

Anti-Bullying Policy

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1.0 Policy statement

Dixons Academies Trust is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe establishment for all our students in all of our academies so that they can learn to the best of their ability in a positive and secure environment. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. If bullying does occur, all students should feel able to inform staff and be confident that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are conscious that bullying usually involves an imbalance of power and children with specific protected characteristics may be more vulnerable. Therefore, staff should receive training to understand this and be particularly vigilant when supervising the interactions between children with known protected characteristics. In all our academies, we place a strong emphasis on discipline, a positive culture of achievement and the respect and acceptance of all. This is expressed through our mission and values. We celebrate diversity yet emphasise commonality. Throughout this document, we have used the term 'families' to refer to our students' parents, carers or others that hold parental responsibility or 'PR', including the Corporate Parent for those to whom that applies. This policy should be read in conjunction with our policies on:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding
- Equality
- Positive Behaviour
- Care and Control
- Online Safety and and Acceptable Use of Information Technology
- SEND
- Attendance
- Exclusions

This policy is underpinned by a legal framework and we are aware of our duty to prevent bullying in our academies, specifically including:

- The Education and Inspection Act 2006
- The Education (Independent School standards) Regulations 2014
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children Act 1989
- Preventing Bullying (DfE Guidance, 2017)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

2.0 Scope and purpose

- To prevent bullying from occurring.
- To create a positive and safe learning environment.
- To develop each individual's self-esteem and respect for others.
- To have a complete and consistent method for dealing with incidents of bullying if and when they occur.
- To understand the different types of bullying and hold a consistent definition of what bullying is.
- To ensure all members of our academy communities have a high level of awareness of the Anti-Bullying policy and its aims.
- To ensure families and other members of the community are aware of our approach to bullying.
- To ensure all are aware of their roles and responsibilities to prevent and tackle bullying.
- To resolve bullying, not only through use of sanctions but restorative action, support for both victim and perpetrator and, where possible, through reconciliation.

3.0 Definitions: what is bullying?

- 3.1 Bullying is behaviour by an individual, or group of students, usually repeated over a sustained period of time (although proportionate support and intervention at the first signs, even following a potentially isolated incident, can be preventative) that intentionally hurts either physically or emotionally another individual or group of students.
- 3.2 The term 'bullying' is commonly used to describe these behaviours and its meaning is established in both education and society in general, but using it can lead to minimisation of the seriousness of the behaviour if not also understood as a safeguarding concern for both the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) involved. Perpetration of bullying is a negative behaviour that can and should be managed within the behaviour routines of the academy and the behaviour policy of our trust, but it also falls within the definition of 'child on child abuse' as described in Keeping Children Safe in Education, and it is crucial that the term 'bullying' is not used euphemistically resulting in harmful behaviours not being fully addressed. In addition, bullying is often motivated by difference, or perceived difference, and prejudice against particular groups and therefore has further intersectionality with the Equality Act and protected characteristics such as race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and disability. For this



reason, the management of bullying cannot be through response to incidents alone but must be underpinned by a whole academy culture that celebrates diversity and seeks commonality as the norm.

Bullying can take many forms, including both in person and remotely via the internet or phone / text, and can involve both physical and emotional / psychological harm. Ensuring the immediate and ongoing physical safety of all students is a priority for all academies, but we also acknowledge that non-physical forms of abuse can be equally damaging and must be met with the same level of seriousness and urgency as incidences of physical harm. A more detailed definition of child on child abuse, incorporating bullying, can be found in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and in Keeping Children Safe in Education itself.

Bullying may also manifest as a series of smaller, apparently minor or unconnected incidents, e.g. 'looks', using nicknames that the person does not like, borrowing equipment, or not letting someone join in with an activity. Vigilance and timely, proportionate response to behaviours such as these underpins a culture of safety and respect and can prevent escalation to more serious behaviours taking place. This can be achieved by:

- all staff understanding the role they play in challenging harmful behaviours, however minor or seemingly innocuous
- all staff understanding that harmful behaviour should not be dismissed as a normal part of childhood, 'boys will be boys', or 'banter' etc.
- always taking the voice of the child seriously when they disclose that the behaviour of another child is making them feel unsafe and / or unhappy in any way

3.5 Early identification of potential bullying behaviour, and taking a strong stance against bullying in general, does not mean or lead to either the demonisation or criminalisation of children but instead ensures that both the perpetrators and victims of harmful behaviour receive the support and intervention they need sooner and that incidences of harm are prevented or minimised in most or all cases. Children come to school to learn, including to learn how to function in a community and treat others and be treated with respect – preventative education and response to bullying behaviour is a learning opportunity and supports all students to go on to live happy, successful and safe adult lives.

3.6 In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education terminology, we will be using the terms 'victim' and 'perpetrator' (or 'alleged perpetrator') throughout this policy as they are widely recognised and understood terms. It is important that these terms are used with care and as a means to describe incidents and behaviours and that they do not become associated with a child in a way that could affect their self-perception or the perception of others around them. Not all subject to bullying or child on child abuse will self-identify as a victim and it is important that the words used are ones that the child is comfortable with. Furthermore, it should be noted that the behaviour of a perpetrator of bullying or any form of child on child abuse could arise from them having been or being subject to abuse themselves and is always an indication that they need support and guidance. Careful choice of language used when speaking to or in front of children, and a consistent focus on the wellbeing, education and future prospects of all those involved, should be paramount throughout the response and follow up of any instance of bullying or other form of child on child abuse.

4.0 Cyberbullying

4.1 Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that occupies a unique space within the broader definition due to its scope, both in that it can take place at any time of day or night and the bigger potential audience size, and due to the fact it can (and typically does) take place away from the academy site and beyond the parameters of the academy day. Furthermore, the artefacts of cyberbullying, including things like youth produced sexual imagery or abusive comments, have the potential to travel to any other point in the world and there are few or no options to limit or retract once information has been shared in this way.

4.2 Cyberbullying has become the most common form of bullying that education now faces. We believe that any act of harmful behaviour that occurs between members of our school community is our business and will be managed within the remit of our policies and routines.

4.3 Not all cyberbullying is criminal or meets statutory thresholds for referral to Children's Social Care, but there are laws that can apply in relation to threats, harassment and the safeguarding of children, and so the police or other services will be involved as and when necessary. The Education Act 2011 gives head teachers, and those authorised by head teachers, the power to seize and examine data or files and to delete these where there is good reason to do so.

5.0 Possible signs of bullying

5.1 Here are a number of possible signs and behaviours which might indicate a student is being bullied:

- being frightened of journeying to and from the academy
- unwillingness to come to the academy
- withdrawn, isolated behaviour
- taking an unusual route to or from the academy
- becomes easily distressed
- issues with eating
- fear of the internet or mobile phone
- complaining about missing possessions
- truanting
- feeling ill in the morning

- self harm, including thoughts of self harm
 - difficulty sleeping
 - unexplained scratches, bruises and cuts
 - attempting to gain money for unusual requests (stealing is possible)
 - school work begins to deteriorate
 - becoming aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
 - bullying other students
 - refusing to talk about what is bothering them
 - damaged or incomplete work
 - refusing to work in a group or with another student
- 5.2 All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children, this can happen both inside and outside of school, as well as online, and that no reports being made does not mean that this form of abuse is not taking place.
- 5.3 All staff are provided with regular CPD on the different forms of peer abuse, including bullying, and made aware of the indicators and signs as well as how to respond to it.
- 5.4 Dixons Academies Trust is committed to creating a culture of safety by challenging harmful behaviours between peers and never downplaying or dismissing behaviour that is actually abusive in nature by saying things like “it’s just banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “boys will be boys”. We have a ‘zero tolerance’ approach to managing child on child abuse in any form, including bullying.
- 5.5 Bullying can take place within the academy, including the outside spaces, during events, trips and residentials, in the community and via technology, including cyber-bullying and by phone / text.

6.0 Self-referral

Children must feel confident that, if they feel unsafe or that they are being bullied, they can come forward and will be listened to. Any child can come forward to speak with any member of staff. All self-referrals must be recorded with actions taken and families must be contacted. In most cases, the member of staff that the referral is made to should speak to the appropriate person, either the designated safeguarding lead, head of year or phase leader, who will decide on the appropriate course of action. Because children may not always feel confident to come forward in person, each academy needs to ensure that there are a range of options available for their students to self-refer. This may include:

- being able to communicate with staff by email
- a ‘worry box’
- student voice collected at least annually
- key worker / mentor allocated to students of concern, even if they are not disclosing anything specific
- key contacts such as Childline (see Appendix 1)

7.0 Roles and responsibilities

7.1 The principal and local academy board

The principal, held to account by the local academy board, has to ensure the academy is meeting its duty to prevent bullying in their academy. The principal has the right to exclude a persistent perpetrator of bullying and will do so if they have evidence that the actions of an individual are undermining the safety of others (see Exclusion policy and Positive Behaviour policy).

7.2 All staff

All staff must be responsive to allegations of bullying and be clear that no issue is too small. It is essential that students have the confidence that all allegations are taken seriously and acted upon. The incident will always be investigated and recorded.

- The first priority is to give protection and support to the victim, however the learning and support needs of the perpetrator are also paramount and should be addressed in order to safeguard their wellbeing and future.
- Any member of staff witnessing possible bullying will take immediate action to manage the situation, offer support and make clear that the behaviour is unacceptable, following their academy’s behaviour routines and prioritising the safety and wellbeing, including emotional wellbeing, of the students.
- Any member of staff being told by a child that they are being bullied will follow safeguarding procedures in place for the receipt of a disclosure i.e. give the child their full attention, reassure them that they are being taken seriously, ensure that no child is made to feel shame or that their disclosure is an inconvenience, never tell a child that you will keep a secret but reassure them that their disclosure will be treated as confidential and only shared sensitively and appropriately.
- Although it may be the case that a child is a victim in a specific situation or set of circumstances, and that a child may be behaving in a



way that can be defined as bullying or child on child abuse, no child is inherently a victim or bully and using these labels as descriptors of them as a person can be damaging and even self-fulfilling, so every care must be taken to ensure language used is describing the situation and behaviour and not the child themselves.

- All incidences of bullying should be reported to the appropriate person within the academy – this will be different depending on the phase, staffing structure and systems of the individual academy, but is likely to be a head of year or phase leader, designated safeguarding lead or member of the senior leadership team.
- A thorough investigation will be made and appropriate responses for all parties be identified and actioned.
- Both the victim and perpetrator of a bullying incident are entitled to ongoing support to help them understand what has happened, develop skills and strategies for the future, rebuild self-esteem, and to move on from previous issues.
- All incidences of child on child abuse, including bullying, must be recorded on a ‘bullying log’ with clear response and follow up detailed. In addition, associated behaviours will be logged according to the academy’s usual behaviour system and any associated safeguarding concerns will be logged and followed up on CPOMS.
- Sanctions, if appropriate, will be decided on the individual incidents and circumstances and in line with the Behaviour Policy and the academy’s own routines.
- All incidences of bullying are opportunities for the academy to learn and improve whole academy protocols and routines to better protect all students in the future. This may include:
 - introducing new duty points to better supervise ‘blind spots’ in the physical environment
 - addressing issues through assemblies, PSHE or re-induction events
 - staff CPD
 - always informing families of the incident and outcome
 - informing the police in extreme cases.

7.3 All students

We expect our students to report instances of bullying, no matter how small, and we constantly educate them on the effects of bullying on the individual.

As part of our ongoing commitment to maintaining a culture of safeguarding for all students, staff and visitors to our academies, students will receive ongoing direct learning opportunities through PSHE as well as indirect learning opportunities through observing the behaviour of the adults around them. This will include but is not limited to:

- learning about different forms of child on child abuse and the effects it has on children and adults
- learning about identity, protected characteristics, prejudice and discrimination
- learning about ways to seek help and support
- building trusting relationships with staff
- learning from the professionalism and conduct of staff

All students will be taught how and supported to reach out for support if they feel they are being bullied, or need help in any way, to reach out if they are worried about a peer – be an ‘upstander’, not a ‘bystander’ – as well as to seek support if they are worried about their own thoughts and behaviour.

7.4 Families

All families sign our three way partnership when their child enters the academy. We expect families to work with us in tackling bullying and in upholding our positive culture. Our success as a trust is built on this three way relationship between the home, academy and child.

8.0 Response for victims

- 8.1 On discovering that there is bullying occurring, the first priority is to give protection and support to the victim, including ensuring that they feel safe, that the issue is being taken seriously, and that it will be managed sensitively and in a way that is not exacerbating (victims of bullying often fear that adult involvement will make the situation worse).
- 8.2 The response should be proactive, proportionate, and managed in a way that leaves the possibility of restoration and conciliation / reconciliation available.
- 8.3 Student voice is of paramount importance in both supporting the victim and managing the bullying issue itself.

9.0 Response for perpetrators

- 9.1 Incidences of bullying will be responded to in line with the Positive Behaviour policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, and the academy’s own routines and protocols, and escalate to the appropriate level dependent on severity and whether it is a repeated or ongoing issue.

- 9.2 Wherever possible there will be direct restorative work to facilitate conciliation / reconciliation, genuine apology and moving forward positively for all parties. This will be led and supported by staff at all times.
- 9.3 It is crucial for maintaining a culture of safeguarding that bullying behaviour and all perpetration of child on child abuse is an indication of need for education and support, in itself a safeguarding issue because it is not conducive to that child achieving the best outcomes that they can, and may be indicative of a child protection concern. For this reason, immediate and ongoing support will always be put in place for the perpetrator in order to understand their needs and support them to make better choices in the future.

10.0 Academy anti-bullying strategies

- 10.1 Bullying at our academies will not be tolerated and this message will be reinforced regularly. It is important that tackling bullying is seen as an on-going process which involves all members of the academy community.
- 10.2 The message will be delivered through:
- year group assemblies from heads of year and senior leaders
 - PSHE schemes of work, posters and advice leaflets
 - every form teacher / advisor and class teacher
 - duty staff and lunchtime supervisor should be particularly vigilant when on duty at the academy and playgrounds
 - subject teachers will sometimes be able to incorporate an 'anti-bully' message in their lessons, e.g. in literature, drama, discussions of current affairs etc.
 - confidential listening area in pastoral areas; for example, IN / mountain rescue office
 - positive relationship support programmes in place e.g. positive leadership skills, anger management, assertiveness etc.
 - cyber bullying special assemblies and lessons – students to understand the risks of social networking sites and ways to report cyber bullying
 - continuing professional development for all staff
- 10.3 Students should be made aware that, as an academy, we will not tolerate bullying. They must be told that they should not suffer in silence and that any teacher or staff member is prepared to help. They should always be encouraged to talk to someone.

Appendix 1 – Useful contacts

Help organisations:

KIDSCAPE Parents Advice Line

- kidscape.org.uk/advice/parent-advice-line
- Call: 020 7823 5430
- WhatsApp: 07496 682785
- Email: parentsupport@kidscape.org.uk

Childline

- childline.org.uk/get-support/contacting-childline
- Call: 0800 1111

Family Lives

- familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline
- bullying.co.uk (partner website)
- Call: 0808 800 2222
- Email: askus@familylives.org.uk

Other useful websites

- anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- restorativejustice.org.uk
- childnet.com
- ceop.police.uk/Safety-Centre

