

ASSUMPTION GRAMMAR SCHOOL



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Revised January 2013

INTRODUCTION

Assumption Grammar School seeks to establish a positive ethos (as articulated in "Fully Alive" A Vision of Education in Assumption Schools) which is conducive to learning and in which the individual pupil feels safe and supported. Bullying contravenes the Human Rights Act 1998, is totally at variance with the ethos of our school and will not be tolerated. Should a pupil or pupils be involved in bullying, it will be treated as one of the most serious infringements of school policy and dealt with accordingly.

BULLYING: OUR SCHOOL'S VALUES AND BELIEFS

All pupils and staff have the right to feel happy, safe and included.

Pupils and staff have the right to work in an environment without harassment, intimidation or fear.

All bullying, of any sort, is therefore unacceptable.

Pupils and parents will be supported when incidents of bullying are reported.

We recognise the effects that bullying can have on pupils' self respect and on their work and the school community will actively promote an anti-bullying environment.

AIMS OF THE POLICY:

To ensure that all pupils are included fully in the life of the school.

To provide a learning environment free from any threat or fear.

To create an emotionally safe environment where positive relationships can develop.

To reduce and to eradicate, wherever possible, instances in which pupils are subject to any form of bullying.

To respond effectively to all instances of bullying which are reported to us.

To establish a means of dealing with bullying, and of providing support to pupils who have been bullied.

To provide support for pupils who are accused of bullying, who may be experiencing problems of their own.

To ensure that all pupils, staff, parents and governors are aware of this policy and their roles and responsibilities in contributing to its success.

To meet any legal obligations which rest with the school

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is "deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend him or herself." (*Pastoral Care in Schools; Promoting Positive Behaviour- Department of Education 2001*)

"Bullying is the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others." (*Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum*)

Bullying is therefore:

- Deliberately hurtful
- Repeated, often over a period of time
- Difficult for victims to defend themselves against.

It can take many forms but the main types are:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, taking another's belongings
- Verbal – name calling, insulting, making offensive remarks
- Social/Non-Verbal – excluding, offensive gestures, unpleasant notes
- Emotional – personal comments, graffiti, making one feel isolated/unhappy
- Cyber bullying
- Racial and homophobic bullying

These categories may be interrelated.

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT OR REDUCE BULLYING

We promote positive behaviour in school and endeavour to create an environment where pupils behave well; where pupils take responsibility for each other's emotional and social well-being; and where they include and support each other.

Our curriculum is used to:

- Raise awareness about bullying and our anti-bullying policy
- Increase understanding for victims and help build an anti-bullying ethos
- Teach pupils how to manage constructively their relationships with others.

Work undertaken in Personal Development classes, visiting speakers, competitions and designated assemblies are used to show what pupils can do to prevent bullying, and to create an anti-bullying climate in school.

Our policy is posted on the school web site.

Our School Counsellor is available for pupils who feel they are victims of bullying and pupils who are identified as bullying others. Pupils and parents are made aware of this support.

Periodically anti- bullying posters will be displayed on noticeboards.

Our School Council offers a forum in which concerns about bullying can be discussed on a regular basis.

We will provide written guidance for parents on the signs of bullying and what to do if they suspect their child is being bullied at school (Appendix 1).

We will provide written guidance to all our pupils to explain what they should do if they are being bullied, or if they see another pupil being bullied (Appendix 2).

We will ask pupils where and when bullying occurs in school and we will supervise, and try to eliminate any unsafe areas which they report to us.

We will provide regular training for teachers and non-teaching staff (including mid-day supervisors) on spotting the signs of bullying and how to respond to it.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Pupils who have been bullied should report this to a parent, a teacher, a prefect or a friend.

Pupils who see others being bullied should report this to a parent, a teacher, a prefect or a friend.

Members of staff who receive reports that a pupil has been bullied should report this to the Year Head or the Section Head.

Reports of bullying will be logged by the Section Head. The record should include the following:

WHO	Person(s) involved?
WHAT	What happened?
WHERE	Where did the incident(s) happen?
WHEN	Time, Day, Date?

We will promote the safety and security of the individual pupils involved in a bullying incident by following the guidelines below:

- Providing support to pupils who are bullied (including arranging an appointment with the School Counsellor if required).
- Reassuring them that they do not deserve to be bullied and this is not their fault.
- Encouraging them to talk about how they feel.
- Trying to ascertain the extent of the problem.
- Engaging them in making choices about how the matter may be resolved.
- Trying to ensure that they feel safe.
- Discussing strategies for being safe and staying safe.
- Asking them to report immediately any further incidents to us.
- Affirming that bullying can be stopped and that our school will persist with intervention until it does.
- Involving their friends/older pupils in peer support/a buddying scheme/mediation.

STRATEGIES WE MAY EMPLOY WHEN INVESTIGATING A BULLYING INCIDENT

- We will reinforce the message that bullying is not acceptable, and that we expect bullying to stop.
- We will affirm that it is right for pupils to let us know when they are being bullied.
- We will interview the pupil (or pupils) involved in bullying separately and ask them to write down their version of events.
- We will talk to anyone else who may have witnessed the bullying.
- We will adopt a joint problem solving approach where this is appropriate, and ask the pupils involved to help us find solutions to the problem. This will encourage pupils involved to take responsibility for the emotional and social needs of others.
- We will advise pupils responsible for bullying that we will be checking to ensure that bullying stops.
- We will ensure that those involved know that we have done so.
- When bullying occurs, we will contact the parents of the pupils involved at an early stage.
- We will keep records of incidents that we become aware of and how we responded to them.
- We will follow up after incidents to check that the bullying has not started again. We will do this within two weeks, and again within the following half term.
- We will also work with pupils who have been involved in bullying others to ascertain the sort of support that they themselves need. This may include the offer of counselling.

Measures to be taken:

- When a claim is made and no blame can be established a record will be kept of those involved for one year. This record will then be destroyed if there has been no further claim.
- When a claim is made and blame is established, a record will be kept in the pupil's file. Sanctions may be imposed, depending on the seriousness of the incident. These may include:
 - ❖ *Supervision during break and lunchtime*
 - ❖ *Detention*
 - ❖ *Withholding participation in school events that are not an essential part of the curriculum*

- Should a second offence occur, the matter will be brought to the Principal/ Pastoral Vice Principal. Repeated bullying may lead to suspension.

BULLYING OUTSIDE THE SCHOOL PREMISES

Schools are not directly responsible for bullying that occurs off the premises but we know that bullying can occur outside the school gates and on journeys to and from school. The bullying may be done by pupils from our own school, by pupils from other schools or by people who are not at school at all. Where a pupil or parent tells us of bullying off the school premises we will:

- Talk to pupils about how to avoid or handle bullying outside of school.
- Talk to the Principal/ Vice Principal of another school whose pupils are bullying.
- Talk to the transport company about bullying on buses.
- Talk to the Travel Prefects about incidents of bullying and strategies to resolve the problem.
- Talk to the police.

EVALUATING OUR POLICY

We will evaluate our anti-bullying policy by circulating a questionnaire to a selection of pupils and parents (see Appendix 3 and 4) on a biennial basis and by reviewing the number and type of incidents which occurred during that two year period. The Pastoral Vice Principal will monitor and evaluate the policy annually.

LINKS WITH OTHER SCHOOL POLICIES

This policy is set within the broader context of pastoral care and, as such, should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Drugs Policy
- Use of Internet Policy
- Special Educational Needs Policy
- Policy on the Use of Reasonable Force
- Educational Visits Policy
- RSE Policy

INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

Bullying is prevalent in most schools and our anti-bullying policy is designed to address the problem.

Bullying behaviour includes:

- name calling and nasty teasing
- threats and extortion
- physical violence
- damage to belongings
- leaving pupils out of social activities deliberately and frequently
- spreading malicious rumours

Parents and families have an important part to play in helping schools deal with bullying.

First, discourage your child from using bullying behaviour at home or elsewhere. Show how to resolve difficult situations without using violence or aggression.

Second, ask to see the school's anti-bullying policy. Each school must have an anti-bullying policy which sets out how it deals with incidents of bullying. You have a right to know about this policy which is as much for parents as for staff and pupils.

Third, watch out for signs that your child is being bullied, or is bullying others. Parents and families are often the first to detect symptoms of bullying, though sometimes school nurses or doctors may first suspect that a child has been bullied. Common symptoms include headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and irritability. It can be helpful to ask questions about progress and friends at school; how break times and lunchtimes are spent; and whether your child is facing problems or difficulties at school. Don't dismiss negative signs. Contact the school immediately if you are worried.

If your child has been bullied;

- calmly talk to your child about it
- make a note of what your child says - particularly who was said to be involved; how often the bullying has occurred; where it happened and what has happened
- reassure your child that telling you about the bullying was the right thing to do
- explain that any further incidents should be reported to a teacher immediately
- make an appointment to see your child's Year Head or Section Head
- explain to the teacher the problems your child is experiencing

Talking to teachers about bullying

- try and stay calm - bear in mind that the teacher may have no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of an incident
- be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened - give dates, places and names of other children involved
- make a note of what action the school intends to take
- ask if there is anything you can do to help your child or the school
- stay in touch with the school - let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue

If you think your concerns are not being addressed:

- check the school anti-bullying policy to see if agreed procedures are being followed
- make an appointment to meet the Pastoral Vice Principal, keeping a record of the meeting
- if this does not help, write to the Chair of the Board of Governors explaining your concerns and what you would like to see happen

If your child is bullying other children:

Many children may be involved in bullying other pupils at some time or other. Often parents are not aware. Children sometimes bully others because:

- they don't know it is wrong
- they are copying older brothers or sisters or other people in the family they admire
- they haven't learnt other, better ways of mixing with their school friends

- their friends encourage them to bully
- they are going through a difficult time and are acting out aggressive feelings

To stop your child bullying others:

- talk to your child, explaining that bullying is unacceptable and makes others unhappy
- discourage other members of your family from bullying behaviour or from using aggression or force to get what they want
- show your child how to join in with other children without bullying
- make an appointment to see your child's Form Teacher or Year Head; explain to the teacher the problems your child is experiencing; discuss with the teacher how you and the school can stop them bullying others
- regularly check with your child how things are going at school
- give your child lots of praise and encouragement when they are co-operative or kind to other people

INFORMATION FOR PUPILS

If you are being bullied

- try to stay calm and look as confident as you can
- be firm and clear - look the bully(ies) in the eye and tell them to stop
- get away from the situation as quickly as possible
- tell your parent/teacher/prefect/friend what has happened straight away
- if you are scared to tell an adult by yourself, ask a friend to come with you
- keep speaking up until someone listens and does something to stop the bullying
- don't blame yourself for what has happened

When you are talking to an adult about bullying, be clear about

- what has happened to you
- how often it has happened
- who was involved
- who saw what was happening
- where it happened
- what you have done about it already

If you find it difficult to talk to anyone at school or at home, ring

ChildLine, Freephone 0800 1111,

The phone call is free. It is a *confidential* helpline.



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PUPILS (January 2013)

In order to address the problem of bullying and help prevent it occurring, we would appreciate if you could answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

Table with 6 columns: Question, Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree Nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree. Rows 1-13 contain various bullying-related statements.

Please tick the box if you have ever been bullied.

Please use the space below to add any further comments:

Large empty rectangular box for additional comments.

Signed: _____ (Optional)

Thank you for taking the time to fill the Questionnaire.



QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS (January 2013)

In order to address the problem of bullying and help prevent it occurring, we would appreciate if you could answer the following questions as honestly as possible.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. My daughter has been bullied in school.					
2. My daughter has been bullied on the way to and from school.					
3. My daughter has been bullied through text messages and use social networking sites.					
4. My daughter would let me know if she was being bullied.					
5. I am confident that my daughter would report instances of bullying to a member of staff.					
6. I believe that my daughter would report instances of bullying to a senior prefect.					
7. I believe that my daughter would report instances of bullying to a friend.					
8. If my daughter was being bullied, I would feel confident about contacting her Year Head/Section Head.					
9. I feel that cases of bullying are effectively addressed by the school.					
10. If I was aware of another/other pupil/s being bullied I would contact the school.					
11. I am familiar with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.					

Please use the space below to add any further comments:

Signed: _____ (Optional)

Thank you for taking the time to fill the Questionnaire.