



Akademeia High School Anti-Bullying Policy

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Introduction

Akademeia High School is committed to creating and maintaining a safe and inclusive learning environment for all students. Bullying can occur in various settings, such as schools, after school activities and online platforms, and it can have severe consequences for the well-being and development of those involved.

Akademeia High School Anti-Bullying Policy is a set of guidelines and procedures designed to prevent and address incidents of bullying. It aims to promote respectful behavior, foster empathy, and provide support to individuals who have been affected by bullying. The policy applies to all members of the school's community and outlines the responsibilities of all parties involved.

This policy is addressed to all members of staff, volunteers, and anyone working on behalf of Akademeia High School and is applicable to operations that occur at the school both inside and outside (e.g. Summer Schools, school trips and other) of core term time dates.

Aims of Akademeia High School Anti-Bullying Policy

The aims of Akademeia High School Anti-Bullying Policy are:

- **Bullying awareness:** The policy provides a clear definition of what constitutes bullying behaviour, including various forms such as physical, verbal, social, and cyberbullying. The policy highlights the importance of educating AHS community about bullying, its impact, and strategies for prevention. It may involve awareness campaigns, workshops, and training programs for students, staff members, and parents.
- **Bullying Prevention:** The policy emphasizes the importance of preventing bullying behaviour by promoting awareness, education, and positive values. It aims to create a culture that discourages bullying and fosters a safe and respectful environment.
- **Bullying Reporting and investigation procedures:** The policy outlines the steps to be followed when reporting an incident of bullying. It encourages students and staff members to report incidents promptly and guarantees a fair and thorough investigation process. Confidentiality is crucial in this procedure.

- **Support and intervention:** The policy emphasizes the provision of support to students experiencing bullying, as well as appropriate interventions for individuals displaying bullying behaviour. It may include measures such as 1:1 meetings with wellbeing team members, peer support programs, and disciplinary actions to address the issue effectively. The policy also encourages home-school partnership to address bullying effectively. It may also involve reporting issues to relevant authorities (e.g. the police) or external mental health support providers.
- **Review and evaluation:** The policy specifies regular review and evaluation processes to assess the effectiveness of the anti-bullying measures in place. It allows for necessary adjustments and improvements based on feedback, data, and emerging research.

Definitions

Bullying

The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online'.¹

Bullying occurs in situations where one person, or a group, uses their power, strength, or influence to intimidate, harm, or control another person who is unable to defend themselves adequately. Bullying can take various forms, such as:

- **Physical bullying:** This involves physical aggression or harm towards a person, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, or stealing or damaging their belongings.
- **Verbal bullying:** This includes using words or spoken language to demean, insult, or intimidate a person. Examples include name-calling, mocking, teasing, or making derogatory comments about their appearance, abilities, or background.
- **Social bullying:** Also known as relational bullying, this behaviour aims to damage a person's social standing or relationships. It involves spreading rumours, gossiping, excluding the victim from social activities or groups, or manipulating others to isolate and reject the person.

¹ The definition is sourced from: <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/understanding-bullying/definition>

- **Intimidation:** This involves using fear or threats to control or manipulate a person. It can include making intimidating gestures, aggressive posturing, invading personal space, or using implied or explicit threats to coerce or frighten the person.
- **Exclusion:** This behaviour involves purposefully excluding a person from social activities, groups, or events. It can include intentionally ignoring or rejecting the person, isolating them from their peers, or deliberately preventing them from participating in social interactions.
- **Discrimination:** Bullying can also involve targeting individuals based on their race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other characteristic. Discriminatory bullying aims to demean or marginalize individuals based on these attributes.

It is important to note that these examples are not exhaustive, and bullying can take on various forms depending on the situation and individuals involved. It often occurs in schools, workplaces, online platforms, and other social environments. Bullying can have significant negative effects on the victim's well-being, including emotional, psychological, and physical harm.

Cyberbullying²

Cyberbullying refers to the use of electronic communication platforms, such as social media, websites, email, instant messaging, or online gaming, to harass, intimidate, or harm someone repeatedly. It involves the deliberate and persistent use of digital technologies to target and attack individuals, often with the intention of causing emotional distress or humiliation. Cyberbullying can take various forms, including:

- **Harassment:** Sending repeated threatening or offensive messages to a person. This can include using derogatory language, making personal attacks, or issuing explicit threats.
- **Online rumours and gossip:** Spreading false information or rumours about a person through social media, online forums, or other digital platforms. This can lead to social ostracism.
- **Cyberstalking:** Engaging in persistent online harassment or stalking behaviour, such as constantly monitoring a person's online activities, sending unwanted messages, or making intrusive comments.

² The definition of cyberbullying is adapted from: <https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>



- **Sharing embarrassing or private information**, photos, or videos of a person without their consent. This can be done through social media, email, or other digital channels, with the intention of shaming or ridiculing the person.
- **Impersonation**: Creating fake profiles or accounts to deceive and harm a person. This can involve impersonating a person or pretending to be someone else with an intention to hurt or mock a person.
- **Encouraging or involving others to participate in the bullying behaviour**. This can include creating group chats or online forums to target and harass a person collectively.
- **Exclusion and online shunning**: Intentionally excluding the victim from online groups, conversations, or social circles. This may involve intentionally leaving a person out of activities, discussions, or events, or purposefully ignoring their contributions online.
- **Trolling**: Engaging in provocative, offensive, or inflammatory online behaviour with the intention of provoking and upsetting others. This can involve leaving hurtful or insulting comments on a person's posts or starting arguments with the person.

These examples highlight the various ways in which cyberbullying can occur, but it's important to remember that any form of online harassment or intimidation that causes harm or distress to an individual can be considered cyberbullying.

The anonymity and wide reach of the Internet can make cyberbullying particularly distressing, as the harmful content can be shared quickly and reach a large audience. The consequences of cyberbullying can be severe, leading to emotional trauma, social isolation, academic difficulties, and in some cases, even self-harm or suicide.

Symptoms of bullying

Bullying can have various effects on the individuals who experience it. All staff members should be vigilant to the following symptoms, which may indicate that an individual is experiencing bullying:



- **Physical symptoms:** A student may exhibit physical signs of distress, such as unexplained bruises, scratches, or other injuries. They may complain of headaches, stomach aches, or other psychosomatic symptoms. Difficulty sleeping or changes in appetite may also be observed.
- **Emotional and behavioural changes:** A person may display sudden and noticeable changes in behaviour, mood, or emotions. They may become anxious, withdrawn, or depressed. They may exhibit increased irritability, aggression, or tearfulness. Loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed or a decline in academic performance may also be visible.
- **Social withdrawal:** A student may isolate themselves and avoid social situations or activities they used to participate in. They may have difficulty making friends or maintaining relationships. They may express feelings of loneliness or exhibit a reluctance to attend school or social events.
- **Low self-esteem:** Bullying can significantly impact a person's self-confidence and self-worth. A student may express feelings of worthlessness, self-blame, or inadequacy. They may exhibit a lack of assertiveness, constantly seeking approval, or becoming overly self-conscious.
- **Changes in sleep patterns:** A student may have difficulty falling asleep, experience frequent nightmares, or suffer from insomnia. On the other hand, they may also exhibit excessive sleeping as a means of escape or avoidance.
- **Avoidance of certain locations or situations:** A student may try to avoid specific places or situations where the bullying occurs. This could include avoiding certain areas of the school, public spaces, or online platforms.
- **Decline in academic performance:** Bullying can impact a student's ability to concentrate, resulting in a decline in academic performance. They may have difficulty focusing in class, completing assignments, or participating actively in school-related activities.
- **Changes in eating habits:** A student may show changes in eating patterns, such as loss of appetite or overeating, which could be indicative of emotional distress.

It is important to note that these symptoms may not solely be caused by bullying, and other factors could contribute to these behaviours. However, if these signs are noticed, it may be an indication that a person is experiencing bullying and require support and intervention.

Parties involved in bullying prevention

For the purposes of this policy and Akademeia's approach to bullying:

- **Staff** means all those working for or on behalf of Akademeia (including teachers and non-teaching staff)
- **Parent** means birth parents and other adults who are in a parenting role
- **Students** means *all* students at our school

AHS staff members

All staff at Akademeia, whether teaching or non-teaching, play an important part when it comes to preventing bullying. All staff must understand they have a responsibility to take appropriate action and report concerns or allegations of risk of harm to students.

All Akademeia High School staff members have a responsibility to provide a safe environment in which children can learn. We are equally committed to the protection and welfare of our staff, who are expected to adhere to high standards of professional behaviour.

Each member of staff is expected:

- to protect students from bullying,
- to be aware of the Akademeia's child protection procedures and to follow them,
- to keep a sufficient record of any disclosure
- to report any matters of concern to the Deputy Head (Pastoral)



To this effect, staff should:

- carefully read this policy and the mechanism for reporting bullying concerns effectively
- be aware of the different abuse types and alert to signs of possible abuse.
- be comfortable dealing with a disclosure of a bullying incident from a student.

Staff should *always* act on any concerns they have regarding the welfare of a child. If unsure, they should always speak to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or another member of the Safeguarding Team.

Parents

Parents play an important role in detecting bullying (particularly incidents happening outside of the school hours) and mitigating its negative consequences. Therefore, parents' collaboration with the school is vital to effectively target any bullying incidents.

Parental understanding and support may be crucial for students experiencing bullying to build individual resilience and coping strategies, as well as to deal with mental strain, which may be the result of bullying. At the same time, parental support and understanding the school's disciplinary measures is also important in making sure, that a bullying student reflects on their behaviour and changes their attitude and conduct in the future.

Students

As members of AHS community, students are responsible for creating an atmosphere of kindness and respect, free from any bullying Incidents. Therefore, they are strongly encouraged to report any concerns or Incidents. AHS sees whistle-blower's Identity protection as an Important component of effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy and the students should rest assured that we will not disclose their Identity without their clear consent.

Students should also consider their role In opposing bullying by actively protesting against any Inappropriate or aggressive behaviour they witness - both during their school hours and outside.



Procedures

Prevention

Bullying prevention requires a comprehensive approach that involves the effort of students, staff members and parents. For this reason, the school will adapt several strategies to prevent bullying:

- Promoting and encouraging a safe and bullying-free school environment: Encourage open communication, empathy, and kindness among students, teachers, staff members. This can happen through enforcing AHS values of respect, kindness and integrity.
- Educating and raising awareness: Conduct regular bullying prevention training for teachers, staff, and students. The training will tackle the topic of different forms of bullying, its impact, and prevention. Bullying and its negative consequences will be discussed during school assemblies and workshops (e.g. as a part of Personal Development Scheme), and mentor's hour discussions to raise awareness and educate students on the importance of kindness, empathy, and respect.
- Ensuring that the school community is aware of anti-bullying policy and procedures: at the beginning of the school year, all students, parents and staff members are reminded of the policies and procedures, regarding reporting bullying to ensure immediate reaction to any incidents of bullying.
- Encouraging peer intervention: The aim of this procedure would be to create a culture where it is understood that everyone has a responsibility to prevent and address bullying. During assemblies and mentor's hours students will be informed on the importance of being an active bystander and resisting bullying experienced by their peers. Students will be encouraged to support people experiencing bullying, report incidents (also anonymously), and seek help from staff members.
- Implementing peer support system: creating various platforms for cross-year cooperation (e.g. as a part of Student Council, Personal Development Scheme or extra-curricular activities) where

older students support and guide younger students. These programs can provide a sense of belonging and support, reducing the likelihood of bullying.

- **Enhancing supervision and monitoring:** Providing adult supervision in areas where bullying is more likely to occur, such as patio, hallways, and canteen. A visible presence of a teacher and promptly addressing any incidents (e.g. students addressing each other in a vulgar or aggressive way) will enhance the culture of zero tolerance for bullying.
- **Encouraging parental involvement:** Engaging parents and guardians in the bullying prevention efforts by providing them with resources and information on recognizing, addressing, and reporting bullying incidents. If a student is experiencing bullying or is bullying another student, parents are immediately notified by a mentor/Head of Form.
- **Providing support for students experiencing bullying:** wellbeing support is offered for students experiencing bullying to ensure that they can develop successful coping strategies and resilience.
- **Applying appropriate disciplinary measures for students bullying others:** Disciplinary consequences are implemented in line with AHS disciplinary measures, outlined in AHS Handbook. Each case is analysed with great diligence by Deputy Head (Pastoral) in cooperation with other relevant staff members.
- **Regularly evaluating and assessing prevention efforts:** Students, staff members and parents are annually asked to share their feedback regarding school's policies to identify areas for improvement. If necessary, Anti-Bullying Policy is adjusted and modified to ensure ongoing effectiveness of prevention efforts.

Reporting bullying incidents – guidelines for students

Reporting bullying is an important step in addressing and preventing incidents, as well as in building bullying-free environment. Students, who know each other best, are often the first ones to notice bullying

incidents. Therefore, their cooperation in informing staff members about any such occurrences is vital for effective targeting of bullying. Students are encouraged to use the following channels to report bullying:

- Immediate reporting: Students will be informed at various stages of the school year about the importance of reporting bullying incidents promptly and their responsibility for making sure, that AHS environment is safe for everyone. During assemblies and mentor's hour, students will be encouraged to report any incidents they witness or experience to a trusted adult or school staff member as soon as possible.
- Designated reporting channels, including anonymous reporting tools:
- Reaching out to any of the staff members, including teachers, mentors wellbeing team members. They will pass the information to Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- Reaching directly to the Safeguarding Team members. The members of the Team include: Deputy Head (Pastoral), Head of Wellbeing Team, Head of Learning Support, Head of Fifth Form, Head of Sixth Form.
- Write an e-mail to: safeguarding@akademeia.edu.pl
- Use an online and anonymous Safeguarding Box <https://www.safeguarding.akademeia.edu.pl/>

When an incident is reported it should be remembered that the following details need to be included:

- When and where the incident happened
- Who was involved and who the witnesses were
- What happened
- Anything else that is important for the case

In all reporting cases, the identity of reporting person will be protected.

Reporting bullying incidents – guidelines for staff members

Staff members should be vigilant to any symptoms of bullying incident and report them immediately. They can use the following channels:

- Reaching directly to the DSL or via CPOMS. If necessary, you can also alert other members of the Safeguarding Team. The members of the Team include: DSL/Deputy Head (Pastoral), Head of Wellbeing Team, Head of Learning Support, Head of Fifth Form, Head of Sixth Form.
- Write an e-mail to: safeguarding@akademeia.edu.pl
- Use an online and anonymous Safeguarding Box:
<https://www.safeguarding.akademeia.edu.pl/>

Students given guidance related to reporting concerns anonymously that anonymized reports can limit further investigation. They are encouraged that if they choose to disclose their name it is treated on a confidential basis (adhering to Safeguarding rules), and every effort will be made to maintain confidence unless they themselves are at risk of immediate harm. In addition, anonymous is signposted as a means for students to alert the safeguarding team of concerns related to others. Students are encouraged to provide the information as outline below.

When an incident is reported it should be remembered that the following details need to be included:

- When and where the incident happened
- Who was involved and who the witnesses were
- What happened
- Anything else that is important for the case

Reporting bullying – guidelines for parents

Parent's role in addressing bullying is vital. Therefore, the parents are strongly encouraged to reach out to staff members to report any concerning incidents. The parents can contact their child's mentor, Wellbeing Team members, Heads of Years, Heads of Forms or the DSL/ Deputy Head (Pastoral) and provide them with as many details as possible. The family's identity will be protected.

Parents are also encouraged to participate in Wellbeing Team seminars, organised on a termly basis. The webinars are dedicated to issues related to teenagers' wellbeing and mental health, which may help parents to identify any early warning signs.

Addressing bullying incidents

In the process of addressing bullying incidents, the following steps will be taken:

- **Internal investigation:** Once a bullying report is received, the DSL will immediately conduct an internal investigation. This may involve interviewing the person experiencing bullying, potential witnesses, and – potentially – an identified bully. The interviews involve the DSL and other member of Safeguarding Team. Investigation will also include gathering any available evidence, such as screenshots of online harassment.
- **Further steps:** After the investigation is completed, appropriate disciplinary steps are implemented, in line with AHS Disciplinary Policy, outlined in AHS Handbook. The decision regarding any disciplinary actions taken will be based on the severity of incident, context of the incident, previous disciplinary action taken against students involved and other important factors (e.g. psychological assessment of a bullying student). Therefore, all decisions are in fact highly situation-specific. The disciplinary measures are consulted with the Headmaster.
- If a case involves a criminal offence, relevant authorities will be informed (e.g. the police).
- **Communication of further steps:** once a decision is made, student and parents receive a letter outlining disciplinary consequences introduced. If necessary, a meeting is organised with a student/parents explaining the disciplinary consequences. The decision is also shared with student's mentor and teachers in order to ensure effective monitoring of the situation.



- Documentation of incidents: Safeguarding Team members document all reported incidents of bullying in a consistent and organized manner. The documentation includes details of the incident, such as the date, time, location, individuals involved, witnesses, and a description of the incident. This information will help in investigations and tracking patterns of bullying behaviour.
- Support for the person experiencing bullying: A person reporting bullying incident will be offered support from the Wellbeing Team in a form of 1:1 meeting(s). They will receive resources to help them cope with the emotional and psychological effects of bullying.
- Communication with parents: Parents or guardians of both a person experiencing bullying and a bully are informed about the reported incident, the actions taken, and any follow-up steps.
- Follow-up and monitoring: This will include regular check-ups with the person who experienced bullying (by a mentor/wellbeing team member). The behaviour of a bullying person should also be monitored by their teachers/mentor.

Policy evaluation and review

The effectiveness of AHS Anti-Bullying policy and associated prevention strategies will be annually reviewed and updated if necessary, based on its effectiveness and feedback from students, staff members and parents, as well as to reflect changes in legal requirements, emerging trends, and best practices in bullying prevention and intervention.

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