

STUDENT BULLYING AND CONFLICT POLICY AND GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

Over the years bullying behaviour has become much more prevalent with individuals being empowered to express their feelings with the advent of social media. Any form of bullying will not be tolerated as it can have serious and far reaching physical and psychological effects on the person who is bullied, both at the time of the bullying and maybe in later life, especially if it is not dealt with in an appropriate manner. People who bully and those that witness bullying behaviour can also suffer a range of adverse effects.

Though bullying is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, there are laws that are applicable to how bullying should be addressed. For example:

- **Education Act 2002 Section 175**
In relation to FE Colleges in particular, this places a duty on college governing bodies to make arrangements to ensure their functions are 'exercised with a view to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children receiving education or training at the institution'. In this context, the term 'child' refers to learners who are aged under 18. Tackling bullying is a key part of fulfilling this duty.
- **The Equality Act 2010**
Further Education Colleges are required to comply with The Equality Act. This means they are required to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act.
- **Bullying as a child protection issue**
Under the Children Act 1989, a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' (DfE, Preventing and Tackling bullying, 2014). Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2016) describes serious bullying (including cyberbullying) as a form of emotional abuse.

It is incumbent on all students and staff to report incidents of bullying and intimidation. In some cases it will be found that what is reported as bullying is not bullying according to the definitions given below. There may still be conflict between students and a resolution may still need to be sought. The principle reasons why some incidents may not be classed as bullying are:

1. If there was a single event with no recurrence; however severe the incident this is not classed as bullying although it may need a disciplinary response against the perpetrator;
2. If the power balance between those involved is close to equal, there may have been incidents on both sides and one or both students may accuse the other of bullying. In such cases a resolution may be sought and disciplinary action may still be taken against one or both;
3. The incidents may best be classed as teasing or banter.

The Vice Principal: HR & Student Services is nominated lead on bullying.

AIM

The aims of this policy with regard to bullying are both preventative and reactive. They are preventative in that they aim to create an environment where bullying is not tolerated and all students and staff members are encouraged to support a culture of care and consideration.

They are reactive in that they will provide clear information and practical guidance for staff who may find themselves involved with students reporting incidents of bullying. It is important that those investigating any allegation keep an open mind as it may not be bullying but could be teasing, banter or conflict which should be addressed in a different manner but should not be ignored.

With regard to conflict between students the aim is to resolve this conflict in the fairest and least disruptive way, to the satisfaction of all interested parties.

DEFINITION

Bullying is a recurring behaviour which can be unwarranted, offensive, physical, verbal or non-verbal and which is intended to and results in harm, either physically or emotionally, to an individual by threatening their security or create an intimidating or hostile environment which may hinder an individual's development, happiness, confidence or performance. There is unequal power often due to their age, physical strength, or psychological resilience in favour of the perpetrator(s).

Not all conflict between students is bullying, in some cases those involved are in disagreement with neither party exclusively engaging in bullying, this should still be investigated but attempts to a resolution may be more reciprocal.

Bullying may be aimed at certain groups such as the protected characteristics listed below, but are not restricted to these:

- Sex;
- Race;
- Disability;
- Sexual Orientation;
- Religion & Belief;
- Age;
- Gender Reassignment;
- Marriage and Civil Partnership;
- Pregnancy and Maternity.

Other vulnerable groups are potentially individuals with disabilities, special educational needs, facial disfigurements, those from deprived backgrounds, looked after children, individuals who are over or underweight, individuals with medical needs and young carers.

PREVENTION OF BULLYING

Prevention involves all parties within the College community. To that end it is important that staff and students are aware of the policy, procedures and are involved in the review process. The former will be achieved through:

- Staff and student induction training.
- Raising awareness of bullying not being tolerated through tutorials, poster campaigns and use of the Banish the Bully icon on the VLE.
- Campaign during anti-bullying week to promote the College's policy.
- Review the policy and procedure with input from all members of the College community; Student Voice, Safeguarding, curriculum meetings and student surveys.
- Consult with members of the College community to find out whether bullying is taking place, how safe individuals feel, what they feel is working well and where they may need more support from students and from staff.
- Review of cases in the Bullying Log by the College's Safeguarding Team on a termly basis.
- Identify signs of bullying:
 - asking for money – or starting to steal (to pay the bully)
 - low self-esteem and confidence
 - sudden withdrawal from family, friends and loved ones
 - desire to be left alone
 - new or increased reluctance to leave family or friends near their mobile phones
 - increased desire and range of excuses to stay home and not attend college, clubs etc
 - change in personality; increase in anger, appearing withdrawn, anxious or depressed
 - weight loss, gain or desire to change their appearance to 'fit in'
 - changes in what they wear that are unusual or out of season
 - clothes/possessions are missing or destroyed
 - unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches
 - truanting or saying they are going somewhere, but not turning up
 - asking to be driven to school and other places
 - stopping eating, or coming home hungry
 - excessive use of electronic devices, seeming upset or agitated after using electronic devices.
 - changing their usual routine
 - unexplained illness (e.g. frequent tummy upsets and headaches)
 - becoming withdrawn, starting to stammer, lacking confidence
 - starting to self-harm, attempting or threatening suicide
 - refusing to talk about what is happening
 - crying themselves to sleep, having nightmares, bed wetting.

GUIDELINES FOR INVESTIGATION

BULLYING

The College will not tolerate bullying and will act appropriately, which may involve disciplinary action, refer to Grantham College's Disciplinary Policy.

Listen carefully if an individual tells you they are being bullied and look out for the signs. Consider whether they are vulnerable in any way (for example if they are a disabled child or have a special educational needs). Never label the bullied individual as the problem. Reassure the individual that together you will endeavour to do everything you can to stop the behaviour. Ask them what they need you to do in the 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. Agree an action plan together and regularly check in with them to be sure the bullying has stopped.

Below are guidelines for helping resolve any bullying that may be encountered by students and staff. In essence they are:

- It is important that you listen and speak to the victim(s), bullies, reinforcers, defenders and bystanders or outsiders to ascertain a balanced perspective on what happened.
- All incidents of bullying are to be reported to the appropriate Student Progress Mentor or Student Services Manager in the first instance.
- Incidents of bullying may be brought to the College's attention by students and staff in a number of ways. Concerns can be raised or highlighted by the student, NOK, guardian or member of staff either in person, by telephone, email, letter or Banish the Bully in the following ways:
 - Students approaching their Student Progress Mentor, Student Services Manager, Vice Principal: HR & Student Services or any other member of staff.
 - Students or staff approaching a member of staff in the College Safeguarding Team.
 - Using the Banish the Bully icon on the VLE.
 - Student speaking to NOK or Guardian and they in turn contact College with concerns.
- Once an incident has been reported or identified by a member of staff then in the first instance the aim should be to resolve the matter without invoking the College's Disciplinary Procedures.
- Any incident will then be investigated with the involvement of a relevant Student Progress Mentor, and any other staff needed to support the investigation, who will speak to all those involved and any observers. Those reinforcing the bullying behaviour of the participant, for example by laughing or providing an engaged audience and passive observing and failure to report, should be challenged. Likewise those supporting those on the receiving end of bullying and trying to stop the behaviour should be praised.

- Once the facts and allegations have been collated this will be referred to the relevant Student Services Manager, Vice Principal: HR & Student Services, Head of Curriculum(s); as appropriate.
- If it is deemed appropriate that the matter can be dealt with informally the student can be encouraged to address the matter themselves with the alleged perpetrator(s), alternatively they may prefer to have the support of a third party or have a third party to speak on their behalf.
- Details of incidents and a note of any action taken will be recorded on the Bullying Log which is saved in the Student Progress Mentor area and recorded on ProMonitor or confidential records.
- Where a student is left in a potentially vulnerable position following an allegation of bullying members of staff should be given sufficient information to make sure that student is protected both from the alleged perpetrator and any peers who may support the perpetrator. The alleged perpetrator may also need protection from any retaliation by peers.
- In all cases the incident should be reviewed by the appropriate staff to ensure that the matter has been resolved and that relevant lessons have been identified, and procedure and policies are amended. If the matter remains unresolved to the satisfaction of the individual raising the concern, more formal disciplinary procedures may be implemented.
- If formal disciplinary procedures are invoked then meetings should be arranged with all parties and NOK, carer or guardians. Note that if any student is over the age of 18 years of age then their approval to involve NOK, carer or guardian should be sought, the exception to this are students who are classed as vulnerable.
- The Student Services Manager is to be kept abreast of all investigations into bullying and the Vice Principal: HR & Student Services briefed as appropriate.

CONFLICT

The procedure for reporting and investigating conflict of a kind that cannot be classed as bullying is the same as those outlined above for bullying. When incidents are suspected of being either bullying or conflict a record should be placed on the Bullying Log. When dealing with conflict the aim should be for a more reciprocal resolution, one which acknowledges the needs and responsibilities of both sides in the conflict.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying is any form of bullying behaviour by electronic means. It can take place both inside and outside of college, can be experienced 24/7 and has the potential to reach a very large audience in a short period of time. It is highly likely

that young people will either become involved in or witness an incident of cyberbullying. Young people will typically experience cyberbullying on social networking sites, instant messaging services, online gaming, and via emails, text messages and calls. Research has shown that girls are more prone to cyberbullying and are consequently twice as likely to self-harm. Signs of cyberbullying are very similar to those already highlighted previously in this policy.

Types of cyberbullying are outlined below:

- Harassment – harassment involves sending offensive, insulting or humiliating online comments or messages, this includes gaming sites.
- Flaming – flaming involves using extremely offensive language in order to get into online arguments or fights.
- Denigration – denigration is when someone sends fake information or photos about another which is damaging and untrue.
- Impersonation – impersonation involves hacking or faking another's email or social network account to use their online identity to post offensive material online.
- Outing and trickery – when someone shares personal information about another or tricks someone into sharing secrets before forwarding them onto others.
- Cyber stalking – repeatedly sending threatening, harassing and intimidating messages or engaging in online activity by making a person afraid for their safety.
- Exclusion – intentionally leaving someone out of a group, such as group messaging, online apps and gaming sites.
- Trolling – trolling is deliberate act of provoking a response by using insults or bad language on forums and social networking sites.
- Catfishing- like impersonation, catfishing involves stealing another's online identity and posing as them and deceiving others.

Cyberbullying which takes place in College will be investigated. Students will be encouraged to share any online evidence and this will be treated in the same way as any other kind of bullying as outlined above.

As in all cases of bullying, cyberbullying may be reported to the police. Note that Child Exploitation and Online Protection (CEOP) does not deal with bullying, fake accounts or account hacking. CEOP is here to keep children safe from sexual abuse and grooming online. CEOP are here to help and give advice and can report something that has happened online which has made individuals feel unsafe, scared or worried.

Those involved should be made aware of the law relevant to cyber bullying and hate crime so that perpetrators are aware that it is against the law in the UK to use the phone system, which includes the internet, to cause alarm or distress. Students should be encouraged to get the comments removed from the website or to block the perpetrator.

INCIDENTS OUTSIDE COLLEGE

If incidents take place outside of College students should be encouraged to report these to the College, but should be advised to take these matters to police if appropriate. As in other incidents, members of staff should be given sufficient information to make sure that the student is protected both from the alleged perpetrator and any peers who may support the perpetrator. The alleged perpetrator may also need protection from any retaliation by peers.

TEASING AND BANTER

Teasing is common amongst friendship groups and families. For the one doing the teasing it is a playful way of provoking a reaction, usually without an intention or desire to cause hurt. It is important that we support individuals to communicate when they feel a joke has gone too far.

Banter can also be used as a way of reinforcing established groups or social 'norms' and as such can run the risk of being discriminatory, even if it is not a bullying situation. For example, it is common to hear young people reinforcing gender stereotypes through banter; for example, 'you run like a girl', or to express homophobic attitudes, such as, 'your haircut is so gay!'.

It is, therefore, vital to explain to students the difference between playful, harmless teasing, and that which can cause offence.

SUMMARY

Bullying, in any form, will not be tolerated within College and if deemed appropriate after or during investigation will be reported as a safeguarding concern which in turn may be reported to the police.

All incidents of bullying should be reported preferably to a Student Progress Mentor, a member of the College's safeguarding team or any member of staff.

Quality Assurance – version control			
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