

# Anti-Bullying Policy

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Chapter in OU Operations Manual	9
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## **9 Anti-Bullying Policy**

### **9.1 Aims**

9.1.1 The ultimate aims of Ballet West's anti-bullying policy are to:

- Prevent bullying of any sort
- Make it clear to all students and staff that bullying is always unacceptable
- Ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied
- Report bullying behaviour to appropriate disciplinary bodies

9.1.2 The seriousness of bullying cannot be emphasised enough. Bullying is among the top concerns that parents have about their children's safety and well-being. Bullying is also a top concern of children and young people themselves. It can make the lives of its victims a misery: it undermines their confidence and self-esteem, and destroys their sense of security.

9.1.3 Bullying can have a life-long negative impact on some young people's lives. At worst, bullying has been a factor in student suicide. Bullying is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated. All members of the Ballet West community, including Governors, teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers, students, parents guardians and carers should have an understanding of what bullying is and be familiar with the School policy on bullying; and all have a responsibility to help create an atmosphere in which students can report any incident of bullying knowing that these reports will always be taken seriously.

9.1.4 This policy is applicable to all students at Ballet West, whether they attend full-time training or outreach classes. The School acknowledges that bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. However, the School also recognises that the consequences of being allowed to 'get away with it' can be detrimental to them as well as to their victim. All students deserve the opportunity to be helped to understand what acceptable behaviour is. Students who are being bullied will be supported, and students who may bully others will also be given suitable help and guidance.

### **9.2 Definition**

9.2.1 Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, sexual orientation, homophobia, special educational needs or disabilities, appearance or health conditions or home conditions.

9.2.2 It might be motivated by actual differences between people, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously the School's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and Schools have to make their own judgments about each specific case.

9.2.3 Bullying can take place between students, between students and staff, or between staff; by individuals or groups; face-to-face, indirectly or using a range of cyber-bullying methods.

#### 9.2.4 Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Physical (including sexual) assault, for example, hitting, kicking, spitting, removing belongings, damaging property
- Verbal abuse, by name-calling, teasing, 'banter', insulting, writing notes or making offensive remarks
- Cyber-bullying, which is defined as the use of ICT by an individual or group to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour intended to harm others. Examples include using social websites (such as Facebook or Twitter), mobile phones, text messaging, photographs, video and e-mail
- Indirect emotional tormenting by excluding from social groups or spreading malicious rumours
- Initiation ceremonies intended to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation.

9.2.5 Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidatory, but is often hidden and subtle.

### 9.3 Prevention

9.3.1 The best way to stamp out bullying is for people to be aware of the issues involved, to be involved in prevention and to be clear in their own minds what action to take should cases arise. In the procedures that follow, the word 'bullying' is used to cover all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

9.3.2 The most effective way to combat bullying is by creating a community based on respect, with an ethos celebrating success and promoting good behaviour. Awareness and discussion of questions to do with bullying are also vital to prevention. The School will take the following approaches:

- Staff and student awareness will be raised through training, taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at the times and places where it is most likely to occur.
- The key points from this policy will be prominently displayed on School notice boards
- Anti-bullying will be discussed during induction sessions to all years and reinforced in other areas of the curriculum as the opportunities present themselves.
- Student surveys will be used to facilitate an understanding of the level and type of bullying that students might have experienced
- The Ballet West staff will regularly review the record of bullying offences to identify patterns and check that the policy is effective.

### 9.4 If a student is the victim

9.4.1 If they feel able to, the bullied student should confront the bully by verbally making him/her aware that the bullied student thinks that what she/he is doing is wrong. The bullied student should share their feelings with someone else. If possible they should talk to any member of Staff with whom they feel comfortable. Posters detailing those to whom students might speak will be displayed throughout the School. If the bullied

student would rather not go straight to a member of staff, they should talk to friends, older students, or any trusted adult; they may well be able to advise on an appropriate course of action or will be able to involve other people who can.

- 9.4.2 Any student has the right to inform an outside agency of their concerns. Contact details for these are given at the end of this policy.

## **9.5 If a student witnesses bullying behaviour**

- 9.5.1 They should support the victim by offering friendship and making it clear that in their opinion what is happening to them is wrong. They should encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully themselves. They should accompany the victim to see a trusted adult, or suggest that they see the Principal or another member of staff, on their behalf.

## **9.6 If a member of staff witnesses an incident of bullying or it is reported to them**

- 9.6.1 They must reassure and support the students involved; advise them that you are required to pass details on to the relevant member of the staff team; and ask them to write down their allegation.
- 9.6.2 The same procedures must be followed as for a Child Protection case; the member of staff must:
- Choose a place to talk where the talk will not be interrupted, but also where the member of staff is safe from allegation.
  - Listen carefully and patiently to the student, no matter how difficult the member of staff finds what they are saying.
  - Show the student they believe in him/her and takes his/her disclosure seriously.
  - Stay calm and reassuring, and maintain neutral body language.
  - Not promise to keep the conversation secret, no matter how insistent the student may be. The staff member must explain that they are ready to listen but that when they have heard the account there may be parts that they have to tell somebody else in order to get the help required.
  - Not press for information, cross-examine or lead the student, as well-intentioned questions could prejudice further investigations. It is particularly important not to use leading questions or to put words into the student's mouth. If the member of staff needs to respond verbally, they should feed back to the student what they have said.
  - Ensure the students' immediate safety.
  - Make careful notes immediately after the conversation, giving an accurate and full account of what was said. These notes should include all relevant information regarding the setting and circumstances of the communication, including the time and the persons present.
  - Inform the Principal immediately of the disclosure, allegations or suspicion, give them a copy of the written notes and ensure that they are aware of any immediate medical needs. They will coordinate an immediate investigation into the circumstances of the complaint.
  - Take no further action, including discussing their suspicions with the parent or

anyone else involved in the care of the child, until the decision has been taken how to proceed.

## **9.7 Breach of policy**

- 9.7.1 Staff - Any breach of this policy may result in disciplinary action by the board of trustees.
- 9.7.2 Students - Any breach of this policy will be considered as misconduct and may result in disciplinary action under the Student Disciplinary Policy and Procedures.

## **9.8 Criminal Law**

- 9.8.1 Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour - or communications - could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.
- 9.8.2 If staff members feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communication Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

## **9.9 Advice**

If a student, parent or member of staff is unsure about a situation or events, several organisations will speak in confidence to advise what would be the best thing to do:

- NSPCC: 0808 800 5000
- Childline: 0800 1111
- Kidscape: A charity established to prevent bullying and promote child protection. Advice for young people, professionals and parents about different types of bullying and how to tackle it. They also offer specialist training and support for School staff, and assertiveness training for young people. 08451 295
- The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA): Founded in 2002 by NSPCC and National Children's Bureau, the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) brings together over 100 organisations into one network to develop and share good practice across the whole range of bullying issues.
- Beatbullying: A bullying prevention charity with an emphasis on working directly with children and young people. In addition to lesson plans and resources for parents, Beatbullying have developed the Cybermentors peer support programme for young people affected by cyberbullying.