

The No Blame Approach to Bullying

THE NO BLAME APPROACH: THE SEVEN-STEP PROGRAMME

The 'facilitator' is a teacher or pastoral lead within the school, guiding the pupils through the process. A member of staff will not be expected to lead a 'No Blame' meeting unless they feel comfortable doing so. We recommend that a teacher does not lead a meeting themselves until they have witnessed another member of staff with experience of the process leading a meeting beforehand. In most cases, two members of staff will be involved in leading the group and in every instance, the Section Head and Junior School Deputy Head Pastoral will be aware the meeting is taking place and updated as necessary.

STEP 1

- The facilitator talks to the victim about his/her feelings and finds out what/who is involved.
- The facilitator should gather as much information as possible, asking open questions to do so.
- Information relating to specific comments or incidents should also be gathered, to build as clear a picture as possible of what has taken place.
- The victim might be asked to write key words/information down, or draw a picture if they are finding it difficult to articulate a situation.
- The remaining steps are explained to the pupil and they are encouraged to present examples of the upsetting behaviour and his/her feelings as a part of Step 2.
- The facilitator explains that in when the group is gathered for the following steps, no one will name the pupil/s involved and a 'no blame' approach will be applied.
- A list of perpetrators, bystanders (if appropriate) and trusted friends who might be able to help is drawn up and the victim will be expected to attend the meeting in Step 2.

STEP 2

- The facilitator meets with the agreed group of people, decided during Step 1 of the process.
- The victim, or the facilitator on their behalf, explains the victim's feelings and the

behaviour they have experienced.

- If appropriate, specific incidents can be mentioned, though the names of pupils will not be used.
- It is made clear to all pupils that no blame is being applied throughout.
- If the victim feels comfortable talking about their experience, they are able to do so without naming the perpetrator/s or bystanders.

STEP 3

- The facilitator explains or elicits from pupils that the behaviour sounds like it falls into the category of bullying.
- The facilitator reinforces that as a school we do not tolerate bullying and that we therefore need to make some important decisions in the meeting. If the issue can be resolved and the victim is happier, then there is no need for parents to be involved or sanctions imposed.
- It is made clear to the pupils that the most serious cases of bullying can result in a pupil being removed from the College. It is explained that the purpose of the meeting is to make things better, not, at this stage, to blame anyone. If we can achieve this outcome, then things will not be pursued further. If, however, the situation is not resolved, then a full investigation would need to be held.

STEP 4

- The facilitator asks if the group feels they can help in improving the situation.
- The facilitator explains that the group has been identified as a group of pupils who together can make the situation better for the victim.

STEP 5

- The facilitator encourages the members of the group to suggest how the victim could be helped to feel happier.
- Pupils within the group offer ideas and strategies about what can be done to help improve the situation.
- The facilitator positively receives ideas, without passing judgement or correcting what is said.
- All of the ideas should be welcomed and as many pupils within the group as possible should participate in offering suggestions.

STEP 6

- The facilitator should summarise the strategies once all ideas have been received and if appropriate, ask the victim if they feel these ideas would help them to feel better.
- The facilitator suggests that these strategies should all be applied to see whether they have a successful outcome and will assist in making the victim feel happier.
- It is explained by the facilitator that it is important that the meeting is not discussed once the pupils leave the room. Any instances of “I can’t believe you told...” or similar will be dealt with very seriously.

STEP 7

- The facilitator decides what an appropriate review time scale should be.
- Another meeting is organised to see how things are progressing.
- Depending on the progress, the facilitator will arrange follow up meetings as deemed necessary to be confident that the issue is resolved.
- The usual timescale would involve the next meeting being the following day, with other meetings taking place the following week.
- The victim will be given the chance to speak individually to the facilitator during this time period to give them the opportunity to discuss if they are feeling better.

Recording

If a child reports that they are being bullied, then the member of staff who is informed should document this on *My Concern* and the Head of Section and Junior School Deputy Head Pastoral should be told as soon as possible. In some cases, it may become apparent in discussions with the child that it was an isolated incident and would fall under the category of relational conflict or a friendship issue, but perceived as bullying by that child. This information will be recorded on *My Concern* nonetheless in order that we can monitor the relational conflict or friendship issue (particularly if it had initially been cited as *bullying*) and address it proactively. It is the role of the teacher recording the information to clarify with the child why it should be considered a relational conflict or friendship issue and not bullying. The following information would normally be required:

- Name of the victim;
- Date and time of the disclosure (and to whom, if not the Form Teacher);
- Brief description of the behaviour, including any details of dates, specific locations, times etc;
- Names of perpetrators and bystanders;

- Any short term actions taken.

When gleaning information about an incident, it is important:

- that leading questions are not asked;
- that confidentiality is not promised;
- to state that no blame is attached;
- not to promise that it will get better immediately.

Sanctions

Once investigated, every effort will be made to resolve the problem through discussions with all parties, which will seek to support the victim(s) and change the behaviour of the perpetrator(s). In serious cases, the parents will be informed and consulted. This process will normally be carried out by a pastoral lead and/or the Junior School Deputy Head Pastoral.

When the above procedure is deemed not to have had the desired impact, or it is decided that the incident is serious enough, disciplinary sanctions will normally be applied by the Head of the Junior School or Headmaster of the College. These may include suspension, required removal or, in the gravest cases of severe or persistent bullying, permanent exclusion from the College. Appropriate support may be offered to both parties, even after sanctions have been applied. Incidents of bullying are dealt with as individual cases. Sanctions that are appropriate for one may not be relevant for another. These are possible examples of sanctions:

- Bullies may be monitored during their free time.
- Bullies may be put on a Behaviour Conduct Report.
- Bullies may be given a formal warning by the Head of the Junior School or Headmaster of the College .

As soon as an incident has been investigated, a plan of action is agreed and put into place. In the earliest stages of dealing with bullying, parents may not necessarily be informed. This is an important aspect of the "No Blame" approach. If it is deemed a significant bullying situation, or the above does not resolve the situation, the parents of all pupils involved will be kept fully informed by the Junior School Deputy Head Pastoral. Parents are asked to let the school know directly if they have cause for concern, either on behalf of their own children or because they have heard rumours involving others. The school always endeavours to handle information discreetly, and while it likes to follow up such matters, it does not do so without careful consultation first. It is much easier to counter problems at an early stage.

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