophobia or misogyny
- race, nationality, culture or religion or a mixture of these
- pregnancy, maternity or role as a carer

Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour. It can be:-

a) Physical

A student can be physically punched, kicked, hit, spat at, etc.

b) Verbal

Verbal abuse can take the form of name calling.

c) Exclusion

A student can be bullied simply by being excluded from discussions/activities, with those they believe to be their friends. This can also include 'blinking' people, laughing at them or poking fun or putting people down.

d) Emotional

A student may try to get what they want by making others feel angry or afraid. Emotional bullying can often be more damaging than physical bullying.

e) Damage to Property or Theft

Students may have their property damaged or stolen. Physical threats may be used by the bully in order that the student hands over property to them.

f) Cyberbullying (reference to this issue is also contained in the 'Social Media Policy')

This can involve misuse of all areas of internet use such as email, social networking sites, internet chat rooms, mobile phones - calls, text messages, camera and video facilities.

Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment

Sexual violence is rape, assault by penetration or intentionally touching another person in a sexual way, without consent. (Consent is having the freedom and capacity to choose. The age of consent is 16; a child under 13 can never consent to any sexual activity.)

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. It is likely to violate dignity and/or make the victim feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated. It can also create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment. It includes sexual comments, jokes or taunting, sexual exploitation, coercion or threats, sexualised bullying online or offline, sharing of sexual images and videos, physical behaviour such as deliberately brushing against someone.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between children of any age and any gender although girls are significantly more likely to be victims rather than perpetrators.

Children with SEND are three times more likely to be abused than their peers and children who are LGBT or perceived to be LGBT are targeted more frequently.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment is not an inevitable part of growing up, it is not banter and it is not part of having a laugh. It is criminal activity.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can be driven by wider societal factors such as sexist stereotypes and sexist language.

Child on Child abuse

Children can abuse other children. This can involve:

- Bullying (including cyberbullying)
- Physical abuse
- Sexual violence and assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals
- Upskirting (this involves taking a picture under someone of any gender's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or to cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm)

Possible Evidence of Bullying

- a previously extrovert student becoming withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- a student becomes isolated and disengaged from the class, or is unwilling, for example, to participate in group work
- a student frequently complains of headaches or nausea
- a student displays unusual patterns of non-attendance
- a reluctance to remain in school outside lesson times
- a student bears cuts, bruises and torn or dishevelled clothing at the beginning or in the middle of the day
- noticeable damage to books or other property
- an unaccountable and possibly repeated loss of bags, books, equipment or money
- a deterioration in academic performance
- disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- acts of theft (to pay bully)
- self-harm or suicide attempts

These signs and behaviours could indicate problems other than bullying but, where they are observed, bullying should be considered as a possible cause.

The School Aims

- a) To organise the community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying.
- b) To ensure that all staff are fully aware of the existence and contents of this policy, as part of their induction to the school and through regular formal and informal discussion, and that they take any action necessary to help minimise opportunity for bullying and to raise awareness amongst students of how seriously the school views any type of bullying.
- c) To use any opportunity to discuss aspects of bullying and the appropriate way to behave towards each other
- d) To promote and support National Initiatives such as the annual National Anti-Bullying Week and World Mental Health Day/Week.

e) To deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints, involving parents where necessary.

f) To review the School Policy and its degree of success on an annual basis.

g) To ensure the school staff will continue to have a firm but fair discipline structure.

h) Not to use teaching materials or equipment which give a bad or negative view of any group because of their ethnic origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, because they are adopted, because they are a carer etc.

i) To encourage pupils to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people.

j) To encourage pupils to treat everyone with respect.

k) To educate students about the dangers of the use of the internet and social media.

l) To treat bullying as a serious offence (remember that bullying can cause psychological damage in, in extreme cases, even lead to suicide) and take every possible action to eradicate it from Performers Theatre Company.

m) To make it clear that our stance on bullying applies to students when both in and out of school.

n) To investigate incidents of bullying outside school that are reported to us and take appropriate action according to school policies. Liaise with children's usual educational establishment where appropriate.

o) Where the bullying may involve an allegation of crime (assault, theft, harassment) a referral should be made to the police at the earliest opportunity.

p) To recognise that Bullying can include emotional and / or physical harm to such a degree that it constitutes significant harm (see 'Safeguarding Policy' for further details). Significant harm is defined as a situation where a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, a degree of physical, sexual and / or emotional harm (through abuse or neglect), which is so harmful that there needs to be compulsory intervention by child protection agencies into the life of the child and their family. In the most serious cases, referrals for assessment to MASH children's social care would be made for the child victim and for the child abuser.

q) To record details of incidents of bullying in and out of Performers to assist in identifying repeat offenders. All records of bullying incidents are recorded by, or records are seen by the Principal to enable any overall trends to be identified.

r) To ensure that there is at least one member of staff (currently the designated safeguarding lead) who has specialised skills in order to understand the needs of its students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those who identify as LGBT.

s) To provide regular education to all students about bullying, prejudice, relationships, language and empathy

Advice to Students

What you do if you are being bullied

Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon.

- a) Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that it is wrong.
- b) Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual.
- c) Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- d) Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- e) Be assertive - shout "No!" Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- f) Fighting back may make things worse. Rather than fight back, talk to a teacher or parent/carer.
- g) Generally, it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support. Teachers will take you seriously and will deal with bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.
- h) If you do not feel able to talk to an adult then tell one of the senior students, another older student, one of your mentors or even a friend in your own year. They will help if they can or get an adult to help if they cannot.
- i) You can also get support from Helplines and websites such as ChildLine, Kidscape and the Anti-Bullying Alliance, ChildLine, Kidscape, the Anti-Bullying Alliance, and the Diana Award Anti Bullying Campaign. Phone numbers and web addresses are listed at the end of the school anti-bullying policy.

If you know someone is being bullied

- a) If you are a bystander, act. Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.

b) If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.

c) Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.

Advice to Parents

a) Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend Performers (or their usual school depending on where the bullying is taking place) or feel ill regularly.

b) Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunch time was spent etc.

c) If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform Performers. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.

d) It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse!

e) Tell your own son or daughter there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is not his or her fault that they are being bullied.

f) Make sure your child is fully aware of the School policy concerning bullying, and they will not be afraid to ask for help.

g) Parents can also get information and support from websites such as ChildLine, Kidscape, the Anti-Bullying Alliance and the Diana Award Anti Bullying Campaign.

If you know, suspect or see someone is being bullied, or you are a bystander:

a) If you are a bystander, act. Doing nothing sends a message of not caring and as adults in a position of responsibility and authority, it is our duty to intervene. If not, it makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own and they may feel that we agree with the bully's behaviour.

b) If you feel able to, tell the bully to stop what they are doing and remove the victim from the situation.

c) Report the incident to the school immediately and the authorities if necessary.

Action to be taken / Disciplinary steps

If bullying is suspected we talk to the suspected victim, the suspected bully and any witnesses. If any degree of bullying is identified, the following action will be taken:-

Help and support will be given as is appropriate to both the victims and the bullies:

We support the victims in any or all of the following ways:-

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with the Principal, Business Manager or teacher.
- By enlisting the help of friends / other students to help support the victim and prevent further bullying.
- Informing the victims' parents/guardians.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent further bullying.
- Take statements of any witnesses to the bullying

We also discipline, yet try to help, the bullies in any or all of the following ways:-

- By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- Informing the bullies' parents/guardians.
- In accordance with 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' and under the Children Act 1989, if there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm then a bullying incident will be addressed as a child protection concern.

Disciplinary Steps:

Responses from Performers will vary depending on the nature of the incident, but may include:

1. Monitoring by Principal and teachers
2. Peer support/peer mentoring
3. Formal recording (racism, HBT)
4. Liaison with school/parents/carers
5. Fixed term exclusion
6. Permanent exclusion

The school will take into account the special educational needs and/or disabilities of both the bully and the victim as it investigates any incident and will provide appropriate support in bringing about a resolution or modification to unwanted behaviours.

Useful Numbers and websites providing support and useful information:

Child Line - 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC - 0808 800 5000 www.nspcc.org.uk

Kidscape - 0207 730 3300 www.kidscape.org.uk

Anti-Bullying Alliance www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Bullying UK www.bullying.co.uk

Samaritans 08457 909090 www.samaritans.org

Young Minds www.youngminds.org.uk

The Diana Award's Anti-Bullying Campaign www.antibullyingpro.com

Staff must report all bullying, or suspected bullying, which has been communicated to them, either to the Principal or Business Manager so that an overview can be gained and the situation monitored and logged.