

## **Ascension Church, Haywards Heath**

Freely you have received, freely give. Matt 10:8

### **Anti-bullying policy for children and young people**

#### **Statement of intent**

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all of our children and young people so they can develop in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the Ascension Church. If bullying does occur, all children and young people should be able to tell and be confident that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a telling church. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the group leaders and be assured that they will be supported throughout any investigation.

#### **What Is Bullying?**

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person and results in pain and distress to the victim.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional - Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. threatening gestures);
- Physical - Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence;
- Racist - 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; and
- Cyber – using all areas of the internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging and calls, misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.

#### **Why is it important to respond to bullying?**

Bullying hurts and no one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Children and young people who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. We have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

#### **Objectives of this policy**

- Bullying will not be tolerated.
- All adults involved in working with children, as well as children and young people, should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All adults involved in working with children must know what the policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.

- All children/young people and parents should know what the policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.

## **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 they should investigate if a child:

- Is frightened of walking to or from the activity;
- Doesn't want to go home;
- Begs to be driven everywhere;
- Changes their usual routine;
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence;
- Starts stammering;
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away;
- Arrives with clothes torn or books damaged;
- Asks for money or starts stealing money;
- Has monies continually "lost";
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises;
- Arrives hungry/starving;
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- Is bullying other children or siblings;
- Is frightened to say what's wrong;
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above; or
- Is afraid of technology – mobile phones/the internet.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

## **Prevention**

Strategies can be adopted to prevent bullying. As and when appropriate, these may include:

- Writing a set of group rules;
- Signing a behaviour contract;
- Writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying;
- Reading stories about bullying or having them read to the group;
- Making up role plays; and
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters.

## **Procedures**

1. Report any bullying incident to the group leader.
2. In cases of serious or persistent bullying, the incidents must be recorded and the Safeguarding Officer informed.
3. In serious or persistent cases parents will be informed by the Safeguarding Officer and asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the problem.
4. If it is thought that an offence has been committed, the Safeguarding Officer will contact the Police.
5. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and all bullying stopped quickly.
6. An attempt will be made to help the bullies change their behaviour.

## **Outcomes**

- In serious cases, suspension or even exclusion from the group/activity will be considered.

- If possible, the children/young people will be reconciled.
- After the incident/incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.
- After the incident/incidents have been investigated parents/carers will be informed of the action taken.

## **Help Organisations**

Kidscape

Family Lives  
080 88 00 22 22

Youth Access

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