# Golden Hill Steiner School

# Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy

| Ratified By: Board | May 2018 |
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**Golden Hill Steiner School Bullying Prevention and Intervention Policy and Guidelines**

**Overview**

Golden Hill Steiner School works with the indications given by Rudolf Steiner aiming to create a safe and caring environment which promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all. Bullying behaviour in any form does not belong in such an environment where positive, assertive communication is promoted, and difference is valued.

Golden Hill Steiner School recognises its duty to students to provide a safe and positive learning environment where individual differences and diversity within the school is respected and accepted.

No student, employee, parent, caregiver or community member should experience bullying within the learning or working environments of Golden Hill Steiner School.   In any bullying incident there are likely to be three parties involved: the bully, the person being bullied, and bystanders.

The policy applies to all student bullying behaviour, including cyber bullying that occurs in and off school premises and outside of school hours where there is a clear and close relationship between the school and the conduct of the student.

**Policy**

**DEFINITION : What is bullying?**

1. "Bullying is a behaviour which can be defined as the repeated attack, physical, psychological, social or verbal, which is formally or situationally defined, on those who are powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or gratification." Besag (1989)

2. Bullying involves a desire to hurt + hurtful action + a power imbalance + an unjust use of power + (typically) repetition + evident enjoyment by the aggressor and generally a sense of being oppressed on the part of the victim.  Ken Rigby (2002)

3. What is Bullying?

- Repeated and unjustifiable behaviour
- Intended to cause fear, distress and/or harm
- Physical, verbal, psychological, relational
- By a more powerful individual or group
- Against a less powerful individual unable to effectively resist

Source:  Child Health Promotion Research Centre – ECU (2005)

All three definitions of bullying contain the same three main parameters of bullying.  These are:

- Repetitive behaviour – prolonged over time;
- Involves an imbalance of power; and
- May be verbal, physical, emotional or psychological

**PRINCIPLES**

• Bullying is not tolerated at Golden Hill Steiner School.

• If bullying behaviour is occurring, staff take responsibility to meet with families to gain information. The school then investigates.

• Once it is ascertained that bullying behaviour is occurring teachers meet with the children and parents of children involved.

• Bullying will be managed through a 'whole of school community' approach involving students, staff and parents/carers;

• Bullying prevention strategies will be implemented within the school on a continuous basis with a focus on teaching age appropriate skills and strategies to empower staff, students and parents/carers to recognise bullying and respond appropriately. At Golden Hill Steiner School we implement the SA Keeping Safe: Protective Behaviours Curriculum and The Virtues Project.

• Bullying response strategies will be tailored to the circumstances of each incident;

• Staff establish positive role models emphasising our no-bullying culture.

Bullying can take many forms including:

**Physical bullying** which involves physical actions such as hitting, pushing, obstructing or being used to hurt or intimidate someone. Damaging, stealing or hiding personal belongings is also a form of physical bullying.

**Psychological bullying** is when words or actions are used to cause psychological harm. Examples of psychological bullying include name calling, teasing or making fun of someone because of their actions, appearance, physical characteristics, gender or cultural background.

**Indirect bullying** is when deliberate acts of exclusion or spreading of untrue stories are used to hurt or intimidate someone.

**Cyber bullying** is the ongoing abuse of power to threaten or harm another person using technology. Cyber bullying can occur in chat rooms, on social networking sites, through emails or on mobile phones.

Other forms of conflict including teasing and fighting amongst peers, whilst being potentially distressing for students, are not necessarily bullying.  These include:

**Mutual Conflict Situations:** which arise where there is disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Mutual conflict situations need to be closely monitored as they may evolve into a bullying situation; or

**One Off Acts:** (of aggression or meanness) including single incidents of loss of temper, shouting or swearing do not normally constitute bullying.

They may represent the normal dynamics of a particular friendship and children need to have the skills to deal with these situations. Conflict between students of roughly equal physical strength and/or social status may require implementation of the school's Student Code of Behaviour and Discipline policy.

Major behaviour changes in a student may be indicative of bullying. Such behavioural changes may include:

• Crying at night and having nightmares;

• Refusing to talk when asked "What's wrong?";

• Having unexplained bruises, cuts or scratches;

• An unwillingness or refusal to go to school;

• Feeling ill in the mornings;

• A decline in quality of school work;

• Becoming withdrawn and lacking confidence;

• Beginning to bully siblings; and

• Acting unreasonably.

Parents/carers are encouraged to recognise signs of bullying and notify the school through a trusted staff member immediately (such as a class teacher), if they suspect their child is a victim of bullying.

**Bullying Prevention Strategies**

Golden Hill Steiner School recognises that the implementation of whole school prevention strategies is the most effective way of eliminating, or at least minimising incidents of bullying within our community.

 The following initiatives form part of our overall bullying prevention strategy and our strategy to create a 'no bullying' culture within the school:

• A structured curriculum and peer group support system, that provides age appropriate information and skills relating to bullying (including cyber bullying) and bullying prevention, to students over the course of the academic year;

• Education, training and professional development of staff in bullying prevention and response strategies;

• Regular provision of information to parents/carers, to raise awareness of bullying as a school community issue to equip them to recognise signs of bullying, as well as to provide

them with clear paths for raising any concerns they may have relating to bullying directly with the school;

• Promotion of a supportive environment that encourages the development of positive relationships and communication between staff, students and parents/carers;

• Promotion of responsible bystander behaviour amongst students, staff and parents/carers;

• Reporting of incidents of alleged bullying by students, bystanders, parents/carers and staff are encouraged, and made easy through the establishment of multiple reporting channels (as specified below);

• Regular risk assessments of bullying within the school are undertaken by surveying students to identify bullying issues that may ordinarily go unnoticed by staff;

• Records of reported bullying incidents are maintained and analysed, in order to identify persistent bullies and/or victims and to implement targeted prevention strategies where appropriate;

**Reporting Bullying**

Students and their parents/carers are sometimes reluctant to pursue bullying incidents, for fear that it will only make matters worse.

A key part of Golden Hill Steiner School's bullying prevention and intervention strategy is to encourage reporting of bullying incidents as well providing assurance to students who experience bullying (and parents/carers) that:

• Bullying is not tolerated within the school;

• Their concerns will be taken seriously; and

• The school has a clear strategy for dealing with bullying issues.

Bullying incidents can be advised to the school verbally (or in writing) through any of the following avenues:

• Informing a trusted teacher;

• Informing the Principal

Bullying behaviours vary enormously in their extent and intent and, as a consequence, each incident needs to be dealt with on its facts.

 In all circumstances the school:

• Takes bullying incidents seriously;

• Provides assurance to the victim that they are not at fault and their confidentiality will be respected;

• Takes time to properly investigate the facts including discussing the incident with the victim, the bully and any bystanders;

• Takes time to understand any concerns of individuals involved;

• Works with parents/caregivers to communicate relevant information shared by the bully or victim.

• Maintains records of reported bullying incidents; and

• Will escalate its response when dealing with persistent bullies and/or severe incidents.

Actions that may be taken when responding to bullying include:

• Notification of/Consultation with parents/carers;

• Offering counselling to persistent bullies/victims;

• Implementing effective follow up strategies; and

• Disciplinary action at the Principal's discretion including suspension and expulsion of persistent bullies, or in cases of severe incidents.


All Staff are responsible to:

• Model appropriate behaviour at all times;

• Deal with all reported and observed incidents of bullying in accordance with this policy;

• Ensure that any incident of bullying that they observe or is reported to them, is recorded appropriately;

• Be vigilant in monitoring students that have been identified as either persistent bullies or victims; and

• Acknowledge the right of parents/carers to speak with school authorities if they believe their child is being bullied

(See Appendix A: Internal Guidelines for Staff)


## APPENDIX A: INTERNAL GUIDELINES FOR STAFF

Golden Hill Steiner School explicitly forbids the use of any form of child abuse, corporal punishment or other degrading punishment.

**Guidelines for teachers investigating a bullying incident.**

Interviews must be conducted with at least one teacher and another staff member and ensure Procedural Fairness is followed.

Steps for Procedural Fairness: During the interview –

- Outline the alleged behaviour.
- Allow the student to respond.
- Consider the response.
- Indicate the school's view and likely action to the student and parents/guardians.
- Consider any further comment or appeal particularly in relation to suspension, expulsion or exclusion.
- Make a final decision.

**Stage 1: Interview**

Interviews with pupils with bullying behaviour

The teacher should be calm, empathic, never angry or indignant. The teacher needs to be ever attentive to what each student is saying or suggesting by non verbal messages. Throughout the interview there must be continued acceptance and respect shown for the student as a person.

Each member of the group suspected of being involved in the bullying of a fellow pupil, is interviewed alone. Normally the interviewer will take them from the classroom to a comfortable room where they will not be interrupted.

If the pupil is to be interviewed by someone other than his/her class teacher, then the class teacher will need first to be informed. It is customary to begin with the group leader (if known) and to see each student in turn.

Interviews should clearly be non-confrontational and non-adversarial. There should be a clear invitation for the student to talk.

Sometimes the bully will remain silent, uncommunicative; in which case a suggestion may be made that he or she might not like to talk today and can go back to class. This may motivate them to speak.

In some cases, the victim may be blamed (perhaps with some justice) and accused of provoking the negative treatment. Whatever is said by the bully, it is important not to get into any argument, to interrogate or to blame. The teacher's role at this stage is to emphasize the concern that is felt for the person who is being hurt.

Normally, there will be some reciprocated concern expressed by the bully and some acknowledgment of involvement in the situation either directly or indirectly. As soon as this happens, the interviewer turns to the question of what can be done to help the victim.

Once a suggestion has been made that is at all constructive and realistic, the interviewer acknowledges and comments favourably. Sometimes it is left to the teacher to make a suggestion that the student will find acceptable.

When each group member, one after another, has expressed concern and indicated steps that he or she will take to help the victim, each has begun to act as a responsible individual.

The meeting closes with an agreement that they will meet again at a designated time to review progress.

**Stage 2: Meeting with the victim**

After speaking with each pupil who is suspected of bullying, the victim may now be interviewed. The interview can start with an open-ended question: "How are things going?" The victim will quickly recognise the purpose of the meeting and is generally prepared to discuss the circumstances of the bullying.

In listening to the victim, the teacher will need to decide whether the victim is a classical, passive, nonprovocative victim, or alternatively has played some role in provoking the bullying. Explore ways as to how matters can be improved.

The matter needs to be treated as a problem involving some responsibility on the part of the victim. Generally, the victim feels grateful for having been able to talk to someone sympathetic and supportive and may be prepared to accept some responsibility for developing better relations.

**Stage 3: Preparation for a joint meeting with the victim and the group**

First it is necessary to briefly see individuals again, to check on progress and motivate them further. If all goes well, plans can be made for a meeting between the group of bullies and the victim.  There may sometimes be repeated meetings with an individual student and/or the entire group without the victim being present.  At these meetings the teacher may note the progress that has been made.

At some point it will become evident (ideally at the suggestion of a group member) that the victim will be welcome at the group meeting.  It is important that the group and the victim are adequately prepared for this event.  It may be agreed that each member of the group will make a positive and sincere comment about the victim with him/her present.  Next, the victim must be contacted and assured that s/he will be welcome and that indeed positive things will be said about him or her.

**Stage 4: Group meeting**

If the group members have been well prepared the teacher can sometimes act primarily as a facilitator, enabling pupils to indicate their goodwill and acceptance of the victim.  For this to be done publicly by group members will greatly strengthen any individual commitments that have been made.  But in cases in which victims have been seen as provocative, a different scenario can be expected.

The group members will then require some assurance regarding a change in the behaviour of the victim.  The teacher seeks from both side's suggestions and proposals that are acceptable to the other.  The meeting may then conclude with an agreement as to how the victim, as well as the bullies, will behave in future.

 NOTE:  If bullying behaviour has reached Level 3 in Discipline Policy, a "Behaviour Plan" form may be filled in, see Student Code of Conduct and Discipline Procedure.

**Possible ways of providing practical support for victimised children:**

A Child who is frequently victimised by others can be helped in different contexts and each has advantages and disadvantages.

What kind of support is needed?

It may not be immediately evident whether the problem is due to a lack of appropriate assertiveness skills in a child's behavioural repertoire or due to a pervading state of anxiety or poor self-esteem that prevents a child from using the skills s/he might actually possess. Age and maturity may also be a factor.

To some extent helping non-assertive children to help themselves more effectively by learning more positive ways of responding to teasing and harassment can be a highly effective anti-bullying measure.

Support can be offered in two ways; moral or psychological.  This is provided when we listen sympathetically to a child's problems.  We have seen that this can have an important effect of acting, at least partially, as a buffer between the stress of victimisation and consequent health problems.

 The second kind is more active.  It may include giving moral support but also seeking to help the victimised child to acquire new skills (or practice old ones that have fallen into disuse) that could prevent the child from being bullied.  Vulnerable children can learn better ways to protect themselves.