

The American Academy Larnaca aims to ensure that all members of the school community feel welcome, safe and happy and so are able to learn and make progress. Bullying of any kind prevents this happening. Bullying makes people feel unsafe.

As a school, we take bullying in any form very seriously. Students, parents and teachers should understand that reporting bullying is essential, and the school will investigate thoroughly whenever an incident is reported. It is the responsibility of all members of the school community to implement the Anti-Bullying Policy.

## Policy Objectives

- To build an anti-bullying ethos within the school community
- To ensure all staff, students, and parents have a clear understanding of what bullying behaviour is
- To ensure all within the school community know and understand the school policy on bullying and feel confident to implement it when bullying is suspected or reported
- To challenge attitudes about bullying behaviour
- To increase understanding for students who are bullied

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is defined as any action which makes someone feel unhappy, or uncomfortable, because of their gender, race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, ability or disability.

It can be a one-off incident, but more commonly it is repeated over a period of time. It can be carried out by individuals, or by groups. It can be emotional, physical, racial, sexual, verbal, homophobic or a combination of these. It can take the form of name-calling, threatened violence, actual violence, intimidation, isolation, ridicule, or other actions such as spreading unpleasant stories and gossip, sending inappropriate text messages and/or e-mails or making inappropriate telephone calls, the

inappropriate use of the internet/personal websites/ blogging. All bullying is designed to make the victim feel threatened, humiliated and unsafe.

Some bullying is physical. For example:

- Pushing, hitting, kicking, spitting, unacceptable touching (including that of a sexual nature) or any other physical activity that is used in such a way as to make the other person feel threatened or intimidated
- Taking and damaging belongings

Some bullying is verbal. For example:

- Name-calling
- Taunting, mocking or any other comments designed to be hurtful or used to intimidate

Some bullying is relational. For example:

- Excluding people from groups, deliberately ignoring
- Gossiping, spreading rumours

Some bullying involves written insults. For example:

- Note passing, graffiti
- Threats sent by email, offensive text messaging and other misuse of technology and social media

Not all negative interactions between students can be characterised as bullying and the school works hard to ensure that students understand the differences between bullying and 'falling out' or arguing.

**The American Academy Larnaca adopts a zero tolerance policy towards any form of bullying, including cyber bullying.**

The American Academy Larnaca is fully committed to minimizing the incidents of bullying through the following means:

- Commitment of staff and students to reporting incidents
- The school's PSHE programme
- Dealing with incidents immediately
- Clearly specified sanctions and consequences, which are made known to the whole school

community

- Informing parents and other appropriate individuals
- Following up on incidents to ensure there is no recurrence

**It is expected that everyone in the school community will adhere to this policy.**

## Preventing Bullying

At the American Academy Larnaca everyone is vigilant for signs of bullying and always take reports of bullying seriously. We use the curriculum to reinforce the ethos of the school and to help students to develop strategies to combat bullying behaviour.

We make sure that students understand that they must report any incidents of bullying to an adult and that, when another student tells them that they are being bullied, or if they see bullying taking place, it is their responsibility to report their knowledge to a member of staff.

Signs of bullying might be:

- **Physical:** bruises, scratches, cuts, damaged clothes
- **Health:** loss of appetite, stomach-aches, headaches, soiling/bedwetting
- **Emotional:** unwillingness to go to school, withdrawn or secretive behaviour, unhappiness, unusual shows of temper, refusal to speak about problems, high levels of anxiety
- **Change of routine:** asking to be taken to school rather than walking/travelling on the bus, asking for more money, belongings that are lost or go missing repeatedly
- **Academic:** concentration difficulties, damage to work, missing work

## Procedures to follow for reporting Bullying

Pastoral Leaders, in consultation with the Principal, will have overall responsibility for monitoring incidents and any resulting disciplinary measures.

Students who are bullied, who witness bullying or who have even participated in bullying should feel confident to report it to any member of the school staff whom they trust enough to tell. Each incident

will be dealt with individually; all reported incidents of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated.

Any incident from name calling, physical bullying to harassment of a student or member of staff should be reported immediately.

**Immediate response (preferably within 2 hours of the incident, or by the end of the school day).**

1. Every incident must be recorded in writing. A copy of the report and the action taken should be handed to the Pastoral Leader.
2. Older pupils may be asked to write a report themselves.
3. The Mentor of the student who has been bullied will be informed.
4. The relevant Pastoral Head will decide on the next stage of action.

**Follow up response (within 24 hours):**

- When an incident of bullying takes place, relevant staff and Pastoral Leaders will discuss issues relating to the incident with the students involved, in a way suitable to their age and level of understanding
- Each student will be given an opportunity to talk and the discussion will remain focused on finding a solution to the problem and preventing any recurrence of the bullying
- Students who have been bullied will receive appropriate support, which may include advice from external agencies, where needed
- Students who have bullied will be offered support. Students who bully will be helped to understand the pain this causes to others and reminded of the possible consequences of bullying. The sanctions for repeated incidents will be explained clearly to them. Support will be agreed to ensure they do not repeat bullying behaviour, and they may be monitored

**If bullying persists, one or a combination of the following actions may be taken:**

- An official report will be made and filed in the student's personal record
- Existing disciplinary sanctions will be used
- Parents will be contacted to discuss the issues. They will be given feedback on progress in dealing with the incident. Additional external help may be recommended; for example, from psychologists

- Exclusion from the school – this is dependent on the severity and/or persistence of the bullying and will be a final resort

**Teachers are encouraged to use strategies to prevent bullying and to respond to bullying incidents.**

**These include:**

- Role-play and other drama techniques to help students understand and appreciate the feelings of others
- Assemblies designed to help students share information and to provide an opportunity for presenting important issues such as equal rights, relationships, justice and acceptable behaviour
- Anti-bullying week takes place in November each year

## Information for Students

If you are bullied:

- Remember it is not your fault; no-one should be bullied
- Tell someone: a parent, a friend, a teacher or an older student
- Never keep it to yourself and think it will go away
- It will not get worse if you report it

## Involvement of parents

The parents of any student involved in an incident of bullying will be informed of the incident and will be asked to support strategies proposed to tackle the problem.

Parents are reminded that they need to encourage their children to tell someone if they experience bullying.

## Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Monitoring and evaluation of this policy forms a regular part of our self-review process. All policies are evaluated and reviewed with involvement from staff, students and parents.

## Cyber Bullying Policy

Some bullying uses modern technology such as mobile phones, or the internet. This 'cyber bullying' includes:

- Text-message bullying
- Phone-call bullying
- Picture/video clip bullying (via mobile phone or digital camera devices)
- Email bullying
- Chat-room bullying
- Bullying through instant messaging
- Bullying via websites
- Taking photos without permission
- Altering photos or videos without permission

According to the Ministry of Education Guidelines, cyber-bullying which occurs outside of school is deemed not to be the responsibility of the school. In such instances, parents will be informed and the school will contact the Cyber Ethics Department of the Cyprus Police Force who will carry out further investigations. However, if the cyber bullying impacts on a student's life in school then the School will take measures to protect that student and impose sanctions against the offending student(s).

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