



AUBURN HOUSE POLICY

BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATION

We would like Auburn House to be a place where everyone feels safe and respected. Peace and respect are core to the daily practice of our teachers and to the Montessori philosophy.

Auburn House does not tolerate any form of bullying. All members of the school are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment that promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all.

Contents of this Policy

This policy consists of two parts.

PART A

outlines information useful to children, parents and teaching staff:

- Introduction
- Definitions of terms and concepts
- Description of bullying
- Description of discrimination
- Reporting incidents of bullying/discrimination

PART B

contains information useful to teaching staff:

- Guidelines for staff on dealing with bullying/discrimination
- School based interventions for dealing with bullying/discrimination
- Disciplinary consequences of bullying/discrimination
- Education of staff with respect to bullying/discrimination

PART A

Introduction

Every Auburn House Child has the right to:

- feel safe (emotionally and physically)
- learn, work and play without fear of being hurt or humiliated
- feel belonging, acceptance and friendship
- ask for help in stopping hurtful behaviour and to keep asking for help until the hurtful behaviour has stopped
- learn to solve problems with others in a helpful way
- be treated politely and with respect by others.

For this reason, we do not tolerate bullying or discrimination in any form. The policy of the school is to prevent bullying and discrimination from taking place, to stop it if it does take place and to deal with incidents if they occur.

Definitions of terms and concepts

'Staff' is taken to mean all individuals employed by the school.

'Bullying' describes any abuse of power intended to hurt, injure, threaten or frighten another person, who is then intimidated and disempowered to the extent that s/he feels that s/he cannot do anything about it.

'Discrimination' refers to any act in which an individual is treated differently because of some personal characteristic. Acts of discrimination can be intentional or unintentional and may be carried out covertly or overtly. For the purpose of this policy, an incident is deemed to be an act of discrimination if it is perceived as such by the victim.

Description of bullying

There are various types of bullying behaviour, which need to be spelled out so that they are clearly recognisable. Central to any prevention of bullying is knowing where to draw the line between what is acceptable and what is not, especially in relation to behaviours such as horseplay, bantering or teasing. The following serve as examples of typical bullying behaviours:

Physical bullying

This could include pushing around, hitting, kicking, taking or damaging someone else's property; acting either one-on-one, or else as a group against an individual or a group.

Verbal bullying

This could include name-calling, insults, 'tuning', 'diss-ing' or taunts aimed at belittling or humiliating the victim, including homophobic allusions and constant teasing. Verbal bullying could also take the form of a threat. This also includes constantly 'picking on' someone.

Psychological Bullying

This could include rejection by a group or an individual, rumour-spreading, intimidation that is not physical. Psychological bullying could also take the form of constant threatening looks or aggressive posturing.

Cyber Bullying

This is the use of the internet and related technologies to harm other people in a deliberate, repeated and hostile manner.

Description of discrimination

Discrimination can take many forms. The following are typical examples:

- Name-calling
- Derogatory comments about a person
- Refusal to hold hands
- Refusal to be partners
- Refusal to work together
- Refusal to sit next to each other
- Dividing into racial groups
- Physical abuse
- Graffiti or chalking of slogans that are offensive to others on religious, racial, sexual orientation or gender grounds
- Wearing racist insignia
- Declining to participate or share for overt reasons pertaining to race, religion or perceived sexual orientation
- Abuse of personal property
- Offensive physical gestures or body language
- Stereotypical comments in discussion
- Disputes having racial, religious or homophobic overtones and which deteriorate into the use of offensive terminology
- Excluding other individuals from activities on the grounds of race, religion or sexual orientation
- Refusal to undertake a particular activity
- Articulating or repeating comments brought from home or the media
- Dismissal of another individual's viewpoint
- Unwillingness to listen to alternative views
- Aggressive manner towards ethnic or religious minority pupils in the school
- Telling jokes that are offensive to members of a particular race or religious group, women or individuals with disabilities or alternative sexual orientations
- Imitating accents
- Negative comments about individuals or groups pertaining to:
 - Appearance
 - Clothes
 - Food
 - Accent or dialect
 - Language
 - Status
 - Ability
 - Culture
 - Religion
 - Country of origin
 - Family
 - Sexual orientation.

Reporting incidents of bullying/discrimination

It is the responsibility of every member of the Auburn House community to report and respond to incidents of bullying and/or discrimination. All incidents dealt with by an adult, who is not a teacher of that child, must report the incident to the appropriate teacher. This must include all morning and afternoon care staff. It is especially important that children, staff and parents should act pro-actively in circumstances which might lead to bullying and/or discrimination. Staff should intervene immediately when they witness cases of bullying or discrimination and if the situation warrants it, refer the matter to the Deputy/Head. Confidential reporting (ie: reporting where the informer is permitted to remain anonymous) must be allowed, so that the Deputy/Head can approach the victim or the perpetrator and start bringing the behaviour into the open. Confidential reporting must also be allowed to the School Counsellor, who should then approach the Deputy/Head.

PART B

Guidelines for staff on dealing with bullying/discrimination

Research shows that many incidents of bullying and discrimination in schools take place in the presence of teachers. For this reason, teachers have a significant role to play in dealing with and helping to eradicate these types of anti-social behaviour. When dealing with incidents of discrimination/bullying it is useful to distinguish four levels of interventions based on the severity of the incident.

The following criteria are used to assess the severity of the incident:

1. Was the behaviour hurtful?
2. Was the behaviour intentional or deliberate?
3. Has the behaviour been persistent?
4. Has the behaviour continued in spite of warnings to the individual to stop?

LEVEL ONE

If the behaviour is both hurtful and deliberate it should be dealt with by the teacher who witnesses it or the Deputy/Head to whom it has been reported. In dealing with incidents at this level, the following principles should be followed:

- Acknowledge the need for intervention.
- Identify the incident, perpetrator and victim.
- Put a stop to it and deal with or challenge it immediately.
- Acknowledge that it has happened or is happening.
- Be specific as to what the incident is and is about.
- Make all present aware that it has happened and is being dealt with.
- Ensure that the perpetrator and witnesses realise that the incident is a form of bullying or discrimination.
- Explain why it has been stopped. Possible explanations could include: personal moral outrage; offensive to peers and others; socially unacceptable; inflammatory behaviour; detrimental to the school ethos and atmosphere; demeaning to

self-esteem of victim; reflects poorly on character, and/or self esteem of perpetrator; against school policy; against the law.

- Protect the victim's welfare and support him/her.
- Counsel the victim and the perpetrator at the earliest possible point.
- Talk through the incident in class, public, in small groups, in pairs, or with the individuals involved (where appropriate).
- Report the incident to Deputy/Head and record it in the child's file.
- Counselling of perpetrator to:
 - Establish reasons for the behaviour
 - Ascertain underlying attitudes
 - Determine possible influences which may be sustaining the attitudes manifested
 - Reiterate norms /accepted codes of acceptable behaviour
- Both the perpetrator and victim are struggling with similar developmental challenges and need support in handling their feelings about what is happening. They both need to be supported and encouraged to own their share in working to solve the problem.
- Children should be re-empowered by being encouraged to be assertive rather than have staff 'rescuing' them. Thus in addition to stopping the hurtful behaviour it is essential that we try to teach more adaptive behaviour skills to both the victim and the perpetrator.

Teachers have a responsibility to adopt the following specific strategies for dealing with incidents at this level:

- On witnessing or hearing incidents, intervene immediately.
- Stop everybody if the incident is related to whole class or is audible publicly. Should the incident be within the context of a smaller group, keep any response contained within that group.
- Stress gravity by calling for everybody's attention.
- Seek an opinion or response from the class.
- Support anger or indignation of the victim, thereby legitimising the natural anger or expression of feeling at the hurt or affront. Utilise the incident to demonstrate to the wider audience the unacceptability of such behaviour if the victim is confident and secure that it will help in the future.
- Do not isolate the victim or add additional burden.
- When circumstances permit personally question the victim and the perpetrator.
- Establish the truth of the incident if you weren't actually a witness. Report the incident to the Deputy/Head and outline what action you have taken.

LEVEL TWO

If the behaviour is hurtful, deliberate and persistent, a behavioural warning should be issued to the perpetrator, as outlined below:

- The Deputy/Head issues a written warning making it very clear that the behaviour is unacceptable. At this point, the victim has the right to remain anonymous.
- Parents should be informed.
- The perpetrator can choose to respond to the warning in one of three ways:

1. Stop the behaviour immediately.
 2. Ask for help to solve the problem and to tell his/her side of the story. This can be done either to the Deputy/ Head or the Counsellor.
 3. Continue with the unacceptable behaviour and then face the subsequent consequences.
- A copy of the written warning together with a record of the child's chosen response is kept on file.

LEVEL THREE

If the behaviour is hurtful, deliberate, persistent and continues after a written warning has been issued then the following procedure should be followed:

- The victim needs to make a statement to the Deputy/Head. This should preferably be a written statement.
- The Deputy/Head should interview the perpetrator, giving him/her an opportunity to tell their story. The perpetrator should be helped to identify the hurtful behaviours and substitute behaviours which are more helpful. Ideally, this agreement should be written down and signed as a contract between the perpetrator and the Deputy/Head.
- The parents of both parties are to be informed of what has happened and the action that has been taken.
- Documentation of this process, together with the statements should be kept on file.

LEVEL FOUR

This stage is reached when a behaviour warning has been issued, opportunities to modify behaviour have been provided through Mediation and the child deliberately chooses to disregard the terms of this contract and continue the harmful behaviour. In certain circumstances, severe cases of bullying, victimisation or discrimination (for example, incidents that involve physical beatings, severe humiliation of others or damage to property) may also warrant intervention at this level. If the situation reaches this level, the Deputy/Head should:

- Obtain statements from all parties involved (including witnesses).
- Inform the parents of both the victim(s) and perpetrator(s).

Disciplinary consequences of bullying/discrimination

Each case of bullying should be considered on its own, and consequences determined according to each case, and should reflect the scale of the bullying/discrimination.

These may include:

- Withdrawal of privileges, appropriate to the offence and the individual concerned, including participation in activities or any position of leadership.
- Suspension from school for varying lengths of time.
- Expulsion from school.

School-based interventions for dealing with bullying/discrimination

With respect to school-based interventions to address the issue of bullying and discrimination at Auburn House, we recognise:

- There are no 'quick-fix' solutions to the problem of bullying and discrimination. Interventions are time-consuming and change is slow. The School, however, commits itself to the implementation of this policy.
- Change is evolutionary. As such in order to change behaviour and create a school free of bullying and discrimination it is necessary to implement this policy, adapt it over time and make it part of the school's ethos.
- The whole school community needs to be involved in creating a bullying-free and discrimination-free school. As such, efforts should be made to involve the School's Executive Committee, staff, Counsellor, children and parents in the implementation of this policy.
- Education of pupils on the issues of bullying and discrimination should be part of the Life Skills syllabus.

In particular, the following will be covered:

Exercises designed to:	identify bullying behaviour
	explore what can be done about bullying
	explore reasons for bullying

Exercises that allow for self-identification of victims.

Age-appropriate explanation of this policy and its implications.

Teaching defender behaviour (including assertiveness training, standing up for victims, encouraging reporting of incidents.)

Surveys to measure the current level of bullying/discrimination.

Education of staff with respect to bullying/discrimination

Training of the staff should focus on:

- Explaining the content of this policy.
- Gaining consensus on what constitutes bullying/discrimination.
- Increasing staff insight into the process and psychodynamics of bullying, discrimination and victimisation.
- Clearly outlining the procedures to be followed in dealing with incidents of bullying/discrimination.
- Making it clear to staff what their responsibility is.
- Ensuring that staff understand the need for this policy to be applied consistently.