

**SABA VERDA INTERNATIONAL
SCHOOL**

«Anti-bullying policy»

2018

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Our policy has been written in the context of our responsibilities under:

- *British School Overseas Standards.*

The support of external services may be accessed to help with, understand or address incidents.

- *The police*
- *The local social services*
- *Family counselling*
- *Psychologists*
- *Child psychiatrists, paediatricians*

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 or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case. Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating."

Cyber-bullying

"The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click. The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable ground to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must give the device to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable."

Introduction

Types of bullying

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in our definition of bullying:

- Physical bullying
- Emotional bullying, verbal, gestures, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours etc.
- Cyberbullying

- Bullying because of disability or special educational needs.
- Bullying based on prejudice towards sexuality, gender or race
- Sexual bullying in the form of behaviour that crosses individual limits and privacy
- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullyingⁱⁱⁱ

Signs of bullying^{iv}

It can be hard for adults, including parents, to know whether or not a child is being bullied. A child might not tell anyone because they're scared the bullying will get worse. They might think that they deserve to be bullied, or that it's their fault.

You can't always see the signs of bullying. And no one sign indicates for certain that a child's being bullied. But you should look out for:

- belongings getting "lost" or damaged
- physical injuries such as unexplained bruises
- being afraid to go to school, being mysteriously 'ill' each morning, or skipping school
- not doing as well at school
- asking for, or stealing, money (to give to a child who bullies)
- being nervous, losing confidence, or becoming distressed and withdrawn
- problems with eating or sleeping
- bullying others

A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and environment that is welcoming to difference and diversity and is based on inclusion and respect. A school policy on bullying is most effective when supported by a positive school environment which encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others.

In Saba Verde International School our emotional educational content is essential to the school and has its own place in the curriculum being taught weekly in the subject "class conference" as well as being integrated in other subjects and projects. It is based on mutual respect between all parties at school and after school. We think that respectful relationships are central to a positive school culture across the entire school community. This encompasses relationships amongst peers (e.g. pupil to pupil, teacher to teacher) and relationships between groups (e.g. teachers and pupils, parents and teachers etc.).

The school endeavours to create an environment where pupils feel comfortable and free to discuss and disclose incidents of bullying. This also includes challenging prevailing attitudes so that pupils realise that they also have a responsibility for the safety and welfare of fellow pupils.

Bullying is not a criminal offence in the UK or Spain but if any threatening behaviour or harassment or other criminal activity takes place we will involve the police. The lack of will to change a continuous bullying behaviour eventually could cause expulsion from the school.

School visits are a part of everyday school life and as such this policy applies in full when pupils are off site, which includes any activity connected to the school. As such, any bullying incidents occurring off the premises, such as on public transport, school buses or in the local community, will fall under this policy and be treated accordingly. If the matter

involves criminal activity, the police will always be informed.

An intrusive effort

Bullying is often experienced as a difficult and inescapable situation. Pupils and adults need to discuss bullying to move forward in creating the optimal school environment.

"Adults must clearly and distinctively show that bullying is not acceptable. Action must be taken and it is important to involve teachers, students and parents. It is important to simultaneously empower the group- not just those who are bullied, but also those who bully and those who are passive. The entire situation must be investigated and analysed before going forward and talking about how to change the situation. For adults, it's about not condemning but being curious, open-minded and inquisitive so that children feel comfortable about explaining their experiences. Bullying is in itself an abstraction, a cover for concrete actions and experiences, and these are the ones we need to understand to make changes."^v.

Implementing anti-bullying efforts in our daily school routines

The procedure

The preventive effort

Prevention of bullying is obtained by creating an inclusive school culture and a good educational environment with particular focus on the psychological educational environment, primarily focusing on social well being in daily life.

At school level

Our preventive efforts consist of working on improving school culture through continuously:

- Debating how to obtain a good teaching and learning environment and understanding what bullying is.
- Making it easy for pupils to report bullying so they feel assured that they will be listened to and any incidents acted upon.
- Having weekly "class conferences" to ensure pupils well-being and emotional healthy development.
- Having regular full school meetings with all pupils and staff.
- Openly discussing differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related differences. Also children with challenging family situations.^{vi}
- Creating common policies on how to engage in and resolve conflicts with an open mind.
- Preparing and implementing anti bullying strategies.
- Taking joint positions in focusing on student resources over shortcomings.
- Explicitly teaching pupils about the appropriate use of social media.
- Following up and following through with pupils who ignore the rules.

- Ensuring that staff actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensuring adequate playground/school yard/outdoor supervision.
- Supporting the work of the student council.
- Working with the wider community such as the police and children's services to agree on a clearly understood approach to cases where bullying is particularly serious or persistent and where a criminal offence may have been committed.^{vii}
- Supporting children who are bullied and making appropriate provision for a pupils needs. The nature and level of support will depend on individual circumstances and the level of need. These can include a quiet word from a teacher who knows the pupil well, asking professionals to provide support, providing formal counselling, communicating with parents, referring to local authority children's services, completing a Common Assessment Framework or referring to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.^{viii}
- Conducting written anonymous surveys on pupils welfare each term for all pupils
- Creating a postbox where pupils can write anonymous notes with information about bullying or with their name on it if they are in need of help.

At class level

At class level as a preventive measure pupils and teacher continuously debate (usually in class conference):

- Which type of school class would we like to have and which type of class environment do we want on a daily basis?
- Basic rules for socializing and etiquette.
- How do we ensure that everyone is part of our community?
- How do we help each other and take care of each other?
- How to say yes and no and how to receive a refusal in day to day life?
- How to resolve conflicts constructively and with an open mind?
- How to focus on individual resources rather than weaknesses?
- What are pupils and teachers expectations of each other?
- What do we do if someone is being bullied?

Each class decides on ground rules and publishes them in class.

Coordination

We coordinate our efforts at school level and at class level by making our policies known and including students, parents, teachers, educators, management and health professionals in our work.

"Adults must be very clear that bullying is not acceptable. Action needs to be taken and the process must involve teachers, students and parents. Simultaneously you must try to empower the group as a whole- not just those who are bullied, but also those who bully and those who passively look by. Every situation needs investigating and analysing before you can address it. As an adult, it's about avoiding condemning the children but being

curious, open and inquisitive to get the children to talk about their experiences. Bullying is an abstraction to cover up actions and experiences, which need addressing to resolve the bullying."^{ix}

Guidelines for conducting conversations with those involved in bullying

The immediate priority is to stop bullying, so instances will be dealt with without delay.

The conversation with the victim

Many negative feelings are associated with being bullied; guilt, shame, negative self-image and lack of confidence in the school environment. No matter how long the bullying lasts, it is associated with pain, and this is where conversation can help to solve problems. The conversation should be focusing on:

- Showing empathy by signalling solidarity which prevents the victim from feeling guilty, at fault, shameful or on show.
- Understanding the pupils needs and feelings.
- Turning the feeling of being powerless and helpless into constructive resourceful thinking, strengthening the pupils ability to handle similar situations.
- Research the possibilities of action and the resources for each individual situation.

The conversation with the child who bullies

The basis of the conversation is to make sure it is clear that bullying will NOT be accepted. The Adult must clearly state this. Only then can the conversation begin.

"The task of the interlocutor is to make the story unfold, to be analytical and not condemning. Telling off accelerates the feeling of stress. It is important to lower the pace, thereby creating a better rapport and to show attention to the conversation to promote reflection and learning. The adult interviewer must be open, curious and inquisitive towards the child's experiences and be clear in the explanation of what is permitted and not permitted."^x(Bente Lynge, Interview 2004).

The latter part of the conversation is about creating a behavioural change in the child who bullies:

- Discuss bullying incidents to analyse the content, location and timescales and the reactions and feelings it arouses
- Tell stories or examples of acceptable social behaviour
- Explore the child's resources and new strategies to act appropriately in future social relations
- Study class dynamics, social behaviour, group positions and -dynamics to emphasise social co-responsibility and the importance of good community spirit.

The conversation with passive spectators

Passive spectators of a bullying incident are a significant group to count on when bullying is to be stopped. Spectators can help indirectly with legitimizing bullying by not telling adults what they know or by not interrupting the incident. Spectators may feel the need to talk about their experiences, and this is often associated with discomfort, insecurity and sometimes fear of "telling on someone" or even being bullied themselves. Conversation with the spectators has several purposes:

- To help understanding what actually happened
- Telling the story to someone the spectator is comfortable with
- To speak about social responsibility and assessing what you can do as spectator to no longer be passive
- Bring out individual resources to encourage intervention and prevention of future bullying. In the long term legitimising anti bullying behaviour.

Staff anti-bullying training and knowledge

Through yearly obligatory anti bullying training sessions for all staff we ensure that all staff have had relevant training and understand the importance of the school anti bullying policy.

In particular, our director ensures that all staff understand the principles and purpose of the school's policy, the legal responsibilities, how to resolve problems and where to seek support. We use specialised skills to help our staff understand the needs of any pupils, including special educational needs and/or disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGB&T) pupils.^{xi}

We aim is to ensure staff feel confident to consistently tackle all forms of bullying and that students are empowered to say "no" to bullying.

It is important for the school to understand the motivation behind any bullying and whether it reveals any cause for concern about the safety of the perpetrator. This is because the child who bullies may need support themselves.

In serious or persistent cases, parents will be informed and may be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem, and if necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted. All attempts will be made to help the child who bullies change their behaviour.

Any incidents of bullying will be recorded by relevant staff. This will enable patterns to be identified, and keeping records of bullying incidents.

Where bullying has a severe impact

In some circumstances the consequences of bullying may lead to a child or young person experiencing pronounced social, emotional or mental health difficulties. We work to ensure making appropriate provision for a child's short term needs, including setting out what actions they are taking when bullying has had a serious impact on a child's ability to learn. If the bullying leads to persistent, long-lasting difficulties that cause the child to have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age, then the school considers whether the child will benefit from being assessed for SEN.^{xii}

Disciplinary sanctions

We use the strategy of disciplinary sanctions and learning programmes to deal with those pupils who are bullying and are not willing to change their behaviour. Such disciplinary measures have three main purposes, namely to:

- Make clear to the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable;
- Deter him/her from repeating that behaviour; and
- Signal to other pupils that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing the same.

The lack of will to change a continuous bullying behaviour eventually can cause expulsion from the school.

Responsibilities

The Headteacher is responsible for the implementation of this policy and for reviewing it from time to time to evaluate its implementation and impact.

Document author; Rie Jul, December 2017

- i DfES Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence"
- ii DfES Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence"
- iii "anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools Ireland"
- iv NSPCC website <https://www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/child-abuse-and-neglect/bullying-and-cyberbullying/signs-symptoms-effects/>
- v «Sådan kan skolen forebygge og håndtere mobning» Bente Lynge, Interview 2004 , Karin M. Willumsen og Mia Malmstrøm 21 july 2006, Denmark
- vi DfES Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence"
- vii DfES Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence"
- viii DfES Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence"
- ix «Sådan kan skolen forebygge og håndtere mobning» Bente Lynge, Interview 2004 , Karin M. Willumsen og Mia Malmstrøm 21 july 2006, Denmark
- x «Sådan kan skolen forebygge og håndtere mobning» Bente Lynge, Interview 2004 , Karin M. Willumsen og Mia Malmstrøm 21 july 2006, Denmark
- xi DfES Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence"
- xii DfES Guidance "Bullying: don't suffer in silence"