



Lesmahagow High School

Promoting Positive Relationships Policy



Context

Lesmahagow High School's Promoting Positive Relationships guidelines is in the process of being updated. While many of the principles and ideas from our previous anti-bullying policy are still relevant, there was a need to update these guidelines in line with the following documentation:

- Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People (2017)
- Treat Me Well Anti-Bullying Behaviour Guidance (2018)
- Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour (2019)
- United Nations Convention for the Rights of the Child
- Equally Safe At School – Pilot Scheme 2019/20

We aim to ensure that our new policy works for everyone at Lesmahagow High School. In a recent survey, 86.3% of our young people said they felt safe in school. Our objective is to have 100% of young people feeling safe in school, emphasising the need for a comprehensive policy and whole school approach to promoting positive relationships.

Our young people have been working on updating our promoting positive relationships and anti-bullying approach over the past year. In partnership with the Dianna Award, several of our young people have become Anti-Bullying Ambassadors. An **Anti-Bullying Ambassador** is someone who has been trained by The **Diana Award Anti-Bullying** Campaign. Their role is to help educate their peers on **bullying**, lead **anti-bullying** campaigns, promote a culture which celebrates difference and to help keep their peers safe as well as help to promote positive relationships amongst their learning community.



In consultation with pupils, parents and staff, a set of guidelines has been created to support all pupils regarding bullying behaviour. While we understand that this behaviour will occur, as a school community, we seek to reduce it, minimise its impact and support all pupils.

Statement of Intent

At Lesmahagow High School, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment, built upon mutual respect and dignity for all. We want all of our pupils to learn in a happy, relaxed and safe atmosphere. Central to this is creating an ethos of respect for all. Positive relationships between pupils, parents, staff and the wider community are essential to building and maintaining an ethos of respect for all.

Promoting positive relationships are key to developing an inclusive and positive ethos and any behaviours or actions, which contradict this, including acts of bullying, are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in this school.

When this form of behaviour does occur and is reported to us, we will endeavour to deal with it promptly and effectively. Like all schools, Lesmahagow High School is fully committed to the elimination of such behaviours.

The breakdown of relationships and bullying behaviour can leave victims hurt, distressed and frightened preventing young people from feeling safe and happy, and impacting on their ability to achieve their potential.

Our school policy has been formulated to ensure the strategies we adopt are effective in dealing with all kinds of relationship difficulties that pupils may experience, including bullying. In Lesmahagow High School, we aim to deal with cases as quickly and sensitively as possible.

Policy objectives

South Lanarkshire's "Treat me Well Anti-Bullying Guidance" (South Lanarkshire, 2018) highlights that pupils will achieve their best in a safe and nurturing environment where there is a clear promoting positive relationships strategy in place. "Treat me Well" has five key components listed below, which will form the basis of our policy:

- A clear and working definition of bullying in line with the national approach
- A positive ethos and culture of respect
- Positive strategies and structures to support pupils
- A procedure for handling bullying incidents
- Recording, monitoring, evaluating and reporting

School Ethos

Health and wellbeing is the responsibility of all staff and it is a critical factor in creating and maintaining a positive ethos within Lesmahagow High School. Our aim is to have a positive ethos and culture of dignity, excellent behaviour, strong leadership, shared responsibility, inclusion and equality, partnership working and a sense of community.

Our vision (***Aspire to be your Best***) and values (**Respect, honesty, Ambition, Resilience and Equity**) are reinforced in a number of ways, including:

- Having a shared responsibility in making Lesmahagow High School a positive environment for all stakeholders
- Being accessible and approachable, creating a safe and welcoming environment
- Ensuring children are aware of their rights and are able to understand what constitutes responsible and respectful actions and attitudes
- Involvement of Pupil Council in updating our values and sharing concerns
- Restorative practices and solution-focused approaches
- Visual reminders, such as posters or school screen displays
- A growth mindset culture promoting resilience, confidence and a 'can do' attitude
- Discussion as part of our PSE curriculum
- Assemblies
- Activities such as role-play, art work, drama and literature

To maintain a positive ethos, we are committed to promoting and encouraging positive relationships amongst pupils, staff and parents. In order to do this there must be positive strategies and structures in place, and a clear procedure for handling serious breakdowns in relationships including bullying.

The topic of relationships and promoting positive values such as ***Respect, Honesty, Ambition, Resilience and Equity*** is frequently highlighted through our weekly year group assemblies, in Personal and Social Education as well as in other areas of the curriculum.

Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour (PPRUBB)

Lesmahagow High School foster the values and principles of the new authority wide guidance *Promoting Positive Relationships and Understanding Distressed Behaviour* launched in 2020. We place relationships at the heart of everything we do helping to develop a positive and inclusive ethos based on trust and mutual respect. This has a positive impact on behaviour and learning as young people feel safe and secure.

As a school, we are aware that positive relationships and an understanding that every behaviour is communicating a need are essential to the promotion of positive behaviour, the reduction of incidents of bullying and exclusion, improving learning and teaching and raising attainment and achievement of all.

When young people display signs of distress, we aim to deal with them empathetically with a view to understanding the thoughts and feelings behind their behaviour.

All staff are committed to ensuring the principles of social justice are promoted within the school.

What is bullying?

A clear and working definition of bullying is required so we are able to fully support pupils.

Respect Me has defined bullying as:

Bullying is both behaviour and impact; the impact on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what we term as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online. (Respect Me, 2015)

This behaviour can include:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened face-to-face or online
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked
- Having belongings taken or damaged
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face-to-face and/or online)
- Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or phones
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face to-face and/or online)
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face-to-face and/or online).

When is bullying something else?

It is equally important at this point to define what we say bullying ISN'T – namely the situations where friends have a 'fall-out'. In such instances, while there is still the need for support, it would not be considered within the terms of the anti-bullying policy unless, unresolved, it develops into something more serious.

There may also be times when what would appear to be bullying is, in fact, a **crime**.

Bullying is **not**:

- Hate crime
- Sexual harassment or assault
- Physical assault.

Children's Rights

Bullying is a clear breach of children's rights. The UNCRC (United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child) is a human rights treaty, which sets out the civil, political, economic, social, health and cultural rights of children. Bullying impacts on these rights and can do so in a variety of contexts:

- Asylum seekers and refugees
- Body image
- Disability bullying
- Gender and sexism

- Homophobic bullying
- Homelessness
- Care Experienced Children
- Peer pressure
- Racial bullying
- Religion and belief
- Sectarianism
- Young Carers

While not an exhaustive list, this clearly sets out many of the key contexts in which bullying can occur.

Protected Characteristics

At Lesmahagow High School, we challenge all types of prejudice-based bullying and language, particularly ones targeted toward the protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act 2010, which are:

- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Pregnancy
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation.

There are other forms of prejudice, which are also unacceptable, for example prejudice toward body image, poverty, young carers, and “looked after “children.

LGBTI+

At Lesmahagow High School we strive to prevent LGBTI+ bullying of any form.

LGBTI+ bullying can extend to any individual in our school community. Behaviour of this nature can include:

- Being singled-out, treated differently or subjected because an individual identifies as LGBTI+ or are assumed to be LGBTI+
- Misgendering
- Being subjected because family members identify as LGBTI+
- Being “outed” without permission
- Spreading of rumours / hearsay with malicious intent

Staff, pupils, parents and carers are expected to challenge inappropriate use of language such as “that’s gay” as by leaving it unchallenged it suggests that it is acceptable. We cannot condone homophobic, biphobic and transphobic language. No individual should be subjected to abusive language, and as a school we do **not** tolerate it.

At Lesmahagow High School we endeavour to exercise discretion and respect when responding to LGBTI+ bullying incidents. We also have a duty to respect a young person’s confidentiality. Like all bullying incidents, any LGBTI+ bullying incidents are expected to be referred to the appropriate Principal Teacher of Pupil Support. The young people involved will be spoken to, sanctions will be issued and, where necessary, parents/carers will be contacted. In addition to this, we work in close partnership with our Community Police Officer and other agencies to help pupils understand how their language and behaviour can impact on others in negative way as well as being aware of actions and comments which can be deemed as a Hate Crime.

Equally Safe At School

Lesmahagow High School is participating in a pilot programme called Equally Safe at school (ESAS) which is coordinated by Rape Crisis Scotland and evaluated by the University of Glasgow. ESAS is a whole school approach to preventing Gender Based Violence and promoting gender equality. It aims to equip schools with the tools to better challenge gender based violence and the attitudes that can facilitate it, as well as to build confidence and skills in responding to incidents and disclosures

This policy cannot fully address all forms of gender-based violence, such as sexual harassment and assault, as these may constitute criminal offences and require a response beyond the scope of an anti-bullying policy. However, by understanding and tackling the ways that bullying can reinforce gender norms and stereotypes, we can help to tackle some of the behaviours that may lead to sexual harassment and other forms of gender-based violence. Therefore, we may refer to this Promoting Positive Relationships policy in addressing these issues.

In addition to standing against bullying, Lesmahagow High School has also adopted a whole school approach to standing up against gender-based violence. We should:

- Challenge gender stereotypes and sexism
- Offer a consistent message that all forms of gender-based violence are unacceptable
- Sensitively approach issues of this nature
- Where necessary, refer those involved to specialist organisations, such as Lanarkshire Rape Crisis Centre and Women’s Aid, for support
- Be taught how to identify, respond to and challenge gender-based violence

Positive Strategies

Proactive strategies and structures within and between establishments support children and young people and seek to prevent the breakdown of relationships, including bullying or minimise its effect where it does occur. In line with the PPRUDB documentation, we aim to promote positive relationships and mutual respect amongst our young people, staff and parents, and manage any situation that does arise in a restorative and supportive manner. With this in mind, it is imperative that a clear structure is in place to ensure key stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities.

In line with PPRUDB guidance it is important that we appreciate that all behaviour is communication. As a school, we must try to support all parties in incidents where a breakdown in relationship has occurred. To do this we may look to engage with external agencies in order to ensure the correct support is received by all involved. This may include:

- Adjusting an individual's timetable
- Time-out cards
- A safe space where they can go at lunch and at interval
- Alternative curriculum options
- Being referred to an external agency to access more specific support
- Restorative practices

This is not an exhaustive list but provides examples of the various ways in which we can support all parties to restore relationships and address any underlying needs.

Managing a Break Down in Relationships

Outlined below are the key expectations and responsibilities of the key stakeholders:

All Lesmahagow High School staff will:

- Follow school policies regarding recording, monitoring and responding to incidents, including:
- Listening to all children and young people, to establish supportive relationships whereby young people feel secure in sharing information
- Reporting any bullying or serious incident
- Highlighting and correcting attitudes and behaviour that lead to a breakdown in relationships and discrimination
- Model behaviour / relationships that promote Health and Wellbeing, and build into everyday practice an ethos of caring and compassion
- Undertake continuous professional development or training promoting positive relationships
- Reassure anyone subjected to bullying that their concerns will be treated seriously
- Reassure the 'reporters' of anonymity, safety and that the matter will be treated seriously and investigated
- Be careful to **avoid the label 'bully'**. Instead, refer to specific the behaviours that could be considered as bullying behaviour

Pupil Support and SMT will:

- Reassure the young person this matter will be taken seriously
- Communicate with **all** pupils involved to ensure their views are taken into account
- Assess if restorative practices can be taken to resolve the situation
- Consider if a wider investigation will be required
- Liaise with parents/ carers and, where appropriate, wider agencies/ community members
- Communicate with staff to seek their support in minimising the impact of a break down in relationships, including incidents of bullying in the classroom environment
- Track and record incidents appropriately and in line with South Lanarkshire Council guidelines
- Ensure prejudice-based bullying incidents, which relate to protected characteristics are recorded in the appropriate way in line with South Lanarkshire Council guidelines
- Keep in regular contact with young people and ensure an outcome is reached and agreed on by all parties involved
- Evaluate success of strategies once situation is resolved
- Provide **information** on the effects of bullying and strategies to respond to bullying throughout the school **PSE** programme
- **Monitor** the social areas during break and lunch times

Parents: What is expected of you?

- Be aware of our promoting positive relationships policy and **promoting positive relationships and distressed behaviours documentation**
- **Be alert** to your child's wellbeing and relationships in school watching out for changes in their mood and personality
- **Understand** that fall-outs and changes in friendship groupings are not uncommon amongst young people
- Work with us to promote the message that the reporting of bullying is an **act of courage**
- Encourage your child to **use social media safely** and maturely and **monitor** their online activity
- **Familiarise yourself** with the language of social networking and know about the associated dangers for young people. The **CEOP** website offers advice on this
- **Alert** your child's **Pupil Support Teacher** as early as possible to any instances of bullying, **either of or by** your child
- Keep channels of communication open until the situation is resolved
- Be aware that the situation may not be resolved upon an initial meeting
- Contact the **police**, if behaviour is of a **criminal** nature.
- **Engage** through our Parent Council or other appropriate forums to contribute to and learn about our promoting positive relationships policy
- Not tell children to 'hit back' – this is a common response but not necessarily the best or safest option

What is expected of pupils?

- **Respect** all members of our community and **don't engage** in bullying behaviour
- Value **diversity** and never let our differences lead to any kind of 'slagging'
- **Avoid** getting into **confrontations**
- Use **social networking** with **maturity** and **care for others**.
- If bullying takes place online, **save the evidence** and remember that you have the option to **block** other people
- Talk to someone **you trust** if you have suffered a breakdown in relationships, including bullying, or know of someone who is. This could be a family member, a teacher or any member of staff, a friend or a senior pupil
- **Write down** your problem with bullying behaviour if you don't feel able to talk about it at first and hand it to a member of staff
- Be **supportive** of those experiencing any kind of bullying
- Build confidence, resilience, understanding and coping strategies to deal with challenges they encounter

Appendix 1: Procedure for Managing Serious Breakdown in Relationships and Bullying Incidents

All reported incidents of serious breakdowns in relationships are taken seriously in Lesmahagow High School. We deal sensitively with these offering the supports listed above where necessary to restore positive relationships wherever possible. Incidents of suspected bullying should be reported to the school as soon as possible. We endeavour to ensure there is effective early intervention in all instances of bullying and therefore avoid the need for formal action, however, we reserve the right to apply the following consequences if need be:

- Verbal warning
- Contact with parents
- Parental meeting
- Formal exclusion
- In extreme conditions and in collaboration with the Local Authority and parents, removal to another establishment and/or involvement of the police.

It is also important to ensure the person involved in the bullying behaviour is also provided with ongoing support, guidance and, where appropriate, formal counselling to help change the behaviour, which leads to bullying. The school will manage each case on an individual basis and provide supports and action when appropriate. We asked young people and they said that it was important for those involved in bullying incidents to receive support in order to help them change their behaviour.

In **every** case, the situation should be monitored over a period of months to ensure that there is no re-occurrence of behaviour which could lead to intimidation or harassment.

If such behaviour persists, the school will respond accordingly either by increasing the severity of the consequence or addressing the reasoning behind such behaviour through other means.

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| Policy to be reviewed: | 2022/23 Academic Year |
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