

Academus

Learning without Barriers

Pastoral Care, Child Protection, Behaviour & Discipline

Anti-Bullying Policy

The nature of ACADEMUS INDEPENDENT's foundation makes us especially concerned to create a community founded upon principles of tolerance and mutual respect. This Anti-Bullying Policy has been written with reference to DCSF guidance on the prevention of bullying contained in 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying; Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies' DfE guidance (www.education.gov.uk) and the Early Years Foundation Stage Statutory Framework (May 2008).

All acts of bullying or intolerance are completely unacceptable within the community of ACADEMUS INDEPENDENT. It is the duty of every teacher, pupil and parent to support this principle and to act upon it on all occasions.

We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips, and that involve our pupils.

Bullying and intolerance may be said to include all acts that are deliberately cruel towards another member of the school community:

- physical intimidation
- sustained teasing and verbal abuse (including chatroom and SMS messages, social networking websites, photographs, email)
- racial, sexual/sexist, homophobic, ethnic, or religious comments or taunts
- unkind references to another person's disability
- rejection or deliberate isolation of a pupil by his/her peer group; tormenting or spreading malicious rumours
- manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone
- complicity in unkind behaviour that falls short of direct participation.

All behaviour of this kind is unacceptable at ACADEMUS INDEPENDENT. It can cause psychological damage and in extreme cases may even result in the suicide of a victim. It is the responsibility of all members of the school community, pupils as much as staff, to express their disapproval of such behaviour whenever it is encountered. Training is given to staff in order to raise their awareness of the problem and with the aim of reducing the risk of bullying.

Signs of bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet

- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoiled by others
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up extra-curricular activities, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Unexplained behaviour
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away.

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of, these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers.

Preventative Measures

All new pupils are briefed thoroughly on the school's expected standards of behaviour. Our Website has a copy of the ACADEMUS INDEPENDENT Code of Conduct and we encourage all our pupils and parents to take the time to read it. All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place.

All new members of staff are given guidance on the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. They are required to read the policy as part of their induction. It also forms part of the Staff Handbook published to all staff.

We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form Teachers who support the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and who are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying.

We encourage close contact between pastoral staff – Form Teachers – and parents/guardians, and would always make contact if we were worried about a pupil's well-being.

In PSHE, pupils consider the reasons why some people might bully. They learn

- to be more sensitive to others' feelings
- the fine line between teasing and bullying
- how to stand up for themselves
- to deal with unwanted name-calling
- how sloppy language can develop into bullying
- to take responsibility for what they say.

We regularly reinforce these messages and it is hoped that, supported by this, members of staff - particularly Form Teachers, and the Headmaster - will succeed in creating an environment in which bullies (whether single or in groups, whether active or passive) are left in no doubt of the need to reconsider and to adjust their attitudes towards others.

If any pupil, parent or teacher believes that bullying is taking place, it is essential that this is drawn to the attention of pastoral staff (Form Teacher, Deputy Head or the Headmaster) at once. Such approaches will always be treated in complete confidence. All reported incidents are recorded to enable patterns to be identified, and investigated immediately.

Procedures to deal with reported bullying

The member of staff who first becomes aware of bullying, or to whom it is first reported will control the situation and reassure and support the pupil(s) involved.

He or she will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible.

The victim will be interviewed on his/her own and asked to write an account of events.

The bully, together with all others involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to write an account of events.

The incident should be recorded.

All appropriate pastoral staff should be informed. In serious incidents, the Head should be informed.

The victim will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separate from the alleged perpetrator. It will be made clear to him/her why revenge is inappropriate. He/she will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him/herself.

The alleged bully will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why his/her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. He/she will be offered guidance on modifying his/her behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions.

The parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.

A way forward, which might include disciplinary sanctions and/or counselling, should be agreed. This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures.

A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place.

In very serious cases, and only after the Head has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or Social Services. However, it is the policy of ACADEMUS INDEPENDENT to attempt to resolve such issues internally under the school's own disciplinary procedures.

Whilst such matters will always be treated seriously, every effort will be made to provide prompt, sensitive and effective support for both victim and bully.

We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips involving our pupils.

Repeated or serious offences of this kind by particular pupils are likely to lead to suspension or even exclusion from ACADEMUS INDEPENDENT.

We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

Electronic Communication

The development of electronic means of communication – the internet, electronic chat-rooms and associated web-sites – has created new avenues for bullying, cruelty, unkindness and intolerance. The policy stated above applies equally and directly to such electronic communication involving any members of the school community.

The school expects all pupils to adhere to its policy concerning the use of the Internet. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors pupils' use. In particular, all pupils must be aware that:

- Messages or images posted on web-sites must never be teasing or abusive of others – including other members of the school community – nor should they encourage others into teasing or abusive behaviour.
- Such messages or images must never include racial, sexist, ethnic, religious or other taunts or remarks directed towards others.
- Such messages or images must never suggest threats or intimidation towards others.
- Such messages or images must never be such as to damage the reputation of the school, nor of any member of the school community – whether staff or pupil.
- As a general principle, no image of the school, or of any member of the school community, should be posted on the internet or communicated electronically to others, without the consent of the individual(s) involved. In the case of the school itself, this will require the consent of the Headmaster.

Pupils and their parents should note that this policy applies to all media of electronic communication, not simply to the use of the school's own IT network.

As with any cases of bullying, cruelty or intolerance, offences against this code will be treated seriously. Offenders are likely to be excluded from school. Repeat or serious offences may lead to permanent exclusion from the school.

(Reviewed on 3rd September 2012)