

Anti-Bullying Policy

Aim

Bullying is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

The aim of the Anti-Bullying Policy is to reduce the incidence of bullying at VLC in order to ensure that:

- students can learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied;
- staff are free from fear of bullying by students.

This policy includes:

- bullying of pupils by pupils within school;
- bullying of and/or by pupils outside of school, where the school is aware of it; and
- bullying of staff by pupils within or outside school.

Allegations about bullying of pupils by staff will be dealt with under VLC's Safeguarding Policy.

In order to achieve this, all staff, volunteers, students and parents/carers:

- should share a clear understanding of what constitutes 'bullying';
- should be fully aware of VLC's Anti-Bullying Policy;
- should follow VLC's Anti-Bullying Policy closely and consistently;
- should have confidence in VLC's Anti-Bullying Policy and should be assured that they will be fully supported when bullying is reported.

NB. Throughout this policy the term 'parent' is used to mean a student's parent, carer or guardian.

Definition

VLC has chosen to adopt Warwickshire's Antibullying Partnership's definition of bullying:

"When a person's or group of people's behaviour over a period of time leaves someone feeling one or more of the following:

- physically and/or mentally hurt or worried;
- unsafe and/or frightened;
- unable to do well and achieve;
- 'badly different', alone, unimportant and/or unvalued; and/or
- unable to see a happy and exciting future."

When a person, or group of people, has been made aware of the effects of their behaviour on another person, and they continue to behave in the same manner, this constitutes bullying.

If someone is made to feel like this, or if they think someone they know feels like this, an investigation should take place. VLC will ensure that appropriate investigations are carried out. This will happen as soon as possible, remembering that it can take a long time to build up the courage to tell. However, lots of things can make people feel bad and it is not always bullying. Therefore the following definition, from the Anti-Bullying Alliance, is adopted:

Bullying as any behaviour that:

- is deliberately hurtful - the person/people doing the bullying know what they are doing and mean to do it;
- represents a pattern of behaviour - the behaviour will occur more than once, as opposed to a one-off incident; and
- involves an imbalance of power - it is initiated by one individual or group against another individual or group, and the person being bullied will usually find it very hard to defend themselves.

Bullying can be either:

- physical, eg. kicking, hitting, taking and damaging belongings;
- verbal, eg. name calling, taunting, threats, offensive remarks;
- indirect, eg. spreading gossip, excluding from social groups, tormenting;
- sexual, eg. unwanted physical attention or contact, sexually abusive or explicit comments;
- cyber, eg. texts, e-mails, picture/video clip bullying, Instant Messaging (IM);
- homophobic, eg. verbal/physical abuse focussing on the issue of a person's sexuality; and/or
- racial, eg. abuse focused on a person's culture /ethnicity /colour /nationality /religious identity.

Statutory Duty

VLC has a legal duty under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among pupils and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and pupils. Under the Education Inspections Bill 2006 the duties are extended to include preventing/responding to bullying that happens outside school, where it is reasonable to do so. Schools also have a duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils' (Education Act 2002) and to ensure that children and young people are safe from bullying and discrimination (Children Act 2004). Government guidance advises that the policy should also address the bullying of staff by pupils ('Safe to learn' DCSF 2007).

Identifying and reporting concerns about bullying

All concerns about bullying will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly.

Students, and staff/volunteers, who are being bullied may not report it. However, they may display the following signs as an indicator that they are being bullied:

- becoming shy and nervous;
- feigning illness;
- taking unusual absences
- clinging to adults;
- changes in work patterns;
- lacking concentration; and/or
- truanting from school.

VLC's staff will be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it in accordance with this policy.

Staff who are being bullied will be encouraged to report it to a colleague of their choosing.

Parents will be encouraged to report concerns about possible bullying and to support VLC in tackling it. Parents should not try to resolve bullying directly with other students or their families as this can lead to an escalation of problems.

Students who are aware of bullying ('bystanders') can be a powerful force in helping to address it and will be encouraged to do so in a safe way.

Students who are bullying others also need support to help them understand and change their behaviour.

All students will be encouraged to report bullying by:

- talking to a member of staff/volunteer of their choice;
- making a written statement of the bullying concern and passing it to a member of VLC's staff/volunteer team;
- talking to, or passing a written statement to, another adult with whom the student is familiar, eg. a social work, school family liaison officer etc.;
- contacting local and national support agencies for advice/support.

Responding to reports about bullying

VLC will take the following steps when dealing with concerns about bullying:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, it will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been made aware of it.
- A clear account of the concern will be recorded and given to the Centre Leader or member of the Leadership Team.
- The Leader will ensure everyone involved is interviewed and keep a detailed record. This will be held in line with the VLC's data protection policy/practice.
- Relevant staff will be kept informed.
- Parents and other relevant adults/agencies/schools will be kept informed.
- Where bullying occurs outside VLC, any other relevant schools or agencies (eg. youth clubs, transport providers) will be informed about the concerns and any actions taken.
- Where a child's behaviour outside of VLC affects other students' ability to function inside VLC, VLC will consider action in the same way as if the offence occurred inside of school.

Students and staff/volunteers

Students and staff/volunteers who *have been bullied* will be supported by:

- an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a member of staff of their choosing;
- reassurance that the bullying will be addressed;
- the offer of continuous support;
- action seeking to restore self-esteem and confidence;
- the use of specialist interventions and/or referrals to other agencies where appropriate eg. educational psychology.

Students who *have bullied* will be helped by:

- discussing what happened;
- discovering why they became involved;
- establishing the wrong doing and need to change;
- looking at the dangers/consequences of bullying;
- informing parents to help change the attitude of the student;

- the use of specialist interventions and/or referrals to other agencies where appropriate.

Parents

All parents will be made aware of VLC's Anti-Bullying Policy as part of the student's induction, and will be signposted to the VLC website to read a full copy of this document.

If/when a parent contacts VLC to report a bullying incident, they will be given a timescale indicating when a member of staff will respond to discuss the incident, and a note of the call should be made. Parents will also be encouraged to put their concerns in writing.

Most concerns about bullying will be resolved through discussion between home and VLC. However, where a parent feels their concerns have not been resolved, they are encouraged to use VLC's formal Complaints Procedure, which is available on VLC's website.

Parents will be asked to work with VLC in addressing their child's behaviour, especially where a student is involved in bullying others outside VLC eg. in the street or through the use of internet at home.

Referral of the family to external support agencies will be made where appropriate.

Preventative measures

VLC will:

- raise awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in learning time, as appropriate, and in informal discussion in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour;
- seek to develop links with the wider community that support inclusive anti-bullying education;
- consider the use of specific strategies, for example peer mentoring, on a regular basis and implement them if appropriate, subject to available resources.

Restorative conversations and solutions

The primary aim of punitive sanctions must be to put a stop to the bullying and to prevent its continuation. If a student does not respond to preventative strategies, VLC will work with the students, parents, commissioners and other professionals concerned in order to stop this behaviour, this will be in line with our Relationships and Praise policy. If appropriate, a pupils may be required to move centres and/or days. Other sanctions are in line with the Relationships and Praise policy and the Maintaining a safe environment policy. These will be used as appropriate and in consultation with all parties involved.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Principal will lead on the implementation of the policy.

VLC will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. This shall include an annual report on:

- the number of reported concerns;
- monitoring information about the students involved;
- motivations for bullying;
- actions taken and outcomes.