

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. Definition and Recognition of Bullying

- There is a national concern about bullying. Workplace bullying, domestic violence, violence in the streets, racism, institutional bullying, and even road rage have all been highlighted as public areas of concern.
- One in five children say that they witnessed bullying within the last month bullied according to a 2018 National Survey.
- The 2017 National Green Paper highlighted that vulnerable children were the most likely to endure bullying and over half may experience mental health problems as a result.

A definition of bullying is fundamental to the purpose of this policy.

'Bullying is behaviour which can be defined as the repeated deliberate attack (physical, verbal, emotional or psychological) by an individual or a group deemed to be in a position of power, on one or more who is deemed to be powerless to resist, with the intention of causing distress for their own gain or gratification.'

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** – unfriendliness, excluding, tormenting (e.g. threatening gestures)
- **Physical** – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Racial** – racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual** – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic** – because of, or focussing on, the issue of sexuality
- **Verbal** – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber** – all areas of internet, such as social media, email, mobile phone threats by text messaging/Whatsapp and calls/misuse of associated technology i.e. camera and video facilities.

2. Our Philosophy

- As a community, we believe everyone has the right to come to Bounce Theatre and enjoy being in a safe environment, free from bullying, harassment, or violence.
- Our community should be one that is secure, safe and stable, where young people can progress and achieve.
- Bounce Theatre should protect any bullied student and make effective arrangements for the person's continued support.
- We believe that it is essential to develop in all young people a sense that:
 - it is behaviours that are inappropriate, not people;
 - condoning or ignoring bullying is wrong;
 - people can influence and change a situation for the better; and
 - collectively and individually, young people have responsibility for their own behaviour and can influence others' behaviour.

3. Purpose

The aims of this policy are:

- that all Executive Directors, staff, volunteers, young people, and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is;
- that all Executive Directors, staff, and volunteers should know what the Bounce Theatre policy is on bullying and follow it when bullying is reported;
- that all young people and parents should know what the policy is on bullying and what they should do if bullying arises;
- that we take bullying seriously. Young people and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported;
- that bullying will not be tolerated;
- to encourage confidence, self-esteem, a feeling of security, ownership, and active participation;
- to reward responsible and caring behaviour;
- to promote positive, non-violent discipline which reinforces pro-social, anti-violent attitudes;
- to respond to bullying as a Bounce Theatre issue and recognise that both bullies and the bullied have emotional and social needs;
- to recognise that bullying is wrong, morally and socially unacceptable, and should not be tolerated in any environment;
- to make our response to bullying swift, clear and firm;
- to stress our abhorrence of bullying at all times and in all places; and
- to adopt maximum vigilance to counteract bullying.

4. Practice

4.1 Heart of the Matter

All Bounce Theatre staff must encourage and enable young people who are being bullied to tell someone without delay. Staff must then ensure prompt action follows.

4.2 Signs and Symptoms

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

- is frightened of walking to or from Bounce Theatre's venues;
- does not want to go on the public bus;
- begs to be driven to the centre;
- changes their usual routine;
- is unwilling to go to Bounce Theatre;
- begins to truant;
- becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence;
- starts stammering;
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away;
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares;
- feels ill more often;
- begins to do poorly in activities;
- comes to our venues with clothes torn or personal possessions damaged or 'gone missing';
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully);
- has money continually 'lost';
- has unexplained cuts or bruises;
- comes to Bounce Theatre hungry (money/food has been stolen);
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- is bullying other children or siblings;

- stops eating;
- is frightened to say what is wrong;
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above;
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone; or
- is nervous and jumpy when a cyber message is received.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated. Executive Directors, staff, and volunteers must be aware of all these signs to ensure early identification. Bullies may:

- lack ability to empathise with others;
- have difficulty making friends;
- have low self esteem;
- be self-hating;
- have an unrecognised special need;
- have changing, difficult or hostile living circumstances;
- have experienced harsh, physical punishments themselves;
- have experienced rejection;
- have experienced humiliation;
- be unable to relate their actions with their consequences; or
- express no remorse.

4.3 Creating an Atmosphere Where the Bullied Feel Safe to Tell

- Explicit statements by all staff that bullying is unacceptable.
- Publishing this policy to young people, staff, volunteers, and parents to promote the confidence to speak out.
- Creating an environment where kindness is celebrated and judgement is avoided.
- Setting out our standards on signs on display around the Bounce Theatre venues.
- Regular discussion with staff and volunteers, and in-house training as necessary.
- Getting the word around that 'telling' leads to a prompt and sympathetic response and resolution. This will encourage the 'tellers' and deter the bullies.
- Ensuring necessary confidentiality for 'tellers'. Encouraging staff and volunteers to be observant, sensitive, and good listeners.
- Pointing out to young people that they have a responsibility to 'tell' if they know of another young person who is being bullied.
- Make it clear that both "bully" and "victim" are labels, and we must try to see the people beyond them.
- Breaking down (with a great deal of persistent persuasion) the culture that says one should not tell; that it is weak or shameful to tell; that there is no point in telling; that the bully will seek revenge if one tells; that one must just shrug one's shoulders and put up with it; that everyone must expect their share of this suffering.
- Providing a caring and supportive environment so the bullied young people can tell someone.
- However, it is everyone's responsibility to be vigilant and good listeners.

5. Staff Training

- All Bounce Theatre staff and volunteers will be given in-house training to help them develop skills relevant to this policy.

- Opportunities are given during staff supervision and meetings to raise the awareness to discuss the topic of bullying.

6. Action to be taken when a Child tells:

- The member of staff or volunteer told must first listen carefully and, if there seems to be a genuine case of bullying, initiate immediate action either on his/her own part or personally refer the matter to the Safeguarding Officer, Louise Pendry on louise@bouncetheatre.com or phone 07980 210705. The complaint must not be dismissed or ignored.
- It may be sufficient to go to the scene or summon the bully and then mediate with advice, reprimand, and extracting assurances. A careful written record must be kept and the victim asked when next seen to ensure that there has been no repetition.
- Where necessary, a regular appointment may be made to 'check in' with both parties, to ensure that it is clear the situation cannot continue.
- A case judged to be more serious must be investigated, necessary action taken, and parents of both bully and victim informed.
- Consideration should be given to contacting parents at an earlier stage on a case by case basis.
- A few young people may appear to 'attract' bullying, and they may need particular support to avoid this and on how to integrate better.
- At all times the victim should be made to feel safe. It may mean that anonymous evidence has to be taken in order to protect others. Staff and volunteers must use their professional discretion but they must record their actions and communicate their concerns.
- The experience of bullying should be halted quickly, and the bullied young person is helped to feel safe and secure. Steps must be taken to overcome a young person's reluctance to tell, whether from:
 - fearing reprisals;
 - feeling that they are 'grassing';
 - feeling ashamed of their vulnerability;
 - feeling inadequate in being unable to sort out their own problems.
- The Executive Directors and staff may consider speaking to the whole theatre group mentioning names in order to encourage shared responsibility and give whole group support. Staff and volunteers must monitor this approach carefully.
- Support programmes can be put in place:
 - ongoing monitoring by staff and volunteers;
 - referral to external support services.

7. Policy Review

Bounce Theatre is committed to reviewing this policy on an annual basis.

Date Reviewed: November 2023

Next Review Date: November 2024