

Anti-Bullying Policy Parent's Guide

Why should you read this document?

Because many children of secondary school age will either be involved themselves or be witness to unacceptable behaviour which may or may not constitute bullying. This document will hopefully help you to help your young person through such incidents and to navigate the system used at Mearns Academy to deal with such behaviour.

The most important point is that if your young person is having any issues at school, please contact their Guidance Teacher via the school email address mearns.aca@aberdeenshire.gov.uk:

Mrs Jamieson:-	Thornton
Mrs Wilson:-	Conveth
Mrs Dunn:-	Drumtochty
Mrs Stevenson:-	Johnston

This document is a summary of the comprehensive Mearns Academy Anti-Bullying Policy which can be found online <https://mearns.aberdeenshire.sch.uk/policies/>. A copy can also be obtained by contacting Reception at Mearns Academy or any Guidance Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team.

All members of the school community including pupils, staff and parents have a role to play in making Mearns a welcoming learning environment for all. Staff will always take bullying-type behaviour seriously and listen to and support young people who have experienced or have demonstrated bullying behaviour.

Definition of Bullying Behaviour

There is no legal definition of bullying behaviour. Bullying-type behaviour in schools is often behaviour which emerges from complex social dynamics as opposed to being a characteristic of a particular individual. It is not helpful to label students as 'bullies' or 'victims'.

It is important to acknowledge, however, that not all unpleasant behaviour constitutes bullying-type behaviour. As children grow and develop as individuals, their relationships with peers will inevitably change. Children will have disagreements; they will fall in and out with each other, will argue and have different opinions as they make and build relationships. This is a normal part of growing up and of life. Sometimes children may need support to resolve these issues. It is also important to remember that some children may not be aware that their behaviour is unacceptable to others and will need to help to acknowledge this fact. Restorative approaches used in school can allow both parties to overcome these challenges and improve their emotional intelligence and resilience.

Bullying type behaviours may include the following:

- Physical assault – hitting, tripping, pushing, kicking...
- Making threats, intimidation
- Name calling, teasing
- Ignoring, excluding, spreading rumours
- Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media or by phone
- Taking or damaging someone's belongings
- Targeting someone because of who they are or what they believe in

Online Bullying Behaviour

The internet, like any social setting, has the potential to become a place where bullying behaviour can take place. Schools and parents/carers have a role in supporting children to navigate social media safely and responsibly. To support our young people, internet safety and digital literacy form part of our PSE and Information Technology curriculums. Parents/carers can take the following steps to support young people at home:

- **Speak to your young people** about the risks
- **Monitor your young person's online activity** – know who they are talking to
- **Listen to their concerns**
- **Set clear boundaries**
- **Check the age rating** of games/social media apps etc. that they use
- **Set up parental controls**
- **Look out** for any unusual behaviours
- **Be a positive role model**
- **Know how to report a concern** [CEOP Safety Centre](#)

Impact of Bullying Behaviour

The impact of bullying behaviours may lead to the following behaviours in young people:

- **Changes to behaviour and or physical appearance**
- **Withdrawal from activities/hobbies**
- **Refusal to attend school**
- **Tearfulness**
- **Anxiety**
- **Self-harm**
- **Social isolation**
- **Aggression**
- **Being secretive** – hiding their phone or other devices

Parents and carers should be aware of any changes in the behaviour of their young person and respond appropriately.

Reporting Unacceptable Behaviour including Bullying-Type Behaviour - Expectations & Responsibilities

All members of the school community have a role to play in preventing, challenging and reporting unacceptable and bullying-type behaviours.

- **Be aware** of any changes in behaviour
- **Listen** to your young person. Try to keep an open mind - you may not be in possession of all the facts
- **Discuss** how they feel and help them to develop resilience and strategies to manage relationships
- **Report it** - Contact your young person's Guidance Teacher as soon as a concern regarding unacceptable behaviour is raised by your young person. This allows staff to deal with unacceptable behaviour before it escalates.
- **Work with the school** and other agencies to support your young person and allow time for an investigation to take place
- **Monitor** your young person's online activity
- **Be a role model** giving a consistent message promoting positive relationships

Ensure that your young person is aware that they should:

- **Speak to a trusted adult** about their concerns. Alternatively, report any concerns to their Guidance Teacher using the **QR code** in school which links to a Microsoft Form
- **Where safe and appropriate, challenge bullying behaviour** – which is covered in their “See Me, See Change” sessions and in PSE lessons
- **Keep calm**
- **Do not retaliate**
- **Do not respond to any abusive messages or texts**
- **Block messages**
- Work with yourself, staff and other agencies to resolve any issues

Investigating Allegations of Bullying Behaviour

The full flowchart can be found in the aforementioned Mearns Academy Anti-Bullying Policy. In summary:

Once notified of any unacceptable behaviour, including bullying-type behaviour, your young person’s Guidance Teacher (Principal Teacher of Guidance or PTG) will ensure that all parties are safe and discuss the incident with them.

In the case of an alleged bullying incident, the Guidance Teacher will inform the Year Head. Together the Guidance Teacher and Year Head will decide an appropriate course of action.

The Guidance Teacher will then reach out to parents/carers of all parties involved to set out the next steps including a likely timeline.

The appropriate staff within Mearns Academy will then log and investigate the alleged incident. On completion of the investigation, all parties involved will be informed of the outcome of the investigation. It is important to remember that, due to data protection laws, Mearns Academy is restricted with regard to the information that can be given regarding the outcome of the investigation in relation to, among other things, which Support/Interventions or Sanctions were put in place. A list of possible Support/Interventions and Sanctions are given in the above-mentioned Mearns Academy Anti-Bullying Policy.

Take Away Message

If you or your young person are worried about any behaviour at Mearns Academy, please contact your young person’s Guidance Teacher as soon as possible.

The school leadership team and staff want to work with members of the school community, pupils, parents and carers to produce a welcoming school environment which is conducive to a good learning environment, and we all need to work together to achieve that.

Useful Links/Supports

Anti-Bullying Alliance - [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#)

Childline - www.childline.org.uk

Children 1st - [Scotland's National Children's Charity | Children 1st](#)

Children and Young People’s Commissioner Scotland - www.cypcs.org.uk

Respectme - www.respectme.org.uk/

See Me - <https://www.seemescotland.org/>

Stonewall – www.stonewall.org.uk

Unicef Rights Respecting Schools - www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/