



Oakwood Infant School

Great oaks from little acorns grow

Spotlight on Bullying!

Bullying has a negative effect on all those involved; the person being bullied, the person doing the bullying and the bystanders. At Oakwood our overarching vision is that every child and young including those who are vulnerable or disadvantaged has the best possible start in life.

“Our vision is to inspire learning for life where children feel safe, valued and respected and have the confidence and self-belief to build the skills that they need for a bright and successful future.

Our vision is built on our core beliefs that we need to value ourselves, each other and our future.”

Oakwood Infant School: Vision, values and aims

Our school values and aims expect children to:

- ✓ be able to grow and develop in safety and free from prejudice and discrimination
- ✓ be listened to and have their views taken into account
- ✓ be treated with respect
- ✓ belong to and be valued in their community
- ✓ see their needs and interests at the heart of everything we all do.

So just what is bullying?

It is really important that teachers, parents and children understand what bullying is and what this means. It is also important for everybody to understand the difference between bullying and 'normal' happenings in an infant school such as fallings out, disputes and the occasional kerfuffles.

Bullying is defined as:

“Behaviour by an individual or group, usually **repeated over time**, that **intentionally hurts** another individual or group either physically or emotionally ... there is **a power imbalance** that makes it hard for the victim to defend themselves.”

The key point to remember is that bullying is **intentional, targeted** at a specific individual or group, and is **repeated several times over time**. It is not where a child has been hurt physically or emotionally by another child one or a few times, or where any physical or emotional hurt has not been caused intentionally or specifically targeted.

Bullying can be:

- verbal
- physical
- emotional
- non-verbal
- cyber

and can be because of:

- race
- disability
- gender
- sexuality
- being in care
- family circumstance
- being different

How do we teach the correct behaviour to children?

As you know our school has a positive behaviour policy where the children are encouraged to keep our Golden Rules and are rewarded for positive acts of behaviour such as being kind to another child. This may be through a sticker or a stamp on the smiley card but more often it will be through positive praise. This has a much more lasting effect, with the child learning to think of others because it is the correct thing to do and not for the thrill of an extrinsic reward.

Personal and social skills and learning to manage feelings and behaviour are taught directly through the school curriculum through dedicated 'circle time' sessions or as and when situations arise.



But what if something goes wrong?

Alongside teaching the children the correct behaviour we also talk to them about what to do if a child does something to hurt them physically or emotionally. Children are taught to:

- use the STOP sign – holding their hand up firmly in front of them and saying 'STOP' clearly and assertively
- Talk to each other about what they do and don't like happening
- Talk to the teacher about what has happened.

When an incident has happened the first thing we do is encourage the children to talk each other about the effect the action or words has had on them. The teacher helps the child to 'label' the emotions and how these can be recognised. For example, "you have hurt Bobby and this has made him sad. I can see that he is sad

because he is crying.” We then talk to the children about what was wrong about the action and what would have been the correct alternative. For example if a child has hurt another child because he had a toy that they wanted we would talk about how to ask for things with words, sharing and turn taking. We would also look for examples in the classroom or playground of children making the right choices to provide a role model for good behaviour.

What happens if this positive approach does not work?

It is normal for young children to need time to overlearn the correct pattern of behaviour but there will occasionally be times when a very structured approach is needed to help a child learn to handle their feelings and behaviour. This would involve:

- An individual behaviour plan with targets set by the classteacher, alongside Catherine Macdonald, and the parent
- Behaviour incentives eg a special stamp or sticker each time the correct behaviour is observed or when there has been no occurrence of the wrong behaviour within a specified timescale
- Dedicated sessions with our ELSA [emotional literacy support assistant] who will help the child to understand their feelings and how to manage their behaviour.
- The use of outside agencies if needed eg Hampshire Behaviour Support

But what about bullying?

Bullying is extremely rare in infant schools as children of this age do not have the cognitive development necessary to intentionally target another child systematically and over a sustained period of time because they perceive another child to be weaker than, or different to, themselves. However we do teach the children about bullying, what it means and what they would need to do if they thought they were being bullied. They are taught to:

- Understand that nobody has the right to hurt them physically or emotionally
- Say ‘no!’
- Tell a trusted adult straight away

Any accusation of bullying is taken extremely seriously by the school and will involve a full investigation by the school and a designated Governor. Parents would be involved at all stages and the incident would be recorded in school incident log as is legally required. I am pleased to say that the school has no reported incidents of bullying!

How can I help at home?

It is important for your child that the approaches that you use at home to manage behaviour are consistent with school. Therefore try to:

- Praise good behaviour but resist using rewards unless really needed as this can result in children developing a ‘what’s in it for me’ mentality or ‘I will be good if you give me ...’
- Help your child to understand other people’s feelings and the effect that their actions have on others
- Promote an understanding, acceptance and respect of differences
- Encourage your child to talk about their feelings but resist asking leading questions – if you ask a child “did Bobby push you over?” You are likely to get the response ‘yes’ only to find out later that Bobby was playing on a different playground!
- Talk through the strategies that we use at school – say stop, talk about what’s happened, tell the teacher
- **NEVER** tell your child that it is acceptable to push, hit or hurt someone back as this is giving the message that hurting someone is OK and will result in your child learning incorrect behaviour and ways of handling disagreements
- **ALWAYS** talk to your child’s class teacher if you have any concerns about behaviour and remember that all situations are handled confidentially so we will be unable to discuss other children.

So now you know all about how the school manages behaviour and would respond to any incidents of bullying. Always remember that you can help at home by promoting good behaviour and talking to your child about how to understand and respect differences.

