



## **KESTREL HOUSE SCHOOL**

### **Anti-bullying Policy**

Kestrel House School is an independent school which provides an appropriate, specialist education for children aged 5-16 who hold a Statement of Special Educational Needs for Autistic Spectrum Disorders and associated social and communication difficulties. This will include children and young people with moderate or severe learning difficulties.

This policy sets out Kestrel House School's procedures for dealing with bullying and pays regard to the Department for Education publication *Preventing and Tackling Bullying: advice for Head teachers, staff and governing bodies (2014)*. This policy should also be read in conjunction with the following Kestrel House School Policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Care and Control Policy
- E safety Policy
- Safeguarding and child protection policy
- Meeting the Needs of Individuals Policy

The school is committed to providing a safe environment for children and is compliant with national and local guidance and compatible with the School's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.

The nature of their disability means that children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs) may not have sufficient understanding or awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying. Similarly, children with ASDs who are the recipients of such behaviours may be unable to express or communicate their aversion to such behaviours or to tell adults. This means that all staff at Kestrel House School have a duty to not only be aware of such behaviours and of any child involved, but also to respond appropriately to instances of bullying behaviours. Kestrel House School can draw upon skilled and knowledgeable professionals, including psychologists, to help devise strategies to manage and reduce bullying behaviours and their effects.

#### **Defining Bullying Behaviours**

The DFE anti-bullying pack for schools suggests that the bullying behaviour which may occur in a school usually has three common features:

- It is deliberate, hurtful behaviour
- It is repeated, often over a period of time
- It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves

And that there are three main types of bullying behaviour

- Physical; hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- Verbal; name-calling, insulting, racist or discriminatory remarks attributed to gender or sexual orientation.
- Indirect; spreading nasty stories, excluding from groups, cyber bullying

### **The Behaviours of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and the Characteristics of Bullying Behaviours**

The children attending Kestrel House School have a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This means that some pupils are likely to have a limited ability to comprehend that they may be engaging in activities which have the characteristics of bullying behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is possible that a pupil may develop an obsession with another child which may cause distress or anxiety to the recipient and some pupils may also engage in bullying behaviours listed above. Such behaviour might include wanting to be near the “target” child or an interest in making physical contact with that child, such as touching a particular part of his or her body, or demonstrating potentially physically harmful behaviours such as kicking or pinching the skin. Staff have a duty to be vigilant and alert to these behaviours. For example, the child who is the target may show fear or anxiety when he sees the child who targets him. This information must be shared amongst all members of the class team, and also shared with other members of staff as soon as possible particularly with those on duty during playtimes and lunchtimes. As the DFE anti-bullying guidance notes, children with special educational needs and disabilities may not be able to articulate their experiences.

### **Strategies for managing Bullying Behaviours in Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders**

Staff need to be skilful in observing the outcomes of the behaviours described above. For example, some children with ASDs may seek adult attention and use a behaviour directed against another child as a way of achieving this attention. Children with ASDs are likely to be unaware that certain behaviours are socially unacceptable.

For many children with ASDs “any attention is good attention” and so inappropriate adult intervention could potentially reinforce the bullying behaviour. In these circumstances, the

strategy should be to break this cycle to eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour. This could involve adults deliberately diverting the child's attention away from one behaviour to a new activity or giving the child "time out" away from the classroom, playground or other physical setting. "Time out" can be an effective way of withdrawing adult attention. It is important that the child is helped to develop understanding that the reason for being given "time out" is his or her behaviour.

Communicating the reason for disapproval of the behaviour can for example be achieved by saying or singing, "kicking is sad!" Other strategies may include assigning a one-to-one adult to monitor the bullying child at playtimes and to manage "time out" in a quiet part of the playground.

The strategies being employed to overcome a child's potentially or actually bullying behaviour must be recorded in a Behaviour Management Plan / Working with me pack. This may involve consultation with the School's Assistant Psychologist and must include discussing the plan with the Headteacher and the child's parents or carers. The Behaviour Management Plan will be shared with the child's parents or carers. Strategies need to be carried out over a specific time span and their effectiveness reviewed. It is important that strategies are shared with parents and carers of the children involved so that there is a consistency of approach at school and at home.

It may be the case in exceptional circumstances that the child's bullying behaviour continues even though a variety of strategies have been employed. In such cases the school may request the child's LA to sanction a change of provision, or it may be necessary to consider sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion. It is also important to help the child with ASD who is the target of bullying behaviour, particularly as he or she may have difficulty communicating about their experiences. The child should be able to communicate in his or her preferred mode for example using augmentative communication or speech to an adult skilled in this preferred communication mode. For example social skills training may help him or her to become more assertive, to show less anxiety and say or sign "No!" There must also be a designated adult to whom the child can go to communicate about anxieties or fears, particularly if these concern bullying behaviours. The child needs to understand that he will always be "safe" if he does this. This adult will normally be a member of the child's class team. The key worker is responsible for sharing information with other members of the class team.

|   |
|---|
| <b>Bullying and the Kestrel House School Curriculum</b> |
|---|

In all work with children, staff emphasise the importance of developing social and emotional skills, including respect for the feelings of others. Where children have difficulties interacting appropriately with their peers or with adults, then staff aim to help them develop an awareness of why particular behaviours are valued socially and what is

inappropriate. The Kestrel House School Curriculum builds on this through activities which include PSHE, Circle Time, playtime, PE, Snack Time, Language and Communication sessions and group work to develop an ethos of cooperation and respect for everyone.

Staff are important role models for the children. The behaviour of adults towards each other and towards the children is a potentially highly effective tool for preventing and for decreasing bullying behaviours in children with autistic spectrum disorders.

**Policy amended January 2013**

**Policy reviewed January 2014, January 2015, January 2017**

**Next review January 2019**