



Great Missenden C of E Combined School

## Learning to Get Along Together Anti-bullying Policy

The starting point for this policy is to ask ourselves, as adults:

**“What skills do we need in life in order to get along with other people?”**

- How do we treat others?
- How do we expect to be treated?
- What do we do if we don't get along with someone?
- How do we stand up for ourselves?
- Where and when did we learn these skills?

We recognise that children need to learn how to get along with each other, and this is easier for some children than others. “Getting along” involves a complex set of skills, and school is the best possible place to learn them.

This policy is in two sections:

1. What we do to help children learn how to get along
2. What we do if things go wrong (Anti-bullying)

### 1. WHAT WE DO

These are the things we do at Great Missenden School to help children to learn how to get along with each other.

#### **Buddies**

With two different stages of entry (Reception and Year 3) it is particularly important that children who are new to the school are welcomed and have someone to look after them right from the start. We operate two buddy systems:

- Children coming into Year 3 are paired up with a buddy from our existing Year 2 class who stays by their side in the first few days. They write a welcome letter to their buddy, show them round the school and make sure they are not left alone on the playground.
- Reception children (as well as Years 1 and 2) have a Year 6 buddy who looks after them all year. Buddy reading takes place on Friday afternoons.

The children really value these friendships and many of them endure for years.

#### **Assemblies**

Getting along together is a recurring theme in our whole school assemblies throughout the year. Early in the Autumn term we have a “Getting Along Together” week or fortnight when staff and children present assemblies on this theme.

#### **Curriculum Input**

In PHSE and circle time the children learn strategies for getting along together. They learn about the importance of self esteem, of communicating their feelings clearly and assertively and what to do if they feel they are being treated badly.

### **Class and School Councils**

The Councils meet every week and in this forum the children can discuss any problems they are encountering, and talk about behaviour in the school.

### **Team Work**

The school has four house teams, and the older children are expected to look after the younger ones. House Captains and Vice Captains are elected by their team, and are chosen for their ability to help and support others. They help resolve disputes in the playground, and patrol the corridors at break times. On Sports Day every member of Year 6 has to encourage and lead their mixed-age team. These structures create an ethos of kindness across the school. The older children are not scary or intimidating for the younger ones.

### **Classroom routines**

The way learning is organised has a direct bearing on children's ability to get along.

- We often use "talk partners" in class and expect all children to be able to pair up with either a regular talk partner, or any other child in the class.
- We use different seating plans, and expect all children to be able to collaborate with all other members of the class.

### **Life Skills and Social Groups**

Some children find social interaction very difficult. Our Inclusion Department runs several intervention groups which target these children and help them develop the skills they need to make and maintain friendships.

### **Encouraging Friendship**

There are many other ways we encourage children to be good friends. A "friendship" bench in each playground is a place to go if you are feeling lonely and want to have a talk. The "Secret Friend" system is also used. Children draw lots on who will be their "Secret Friend" and they have to say or do something kind to that person every day for a week. Children enjoy trying to work out the identity of their Secret Friend – and it makes everybody kinder.

### **Specific Strategies**

We use teaching methods which create an inclusive environment. For example, in Games lessons, we do not ask children to pick their own teams, as this can often lead to some children being the last to be chosen, and can create an atmosphere of ill feeling. Instead we use random numbers / birthdays or sorting games to divide the children into teams.

### **Fogging**

We teach the children how to be assertive, so that if anyone is unkind to them they know what to do. One method is "fogging", which means not rising to the bait, but responding in a neutral, bored voice to any provocation.

### **Help!**

Every child is asked, at the start of the academic year, to identify a named adult to go to if they are experiencing difficulties. This may be the class teacher or any other adult in the school. Children know that they will be listened to, and given help and advice to overcome their difficulties.

## 2. IF THINGS GO WRONG

- It is natural and an essential part of growing up for children to fall out with each other.
- It is natural and normal for children to test the boundaries of their “power”, and for there to be imbalances of power between children.
- When interacting freely, children are capable of being highly unpleasant to each other.
- The important thing is that they learn, from the reaction they get from adults and other children, what is and what isn’t acceptable.

### **WHAT ISN’T ACCEPTABLE: TACKLING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR**

Children need to learn that the following behaviour is unacceptable:

- Saying cruel or unpleasant things
- Hitting, kicking or hurting in any way
- Threatening
- Sending nasty notes, texts or e-mails
- Excluding others from games or friendship for no reason
- Deliberately moving, hiding or damaging someone else’s property to cause them distress or annoyance
- Anything else that deliberately makes someone’s life unhappy

Bullying is not the occasional fight or quarrel - it is deliberate and repeated persecution. It is the job of everyone in our school community to tackle bullying. Research has shown that although bullying happens in most schools, it is only a major problem in organisations which leave it unchallenged.

Tackling bullying in school matters because:

- It makes children unhappy
- Pupils who are being bullied are unlikely to concentrate fully on their school work
- Some pupils avoid being bullied by not going to school
- Pupils who observe unchallenged bullying behaviour are likely to copy it
- Action against bullying is integral to our Behaviour Policy, and our ethos as a caring church school.

Preventing and tackling bullying has a high priority within the school, with a clear commitment from the head teacher, governors and staff.

Our school values reject bullying behaviour and promote co-operation and consideration for others. Our Behaviour Policy is based on:

### **RESPECT RESPONSIBILITY RELIABILITY**

In the context of this Getting Along Together Policy, the three “R”s mean:

- **Respect for others and their property.**
- **Responsibility to tell an adult if children cannot deal with a situation themselves.**

- **Reliability means children doing what they have been asked to do by an adult, not ignoring advice. It means sticking to the terms of a behaviour contract, and not bending the rules or forgetting them.**

It is vital that children have the confidence to tell a member of staff if they are being bullied. Any bullying behaviour is responded to promptly and consistently. This may involve simply talking to the children involved, either individually or as a group, and asking them to suggest ways of handling the difficulty.

If this does not improve the situation, the next step is to involve parents. Our policy is to inform the parents of all children involved in any allegations of bullying behaviour. Very often just informing the parents and asking them to speak to their children is sufficient to bring the bullying behaviour to an end.

### **CHILDREN SOMETIMES JUST NEED TO BE TOLD TO “CUT IT OUT”**

When advice and guidance to children and contacting their parents has not succeeded in resolving problems, meetings are set up involving parents and children using “Restorative Justice” techniques. The child or children accused of bullying behaviour is asked to listen to their alleged victim or their parents, to hear the effect their behaviour is having on the individual and the family. This is a very good way to develop empathy, a key skill which some children find difficult to learn.

### **WHY DO CHILDREN BULLY?**

Children bully because:

- They want to be “in with the cool gang
- It feels like fun – they don’t realise how much it hurts
- They dislike or are jealous of someone
- It makes them feel powerful or respected
- They are bullied themselves and are taking out their hurt and anger on someone who they think won’t fight back
- They are having problems in their life that are making them feel bad

### **PEOPLE WHO ARE HAPPY WITH THEMSELVES DO NOT NEED TO BULLY OTHER PEOPLE**

We recognise that bullying disappears most rapidly when the whole class adopts an anti-bullying stance. If the “on-lookers” do not encourage bullying behaviour, then it is short-lived. We aim to make bullying an issue that is not secret, but is talked about openly, and is understood to be everyone’s concern.

### **GETTING ON TOGETHER**

#### **Children’s Responsibility**

- To remember the GOLDEN RULE: “Do for others what you want them to do for you” (Matthew 7:12)
- Do you like being picked on?
- Do you like people making fun of your appearance?
- Always imagine you are in someone else’s shoes, and then it’s easy!

#### **Parents’ Responsibility**

- Be a good role model for your children.

- Don't jump to conclusions.
- Listen to all sides. Try to solve problems rather than exacerbate them by only listening to your own child's point of view.
- Don't label children – especially don't label other people's children as "bullies" before you know all the facts.
- Advise your children to tell an adult in school if they have any problems. If they are not brave enough to do this, contact the school and be confident that the school will sort it out.
- Don't approach other parents to try to resolve playground disputes – this often makes the problem worse.
- Never tell your child to "hit back". This is not a good way to de-escalate disputes. Tell them to be assertive, to stand up for themselves and to expect to be treated with respect.
- Don't expect the school to exclude a child for bullying. If schools excluded every child who had been involved in some bullying behaviour, they would have very few children left! The school's job is to challenge and change bullying behaviour, not just to pass it on to another school.

### **School's Responsibility**

- To teach children how to take positive steps to resolve their differences.
- To help children with strategies to deal with unkind or hurtful incidents.
- To help children decide what constitutes bullying behaviour.
- To intervene in any alleged bullying incidents, to speak to the children involved and make it clear that any repetition of the bullying behaviour will mean parents being involved.
- If the behaviour is repeated, to inform parents of all children involved in the alleged bullying.
- To meet with children and parents if necessary and help resolve disputes in a practical and objective way.

### **Summary**

Making and losing friends is a natural part of growing up. As a school, we cannot eliminate it, and we would be doing the children a disservice if we did.

Children need to learn how to "move on", how to deal with the ups and downs of friendship and keep their self-esteem intact. As adults, we have all experienced exclusion, rejection and unhappiness at times in our lives, but we have survived and know that these experiences have made us stronger.

Our aim in school is to help children develop the confidence and self-reliance to make a positive contribution to society, to be able to speak up for themselves and to take life's knocks without completely crumbling.

It is also to let them know that bullying behaviour is always unacceptable, to know how to recognise it and what to do about it. Children need to learn that behaviour is complex, and that often bullying behaviour is caused by real unhappiness. Children should not be fearful of bullying behaviour, but know that they can face it, analyse it and change it.