



Bullying and Harassment Policy

Introduction

Bullying amongst children in schools is not something new. It is the most malicious and malevolent form of anti-social behaviour practised in our schools.

Bullying, however, is a problem that is often overlooked or ignored, because teachers and parents are often not aware that it is going on, or, if they are aware of it, they do not know how to deal with it. The situation is made more difficult by the fact that children who are victims of bullying are afraid to report it, for fear that things will get worse for them.

The situation becomes increasingly more difficult when adults hold the misplaced belief that if bullies are ignored, they will stop bullying, or the view that it is an inevitable part of growing up which will pass without their intervention. There are even those who subscribe to the view that bullying is good for children and builds character.

Bullying, as research and experience has shown, is something that cannot be ignored and should not be tolerated. The consequences for the bully and the person being bullied are far too serious.

To this end we aim to establish a community in which everybody feels valued and safe, and where individual differences are appreciated, understood and accepted. Everybody has a right to enjoy his or her time at school.

We need to realise the importance of reporting bullying, so that we can challenge the silence associated with it.

It is your right and your responsibility to report bullying, whether it happens to you or to someone else. To remain silent is to condone bullying.

What is Bullying?

Bullying is the wilful, deliberate desire to hurt another person and put him or her under stress, by means of physical, psychological or verbal abuse. This behaviour is often persistent.

Bullying comes in many forms, including:

- Deliberately kicking, punching, hitting and bumping
- Teasing, taunting, mocking, name calling
- Spreading rumours
- Picking on others
- Repeatedly "putting down" someone
- Deliberately ignoring, avoiding, excluding and isolating
- Interfering with, taking or damaging another's property
- Using threatening gestures.

- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others
- Sending offensive messages about another
- Making degrading comments about another's religion culture, family members or social background

To prevent bullying:

- Respect yourself and others
- Work to create a pleasant school environment for all
- Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation
- Learn to tolerate and accept individual differences
- Support the school policy against bullying

What to do if you are bullied:

- Tell the bully to stop.
- Take courage. Seek help. Talk about it to someone you trust.
- Take courage, report it to a member of Staff. The school does not tolerate bullying. Feel confident that any incident can be resolved satisfactorily. Once the incident has been reported, you will be assisted with filling out the ***Hurtful Behaviour Report*** should the behaviour against you meet the criteria for harassment and bullying (i.e. the behaviour is hurtful deliberate and persistent and continues even after you tell the person to stop)
- Put a note into the "***Bullying Box***" if you are finding it difficult to report the incident. Your note will be followed up and necessary action will be taken. (**Remember to write your name and grade**).

The "Bullying Box" is covered in brown paper and is in Reception with Aunty Pam and Aunty Irene.

- If appropriate, take preventative action.

What to do if you know someone is being bullied:

- Care enough to **do something** about it whether it affects you personally or not.
- Early intervention can defuse a situation before it gets out of hand.
- Report it to a member of Staff or put a note into the "***Bullying Box***" in Reception. **Remember to include your name and grade and the bully and the victim.** This will be dealt with confidentially.

What if you are bullying:

1. You will be removed from the bullying situation and you will be dealt with according to the Code of Conduct at Summerhill.
2. The Head of Ethics/Principal will be involved, depending on the nature and severity of the incident(s).

The order of severity is as follows:

- Warning and demerit
 - Detention and letter to parents
 - Parent, Student Interview
 - Daily reporting to the Head of Ethics
 - Suspension
3. You will be required to make a decision regarding your future behaviour in the form of a contract, which you and your parents will sign. (**Behaviour Warning with Student Response Choice Form**)

4. You may be asked to sign a **No Contact Contract**
5. You may be involved in a mediation process.
6. You may be asked to complete a Social Skills Training Programme or attend sessions with a therapist.
7. In serious cases, your enrolment at Summerhill may be reviewed.

Investigating and Reporting bullying:

- All investigations and reports will be treated in the **strictest confidence**. The issue will be dealt with delicately but very seriously.
- The teacher will fill out **The Hurtful Behaviour Report** if the behaviour reported to him/her or the behaviour observed by him/her meets the criteria for harassment and bullying (i.e. the behaviour is hurtful, deliberate and persistent and continues even after the person has been told to stop). The offending student may then be referred to the Head of Ethics or the Principal for support and further screening of the situation if it is deemed necessary by the staff member filling out the **Hurtful Behaviour Report**.
- The Head of Ethics shares the information describing his/her behaviour(s) with the offending student. A **Behaviour Warning** is issued and the student is asked to make a decision regarding his/her future behaviour on the **Student Response Choice**. In each case, incidents will be investigated thoroughly, with all parties involved being able to express their views.
- Once the investigation is completed, each case will be treated on merit. Where necessary, disciplinary procedures will be implemented as outlined in the Summerhill Code of Conduct.

Disciplinary Procedure

Bullying is categorised as a Major Offence in the Summerhill Code of Conduct.

Summerhill recommends the following to parents:

- Encourage your children to discuss bullying as much as possible. Read through this policy thoroughly with your children,
- Watch for signs of distress, e.g. unwillingness to attend school, frequent apparent illness.
- Advise your child to follow the procedures outlined above.
- Do not encourage your child to retaliate.
- Contact the school if your child's efforts to deal with bullying do not appear to be working. Let your child know that this is the appropriate action.

All reported cases of bullying will be taken very seriously.

In Conclusion

Bullying is condoned as long as the silence surrounding it is accepted and if the misplaced belief held by some adults is allowed to perpetuate. Speaking out is the greatest weapon we have against bullying. We trust that the whole school community will share the responsibility to eradicate bullying wherever and whenever it occurs.

Summary

Teacher's Responsibility:

1. Child approaches teacher or leave a note in the Bullying box. Teacher handles the once off event.
2. Once discerned if true case – assist the student in completing the Hurtful Behaviour Report and submit to Head of Ethics.

Ethics Department's Responsibility:

3. If the same offence is repeated, Head of Ethics will investigate, meet with student and issue a Behaviour Warning Form and/or No Contact Contract as well as contact the parents.
4. Head of Ethics will provide feedback to the teacher regarding the status of the offender.