

The Learning Tree Montessori Education Centre



Anti-Bullying Policy

Legal Status:

- Prepared with reference to DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying
- Having regard for the guidance set out in the DIE (Don't Suffer in Silence booklet)

Applies to:

- The whole tuition centre

We aim, as a tuition centre, to produce a safe and secure environment where all can learn without anxiety.

Children have the right to be emotionally, socially and physically healthy and to learn in emotionally, socially and physically safe environments to enjoy learning and achieve their full potential. Incidents of bullying threaten this and cause enormous stress to victims. We are therefore strongly committed to the avoidance of bullying in all its forms. We believe that the principle means of preventing it is through the maintenance of conditions where bullying is less likely to flourish and is more easily detected. As we are a small tuition centre, all children are known to us personally and it is therefore easier for us to detect signs of possible distress. Moreover, we feel that it is important that children have free and informal access to both of the Proprietors and any other staff.

We need to ensure that our curriculum gives our young people the knowledge and skills to take responsibility for these outcomes - initially for themselves - and then for others to whom they relate and eventually for others who may be in their care. Despite our aspirations, a formal anti-bullying policy is of utmost importance.

What is bullying?

Bullying is a repeated action taken by one or more children with the deliberate intention of hurting another child, either physically or emotionally. Bullying is any behaviour by one child to another that is intimidating, cohesive, threatening or violent. It may be of a physical, verbal or social nature, including racist, sexist and homophobic actions / attitudes. It may also be a combination of these. A child who is bullying has reached a stage of cognitive development where he or she is able to plan to carry out a premeditated intent to cause distress to another.

Bullying can occur in children five years old and over and may well be an issue in after school clubs and holiday schemes catering for slightly older children. We believe that bullying is a behaviour or set of behaviours. It does not define a child's identity. We need to make this distinction when we are tempted to call a child "a bully". Behaviours are short term and changeable.

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It is recognised that many children will, in the process of developing relationships with other children, experiment with socially unacceptable behaviour. This does not make a child 'a bully' but does require an immediate and clear response from The Learning Tree. It is also recognised that there are playground games such as mock fighting that some children find intimidating. Name-calling is always intimidating.

'A pupil is being bullied or picked on, when another pupil or group of pupils says nasty things to him or her. It is also bullying when a pupil is hit, kicked, threatened, locked inside a room, sent nasty notes, when no-one talks to them and things like that. These things can happen frequently and it is difficult for the pupil to defend him/herself. It is also bullying when a pupil is teased repeatedly in a nasty way. (Olweus 1991)

If two children of equal power or strength have an occasional fight or quarrel, this is not necessarily bullying and will be dealt with using the measures in the behaviour policy. It may be further defined as the deliberate and repeated attempt to humiliate, threaten, frighten or hurt someone by means of verbal or physical abuse, and could also include racial, religious, cultural, sexual/sexist, homophobic, cyber (social websites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and email) bullying or because of their special educational needs or disability. A feature of bullying in educational settings is that its existence is not always immediately known or suspected by those in authority. The Learning Tree recognises the seriousness of bullying in causing psychological damage and even suicide. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

The Aims and Objectives of the anti-bullying policy are:

- to enable all members of The Learning Tree community to understand what constitutes bullying, making it clear to children, staff, parents and guardians that bullying is completely unacceptable and that children and young people have the right to be protected from physical, written and oral abuse or intimidation;
- to increase the sensitivity of The Learning Tree community to incidents of bullying, encouraging openness in which children, staff and guardians act immediately if there is any suspicion of bullying;
- to provide a clear framework for dealing with incidents of bullying, ensuring that bullies are dealt with swiftly and firmly;
- to provide counselling / help for victims of bullies and for bullies themselves;
- to create and maintain a caring, kind, non-violent and non-threatening atmosphere in the centre by, regular staff training to raise their awareness and through educational opportunities that arise such as Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE), the Peace Circle, the involvement of guest speakers and assemblies and also by ensuring that staff treat children with respect and empathy;
- to raise awareness of staff through training, taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely.

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Bullying can be:

- Emotional (indirect bullying) including isolation of others by a refusal to co-operate with them and exclusion - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures), deliberately excluding from social groups or an activity by refusal to sit next to/ talk to/ work/ co-operate with others and refusal to follow staff instructions to do the above, or malicious rumours, e-mails or text messages, and also exclusion from play/discussions etc. with those whom they believe to be their friends.
- Physical harm or its threat, including the abuse of personal property - jostling, serious fighting, pushing, kicking, hitting, taking or hiding belongings, punching or any use of violence; deliberately destroying or damaging work or possessions or removing personal property, use of weapons/threatened use of weapon (or any object which could be used as a weapon), intimidation through physical gestures and actions;
- Cyber - not occurring face to face but rather through electronic means including, but not limited to, social networking sites, internet and intranet sites, email, instant messaging, by mobile phone including through text messages and phone calls, photographs both real and manipulated etc.
- Peer on peer abuse can manifest itself in many ways. This may include bullying (including cyber bullying), physical abuse, sexual violence / sexual harassment 'sexting' or initiation / hazing type violence and rituals.
- Race - Bullying directs at individuals of a certain race, culture, ethnicity, language, faith, community, national origin or national status. The distinctive feature of racist bullying is that the victim is attacked not as an individual but as the representative of a family, community or group. This is an area where educational settings are required to keep statistics about incidents. (We have a Racial Log).
- Cultural- focusing on and/or playing of perceived cultural differences etc.;
- Sexist - covers a wide range of behaviour from name calling to physical sexual assault. It is the use of sexual language or negative stereotyping on the basis of gender.
- Sexual - is unwanted or inappropriate physical contact or sexual innuendo.
- Homophobic - This is bullying which is directed towards people who are openly gay, bisexual, are perceived as gay, or show characteristics heterosexual young people subject to homophobic bullying are less reluctant to report it as this may enforce the stereotypical way that they are already viewed by others so sensitivity and positive support is required for victims.
- Religious - Attacking faith, belief, religious practice or custom;
- Disability - remarking upon, drawing attention to, or discriminating against persons with physical disabilities or learning difficulties;
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, making snide comments, teasing, humiliating others, threatening others, inciting others to humiliate and threaten others; and
- Written - on paper.

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Bullying can take place between child and child, staff and staff and staff and child. We consider the pastoral care of the staff and children to be of prime importance. At The Learning Tree this role largely rests with the tutors. It is The Learning Tree policy that any misdemeanour will be dealt with by the member of staff present when it occurs, whether on the playing field, classroom, cloakroom or any part of the centre. A common code of behaviour is expected from everyone at The Learning Tree (see Behaviour Policy). Staff are expected to treat each other with a professional level of respect.

The effects of bullying

All forms of bullying are hurtful and may have a devastating effect on those who are bullied. Whilst some children may recover from bullying, there are others who suffer lasting consequences. Children who are bullied may see themselves as inadequate and friendless and suffer from loss of confidence and low self-esteem.

Bullies may also suffer from long lasting consequences and if offered no support, may continue with bullying behaviour into their adult lives. For this reason, it is important that they receive support to enable them to change their behaviour.

Aspects of bullying

Here are some examples of bullying behaviour:

- hitting, kicking, pushing people around, spitting
- name calling, taunting, teasing, insulting
- intimidating, isolating or excluding from the group
- spreading rumours or writing unkind notes
- taking, damaging or hiding possessions
- talking to or touching the victim in a sexually inappropriate way
- initiation rites or 'ceremonies', particularly those that may cause embarrassment, pain or anxiety. These are absolutely forbidden at The Learning Tree
- isolating or teasing someone on the basis of their gender, race, religion or beliefs, culture, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disability.
- a pattern of minor illnesses
- withdrawn behaviour
- unexplained tearfulness

Preventative Approaches

Children and young people do not separate their experience into boxes or outcomes. Everything is fitted together as one on-going experience. The five outcomes from the Every Child Matters Agenda need to be seen as interdependent - that is:

- be healthy
- stay safe
- enjoy and achieve

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- make a positive contribution
- achieve economic well-being.

Integrating these elements will help us ensure that our curriculum gives our young people the knowledge and skills to take responsibility for achieving these outcomes - initially for themselves - and then for others to whom they relate and eventually for others who may be in their care.

Strategies in use at The Learning Tree to address bullying

Preventative strategies

The Learning Tree's behaviour policy makes expectations clear to children in class about their behaviour with others and promoting positive behaviours. Use of the normal behaviour management strategies, as described in the behaviour policy, should be used to ensure bullying does not begin to develop.

We use various educational elements such as our personal, social and health education (PSHE) resources, circle time and social stories to highlight the essential anti-bullying messages and maintain awareness of potential problems, striving to prevent any form of bullying through education. Children are encouraged to share their concerns with the adults responsible for them.

The anti-bullying policy is dovetailed with The Learning Tree's behaviour policy (with support for the victim and the bully) and makes it clear what the sanctions are for bullying (strong sanctions such as exclusion may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying). Handling of a bullying incident is given much thought to ensure that the facts are fully known, agreed and understood by the bully(/ies) and the victim(s). Bullying instances are reported and recorded so that patterns can be identified.

Each child is treated fairly and with respect. Members of staff to whom disclosures are made should initiate the following procedures themselves and/or consult with the relevant staff as appropriate. All disclosures, whether from a child, a parent or a member of staff, should be taken seriously and treated with sensitivity. The victim should be made aware that their safety is considered to be of paramount importance. Parents will always be informed if their child has been found to be either a victim or a perpetrator of a bullying incident. All instances of suspected bullying should be recorded in writing and passed to the Proprietors.

Incidents will be carefully recorded. Victims, alleged bullies and witnesses should be interviewed separately by the tutor first involved and are required to write down independent accounts of the incidents/situations. In the course of this procedure enquiries should be made to ascertain whether or not the alleged bully has been involved in similar incidents involving this or other children, thus enabling patterns of behaviour to be established.

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Spotting bullying

Much of the behaviour which leads to both bullying and intimidation is difficult to observe or can be seen as innocent when it is not. It is therefore essential that staff listen carefully to what children say and watch for any signs that a child may be being intimidated. In particular look for changes in behaviour. Typically, although not exclusive, changes to become quiet, shy, fearful or using avoidance behaviour may be clues, although in some cases a child may "pass on" what is happening to them to other people at The Learning Tree, and so may become more physical or vocal themselves.

Signs of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a child is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to The Learning Tree
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. change to accent or vocabulary).
- Psychological damage and diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent reports of symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrivals to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away.

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and tutors.

The staff must always pass on their concern to the other members of staff working with the child and report these concerns to the Proprietors.

Once a bullying incident has occurred (We use the "Support Group" approach Ref. see Appendix A.)

The children are constantly encouraged to tell someone. We involve parents of all parties. If a child bullies another child or children:

- We show the children who have been bullied that we are able to listen to their concerns and act upon them;
- We intervene to stop the child who is bullying from harming the other child or children;
- We explain to the child doing the bullying why her/his behaviour is not acceptable;

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- We give reassurance to the child or children who have been bullied;
- We help the child who has done the bullying to recognise the impact of their actions;
- We make sure that children who bully receive positive feedback for considerate behaviour and are given opportunities to practise and reflect on considerate behaviour;
- We do not label children who bully as 'bullies';
- We recognise that children who bully may be experiencing bullying themselves, or be subject to abuse or other circumstance causing them to express their anger in negative ways towards others;
- We recognise that children who bully are often unable to empathise with others and for this reason we do not insist that they say sorry unless it is clear that they feel genuine remorse for what they have done. Empty apologies are just as hurtful to the bullied child as the original behaviour;
- We discuss what has happened with the parents of the child who did the bullying and work out with them a plan for handling the child's behaviour; and
- We share what has happened with the parents of the child who has been bullied, explaining that the child who did the bullying is being helped to adopt more acceptable ways of behaving.

All staff are informed and asked to be aware of what is going on with the victim and the bully.

Bully victims are given the space to say how they would like incidents to be dealt with.

Children vary:

- Some like to talk to the bully face to face with a tutor present
- Some like to have a member of staff deal directly with the bully
- Some just want the tuition centre to watch out for incidents at first
- Some want the chance for a supervised talk with friends to sort out relationship problems

It depends on the nature and severity of the bullying.

Advice to children about bullying

This advice is openly discussed with children and staff take opportunities to reiterate whenever it is appropriate, not waiting until an incident has occurred, in PHSE type discussions for example.

- No-one deserves to be bullied - remember you have a right for this not to happen to you.
- If you are a victim of bullying, you can tell a member of staff and/or your parent/carer (anyone you feel safe to talk to). It is not weak to do this.
- If you cannot tell anyone at The Learning Tree, you can tell your parents.

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- Friends of victims should let staff know of bullying incidents.

Advice to parents/carers about bullying

If your child is bullying or being bullied they may:

- Change their behaviour
- Be unwilling to talk about their day - it is quite common for children not to want to talk about their day directly after they leave. You might find children more willing to talk during bath time or bedtime story when they are more relaxed
- Look less happy
- Come home with toys and things you have not bought for them
- Not want to wear their glasses
- Take things from home without you knowing.
- Avoid certain children or activities
- Be reluctant to come to the centre

Please talk to someone at The Learning Tree if you see these things or feel something is wrong, and get a copy of our Information Sheet.

How can parents help to prevent bullying?

- Everybody gets angry. Help your child to express it without hurting others
- Encourage your child to tell a member of staff straightaway if they get hurt at The Learning Tree
- Praise your child when they sort out problems by talking rather than hurting others
- Make immediate contact with The Learning Tree at any time over bullying incidents
- Do not intervene with other children's parents, but let The Learning Tree know
- Allow The Learning Tree to seek further professional advice and support over difficult bullying

Sanctions

Where children do not respond to preventive strategies to combat bullying, The Learning Tree will need to take tougher action to deal with persistent bullying. As part of our behaviour policy, we have a range of sanctions we can use.

We ensure that the whole Learning Tree community knows what sanctions will be taken and that they are fairly and consistently applied. Sanctions include:

- Removal from the group (in class)
- Withdrawal of lunchtime and/or afternoon privileges
- Withholding participation in any trip that are not an essential part of the curriculum
- A fixed period exclusion

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Where serious violence is involved and/or these sanctions do not result in a change of behaviour, the Proprietors have the option to permanently exclude a child.

Conclusion

- Bullying behaviour in any shape or form is not an acceptable part of life at The Learning Tree.
- It is counter to all we are working to achieve.
- Any suggestion of bullying behaviour is treated very seriously.
- We listen to what we are told, we report what we observe.
- We will work hard to ensure all the children at The Learning Tree have a safe and secure environment in which to learn and grow.
- We will use the methods outlined in this, and other, policies to ensure this happens.
- We are happy to be held accountable against these policies, either by each other, parents or external bodies. We believe this creates a safer learning environment.

Appendix A

A brief Summary of the "Support Group" Approach

- **Step One - meet with the targeted child.**

After a bullying incident has been referred for "support group" intervention, the facilitator will talk to the targeted child and his/her feelings. No questions are asked about the incidents but information is needed about who was involved.

- **Step Two - convene a meeting with the people involved.**

The facilitator arranges to meet with the group of children who have been involved. This will include children who have been directly involved as well some bystanders or colluders and either friends of the target or good role models. A group of six to eight young people is recommended.

- **Step Three - explain the problem**

The facilitator tells the group about the way the target is feeling and might use a poem, piece of writing or a drawing to emphasise his/her distress.

- **Step Four - share responsibility**

The facilitator does not attribute blame but does emphasise the joint blame and does emphasise the joint responsibility of all to help the targeted child feel happy and safe.

- **Step Five - ask the group for their ideas**

Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the targeted child could be helped to feel happier and safer. The facilitator gives out some positive responses but she/he does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

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- **Step Six - Leave it up to them**

The facilitator ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. She/he arranges to "catch up" with each of the group in a few days (or sooner if appropriate) to see how things are going.

- **Step Seven - meet them later**

A few days later and then regularly for a number of weeks, the facilitator discusses with each child, including the targeted child, how things have been going. In some situations a simple non-verbal signal can be used to indicate how well the plan is going such as "thumbs up". This allows the facilitator to monitor the bullying and keep the young people involved in the process. This monitoring should continue until the facilitator is confident that the bullying has stopped. All monitoring needs to be recorded.

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ANTI-BULIYING CODE

Principles

Every person has the RIGHT to feel secure and happy at The Learning Tree. The Learning Tree Community will not tolerate any unkind actions or remarks.

No child should suffer verbal abuse.

No child should suffer physical violence.

No child should feel victimised by another.

Every child has a RESPONSIBILITY to ensure that harassment is not tolerated.

Every child is ENTITLED to respect from others.

Staff guarantee to take bullying seriously and deal with each incident appropriately and discreetly.

Persistent offenders may be excluded, in extreme cases, permanently.

Bullying is one aspect of behaviour which causes hurt and anxiety to children.

Bullying is an issue which would cause parents some concern.

Bullying is knowingly committing unkind acts towards another individual.

Bullying may include:-

Physical harm or threat of physical harm.

Destroying, damaging or hiding property.

Spreading rumours.

Name calling or teasing.

Deliberately excluding someone from an activity.

Any child or children who wilfully causes distress to other children will be accused of bullying.

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PARENTS INFORMATION SHEET - ANTI-BULLYING

Is it bullying?

It is if on more than one occasion individuals or groups are:

- calling your child names;
- teasing, taunting and insulting your child;
- threatening your child;
- pressuring your child to give someone money or possessions;
- hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting at your child;
- damaging your child's possessions;
- spreading rumours about your child or your family; intimidating, isolating or excluding your child from a group;
- using text, email or web space to write or say hurtful things about your child (cyber bullying).

It is bullying if your child feels hurt because of things said about his/her ethnic background, religious faith, gender, disability, special educational need, appearance or issues in your family or of a homophobic or sexist nature.

Although possibly distressing to parents, it is not bullying when children fall out and argue. In these situations, The Learning Tree will respond to deal with unhappy, angry or worried children and welcome support from parents.

What should you do if your child is being bullied?

Talk to the Learning Tree staff about the bullying. The first point of contact to report concerns about bullying is to your child's tutor.

- It will help to sort out what action to take if you can bear in mind that the tutor may have no idea that your child is being bullied or may have heard conflicting accounts of an incident.
- Be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened, give dates, places and names of other children involved.
- Make a note of what action The Learning Tree intends to take.
- Ask if there is anything you can do to help your child.
- Stay in touch with the centre. Let them know if things improve as well as if problems continue.

What will The Learning Tree do?

The Learning Tree does not tolerate bullying. This is what we do about bullying. We will:

- work to make sure that the person being bullied feels safe;
- work to stop the bullying happening again;

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- provide support to the person being bullied;
- take actions to ensure that the person doing the bullying learns not to harm others;
- discuss any problems with the parents of any children involved.

Families who feel that their concerns are not being addressed appropriately by their child's tutor should make an appointment to discuss the matter with one of the Proprietors.

CHILD INFORMATION SHEET ANTI-BULLYING

Is it bullying?

It is if you feel hurt because on more than one occasion individuals or groups are:

- calling you names;
- threatening you;
- pressurising you to give someone money or possessions;
- hitting, kicking, pushing you;
- spitting at you;
- damaging your possessions;
- spreading rumours about you or your family;
- taking, damaging or hiding your belongings;
- intimidating, isolating or excluding you from a group;
- using text, email or web space to write or say hurtful things (cyber bullying).

It is bullying if you feel hurt because of things said about your:

- ethnic background;
- appearance;
- religious faith;
- gender;
- disability;
- homophobic or sexist nature;
- special educational need;
- appearance;
- issues in your family.

We do not tolerate bullying.

This is what we do about bullying:

- make sure that the person being bullied is safe;
- work to stop the bullying happening again;
- provide support to the person being bullied.

What should you do?

- Tell an adult of your choice.
- If you feel nervous about doing this by yourself take a friend with you