

Bullying is never acceptable in Bushes Primary School.

One of our aims for pupils at Bushes is –

‘To provide a happy, safe, stimulating, supportive and nurturing environment where children can meet their full potential as both learners and people, and can develop respect for themselves, others and their surroundings.’

Bullying prevents this from happening.

We aim to create an environment where bullying cannot thrive. We aim to ensure every response we take is reflective of our Vision and Values. This policy applies to all staff and pupils within Bushes as well as our families and partner agencies.

Vision and Values

Our Vision

“Blossom at Bushes”

We believe that all children are created equal and are owed the best we have to give. As a whole school community, we will work together tirelessly to develop and advance the unique set of skills and talents each of our pupils have and encourage every one of them to believe they can be successful and empower them to achieve amazing things.

Our Values are at the root of everything we do at Bushes:

- Build each other up through **KINDNESS** and **FRIENDSHIP**
- Uphold **HONESTY**
- Share **RESPECT**
- Have **RESILIENCE**
- Encourage **LEARNING** and **ACHIEVEMENT**
- Show **COMPASSION**

Children's Rights

Our commitment to Children's Rights underpins our approach to anti-bullying. This means that our pupils have, in line with the UNCRC, the right not to be discriminated against, the right to have decisions taken in their best interest, the right to be kept safe from harm and the right to be given a voice.

The safety and inclusion of our pupils, their Right to an Education and their Right to be Safe, is paramount. Bullying is a barrier to enjoying your rights.

What is bullying?

Defining bullying can be a source of conflict for parents and schools as well as for pupils. At Bushes our focus is on what we do in response to behaviour and impact first. If we can do this, then we will know if it is bullying or not.

The Scottish Government defines bullying as ***'face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in'*** (Respect for All: National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, Scottish Government 2024)

This behaviour can include:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened.
- Physical aggression.
- Having belongings taken.
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you.
- Things written about you in group chats.
- Being targeted because of who you are or are believed to be.

The Impact can include:

- Physical or emotional harm.
- Fear.
- Anxiety/worry.
- Not feeling that you can be yourself.
- Although the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions such as looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these.

Bullying is usually intentional but there are occasions where language and actions can still harm someone and cause serious upset, regardless of what another person 'meant'.

Online bullying

Online bullying is the same type of behaviour, but it takes place online, usually on social networking sites or in group chats. A person can be called names, threatened, or have rumours spread about them online and in group chat. Unkind and hurtful comments in group chats are just as serious as those made face to face.

It is the responsibility of parents and carers to teach their children how to behave online and how to safely use social media and devices. It is for parents and carers to set limits on screen time, what content they can access and to follow the expectations on use of mobile phones in schools.

What have the pupils told us?

Our pupils have told us that they know who to tell if they are worried about bullying, but also shared widely that they will not always tell that person when it is happening. They fear making it worse. They have shared some other reasons for this:

- They worry about an adult overreaction.
- They think that they might get into trouble.
- They feel they won't be believed.

Our pupils told us that sometimes they feel that if a pupil is rarely mean, they seem to get in a lot of trouble; they also told us that sometimes they feel that a pupil who is unkind quite a lot, they do not get into as much trouble.

As a school, we are mindful of this and will always give our pupils a voice. We explain that decisions and responses are always made with *their* best interest at heart – both considerations are a fundamental aspect of children's rights.

Our pupils told us that they would like to be able to deal with some things by themselves when it comes to friendships and unkind behaviour. Both parents and carers, and the School and ELC agree it is a shared responsibility to give our children the skills to be able to do this.

Fairness is very important to our pupils, and as part of our broader anti-bullying work and recognising this feedback, our staff will explore and develop a shared understanding of fairness and equity. This will help our pupils understand their own behaviour and the impact it can have on others.

Labelling

Our pupils are very supportive of the approach that we name the behaviour and not label the person. They believe we can change and learn from our mistakes and should be given the chance to.

Pupils also stated that they felt it could be unfair to a child labelled simply as the 'bully', as it can mean that all their behaviour might be seen as bullying. They felt some children can get away with unkind behaviour because no one labels them this way.

At Bushes, we will not label children as 'bullies'; we will always be clear that the behaviour is bullying, and that bullying is never okay at Bushes. We will help you learn from mistakes and develop the skills you need to manage relationships.

Anti-Bullying Guidance

Responding to Bullying

'Children who are bullied do not feel like themselves; they feel like they have something taken away from them. They feel they lose the ability to manage what is happening to them and worry a great deal about what might happen if they tell, if they speak up or if they ignore it.' (Brian Donnelly 2021 <https://orbistc.com/anti-bullying/>).

What you do about bullying is more important than how you define it.

If we respond to the behaviour and the impact, we will be able to discover if it was bullying. We do not try to figure out if it was bullying before responding. We act as soon as something happens.

Our staff will respond to any concerns or allegations of bullying by asking:

What was the behaviour?

- What age and stage are the individuals?
- Where they friends before the incident?
- What attitudes, prejudices, or other factors may have led to the behaviour?

What Impact did it have?

- Childs View
- Parents View
- Has pupil changed decision making after the incident?

What do I need to do about it?

- What does the pupil want to happen?
- Problem solving to support the child experiencing behaviour
- Learning and consequences for the child showing the behaviour

This is helpful as it breaks incidents and allegations down into a manageable solution focussed process. All staff in Bushes can respond to bullying and must always share this with the leadership Team for advice, support and guidance.

We separate behaviour and impact to help us explore what happened and what we need to do, then we bring these two parts together as part of our solution and response to incidents of bullying.

Looking at behaviour and impact as two distinct things, gives us a framework on how to respond to all incidents. This will tell us if we are dealing with unkind behaviour or bullying.

This approach will allow us to deal with each situation in a fair and even way.

- Unkind behaviour that makes someone feel worried, scared, left out, and unsure how to respond, and these feelings last, it is likely bullying.
- A hurtful or cheeky comment that makes me annoyed or a bit upset isn't bullying, it's unkind, mean behaviour. This is still unacceptable; we will still treat this seriously.
- Some unkind behaviour has little or no impact. This does not mean the behaviour is acceptable. Pupils will be accountable for behaviour and language regardless of the impact. When it has had a serious impact, our responses will reflect this.
- Every situation is unique, and our response will focus on both aspects. We will explore and challenge any unkind behaviour, and we will help people develop skills to manage and to respond to behaviour.
- Bullying is usually intentional but there are occasions where language and actions can still harm someone and cause serious upset. In cases such as this, an explanation as to why what they said or did was unacceptable should see the behaviour or language stop.

Some behaviours can be dealt with quickly and effectively by adults by focusing on what someone did and the impact it had. We will help our pupils understand that -

- They have options on how to respond.
- Everyone does not have to be friends.
- Learning how to manage friendships is a skill we all develop at school.
- Apologising means that your behaviour changes.
- Just because it is not bullying, it does not mean the language or behaviour is okay.

Bullying is more serious, and the affect can last longer than simply being upset. Bullying is both unkind, hurtful behaviour **and** a particular kind of lasting impact. Consequences for bullying will be appropriate to each situation and the pupils involved.

Guidance

How do we respond to children that are bullied?

It is important to gently ask the child what was the behaviour that made them feel this way. Sometimes the interpersonal nature of bullying makes it hard to focus on what someone did as well as how they made you feel.

Adults need to know what behaviour they will be challenging, so we can let others know it is wrong and why this is the case. This allows us to do this and then move onto dealing with the impact.

We know that bullying takes away a child's sense of being themselves and being able to act. Therefore, the most important step we can take for a bullied child is to help them regain this sense of agency, to give them back some control.

We help restore agency by asking, 'what would you like me to do? What do you think should happen?'. The asking of this immediately puts them in a position where their voice can be heard.

Explore 'what do you think might happen if we try this/that?' and invite the pupil to begin problem solving, this life skill will be essential for them. This way they can understand the outcome and what you'll do in relation to the behaviour but also what you have done to support them.

Our pupils have told us very clearly, this is how they like adults to respond. This makes them feel included and listened to, this is essential for dealing with bullying.

Our parents and carers value communication and we commit to working together to support our pupils affected by bullying.

How do we respond to children that are bullying?

Children and young people who bully need our support and guidance to make things better.

Learning to manage relationships, to deal with difficulties, and to learn about how other people can be affected by our actions, is an essential part of growing up.

We are committed to dealing with behaviour and impact, we never ignore bullying behaviour and there will always be natural consequences for this at Bushes.

Pupils who are bullying will be given help and support to:

- Identify the feelings that cause them to act this way.
- Develop alternative ways of responding to these feelings.
- Understand the impact of their behaviour on other people.
- Repair relationships.

Bullying behaviour can see friendships and relationships affected, families under pressure and other natural consequences such as parents or carers called to the school, increased levels of supervision, inclusion in events affected and restorative sessions put in place.

Pupils who bullying will be provided with clear expectations about behaviour. This may include taking steps to repair a relationship, and where appropriate, supporting them to make amends.

We will challenge prejudice and offer the opportunity to learn and change behaviour. Consideration will be given to any factors that may impact upon a pupil's wellbeing, including whether any additional support for learning is required.

Our parents and carers agreed that we share the responsibility to teach our pupils about behaviour and relationships. We will always frame behaviour around our values. Bullying is unkind and shows a lack of respect. Bullying will never be acceptable here.

Parents and Carers

Most of our parents and carers at Bushes feel that the School and ELC work in partnership with parents. Parents and carers told us that most of them feel listened to and that communication with the School and ELC is good, and they really value regular communication.

We will strive to maintain this, and we will ensure clear and consistent communication with parents and carers when there are concerns about bullying.

When talking to your child about bullying, focus on the behaviour and the impact. Fall-outs with friends and other pupils being mean, isn't always bullying, but it can still be very upsetting. We need to help our children develop skills and strategies to manage and navigate relationships. This is the case for children who have been unkind as well as children who experience unkind behaviour.

If you have any concerns about bullying, please talk to your child's teacher in the first instance, and give the school time to investigate your concerns.

Recording

In line with Renfrewshire Council guidance, all incidents assessed as bullying will be recorded on SEEMIS, our electronic management of information system. Staff can access the "Bullying Log" in SEEMIS through Management Bullying and Equalities. Each incident recorded should include the following details:

- Pupil information relating to those experiencing and displaying bullying behaviour.
- Details of alleged incident.
- Nature of incident including the characteristic of the type of behaviour.
- Procedures to monitor and review targets with dates as required.
- Progress of outcomes following review (within timescale set).

Parents/Carers of all pupils should be informed, and details recorded on SEEMIS Pastoral Notes. It is essential that Staff refer to the Pastoral Notes and the Bullying Log when recording new incidents to compare information and highlight patterns of behaviour.

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