

# LEITH ACADEMY



## Equalities and Anti-Bullying Policy

## **Leith Academy: Our Policy to ensure equality and to promote an anti-bullying ethos**

### **Leith Academy's Values and Beliefs**

All pupils and staff have the right to feel happy, safe and included. The school's values are: mutual respect and caring for others; individual needs and development; honesty and fairness in our actions and success in learning for all. In Leith Academy we strive to create a positive ethos and climate of respect and trust based on these shared values across the school community. Staff and pupils who feel happy and safe in school are more likely to be successful and confident learners & contribute effectively so they are able to reach their full potential.

We are committed to advancing equality of opportunity for all and we work actively towards eliminating all forms of bullying and discrimination as these are never acceptable. It is an abuse of power and relationships and at Leith Academy we actively foster good relations between diverse groups and people, having around 35 different nationalities at the school.

We recognise that certain individuals and groups in society experience disadvantage, prejudice or discrimination on account of their age, disability, ethnicity, gender, gender change, looked-after status, pregnancy or maternity, religion or belief, sexual orientation and socio-economic status or any combination of these.

This policy is written for Leith Academy but embraces the wider City of Edinburgh Council's "*Education, Diversity, Anti-bullying and Equality Policy and Procedures 2011-2015*"

### **Definitions**

#### **Equalities**

We use the legal definition of 'equalities' which gives protection to people who have specific characteristics – for example being gay, lesbian or bisexual or from a minority ethnic group or disabled or old. It also includes boys and girls and anyone undergoing gender change, as well as those of particular faith groups. The Equality Act 2010 denies these as 'protected groups'. Looked after children, young carers and children and young people from poor backgrounds are also included as equalities groups.

## **Bullying**

Bullying is an abuse of power that is defined by its effects. People who are bullied are upset by something someone else has said or done to them or about them. They are likely to fear that this will happen again and feel powerless to stop it. Bullying is a breach of children's rights under several articles from the Convention of the Rights of the Child. **Cyber-bullying** is bullying behaviour that takes place via mobile phone or over the internet through emails, texts or social network websites.

### **Bullying behaviour takes many forms, for example:**

- racist abuse
- sexist abuse
- harassment
- homophobic abuse
- sectarianism
- sending abusive emails, text messages or making abusive comments on social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Bebo or MSN)
- assault
- forcing people to do things against their will e.g. stealing
- damaging or stealing property
- malicious notes or gossip
- teasing, cold shouldering/ social isolation and being 'picked on'
- personal remarks about body image/appearance, disabilities, learning needs, family or social background
- any other behaviour which makes the victim or other people around them feel frightened, unhappy or isolated

### **Why do some pupils become involved in bullying type behaviour?**

**The reasons why pupils may get involved in bullying-type behaviour are many. Some examples include:**

- to impress or establish leadership amongst a peer group
- to create a group identity by attacking an outsider
- pressure to conform – punishing non-conformity
- lack of social skills
- jealousy
- have been bullied themselves
- family and/or social problems

**Those who carry out bullying actions or are at the receiving end may display certain behaviours, for example:**

- deterioration of work
- faked illness
- erratic attendance
- low self esteem

- loss or lack of self respect
- isolation
- desire to remain with adults
- uncharacteristic behaviour or acting out to impress, e.g. showing off or aggressive behaviour

### **The Prevention of Bullying and discrimination:**

The Head Teacher is responsible for introducing and implementing this policy at Leith Academy. However all staff, pupils and parents have an active part to play in the development and maintenance of the policy and in its success.

We are proactive at Leith Academy and there are many things that we do within the school to promote positive relationships. Bullying as a topic is covered in PSE and PD in all year groups to ensure pupils are familiar with the school policy. We teach them about rights and responsibilities and treating others with respect.

We begin our work during the primary - secondary transition. By the time pupils begin their education here they are aware of what we expect of them in terms of respect and how we treat one another.

During the life of every pupil at Leith Academy the stress on mutual respect, trust, equality, and fostering positive relationships is ongoing:

- SEEMIS - MERIT/DEMERIT system which allows staff to reward good behaviour and penalises inappropriate behaviour by pupils. The system makes it very clear about expected standards of behaviour in the school, and in the wider community.
- There are various avenues within the school curriculum for the pupils to focus on and discuss issues connected to relationships and bullying. For example, within Personal and Social Education (PSE) not only is the issue of bullying addressed but also how to equip pupils with strategies and skills to avoid getting involved in bullying behaviour, and, what to do if they receive bullying. Further, with the implementation of the Curriculum for Excellence we at Leith Academy will be working towards ensuring our curriculum reflects and values the diversity of the school and the local community. We have already done much work in this area in our approaches to the celebration of the cultural diversity at the school.

- Themed assemblies and events for pupils, with input from many different agencies, to target specific issues. For example, a focus on cyber bullying by community police officers.
- Pupil Council: Leith Academy has representatives from each House on the Pupil Council (Anderson, Barton, Cowan and Port) and this forum is used by pupils to raise concerns and suggest solutions.
- We have a staff team who monitor the school and playground area daily at breaks and lunchtimes. If they come across any issues then these are passed immediately to the House Heads or Senior Management Team.
- The House Heads can put pupils in touch with a wide variety of organisations and agencies that can offer support, advice and counselling. We have an S6 Buddy system within the school that gives support and guidance to pupils by our senior pupils. Further, at Leith Academy we strive to offer group work sessions that can aid pupils with confidence building and coping strategies.
- We give members of staff opportunities to take part in anti-bullying training that is relevant and up to date.
- Advice and guidance for all pupils is given in their school planners.

### **What we do when bullying occurs:**

A child may not be engaging consciously in bullying behaviour, but its impact is still felt and this is taken seriously. The level of awareness of a child who is bullying is a significant factor in how it is dealt with. Pupils who experience bullying or discrimination will be listened to and supported. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour or discrimination will be treated fairly and consistently using a range of measures.

### **Dealing with Bullying:**

Pupils are expected to:

- Report all incidents of bullying/inequality and suspected incidents that other pupils may be afraid to report. They should do this in the first instance to their classroom teacher or their House Head or House DHT
- Support each other and to seek help to insure that everyone feels safe, and nobody feels excluded or afraid in school

Teachers are expected to:

- To treat all allegations seriously and to investigate any allegation of bullying/inequality and report this to the House Head or SMT
- The Equalities officer for the school keeps a record of these incidents, which are collated and reported to the authority at the end of each year

Parents can help by:

- Supporting our anti-bullying/equalities procedures
- Encouraging their children to be positive members of the school community
- Discussing with their child's House Head any concerns that their child may be experiencing
- Helping to establish an anti-bullying culture outside of school
- Speaking to the HT if their concerns are serious and ongoing
  
- We appreciate that some pupils may find it difficult to report bullying issues but pupils are encouraged to speak out if they feel that they or their friends are at the receiving end of this type of behaviour. If pupils witness it they must be encouraged to report it as this gives a clear message about the positive role bystanders can have in terms of reducing the bullying which takes place as there is an ethos of zero tolerance. Parents/carers are also encouraged to contact the House Head or House DHT if their son/daughter discusses any concerns with them.
  
- We ask that pupils keep copies of any threatening or abusive notes or emails, and don't delete any abusive text messages. This is evidence.
  
- Incidents of bullying may happen out of school grounds and out of school hours but their impact can easily have an impact on pupils in school and this means it becomes an issue for staff to deal with.
  
- In relation to the latter point, we urge parents & guardians to contact the police if they feel an incident out of school or at the weekend merits legal attention. Parents are encouraged to contact their daughter or sons's House Head if they have concerns or have information to pass on about out of school incidents. This allows Leith Academy staff to be better prepared and thus hopefully pre-empt possible situations.

**What happens if a bullying incident is brought to the attention of staff?**

- In a class a pupil may bring an incident to the teacher's attention or the teacher witnesses an incident. In general, low level incidents can usually be dealt with in the classroom setting. If a situation is more serious, e.g. racism or assault then the pupil will be sent to the member of the Senior Management Team (SMT) who is on duty. The Duty

Head, House Head or House DHT will then further investigate and gather evidence. The outcome of this will result in a variety of possible supports and sanctions being implemented (these will be explained below) and the input of the SMT/HH. Further, if the incident is found to be one of bullying then it will be recorded, by the staff involved, on a CEC Recording Form in line with their Equality policy, and passed to the DHT who has responsibility for Inclusion/Equalities.

An allegation of bullying is serious and to ensure we do our job properly we have to gather evidence, primarily in the form of speaking to witnesses. With this evidence we can then take actions to deal with the pupils concerned and keep staff and parents & guardians informed.

A pupil who has been on the receiving end of bullying behaviour needs support. There are a number of strategies we use at Leith Academy:

- staff keep a 'sympathetic eye' on the pupil
- one-to-one meeting(s) with their House Head or House DHT or with a counselling service
- use peer support strategies and if the pupil wants it we can arrange a meeting with the pupil(s) who carried out the bullying behaviour (restorative practice)
- involvement of parent/guardian - this includes keeping them informed about what the school is doing to support their child but also what actions Leith Academy is taking with the pupil(s) who committed the bullying offence and the involvement of their parents in this process
- a referral for further assessment / support via Social Work
- a pupil who has carried out bullying behaviour *ALSO* needs support. This may raise questions of 'why' as they will be seen as the pupil in the 'wrong'. Support is not the school being soft on bullying; it is in fact the common sense approach to get a pupil to see how their behaviour was unacceptable and to modify it for the better. It has to be stressed that those who commit bullying offences have often been on the receiving end of these. If a pupil has misbehaved sanctions will apply, e.g. assault can lead to exclusion, but this is only part of the process.

#### **Our work with pupils who bully others:**

- We interview the pupil (or pupils) involved in bullying separately
- We listen to their version of events and talk to any witnesses
- We reinforce the message that bullying is not acceptable, and that we expect it to stop
- We seek a commitment to this end
- We affirm that it is right for pupils to let us know they are being bullied

- We consider sanctions under our school's Behaviour/discipline policy
- We advise those involved that the situation will continue to be monitored to check that it has not started up again
- We contact the parents of all parties to make sure they know about the bullying – this happens at an early stage
- We offer support to those who have been carrying out the bullying to ascertain what type of support they need to ensure that it does stop

### **Bullying outside the school premises**

We know that bullying can occur outside the school gates, in the evenings and at weekends. It can be via mobile phones, social network sites /chat rooms. The bullying may be done by pupils (and sometimes parents) from our own school, by pupils from other schools or by people who are not at school at all. Where a pupil or parent tells us of bullying off the school premises we will:

- Talk to the pupils about how to avoid or handle bullying outside of school
- Talk to the Head Teacher of the other school whose pupils are allegedly bullying
- Consider additional support, police involvement and Child Protection procedures

### **Planning**

We examine and use all available information to ensure that the promotion of equality and anti-bullying issues are contained within our development plans.

### **Equality Impact Analysis**

When reviewing or creating any new policies or services within our school, we give due regard to all protected groups and consider whether any individual or group might be affected. The DHT Pupil Support will maintain a record of all proven incidents of bullying and of the action taken as per CEC guidelines. This information can be used to inform pupils, staff and parents/guardians about trends of bullying and thus allow the school to be better informed and help plan future strategies. The DHT PS will also review the policy every four years and update it accordingly (due in 2016).



## **Involvement**

We actively encourage all our young people to participate in school and extra curricular activities and we take positive action to make sure that the diverse school population is represented in activities, surveys and our student council.

## **Gathering and Monitoring information**

We are committed to developing measures for monitoring the achievements of our looked after and disabled pupils.

We examine our annual record of incidents and survey information.

We use information from surveys of pupils' views and opinions.

We take active steps to ensure all data held on pupils' disabilities, ethnicity, caring and looked-after status is accurate and regularly reviewed.

## **Resources**

Here are some useful resources for young people, parents and staff:

[www.respectme.org.uk](http://www.respectme.org.uk)

<http://www.kidscape.org.uk/parents/mychildisabully.html>

[http://www.respectme.org.uk/cyberbullying\\_intro\\_txt.html](http://www.respectme.org.uk/cyberbullying_intro_txt.html)

[www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/home.htm](http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/home.htm)

<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/supportinglearners/positivelearningenvironments/inclusionandequality/challengingsectarianism/resources/index.asp>

ASL policy located on the school server

Child Protection Guidelines - located on the school server in the staff information section