

# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

## Background

This policy sets out BeyondAutism Schools' procedures for dealing with bullying and is informed by *Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Department for Education, (October 2014)*. This policy should also be read in conjunction with BeyondAutism School's Behaviour Policy.

## The Policy

### Rationale - Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

The nature of their disability means that pupils with ASD may not have sufficient understanding or awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying. Similarly, children and young people with ASD who are the recipients of such behaviours may be unable to express or communicate their aversion to such behaviours or to tell adults. This means that all staff at our schools have a duty to not only be aware of such behaviours and of any pupil involved, but also to respond appropriately to instances of bullying behaviours.

### Ethos

BeyondAutism Schools follow ABA/VB methodology, which is designed to approve desired behaviours rather than disapprove undesired behaviours. The curriculum is designed to emphasise teaching through positive reinforcement. The system uses the principles of positive reinforcement by identifying effective forms of reinforcement and the manipulation of intermittent and other schedules of reinforcement. The creation of pupil motivation is essential to the implementation of the principles of positive reinforcement. Our schools draw from a scientific research base to devise strategies to manage and reduce bullying behaviours and their effects.

### Policy Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Our schools aim to promote a consistent approach and create an environment in which all types of bullying are considered unacceptable.

BeyondAutism Schools aim to:

- involve parents, carers, pupils and staff in the prevention of bullying
- regularly update our approach to take account of developments in technology
- intervene wherever needed
- create an inclusive and safe environment in which differences which could motivate bullying are openly discussed
- use specialist organisations and resources for help whenever needed
- provide effective staff training
- involve the wider community such as the police and children's services whenever needed
- make it easy for pupils to report bullying

## What is Bullying?

***Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Department for Education, (October 2014)*** defines bullying as behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between children.

## The Behaviours of Children and Young People with ASD and the Characteristics of Bullying Behaviours

Pupils with ASD are likely to be unaware that certain behaviours have the characteristics of bullying and are socially unacceptable. It is possible that one pupil may develop an obsession with another which may cause distress or anxiety. Such behaviours might include wanting to be near the 'target' pupil or having an interest in making physical contact with him/her, such as touching a particular part of his or her body or potentially harmful behaviours such as kicking, pinching or throwing objects.

Staff have a duty to be vigilant and alert to these behaviours. For example, the pupil who is the target may show fear or anxiety when he/she sees the child/young person who targets him/her. This information must be shared amongst all members of the class team, and also shared with other members of staff as soon as possible, particularly with those on duty during playtimes and lunchtime. All incidents of challenging behaviour, including behaviour that involves pupils to pupil incidents are tracked on SchoolPod, and efficiently dealt with.

### The targeted child

It is important to support the target of bullying behaviour, particularly as he or she may have difficulty communicating their experiences. The pupil should be able to communicate in their preferred mode, e.g. PECS, Makaton, signing or speech. Social skills training may help him or her to become more assertive, to show less anxiety, and say or sign, "No".

## Determining the function of the behaviour

Staff need to be skilful in observing the outcomes of the behaviours and establishing the function of a behaviour in order to identify an appropriate strategy. Once the function of a behaviour has been determined an appropriate tactic is chosen to decrease the behaviour. The possible functions of behaviour include:

- Attention (from the pupil, from another pupil or from an adult)
- Escape (e.g. the pupil may not want to be out in the playground)
- Intrinsic Reinforcement (i.e. the pupil is reinforced by the sensory input they receive from emitting a behaviour)
- Access to a tangible object (e.g. snatching a toy from another pupil).

## Attention

Some pupils with ASD may seek attention. For them, to use a behaviour directed against another pupil is a way of achieving this attention. Adult intervention could potentially reinforce the bullying behaviour.

In these circumstances, the strategy should be to break this cycle to eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour. This could involve:

- Differential Reinforcement of Other Behaviour (DRO)
- Non-Contingent Reinforcement (NCR): providing the child with a thicker reinforcement schedule over playtime to prevent attention-seeking behaviour from occurring in the first place;
- Redirection: adults deliberately diverting the pupil's attention away from one behaviour to a new activity;
- Time out: giving the pupil time away from the classroom or playground. "Time out" can be an effective way of withdrawing adult attention. It is important that the pupil is helped to develop understanding that the reason for being given "time out" is his or her behaviour.
- Assigning a one-to-one adult to monitor the bullying pupil at playtimes.

## Escape

Some pupils with ASD emit behaviours in order to escape from certain situations. For example one pupil might kick another in the hope that they will be taken away from the playground. It is important that time out is not the tactic used for pupils emitting escape-motivated behaviours.

In these circumstances, the strategy should be to break this cycle to eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour. This could involve:

- Conditioning playground equipment: pairing positive reinforcement with using playground equipment so that the pupil learns to enjoy playtimes;
- Contingent escape: allowing pupils time away from the playground contingent upon an interval of time of appropriate behaviour;
- Token economies: allowing pupils to earn tokens for appropriate behaviour in the playground which they can exchange for a reinforcer either during playtime or at the end of playtime.

## Intrinsic Reinforcement

Some pupils with ASDs emit behaviours in order to receive sensory input. For example, a pupil may bite another because they are reinforced by the sensation of biting.

A tactic to decrease this behaviour could involve:

- Introducing the pupil to an activity that provides him/her with the same sensory input, e.g. biting into a stress ball.
- Conditioning playground equipment: pairing positive reinforcement with using playground equipment so that the pupil learns to gain reinforcement from other activities.

## Access to Tangible Objects

Some pupils with ASDs emit behaviours in order to gain access to a tangible item. For example, a pupil may push another off a scooter in order to gain access to that scooter.

In these circumstances, the strategy should be to break this cycle to eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour. This could involve:

- Teaching appropriate language skills to request access to tangible items;
- Teaching the pupil to share or take it in turns on different toys.

## Behaviour Plan

The strategies being employed to overcome a pupil's potential or actual bullying behaviour must be discussed with the Head of School and senior staff and recorded in the pupil's Behaviour Plan. It is important that strategies are shared with parents and carers of the pupils involved so that there is a consistency of approach at school and at home. Strategies need to be carried out over a specific time span and their effectiveness reviewed.

## Prevention

In all work with children/young people, staff emphasise the importance of developing social skills, including good behaviour and respect for the feelings of others. Where children/young people have difficulties interacting appropriately with their peers or with adults, then staff aim to help them develop an awareness of why particular behaviours are valued socially and what is inappropriate. BeyondAutism Schools' Curriculum builds on this through activities which include PSHE, PE, Break Time, Language and Communication sessions and group work to develop an ethos of co-operation and respect for everyone.

Staff are important role models for the pupils. The behaviour of adults towards each other and towards the pupils is a potentially highly effective tool for preventing and decreasing bullying behaviours in pupils with ASD.

Staff will gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. This might involve direct teaching on issues of difference, in lessons, through dedicated events projects or assemblies.

## Intervention

It may be the case in exceptional circumstances that the pupil's bullying behaviour continues even though a variety of strategies have been employed. In such cases the school may request the pupil's LA to sanction a change of provision, or it may be necessary to consider sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion.

Last review: February 2015

Next review: February 2018

Review group: Full Governing Body