

British International School and Montessori Education

Anti-bullying Policy

Scope and Introduction

The aim of the British International School (BIS) *Anti-bullying Policy* is to prevent bullying of all kinds and to ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. All members of the school's community, including its board, senior leadership team (SLT), pedagogical and support staff, students and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is and be familiar with the school's policies on matters relating to bullying, as well as other behaviour. Therefore, the aim of this Policy is to assist members of the school community to deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly; to recognise and prevent it.

Bullying is an anti-social behaviour which affects everyone; it is unacceptable, and it will not be tolerated in any form. Every individual in the school community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that comes to their attention and these reports will always be taken seriously.

The *Anti-bullying Policy* is freely available to all members of the school community and can be found as part of the School Handbook. Additionally, printed and electronic copies can be obtained from the SLT on request.

The *Anti-bullying Policy* is to be read and considered in conjunction with the contents of the School Handbook, the school's *Behavioural Policy* and the school's *Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy*.

Definition / Types of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as any deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. Examples of such behaviour include:

- Physical Bullying; pushing, hitting, tripping, punching, restraining, and matters of a sexual nature, ETC
- Verbal Bullying; name-calling, teasing, intimidation, making offensive remarks, ETC
- Cyber Bullying; using ICT (social websites, emails, mobile phones ETC) in a way that is intended to upset ETC
- Social Bullying; exclusion, spreading rumours, humiliating practical jokes, negative facial / physical gestures

Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance; manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidating but is often hidden and subtle. It includes actions or comments that are racist, sexist, homophobic, religious or cultural, sexual or which focus on disabilities or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape).

Zero Tolerance

The seriousness of bullying cannot be emphasised enough. Bullying is among the top concerns that parents / guardians have about their children's safety and well-being at school. Bullying is also a top concern for children and young people themselves. Bullying makes the lives of the victims a misery: it undermines their confidence and self-esteem; and destroys their sense of security. Bullying impacts on its victims' attendance and attainment at school, marginalises those groups who may be particular targets for bullies and can have a life-long negative impact on victims. At worst, bullying can and often is a significant factor in suicide amongst young people.

It is acknowledged that bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. It should also be recognised that the consequences of being allowed to 'get away with it' can be detrimental to them as well as to their victim(s). All students deserve the opportunity to be helped to understand what acceptable behaviour is. In addition to this Policy, there are also criminal laws that apply to harassment, assault and threatening behaviour.

Anti-Bullying Procedure

What to look for:

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school.

All members of the BIS community must be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with this *Anti-bullying Policy*. Surveys have shown that in the vast majority of bullying incidents; most people knew that what was going on was wrong. Sometimes, individuals, either through lethargy, peer-group pressure, or tacit support for what is going on, fail to take action – the consequences of such failure can be calamitous.

What to do:

The way to stamp out bullying is for individuals to be aware of what to look for, the issues involved, and to be clear in their own minds what action to take should cases arise.

Here is some group-specific advice on the aforementioned:

If you are a victim of bullying:

- If you feel able; confront the bully by verbally making them aware that you think what they're doing is wrong and would like them to stop.
- Share your feelings / concerns with someone else.
- Talk to a member of school staff – a teacher, or a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team. If you don't feel comfortable going to a member of staff; talk to your parents, a friend, a friend's parent or a senior student. They may well be able to advise on an appropriate course of action or will be able to involve other people who can.
- Remember that you are not alone and that talking to someone can help you feel better, as well as help to improve the situation and stop the bullying.
- Never suffer in silence and never blame yourself. Nobody asks for or deserves to be bullied.

If you are a witness of bullying:

- Support the victim by offering your friendship and make it clear that you believe what is happening is wrong. Being bullied can be incredibly upsetting and frightening, your friendship can help a lot.
- Encourage the victim to speak out and to confront the bully by explaining how they are making them feel, and how they believe what they are doing is wrong. With the victim's permission, you could confront the bully together – sometimes having the opinion of someone who isn't part of the situation can be helpful.
- Encourage and offer to accompany the victim to a member of staff to provide moral support. If the victim doesn't feel they can speak to a member of staff or other adult (such as their parent), suggest that you could see a member of staff on their behalf.

If you are a member of staff:

- Reassure and support the victim and ensure they understand that the reported bullying will be investigated fully, seriously and sensitively.
- Never promise to keep things a secret. Advise the victims that you are required to pass details on to the relevant staff to ensure that the reported bullying is brought to an end.
- Inform the appropriate member of the SLT as soon as possible who will discuss and advise on a course of action. SLT are also required to record all incidents of reported bullying and ensure that the staff are informed. SLT will keep a central log of all complaints or incidences of bullying, included necessary actions.

What will happen (short-term):

'Bullying' is a term that is often overused / misused. The key word in the definition of bullying is 'repeated' - *Bullying may be defined as any deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually **repeated** over a period of time*, and thus the first course of action is to identify whether or not bullying has been committed. Of course, all accusations / perceptions of bullying will be fully investigated and all acts of undesirable and unacceptable behaviour (be it bullying or other) will be recorded and dealt with appropriately.

In most cases of reported bullying; the victim will be met by their class teacher and a member of the SLT, a parent or other trusted adult may be present, and asked to recall an account of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. The victim is also given the opportunity to discuss his / her own reactions and behaviour towards the bully. The victim is given support and advice and counselling may be suggested to parents if deemed appropriate.

Next, the accused bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually by SLT, in the presence of their class teacher and asked to recall an account of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. If it becomes clear that a bullying offence has been committed, SLT will agree on a course of action.

In the first instance; the bully will be given a Formal Warning; making it clear that any further incident (or discussion with peers about the current incident) would be considered to be further bullying. It will be made clear why the behaviour was inappropriate and unacceptable. Support will be offered as necessary. A suitable punishment will also be given.

The following steps will be applied in accordance with the school's *Behavioural Policy*:

1. Formal Warning from SLT who will speak to the student(s) involved and will contact the parents / guardians giving details of the offence, and inviting them into school to discuss the matter and to be present when their child is given the Formal Warning. Their support for the school's actions is desirable (but not necessary)
2. Temporary Exclusion at the SLT's discretion
3. Permanent Exclusion at the SLT's discretion
4. Any other actions that the school deems necessary, such as: filing a report with the police, calling a joint meeting with the parents of the bully / bully's victim ETC

What will happen (long-term):

The school will raise and share awareness of the incident as necessary.

school will take appropriate action

to reduce the risk of bullying at the times and places where it is most likely to occur, and provide refresher training to staff on bullying if deemed necessary.

The key points from this Policy will be delivered to students during class sessions at the start of each academic year, and repeated as necessary.

Anti-bullying will feature as a discussion point for PTA meetings and feedback will be taken to the School Board. It will also be reinforced in other areas of the curriculum as the opportunities present themselves E.G. drama club, themed-assemblies, physical education, PSHCE, and other activities. Opportunities will also be sought to allow parents to contribute to the school's actions to prevent bullying.

Student surveys will be used to facilitate an understanding of the level and type of bullying that students might have experienced.

Incidents of reported bullying will be followed up by teachers and the SLT to monitor and ensure that the problem has been resolved.

Community Effort

We are absolutely confident, that the vast majority of the BIS community will agree with our sentiments on Bullying. It is our intention to identify and take appropriate action against those who do not.

It is the responsibility of both school staff *and* parents / guardians to ensure that BIS students are well-versed in what is considered appropriate and acceptable behaviour, including the gravity of bullying.

The school welcomes any questions, queries or suggestions regarding this *Anti-bullying Policy*.

Effective / Review Dates

This policy is effective from: 1st September 2023 and supersedes all previous Anti-bullying Policies.

This policy is due for review and republication on: 1st September 2024.