

Anti – Bullying Policy

Definition

Bullying is defined as deliberate hurtful behaviour by an adult or other child. It may result in pain or distress to the victim. It could include emotional, physical, racist, verbal, sexual or online / cyber bullying. Bullying is defined as in the view of the victim. If the victim feels that s/he is being bullied then that is a fact even if others feel that this is not the case. Other children may feel that they are teasing the child, but if the child perceives their actions as bullying, then it must be treated as such.

It could be:

- Emotional, i.e. being unfriendly, tormenting, excluding, making unkind comments etc.
- Physical, i.e. pushing, kicking, hitting etc.
- Racist, i.e. racial taunts or gestures
- Verbal, i.e. teasing, sarcasm, spreading rumours etc.
- Homophobic i.e. making comments or taunts about the individual's real or imagined sexual preferences, or
- Online/ cyber i.e. taunts and unkind comments via emails, social networking sites, text messages etc.

Recognising bullying

Adults should be aware of possible bullying and be alert to possible signs. These may include:

- The child being reluctant to attend Pony Club events
- Changes in his / her usual routine or truancy
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious or unusually lacking in confidence
- Running away, threatening or attempting self-harm or suicide
- Possessions damaged or going missing
- Stealing money or requesting more than usual
- Unexplained cuts or bruises and a reluctance to discuss them
- Becoming aggressive, disruptive and unreasonable to a greater degree than normal or can be explained as normal teenage development
- Afraid or reluctant to discuss what is wrong,
- Reluctant to use the internet or mobile phone.

Bullying of a Child by another Child

- Any incidents of bullying behaviour should be reported to the DC / Centre Proprietor / Manager or Branch / Centre Child Protection Officer (CPO). Observed incidents of bullying must always be challenged.
- The victim should be encouraged to speak to an appropriate adult in an honest open environment away from the bullies where s/he can feel safe.
- The adult should discuss with the victim the need to involve others and the manner of the involvement. S/he must be informed that the information will be recorded.
- The incident must be investigated, the bullies interviewed and appropriate sanctions and mediation put into place as is deemed to be appropriate.
- Reconciliation must be considered.
- The parents must be informed and kept informed of the actions to be taken and the reasons for them.
- A written account of all the meetings and discussion points must be kept.

- All parties should be supported and encouraged to ameliorate their behaviour.
- The situation between the children should be monitored for some time to ensure that there is no recurrence of the incident.

Bullying of a Child by the Parent of another Child

This is unacceptable. The parent must be spoken to and requested to desist from this behaviour. If s/he does not do so, then the Code of Conduct for Parents / Guardians must be used to remind him / her of the appropriate behaviours expected of a parent / guardian. If the bullying behaviour persists then consideration of banning the parent or even, as a last resort, of cancelling the child's membership must be made. In extreme circumstances, the Police may be involved as this could be construed as child abuse.

Bullying of a Parent by another Parent

If such an event becomes known to the Pony Club then the parent who is alleged to be the victim of bullying should be encouraged to inform the Police. This behaviour is unacceptable and cannot be condoned.

Bullying of a Child by an Official of the Pony Club

This is a Safeguarding issue, and the procedure if allegations of a safeguarding nature are made against an official of the Pony Club should be used. The official concerned could be suspended pending a full and proper investigation and the BEF Advisory Group should be consulted.

Bullying of an Adult by an Official of the Pony Club

This is unacceptable, and the adult victim should be supported in bringing a complaint against the official, and involving the police if appropriate. The official concerned may be suspended pending a full and proper investigation.

Online / Cyber Bullying

There has been a huge increase in online bullying over the last few years. The development and expansion of Information Technology (IT) has meant that the majority of the population has access to a range of communication methods. Unfortunately, with the improvements have come improved methods of bullying. The majority of young people, and a significant number of other adults, now subscribe to one of the online communication systems such as Facebook, Whatsapp, Instagram, Twitter, etc. Emails and texting have become the norm for most of the population and there are significant benefits to their use. If a Pony Club official needs to contact the membership body then s/he is able to use the social media to pass on the message within a very short time. Guidance on the use of Social Media can be found on the Pony Club website.

If a child or adult is being bullied online then s/he should inform CEOP (Child Exploitation Online Protection) and/or the Police. Information on how to contact CEOP can be found on the Pony Club website. If the bullying is taking place via a social media site such as Facebook, then a person can request that the site remove the messages in order to protect the child. Another way of dealing with online bullying is to block the messages, but this does not stop the bully.