



FIRST BRIDGE SCHOOL

# Anti-bullying strategy

## **Aims**

The aim of this strategy document is to ensure that all pupils at First Bridge School learn in a supportive, caring, and safe environment, free from the fear of bullying. Our special day school, which caters exclusively for pupils of primary age with complex SEND, promotes a consistent approach to preventing and addressing bullying and is committed to creating a culture where all forms of bullying are recognised as unacceptable.

## **What is bullying?**

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber bullying via text messages, social media, gaming or the internet, which can include the use of videos and images), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between children.

## **What is 'cyber' or online bullying?**

Cyber or online bullying is a different form of bullying that takes place through technology. This form of bullying can happen at all times throughout the day, both in the home and school environments and has the potential for larger emotional impact and harm due to access to a wider audience through various online sharing and social media platforms.

## **Our special school context: understanding the behaviours of pupils with SEND and the characteristics of bullying behaviours**

Due to the nature of their needs, pupils with SEND may not have sufficient understanding or awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others can be undesirable or that they may be construed as bullying by the targeted person.

Similarly, if they are the recipients of such behaviours, they may be unable to express or communicate their aversion to such behaviours or be able to inform adults of such occurrences.

It is possible that one pupil may develop an obsession with another which may cause distress or anxiety to the targeted pupil.

Such behaviours might include wanting to be near the target pupil or having an interest in making physical contact with him/her, such as touching a particular part of his or her body or potentially harmful behaviours such as kicking, pinching or throwing objects.

It is also possible that due to a delay in language development, social and play skills, pupils may use non-vocal, verbal forms of behaviour as a way of making interactions with others. These could include some behaviours that could cause others to feel uncomfortable.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

### **Teachers and therapists**

All staff are responsible for setting the tone and context for positive behaviour within the school.

They will:

- Record immediately all child-to-child incidents on the Family app.
- Create and maintain a stimulating environment that encourages pupils to be engaged.
- Track and disclose immediately to the relevant members of the team, such as the Designated Safeguarding Team, Clinical Supervisors and/or Clinical Lead, whether there are patterns of behaviour, so that a risk assessment and preventative strategies and interventions can be designed and implemented.
- Develop a positive relationship with pupils, which may include:
  - Establishing clear routines
  - Communicating expectations of behaviour in ways other than verbally
  - Highlighting and promoting good behaviour
  - Concluding the day positively and starting the next day afresh
  - Having a plan for dealing with low-level disruption

- Using reinforcement-based strategies to promote pro-social behaviour
- Following Behaviour Support Plans.

## **Clinical supervisors**

As mentioned above, the Clinical Supervisor also has the responsibility to set the tone and context for positive behaviour within the school. Additionally, the Clinical Supervisor has the responsibility of analysing any potential bullying behaviours in which their pupils are engaging and replace those behaviours with socially appropriate interactions. The Clinical Supervisors have the responsibility of updating the pupil's Behaviour Support Plans to reflect any bullying topographies and their appropriate consequences and replacement behaviours. Furthermore, if the Clinical Supervisor observes any bullying behaviours, they also have the responsibility to immediately report the incident on Family.

## **Preventing bullying: our anti-bullying strategy**

First Bridge School emphasises the importance of pupils developing social skills, including good behaviour and respect for the feelings of others. Where pupils have difficulties interacting appropriately with their peers or with adults, therapy plans are designed to help them develop an awareness of why particular behaviours are valued socially and what is inappropriate.

First Bridge School's curriculum builds on this through activities which include Personal Social and Emotional Development (PSED), lunchtime, paired social and play sessions and small group work/circle times to encourage development of an ethos of co-operation and respect for everyone.

Staff are important role models for the pupils. The behaviour of adults towards each other and towards the pupil are a potentially highly effective tool for preventing and decreasing bullying behaviours in pupils with SEND.

## **Behaviour support plans**

Pupils have detailed Behaviour Support Plans (BSPs) which detail all known topographies of behaviour, evoked or elicited towards themselves, or others. All staff responsible for supporting pupils daily in the classrooms, have a thorough knowledge each pupil's BSP and the potential antecedent triggers for potential bullying or harmful behaviour towards others. These antecedent strategies are implemented by staff consistently throughout the day to

ensure incidents of problem behaviour are kept to an absolute minimum. All children who engage in challenging behaviours have daily Antecedent-Behaviour-Consequence data that is taken for each episode/incident, and this is then tracked and analysed for patterns and functions of behaviour by the Clinical Supervisors monthly at a minimum.

### **Attention-seeking behaviours**

Some pupils with SEND and those with developmental delays may seek attention through their behaviour when they are unable to communicate and ask for attention in more appropriate ways.

For example, they may engage in a behaviour and direct it towards another pupil as a way of achieving or gaining attention. An adult intervening at this time, could also reinforce this potential bullying behaviour by attributing more attention to the behaviour and consequently, making it more likely to happen again in the future.

In these specific circumstances, the strategy should be to break this cycle and eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour. This could involve:

- Arranging for times when the pupil has access to high-quality attention from both peers and adults.
- Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behaviours (DRA) – for example, teaching the pupil how to gain attention by saying a person's name, or tapping them, and heavily reinforcing this behaviour in order to replace other forms of attention seeking/gaining behaviour.
- Differential Reinforcement of Other Behaviour (DRO) - providing the pupil with a dense schedule of reinforcement whenever they are not engaging in the behaviour targeted towards the peer.
- Ensuring that the pupil's individual therapy and intervention plan includes goals that are oriented towards developing appropriate social skills and friendships.

## **Automatic reinforcement from behaviours**

Some of the pupils we support may emit behaviours to receive sensory input. For example, a pupil may bite another pupil because they are reinforced by the sensation of biting.

Some strategies to decrease this behaviour may involve:

- Introducing the pupil to an activity that provides him/her with the same sensory input (matched stimuli) e.g., biting into a stress ball, or the use of a chewy.
- Conditioning other toys and activities as reinforcing so that the value of biting decreases.

It is important to note that many younger pupils attending First Bridge School will be experiencing teething, and or may have a history of poor dental health due to difficulties with attending dentist and health appointments. Therefore, parents/carers of all pupils who engage in behaviours such as those described above, are directed to rule out any medical concerns, conditions or reasons, before behavioural intervention is introduced.

## **The targeted pupil**

It is important to support the target of bullying behaviour, particularly as he or she may have difficulty communicating their experiences. The pupil should be given the skills to be able to communicate via their preferred communication mode, e.g., PECS, Makaton, signing, speech or an AAC. Social skills training may help him or her to become more assertive, to show less anxiety, and say or sign, "No".

When incidental teaching opportunities occur, for example, a staff member is present when the incident happens, the targeted pupil may be taught to respond in the moment to the behaviour of the pupil e.g. "I don't like that. If appropriate in the moment, they can be supported to assert themselves in a way that keeps them, and the pupil targeting them, safe.

## **Interventions**

The nature and level of support will depend on the individual circumstances and the level of need. Staff will support all pupils who are being bullied. As the pupils we support can lack the social or communication skills to report such incidents, staff will remain alert to the potential bullying our pupils could face.

In the rare event that bullying behaviours occur, both the pupil who has been targeted and the pupil displaying the behaviour will be supported to learn and practise appropriate replacement skills. This will help reduce the likelihood of the behaviour continuing.

Classroom adults, including therapists, teachers and clinical supervisors, will respond consistently to ensure that bullying behaviours do not result in the desired outcome. By removing reinforcement for these behaviours and promoting positive alternatives, we aim to reduce their occurrence over time.

It may be the case in exceptional circumstances that the pupil's bullying behaviour continues even though a variety of strategies have been employed. In such cases the school may request the pupil's Local Authority or Parent to consider a change of provision, or it may be necessary to consider sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion.

## **Record-keeping and reporting**

Child-to-child incidents are recorded by our therapists or clinical supervisors, immediately following the incident, on CPOMS, as well as the Family app, if the incident resulted in a physical injury. The Designated Safeguarding Team review and sign off each incident and are tasked with the responsibility of monitoring and tracking repeated occurrences of incidents, to determine whether they are incidences of bullying. Appropriate actions come from these reviews.

If a concern of bullying is recorded, in addition to this information being recorded on Family/ CPOMS and shared in the termly board report, a central record, called the 'Incidents of bullying log' is also kept ensuring there is continuous monitoring of repeated incidents/perpetrators/victims. The Clinical Supervisors and Clinical Lead are responsible for completing the incidents of bullying log and ensuring the log is kept up-to-date and accurate. The 'Incidents of bullying log' includes the date and details of the



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reported concern, dates and details of the recorded incidents leading up to reported concern, and information regarding the perpetrator, victim and any actions taken towards the perpetrator, victim and any other pupils or individuals (including staff) who may have been impacted by the incident.