

# **BASTON HOUSE SCHOOL**



## **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

**Autumn 2010**

# BULLYING and CYBER BULLYING

## Introduction

Baston House School recognises that young people with disabilities remain, in general, a vulnerable group in society.

Young people who attend Baston House School may, therefore, encounter bullying in both the community and their living situation. It is vital that staff are aware of this potential, given the cumulative effect of negative experiences that any one young person may suffer.

## The effects of bullying

Bullying is frequently described by young people on the Autism Spectrum as the main reason for negative behaviour such as retaliation, sometimes resulting in exclusions and changes in school placement.

Bullying can cause physical and mental harm; loss of self esteem and depression are common.

Bullying can cause isolation.

## What is bullying?

Many people have written definitions of bullying and for the purposes of this document, we will use the following one:

“Persistent, offensive, abusive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behaviour, abuse of power or unfair sanctions, which makes the recipient feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable and which undermines their self-confidence or which may cause them to suffer stress”.

## Who bullies?

Bullying often involves a person in authority abusing their authority and bullying those below him/her. An individual may also bully a peer and groups of people may pick on and bully an individual. It is often a person with low self-esteem who bullies in order to gain a sense of self-worth and respect for the wrong reasons.

## Forms of bullying

Bullying can broadly occur in four ways:

1. Physical: actions such as hitting, kicking or threats of harm
2. Verbal: actions such as name calling, threats to other family members
3. Racist and discriminatory: remarks or suggestions made in a derogatory way in relation to race, religion, sexual orientation, culture etc.

#### 4. Cyber bullying.

##### Where bullying happens

Bullying of young people takes place in a number of areas:

- At school § this is more often out of sight of staff and usually takes the form of being shouted at, physical and verbal threats or physical intimidation and attacks
- On transport § in cars and minibuses the pecking order of “who sits in the front seat” syndrome can be indicative of subtle bullying
- During activities in the community § young people can sometimes refuse to participate in activities for fear of being bullied in the same ways as described above

##### Problems of talking about bullying

There are many reasons why young people will not discuss the fact that they are being bullied. Among them are:

- They are afraid they won't be believed
- They are afraid that nothing will be done
- They are worried about appearing to be weak
- There are often no witnesses and it would be one person's word against another
- Where there are witnesses, they may be afraid to support the victim

##### What can we do?

Baston House School is clear that it will not tolerate young people in their care being bullied in any way. We see bullying as an infringement of a person's human rights. We see our staff as being the main resource we have in ensuring our young people are not bullied. We expect staff to do the following:

- Challenge any young people who are witnessed bullying another person. This is to be done in a non-aggressive and non-confrontational way
- Report incidents of bullying to their line manager/senior
- Ensure they record instances of bullying and the action taken on an incident sheet which will be copied to the pupil's file
- Work with young people in a way that enables/empowers them to complain about being bullied by ensuring they know about the complaints procedure and who they can complain to
- Work with young people who are bullies to enable/encourage them to alter their behaviour
- Take time to be with young people who have been the victims of bullying

- Work with young people to enable them to report any serious incidents to the police
- In cases of serious and persistent bullying, managers, in consultation with the parents, the bullying child and other agencies, may decide to move a young person in order to protect those being bullied.

Any staff member who is seen to be bullying young people will be disciplined. Bullying will be seen as gross misconduct and a staff member could be dismissed if found guilty at a disciplinary hearing.

## Management

Managers at Baston House School are responsible for ensuring that:

- Staff are aware of all the issues that surround bullying and the impact it has
- There are structured opportunities for young people to talk about being bullied
- Staff are trained to be able to counsel young people, resolve conflict, keep a record of issues and actions taken and use the complaints procedure
- Action is taken when bullying is reported § zero tolerance policy and immediate consequence will be supervised by a senior manager
- Services have an open and honest culture that allows each issue such as bullying to be discussed; regular anti-bullying events and assemblies will be organised
- They have a good working relationship with the local police that facilitates the reporting of more serious incidents of bullying
- Incidents of bullying are properly recorded and reported

Baston House School aims to enable young people to lead fulfilling and meaningful lives. This cannot be achieved if they are being bullied on a regular basis and we are committed to ensuring that incidents of bullying are reduced.

Guidance for staff in responding to Bullying:

When a pupil reports bullying or staff observe incidents that may be bullying:

- Find a place where you will not be interrupted
- Tell the pupil you are worried about them/ask them to tell you about the bullying
- Listen in a non-judgemental way
- Tell them that no-one should have to experience bullying
- Tell them that the school will help them stop the bullying
- Encourage them to agree to the incident being formally logged as an incident of bullying
- Ensure their safety immediately after the incident and thereafter
- Seek support from the senior school staff

## Unacceptable Language:

Dealing with taunts or verbal abuse; this will depend on the pupil and the relationship the member of staff has with them:

- 1. Dismissive response: I am not going to listen to language like that
- 2. Questioning response: What makes you think that? What do you mean by that?
- 3. Confronting response: language like that is not acceptable; a lot of people would find that offensive.
- 4. Personal response: I am not happy with what you said; I find that language offensive
- 5. Organisational response: the school does not tolerate language like that.

## CYBER BULLYING

Cyber bullying may be defined as an individual or a group of people using mobile 'phones, the internet or other technologies to make recipients feel upset, threatened, humiliated or vulnerable.

In what ways can cyber bullying occur?

Mobile 'phone

Sending humiliating and abusive text or video messages, as well as photo messages and 'phone calls over a mobile 'phone. This includes anonymous text messages over short distances using Bluetooth technology and sharing videos of physical attacks on individuals.

Email

Sending emails that are threatening or upsetting.

Instant messenger and chatrooms

Sending instant messenger and chatroom messages to friends or directly to a victim.

Social networking sites

Setting up profiles on social networking sites to make fun of someone.

Abusing personal information

Posting personal photos, emails or blogs where others can see them without the permission of the individual concerned.

Social networking sites make it a lot easier for web users to get hold of personal information and photos of people. It is also possible to get hold of someone else's messaging accounts and chat to people pretending to be the victim.

Interactive gaming

Games consoles allow players to chat online with anyone they find themselves matched with in a multi-player game. Sometimes cyber bullies abuse other players and use threats. They can also lock victims out of games, spread false rumours about someone or hack into someone's account.

Sending viruses

Some people send viruses to another person that can destroy their computers or delete personal information from their hard drive.

How is cyber bullying different?

There are several factors that differentiate cyber bullying from other types of bullying that can make it more difficult both to detect and to prevent:

- Technology allows the user to bully anonymously or from an unknown location, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
- No place provides sanctuary from the intrusion of a threatening text message or an abusive e-mail.
- Young people are particularly adept at using new technology, which can seem a closed world to adults. For example, the numerous acronyms used by young people in chat rooms and in text messages may make it difficult for adults to identify and address potential threats.

What can Baston House School staff and managers do?

As with any other type of bullying, staff and managers need to focus on creating an ethos in which cyber bullying is recognized to be unacceptable, take steps to prevent its occurrence, support young people who are bullied and work with young people who are bullying in order to alter their behaviour.

The Kidscape website provides useful guidance for young people and carers about how to use technology safely and what to do if they are on the receiving end of cyber bullying.

[www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

**Policy Written: 2010**

**Signed.....**

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