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# Anti Bullying Policy

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Adopted by Utopia - for review by the Board of Directors
Updated September 2024
For review - Annually

## **Purpose of this Policy**

Bullying can be described as being “a deliberate act done to cause distress in order to give a feeling of power, status or other gratification to the bully. Bullying can range from ostracising, name-calling, teasing, threats and extortion, through to physical intimidation, assault on persons and/or their property. It can be an unresolved single incident that casts a shadow over a child’s life, or a series of such incidents. Bullying is often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.”

Utopia are committed to providing a caring, friendly and inclusive environment where all of our learners can engage in a safe and productive environment. The school culture is one of positive relationships, empathy and respect for diversity and bullying of any sort will not be tolerated. Interpersonal skills, relationship building and conflict resolution are regular parts of our wellbeing and mental health support offer and are core elements of what we do.

## **Aims**

Utopia believes that every member of its community has the right to be safe and happy and to feel that they will be protected if they feel vulnerable.

All members of our community must be aware that bullying is always unacceptable and we want to foster an environment where caring and supportive relationships allow individuals to flourish without fear.

## **Types of Bullying**

There are many different types of bullying. The main types are listed below. In practice, they often overlap. Some examples of the types of behaviour which fit into each group are given below. The list is not exhaustive.

### **Physical**

Hitting, kicking, taking or hiding belongings (including money).

### **Verbal**

Name-calling, teasing, insulting, chanting and joke-telling at another’s expense. We also consider that unwanted phone messages or voice mail messages from mobile phones or landline phones constitute bullying behaviour.

### **Written**

Graffiti, writing on people’s belongings and schoolwork, signs and symbols left on desks or lockers and unwanted emails and texting.

### **Cyber**

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using electronic technology. Electronic technology includes devices and equipment such as mobile phones, computers, and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text/photo messages, chat, and websites.

### **Emotional**

Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, spreading rumours, intimidating looks.

## **Gestures**

Unkind signs and looks, pointing and sniggering, laughing behind someone's back turning one's back on someone and shrugging shoulders with the intention of making someone feel left out or excluded.

## **Sexual Harassment/Sexual Violence/Harmful Sexual Behaviour**

Sexual harassment is 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature' that can occur online and offline. Sexual harassment is likely to: violate a person's dignity, and/or make them feel intimidated, degraded or humiliated and/or create a hostile, offensive or sexualised environment. Any incident of sexual harassment will be dealt with in line with this policy, our Safeguarding Policy.

Bullying is behaviour which makes other people feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, threatened or left out. It is not the ordinary give-and-take of school life, which may include disagreements, joking and friendly teasing. Similarly, excluding someone from an activity occasionally does not constitute bullying, provided it is not part of a deliberate attempt to be unkind and has not been done in an unpleasant way.

## **What Utopia is Doing About Bullying**

At Utopia, every learner has the right to be educated in a safe, secure and kind environment and all members of the community have a responsibility to ensure that this occurs. In line with our vision and ethos, dealings with regard to misbehaviour and bullying will employ a restorative approach. Concerns raised around bullying are recorded in our bullying logs.

## **Disclosures and Communication**

We are a 'telling' organisation where learners will always be encouraged to inform staff of any incidents or behaviours that are not in line with our positive ethos. Should bullying occur, learners will know that, by telling, the situation will be dealt with promptly and effectively and that anyone who knows about any bullying is expected to inform staff.

While we encourage all learners to report concerns directly to staff, and support them in doing so, we recognise there may be situations or barriers for some students in regularly doing this. To address this we train staff to be hyper vigilant to the signs and symptoms of bullying and ensure that learners are supervised at all times throughout the school day.

## **Measures to be taken when cases of bullying come to light**

Learners who are bullied must be assured that their concerns are being taken seriously. They will have the opportunity to discuss them with the most appropriate member of staff. A multi-disciplinary approach is critical due to the range of social communication and interaction challenges most of our learners have. They will be given a range of options. Once they are familiar with the possibilities, they will be encouraged to choose one of them.

They will then be given support and shown the strategies by means of which they can deal with their option effectively. In serious cases of bullying Utopia may conduct a formal investigation, and sanctions will be imposed in line with the Behavioural Policy. Utopia will always be alert to identifying the threshold at which bullying may become a Child Protection matter, at which point it will be formally referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who will take things forward in line with the School's safeguarding procedures.

Learners who use bullying behaviour will be helped to see that their actions are totally unacceptable and have serious, possibly long-term, consequences. Help and support will be

ongoing and monitoring will take place. Should the behaviour not improve, disciplinary action will occur.

Where appropriate the parents of victims and of perpetrators will be informed of what has happened and invited to come to School to discuss the issue

## **Preventative Measures**

Many learners at Utopia have social communication needs, which can impact relationship building, socialisation and the reading of visual and verbal cues. To support learners with this, we run social skills classes as well as small group and individual counselling sessions. Mediation and restorative conversations and interventions take place on a regular basis, to support the learning of appropriate socialising skills and conflict resolution.

Development of the wellbeing of all members of our School community is an integral aspect of the ethos of Utopia and is embedded in all aspects of our daily routine. This will involve the teaching of kindness and positive personal interactions and will, therefore, be an ongoing topic of staff and development development every year. Staff are aware of the actions which can cause distress and make someone feel that they are being bullied and that this can be addressed in many areas of the curriculum and general life of the School, including:

- The ethos and values of the School as embodied in the Behaviour Policy;
- Assemblies and form periods;
- PSHE sessions;
- Wellbeing, Social Skills, and Life Skills lessons;
- The School's pastoral structures, including one-to-one work with a staff mentor; and
- taking opportunities to reinforce the School's counter bullying message and commitment to wellbeing within all lessons.

## **Positive approach**

Utopia, as an organisation, wants a complete absence of bullying. While this may seem an unattainable aspiration, it is our belief that the strategies we are putting in place will go a long way towards achieving this.

- Staff will be trained in working with all learners to help them gain an understanding of how their behaviour impacts others and to provide them with strategies and targets for improvement.
- Bullying will be discussed throughout the year and learners will be encouraged to discuss strategies for dealing with bullying.
- Parents will be informed of interventions that are taking place with their child so that they can support the positive behaviour focus and inform the school of progress occurring outside of school
- In cases where these interventions do not result in changing the bullying behaviour, a more discipline-focused approach will need to occur. Meetings with parents, learners and staff will occur and behavioural contracts agreed upon, with clear consequences set out, such as removal from activities, removal from lessons, suspensions or exclusions.

Utopia will provide training and ongoing education to staff and learners about cyberbullying and its dangers and will remain vigilant over the appropriate use of social media and IT.

**Legal Status:**

This policy has been Prepared with reference to: Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017), Cyberbullying: Advice for Principals and school staff (DfE- November 2014), Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying (DfE- November 2014) and School support for children and young people who are bullied (DfE- March 2014), Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE: 2022)

In addition regard has been given to the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty and Complies with The Education (Independent School Standards) (England) Regulations currently in force.