

*The Children's Garden*  
A Steiner Kindergarten

## **ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**

## Statement of Intent

As a Steiner Waldorf kindergarten, we have always been committed to understanding and providing, without exception, a secure and safe environment, which will enable our children to grow naturally at the predetermined stages essential to their growth, both as individuals and in the wider context of social integration and assimilation at all levels.

We take our responsibilities as guardians of our children's intellectual, physical, spiritual and social development seriously and ensure that at all times any difficulties that may arise both individually and within their social environment, such as a behaviour which can be termed 'bullying', are dealt with immediately and with the utmost care.

We want our children to grow naturally, feel secure, and approach themselves and each other confidently and without fear. We feel that we are laying the foundations for individuals to build upon; individuals capable of fulfilling their destinies, taking part in and upholding a social structure. Each child's development is closely monitored, reviewed and researched within the context specific to that child and is considered deeply, with care and a desire to help the child overcome any difficulties he or she may have without fear and with freedom for growth.

We try to provide an environment in which everyone feels supported, safe and valued and where they can learn, work and mix socially with their peers without fear. However, in spite of our best endeavours, occasional incidents of bullying are inevitable, so children and staff need to experience that bullying is not acceptable or tolerated, and that incidents of bullying are dealt with effectively.

## Definition of 'Bullying'

We acknowledge that 'bullying' as a behaviour exists and as we understand it, can be defined 'as one or more individuals being exposed, repeatedly, and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other persons. Within a Waldorf environment we view this as consistent negative behaviour. We are aware of natural instinctual drives which with repetitive measures and procedures enable the child to be free from these behaviour patterns and which are detailed within this policy in the sections 'Procedures', 'Outcomes' and 'Prevention'.

Bullying can take many forms, but taking into account that the age range in kindergarten is from 0-6 years, some of the forms of bullying may be:

Emotional:	being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, threatening gestures
Physical:	pushing, kicking, pinching, hitting, scratching, punching, biting, pulling
Racist:	racial taunts, gestures
Sexual:	unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive comments
Verbal:	name-calling, teasing, exclusion, intimidating

Indirect                      spreading rumours, unfair exclusion or discrimination, using peer pressure to coerce or manipulate

There is a danger that the behaviour itself is seen as bullying, regardless of its motivation or the social context in which it occurs. This is not so. For example, a blow may be struck in self-defence; a child may be excluded from an activity because he is too young. We must be aware that bullying behaviour is intended to hurt and is typically repeated over time.

## **How to know if someone is being bullied**

It can sometimes be difficult to find the line between bullying and normal physical/verbal interaction, but bullying can usually be distinguished by the effect it has on the victim or by noticing whether it is always the same person who gets hurt or put down.

Children who are suffering bullying will experience and sometimes express that they are being oppressed; they may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming withdrawn, nervous or tearful, pretending to be ill, having frequent stomach and headaches, frequent absences, clinging to adults. There may be changes in the pupil's work, a lack of concentration, deterioration in behaviour or truanting from school.

Some children and young people are especially vulnerable to bullying, such as those who are physically or learning disabled, young people who experience abuse or neglect, gay and lesbian young people, children from minority ethnic communities, and those growing up in care. Others perceived to be different, for instance, in terms of their size, shape, or because they wear glasses or don't wear 'the right' clothes, may also be picked on. Some children are bullied for no apparent reason and may be bullied by former friends.

Staff and parents, as well as pupils can be the victims or perpetrators of bullying. Signs of bullying in adults include lack of confidence, depression, anxiety and self-harming. Sometimes the person who is bullied also bullies others.

## **Importance of Response to Bullying**

We are committed to ensuring that every child is free to develop naturally. It is absolutely essential to respond appropriately and effectively in order to ensure a secure and safe environment for both victim and perpetrator to enable this development. Parents tend to send their children to Steiner kindergartens because this natural development is encouraged and not impeded.

All staff need to be alert to the signs of bullying and take appropriate action when they know or suspect that someone is being bullied. Sometimes there are no outward signs, but the person will need to be able to tell someone if they want to. Staff must work towards ensuring that the school is a place where pupils and staff feel they can and should report incidents of bullying whether they themselves, or someone else, is the victim.

Communication between parents and teachers with regard to children's behaviour and welfare is essential. For example, if a child is suddenly and inexplicably reluctant to come to school, this could indicate that the child is experiencing difficulties that need to be addressed. If parents are worried

about their children's emotional well-being or know of circumstances which may be affecting their behaviour, the child's Class Teacher or guardian needs to be told.

The individual who is being victimised as well as the parent/s or guardian/s involved need to be acknowledged and reassured that they are safe and can feel secure. That this is not a behaviour that should be imitated, and that the kindergarten does not tolerate this type of behaviour. Help will be given both within the educational setting and at home where possible. The perpetrators as well as their parents will be made aware that their behaviour is upsetting and should be changed. They need to be helped to learn different ways of behaving both within the educational setting and, if necessary, within their own homes.

## **Objectives of this Policy**

To ensure that all Trustees, Members, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff and Parents, as well as those interested in the kindergarten are made aware of the kindergarten's definition of bullying and what it is within an anthroposophical context.

To ensure that all Trustees, Members, Teaching and Non-Teaching Staff and Parents as well as those interested in the kindergarten understand the kindergarten's policy and procedures in relation to bullying.

To assure individuals and parents that they will be supported in any claims relating to bullying or similar behaviours, and know that the kindergarten does not tolerate this behaviour.

## **Possible Signs & Symptoms**

A child may indicate through signs and behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Parents, teachers and guardians should be aware of the following possible indications or signs and should investigate / respond as recommended within the policy:

- changes his/her usual routine
- is unwilling to go to kindergarten (school phobic)
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- cries him/herself to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in given tasks/projects
- comes home with clothes torn
- has possessions go 'missing'
- has unexplained cuts, bruises, scratches
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable

- is bullying other children or siblings
- considers imaginary revenge plans/retribution
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- wets bed / pants
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above

It is important to note that these signs and behaviour could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

## **Procedures**

Within the kindergarten community good relations are always fostered between the parents and the teachers. Indeed, given the nature and size of the kindergarten, we actively encourage parents or individuals who have issues to present these issues to their child's teacher or the kindergarten administrator. The issue is then assessed and appropriate action taken.

- The incident is reported to a member of staff.
- The incident is recorded by staff.
- Appropriate action is considered, agreed and actioned (see below) through consultations with parents, teachers, assistant teachers, kindergarten administrator, SENCO.
- A time or length of time which is appropriate for the situation to be resolved will be agreed.
- At any time within this plan, and if necessary, a home visit will be arranged for further discussions.

With regard to the child experiencing consistent negative behaviour (also known as the victim), we will:

- ensure the child feels safe and secure in kindergarten
- give physical and emotional support
- encourage the child to relay feelings / reactions
- carefully monitor and assess the child
- maintain frequent communication with the parents/guardian.

With regard to the child who has problems with consistent negative behaviour, also known as the perpetrator, we will:

- ensure the child feels safe and secure in kindergarten
- give physical and emotional support

- ensure the child is given reinforcement of desired behaviour through imitation of loving gestures and repetition
- ensure the child is kept close to a member of staff if appropriate
- carefully monitor and assess the child
- maintain frequent communication with the parents/guardian

In addition to the above we will also look at the following ways of helping the children resolve the situation:

- In the case of impulse reactions, such as pinching or hitting we would advise that the child be made subtly aware of limb engagement.
- We would emphasise the importance of reducing unnecessary nerve/sense stimulation (e.g. TV, media, etc.).
- We might suggest dietary inclusions or exclusions.
- We would actively encourage the parents/guardian not to show or reveal their own anxiety unnecessarily to the child. We believe that a child's future is profoundly influenced by the people around him/her and reactionary impulses on the part of the parent/guardian will find reflection within the child's psyche and imitative actions. It is therefore of paramount importance that the child is surrounded by activities and responses worthy of imitation. Intense emotional responses are inappropriate for the young child.
- We would give pedagogical stories to enhance understanding.

## **Outcomes**

The parents involved are kept informed of any decisions or changes both with regard to the behaviour in question and improvements or necessary consequences.

In all cases, except where special needs are determined and this is not possible in a normal sense, children will be reconciled and parents will be reconciled.

Subsequent to the incident/s having been investigated and dealt with, in each case, monitoring will ensure the consistent negative behaviour is not repeated.

In exceptional circumstances temporary and permanent exclusion will be considered.

## **Prevention**

The child's world within the Waldorf educational setting is one of love, peace and nurturing. The quiet, calm love held and created by the teachers nourishes the child and encourages a non-violent culture. The teacher is also on a path of self-education and inward striving, and stands there as a help to the child in overcoming the hindrances we all encounter in our self-development.

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