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Anti-bullying Policy

1. Aims

Everyone at Ringwood Waldorf School has the right to feel welcome, secure and happy. Social, emotional and academic growth is optimised in an environment free from feelings of humiliation, distress, fear and despair. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent any kind of bullying and to promote an ethos of respect, trust, caring and consideration for others in our school.

All forms of bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals; it can create a barrier to learning and have serious consequences for mental wellbeing.

This policy applies to the whole school community, and aims to be a clear and detailed guide on how bullying is prevented, or reported, dealt with, and learned from, at RWS.

2. Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been informed by, and should be read alongside the government guidance:

- Preventing and tackling bullying (2017)

There are several pieces of legislation which set out measures and actions for schools in response to bullying, as well as criminal and civil law. These include (but are not limited to):

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children Act 1989
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; 3.9, 10.
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997

3. Roles and responsibilities

The **SMT** will communicate this policy to the school community, ensuring that measures are applied fairly, consistently and reasonably.

The **DSL Louise Tiley** is the School's Anti-bullying lead.

The **Trustees** will monitor and review this policy.

All staff, including trustees, SMT, teaching and non-teaching staff, and volunteers, will support, uphold, and implement this policy accordingly.

Parents and carers have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy, and to encourage their child/ren to be a positive member of the school. Parents are also responsible for raising any concerns that their child may be being bullied, or bullying, to the teacher immediately. In addition, parents should be aware of the increasing risk of cyber-bullying, and exercise due parental responsibility in supervising their child/rens use of phones and the internet.

4. Definitions

4.1 Bullying is defined as the repetitive, intentional harming of one person or group by another person or group, often where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. The behaviour is

repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

In bullying, there is:

- An intention to harm
- A harmful outcome (physically or emotionally)
- Persistent and repeated (an isolated attack e.g. a fight, is not bullying)
- Direct or indirect (e.g. hitting someone, or spreading rumours)
- Unequal power (or perceived, often due to age, physical strength, psychological resilience)

Whilst we will never directly label the child as a 'bully', for the purposes of this policy we will refer to the person carrying out the bullying behaviour as the 'bully'.

Bullying can include:

Type of bullying	Definition
Emotional	Being unfriendly, humiliating, excluding, tormenting
Physical	Hitting, kicking, pushing, taking another's belongings, any use of violence
Verbal	Name-calling, spreading rumours, graffiti
Sexual	Explicit sexual remarks, display of sexual material, sexual gestures, unwanted physical attention, comments about sexual reputation or performance, or inappropriate touching
Direct or indirect verbal	Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Cyber-bullying	Any form of bullying that takes place online, such as through social networking sites, messaging apps or gaming sites

4.2 Bullying as discrimination

Bullying behaviour may focus on any point of difference or perceived weakness that allows an imbalance of power to be established.

- Racist and/or faith targeted bullying
- Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying (directed at those who are, or perceived to be LGBT)
- Sexist bullying
- Disablist bullying (against a disabled person or someone with special educational needs)

This type of bullying is reportable by law under the Equality Act 2010.

4.3 Bullying as a group behaviour

It is important to recognise that bullying is often a group behaviour that happens within a social context. There are a number of roles people play within a bullying dynamic. These could include:

- Victim
- Bully (active, initiator, ring leader)
- Reinforcer (reinforces the bullying behaviour of the bully; e.g. by laughing or providing an engaged audience)
- Defender (supporting those on the receiving end, trying to stop the behaviour)
- Outsider/Bystander (typically doing nothing, passive audience)

Ringwood Waldorf School will not tolerate bullying, reinforcing, or bystander apathy.

4.4 Teasing or Bullying?

Teasing is generally good natured and used as a playful way of provoking reaction without an intention or desire to cause harm. Where a group of friends are concerned, teasing would not focus on one person, but shared amongst the group. Teasing does not ridicule or make fun of any characteristics a person cannot change (see 4.2 Bullying as discrimination). If a person is upset by teasing and asks for the person to stop, they would. Teasing can sometimes be taken too far, but is not generally considered bullying.

4.5 Banter

Understanding the four elements of bullying is vital to knowing whether something is bullying: intentional, hurtful, repetitive, involves a power imbalance.

Just because 'banter' doesn't constitute all the elements of bullying doesn't mean it's acceptable.

All offensive, threatening, violent and abusive language and behaviour is always unacceptable, whatever your role.

This includes any negative language or behaviour in relation to/referring to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 i.e. age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex (gender), sexual orientation

5. Responding to Bullying

5.1 Possible signs and symptoms of a pupil suffering from bullying behaviour may be noticeable from a change in the pupil's attitude and/or behaviour. Parents, carers, class teachers/guardians should be aware of the possible indications or signs:

- Changes in usual routine
- Unwillingness to go to school
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious, lacking in confidence
- Starting to stammer
- Crying him/herself to sleep and/or frequent nightmares
- Claiming to feel ill in the morning
- Coming home with torn clothing
- Possessions going missing
- Unexplained cuts, bruises or scratches
- Unusually aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Bullying other children, or siblings
- Planning of revenge/retribution
- Stopping eating
- Frightened to say what is wrong
- Starting to bed-wet
- Giving improbable excuses for any of the above

5.2 How pupils, parents and staff can report incidents of bullying

Steiner education benefits include the close relationship of the Class teacher with pupils. Children know they can talk, and the Class teacher always has a watchful eye on changes in behaviour and attitude associated with bullying. The teacher will endeavour to nip any bullying behaviour in the bud. However, if the bullying behaviour becomes higher level, the teacher will consult with colleagues and the DSL on handling the situation.

If a member of staff on break duty notices bullying behaviour, they will report to the class teacher immediately, in addition to putting the incident on the Behaviour Log.

All members of the community should feel confident to report bullying behaviour. RWS is very clear this is not 'snitching' but is vital for keeping everyone safe. Children know who they can talk to, and that there is an anonymous reporting box in the Foyer.

Please refer to Annex A flowchart.

5.3 Investigating reports of bullying

An incident is observed and/or reported by parents, pupils or staff. It is always taken seriously. The Class teacher or guardian is informed and with a team of a minimum of three and including the Anti Bullying Lead, a decision will be made based on their knowledge of the children involved, and any previous incidents, as to whether it is a behaviour or bullying issue. Regardless of the decision, the incident will be recorded on My Concern

- If the incident is a behaviour issue, the class teacher will deal with it, if necessary using the sanctions procedure set out in section 8 of the Behaviour Policy.
- If it is a bullying issue, the DSL must be informed, and details must be brought to the Teachers meeting. The School will also record all incidents and action taken on MyConcern.
- Bullying is repetitive behaviour, and careful record keeping helps to identify patterns of behaviour, new concerns, and children regularly engaging in bullying behaviour, and provides evidence that the School is monitoring the situation.
- Class teacher/guardian/Anti bullying lead discusses the incident first with the victim to find out what happened. TFollowing the initial meeting/interview, the CLass teacher/guardian/anti bullying lead will meet with/interview all others involved to conduct a full and fair investigation

5.4 Procedure

How the school investigates allegations of bullying

The School will take time to listen to all children involved.

Victim:

- Consider whether they are vulnerable in any way (e.g. disabled, SEN). The bullied child will never be labelled as the problem.
- Reassure the child that together we will make the behaviour stop.
- Ask what they would like the School to do, short and long term, to help them get through the situation.
- Build up their confidence and self-esteem and help them develop assertiveness skills to handle bullying situations (see Kidscape for ZAP workshops)
- Agree an action plan together and regularly check in with them to be sure the bullying has stopped.

Bullies:

- Listen to their side of the story. Consider whether there is a history of bullying and aggressive behaviour.
- Explore what may be driving the behaviour- was it an act of retaliation, who else was involved, what do they hope to gain from the bullying behaviour.
- Help them understand the impact it is having on the victim and agree that it must stop.
- See Sanctions procedure below.
- Check in with them and observe to ensure the bullying has stopped.

Reinforcers

- Listen to their side of the story. Explore the ways they were involved and what they could have done differently.
- Help them to understand the impact of their behaviour on the victim and the bully, and agree their behaviour must change.
- See Sanctions procedure in Section 8 of the *Behaviour Policy*
- Check in with them and observe to ensure the bullying has stopped.

Defenders

- Explore with them what has happened.
- Talk about the ways in which they supported the victim of bullying and how it has made a difference.
- Praise them for their positive behaviour and talk about the ways they can continue to stand up for others and influence reinforcers and bullies to change their behaviour.

Bystanders

- Explore with them what they may or may not have witnessed.
- Talk with the whole class or group about the collective responsibility to support others that are experiencing bullying, and the ways in which they can do this (e.g. leading victims away from the situation, or changing the subject, or giving a message of support)
- Encourage them to alert school staff in the future.

Dealing with bullying

If there is low-level bullying for the first time, the School will support children to resolve things peacefully.

If initial attempts to stop the bullying fail, the School will consider any additional support needs that the bully may have, and whether there is now a need to issue sanctions. Please see section 8 of the Behaviour Policy.

In the case of serious incidents of bullying, the School will inform the parents or carers of both the victim and the bully.

If there is a safeguarding concern, the safeguarding procedure will be followed.

If there is evidence that a crime has been committed (e.g. physical or sexual assault, threats of serious harm, hate crime) then the School will contact the police for advice. This may include bullying against protected characteristics

If a child has been hurt, medical support will be sought immediately and parent(s)/carers will be informed. Please see *RWS First Aid Policy*.

Working with parents/carers

Parents and carers can contact their child's class teacher or any other member of staff if they have concerns about bullying. The teacher will respond within 48 hours and agree a time frame for action. When meeting with parents and carers, it will be made clear that the first and foremost goal is to stop the bullying behaviour, whether their child is the victim or the bully. An action plan for change will be agreed, and a careful record kept of all action taken.

How the school supports pupils who have been bullied, and those vulnerable to bullying

Peer mentoring schemes, e.g. Kidscape, which can further develop the confidence of pupils in supporting one another.

The School will endeavour to learn from any previous incidents. For example, if the bullying was prejudice-related, or targeted at an issue such as death or divorce, the School would consider whether pupils and staff would benefit from further training in this area. If the bullying continues in the same area of the School, measures will be put in place to make that area open and safe, with risk assessments carried out.

6. Anti-Bullying Strategy

Whole-school proactive strategies to prevent bullying

The school has an agreed shared definition of bullying that is understood regardless of development stage or age.(see point 4) Children are taught that bullying behaviour of any kind will not be tolerated, and that everyone has a responsibility to take action to stop bullying if they know it is happening.

Every class has a timetabled weekly session to discuss worries and concerns.

In addition, the School carries out regular consultations to find out whether bullying is taking place, how safe children feel, what they feel is working well, and where they may need more support from other pupils or staff. This can be done through annual surveys, anonymous feedback, as well as in the weekly sessions. The consultation is fully accessible to disabled children and those with SEN; children that are most vulnerable to bullying.

Acceptable behaviour is discussed with the children, and they have input into class rules. These discussions will involve how we treat our classmates.

Problems in the playground are often resolved there and then, diffusing situations before they escalate.

The School aims to support all children to handle bullying situations, by supporting all children to be assertive in their relationships. This includes understanding of personal boundaries and consensual touch; the confidence to say 'No' and 'Stop'; what it means to respect difference in others, how to handle an aggressive person; how to disagree without causing hurt; how to diffuse an argument or potential fight. The School's PSHE curriculum covers these aspects.

A new initiative for 2023 is the Student Council members opting in to anti-bullying training that enables them to be school 'anti bullying ambassadors'.

7. Training in preventing and handling bullying

All new staff must sign this policy and take the Educare course on Preventing Bullying within 6 months of starting. All school staff will refresh their training every two years. Staff will be given notification of any changes to legislation in the meantime.

Staff on break and lunch duties are trained in identifying and responding to bullying behaviour. If there is ever need, the School will put into place a peer-mentoring or playground buddy scheme where children are trained to help others.

Annex: Bullying Procedure Step by Step

