

## Safeguarding

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# Anti-bullying policy

<b>Why do we need an anti-bullying policy?</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Policy Objectives</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>What is bullying?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Who bullies?</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Who is bullied?</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Signs and symptoms of bullying</b>	<b>4</b>
- Preventing bullying	
- Our role	
<b>Preventing Bullying</b>	<b>4-5</b>
- Our Role	
- The teacher's role	
<b>Reporting/Telling</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Outcomes</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Pathways of help</b>	<b>7</b>

# Why do we need an anti-bullying policy?

## Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Everybody has the right to be treated with respect.  
Everybody has the right to feel happy and safe.  
No-one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Bullies need to learn different ways of behaving.

Research has shown that there is a tendency for bullying to decrease in schools which adopt an anti-bullying policy/bullying prevention programme. Students' perception of pro-active attitudes on the part of teachers to stop bullying is thought to be a key factor in this. An anti-bullying policy helps to remove the secrecy and passive participation that often surrounds bullying, reduces opportunities for bullying to happen and offers a course of action for victims/concerned parents to follow. It also raises awareness of the many forms that bullying can take, as often children do not know that they are being bullied (or are bullying), just that something is making them unhappy.

It is important that we don't underestimate the risk of bullying taking place in the Teaching Centre. Bullying commonly takes place during extra-curricular activities or break times and many young learners will study with us for a year or more - a daunting period of time for some one who is the victim of bullying.

## Policy Objectives

The British Council, India Anti-Bullying Policy outlines what the British Council Teaching Centre will do to prevent and tackle bullying. The policy has been drawn up through the involvement of the whole Teaching Centre community.

### Our Teaching Centre:

- Discusses, monitors and reviews our anti-bullying policy on a regular basis.
- Supports staff to promote positive relationships and identify and tackle bullying appropriately.
- Ensures that students are aware that all bullying concerns will be dealt with sensitively and effectively; that students feel safe to learn; and that students abide by the anti-bullying policy.
- Reports back to parents/carers regarding their concerns on bullying and deals promptly with complaints. Parents/ carers in turn work with the Teaching Centre to uphold the anti-bullying policy.
- Seeks to learn from good anti-bullying practice elsewhere and utilises support from the Local Authority and other relevant organisations when appropriate.

## What is bullying?

Bullying is “Behaviour by an individual or a group, usually repeated over time that intentionally or unintentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally.”

Bullying can take many different forms, but it is likely to involve one or more of the following:

- negative or hurtful behaviour involving a real or perceived imbalance of power/strength with the less powerful person being repeatedly attacked.
- attacks which become progressively worse.
- attacks which are apparently unprovoked
- attacks which are ignored by those who witness them and who observe a “law of silence”.

**Common examples of bullying include:**

- **Physical violence** (although not all physical violence is bullying)
- **Psychological or emotional aggression** such as:
  - Name calling
  - Using gestures
  - Exclusion
  - Rumour spreading
  - Comment-making
  - Note-passing
  - Text-messaging
  - Stealing/hiding things
  - Defacing property (e.g. scribbling over/tearing victims’ work/notebook etc.)
  - Cyber-bullying

The complex nature of bullying means that the above list is not exhaustive. Each case of bullying may be different, with the victim struggling to say exactly what kind of things are going on. Often, when put into words, the offending actions may sound trivial to the victim.

## Who bullies?

**Anyone** has the capacity to bully.

There are no completely reliable pre-dispositional diagnoses. However, those who perceive themselves as low status within a community, institution or group may use bullying in an attempt to artificially boost their status. Self-esteem is therefore a key factor in whether someone bullies or not. This puts equal opportunities and inclusion at the centre of all anti-bullying work.

## Who is bullied?

**Anyone** can be bullied – student, parent/carer/guardian or staff member.

People who are bullied are often perceived by others to be different.

Sometimes the perceived difference is individual to that person – shyness, physical appearance, clothing and possessions, accent, perceived inappropriate behaviour, etc.

## Signs and Symptoms of bullying

A victim may indicate by signs or behaviour that he/she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a student:

- doesn't want to go to classes
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- threatens or attempts self-harm
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has dinner or other monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home starving (money / lunch has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- shows changes in eating habits
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone

## Preventing bullying

### Our role

Students' behaviour is affected by the behaviour of the adults around them. Therefore, we expect adults engaged with British Council (staff, young and/or adult learners, guardian/parents of students) in any way to model respectful and courteous behaviour.

The attitude and behaviour of adults, especially teachers or British council staff who are in direct contact with children, can determine how much of a problem bullying is likely to be. Students pick up on:

- How the staff/teachers in a school treat each other
- How the staff/teachers in a school treat students
- How aware teachers/ staff are of what goes on in the classroom or in breaks

- How much attention is paid to bullying in general (hence 'Behaviour rules' policy communicated to all students at beginning of each term)

## **The Teacher's role**

As a teacher, you need to be aware of what is going on in your classroom 'below the surface'.

You may suspect that something is wrong and wonder whether, by drawing attention to it, you may make things worse for the victim (it may also be difficult to pinpoint what is wrong or it may seem quite trivial), but experts say it is always best to disallow bullying behaviour (either publicly, or by having an initial word with the offender(s) after class).

By doing this, you are showing your awareness of what is going on in class (which reduces opportunities for bullying to take place), you are showing that you consider the behaviour unacceptable, and you are showing your support for the student who is being "picked on". This in turn will increase the likelihood of him/her confiding in you if the behaviour does not stop and/or is going on in breaks or before/after class.

### **What the teacher can do:**

1. Ensure an environment of teacher-student and student-student respect in your classrooms. Stop any sign of bullying in its early stages and do not allow insults and teasing (or other manifestations such as those listed above), as these are often the starting point for more serious bullying.
2. Be careful with your own language and behaviour towards students and make sure you do not unconsciously encourage bullying (use of sarcasm or highlighting students underachieving in front of class).
3. Other ideas:
  - a. Work with your students to create a set of positive classroom rules, e.g. If you finish first, check your work and then help the others in your group.
  - b. Sign a behaviour contract with your students.
  - c. Tell/read/write stories/poems about bullying.
  - d. Have discussions/role plays about bullying.
4. Be vigilant during breaks and inform the Duty Manager of any incidents you have noticed or any individual students who you think need to be watched during break times. This will help to reduce opportunities and will send out a positive message to all of our students.

## **Reporting/Telling**

All members of the Teaching Centre and British council community need to be alert to incidents of bullying and take appropriate action. Students who identify an incident of bullying should alert an adult they trust. The person

who receives a report from a student will take it extremely seriously and be seen to be doing so.

We need to communicate our approach to bullying to students and parents. At a basic level this involves awareness-raising about what bullying is because students may not realize that they are bullying/being bullied. Also, bullying is almost always a group process, with more people involved than the bully and the victim (witnesses, defenders, possible defenders, followers).

This makes it important to increase the likelihood of “reporting/telling”. Those likely to report bullying, if they feel supported enough, are the victims themselves, witnesses, possible defenders and defenders, who will “tell” someone what is going on. The more open the Centre is about bullying, the more likely it is that someone will “tell”.

If you suspect that a student is being bullied, or if a parent comes to see you because they think that their child is being bullied, let the **Young Learner Coordinator** or **Academic Manager** know and the incident will be investigated. Incident of bullying can also be directly reported to the **National Safeguarding Manager** at [Safeguarding.india@britishcouncil.org](mailto:Safeguarding.india@britishcouncil.org)

### **The next step:**

All action taken will involve the bully/bullies

1. The Young Learner Coordinator or Academic Manager will give you advice and support in resolving minor issues.
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incident(s) will be recorded by staff.
3. In serious cases parents will be informed and asked to come into a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. If necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted.

## **Outcomes**

Feedback will always be provided to individuals who have made the allegations or complaints.

1. The bully/bullies may be asked to genuinely apologise. Other consequences may take place.
2. Where possible, the students involved will be reconciled.
3. In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion from the Teaching Centre will be considered.

After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

## Pathways of help



