

Lesley Ellis School

Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan

Introduction

At Lesley Ellis School, we work to create an environment where all members of the community are treated with respect. Our mission, core values, and Community Code emphasize a kind, inclusive, and respectful community.

Lesley Ellis School aims to provide and maintain a learning environment that is free of bullying and any other verbal or physical behavior that disrupts the learning environment or makes it unsafe. Our Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan spells out the School's comprehensive approach to addressing bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation. The Plan is consistent with broader protection at Lesley Ellis against discrimination that appears in our "Family Handbook," our "LES Employee Handbook," and the "Schools for Children Personnel Policies Handbook."

The Head of School is responsible for the implementation and administration of the Plan, and questions and concerns related to this Plan may be referred to her.

Policy against Bullying, Cyberbullying, and Retaliation

The School does not tolerate any form of bullying or cyberbullying, nor do we tolerate retaliation against any person who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying. The School recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to becoming a target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, sexual orientation, mental, physical, developmental or sensory disability or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics.

Bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited at school and at school events and activities. Bullying and cyberbullying also are prohibited through the use of technology or an electronic device owned by the school.

In addition, bullying and cyberbullying are prohibited at an activity that is not school-related or through use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned by the school, if the bullying

- creates a hostile environment at school for a targeted student;
- infringes on the rights of a targeted student at school;
- or materially and substantially disrupts the educational process or the orderly operation of the school.

Preventative Strategies

Training and professional development: Annual training for all staff on the Bullying Prevention and Intervention Plan will include staff responsibilities, an overview of the

steps that the Head of School will follow upon receipt of a report of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, and an overview of the bullying prevention goals and objectives included in our anti-bias curriculum, as well as additional resources available to staff at the School. Staff members hired after the start of the school year must participate in a training program on the Plan during the school year in which they are hired, unless they can demonstrate participation in an acceptable and comparable program within the last two years. The Plan will also be published annually in the LES Employee Handbook as a reference for staff.

Professional development will also address ways to prevent and respond to bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation for students who may be more vulnerable to being the target of bullying or harassment based on actual or perceived differentiating characteristics (outlined above). This will include a particular focus on the needs of students whose differentiating characteristics affect social skills development, or students who may participate in or are vulnerable to bullying, harassment, or teasing because of their differentiating characteristics.

Developmentally appropriate curriculum: At Lesley Ellis we have a strong anti-bias curriculum that promotes a sense of belonging for all students and builds a sense of connection between them. The goal of the curriculum is to challenge the impact of bias on the students' social and intellectual development by helping them to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to live respectfully in a diverse community.

While keeping the children's developmental level in mind, the anti-bias curriculum introduces children to challenging vocabulary, reflective topics, and brings abstract ideas into real practice. The curriculum builds upon itself, encouraging the students to move along a continuum from knowledge to understanding to tolerance to acceptance to respect and inclusion.

Each grade level at Lesley Ellis has specific goals and objectives. Details can be found in the School's curriculum guidelines for each grade level.

Definitions under Massachusetts General Law

Aggressor is a student or staff member who engages in bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation.

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students or one or more staff members of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- Causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- Places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- Creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- Infringes on the rights of the target at school; or

- Materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

Cyberbullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, fax machines and the internet. It includes, but is not limited to, email, instant messages, text messages, and internet postings.

Hostile environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of a student's education.

Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

Target is a student or staff member against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been perpetrated.

Reports of Bullying, Cyberbullying, or Retaliation

Any student who is the target of, has witnessed an incident of, or otherwise has relevant information about bullying or cyberbullying is strongly encouraged to share the information with the Head of School or any other faculty or staff member. Also, any student who experiences retaliation or who knows of another student who has been subject to retaliation is urged to report it as soon as possible.

Any member of the faculty or staff of the School who witnesses or otherwise becomes aware of bullying or cyberbullying or who becomes aware of retaliation against a student who reported information concerning a violation of this policy is required to report it immediately to the Head of School. Faculty and staff may not make reports under this policy anonymously. Students and parents/guardians may report anonymously, although the School urges all members of the community not to make reports anonymously. The School will take no disciplinary action based solely on anonymous reporting. While the School cannot promise strict confidentiality because information must be shared in order to conduct an effective investigation, the School releases information concerning complaints of bullying, cyberbullying, and retaliation only as needed.

Responding to a Report of Bullying, Cyberbullying, or Retaliation

Preliminary considerations: When a complaint of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is brought to the attention of the Head of School or other staff member, an assessment is made as to whether any initial steps need to be taken to protect the well-being of students and to prevent disruption of their learning environment while the investigation is being conducted. As appropriate, strategies such as increased supervision may be implemented to prevent further bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation during an investigation

Notifying parents/guardians: It is school policy to notify the parents/guardians of any student who is an alleged target of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation and the

parents/guardians of any student who may have been accused of engaging in such behavior after a complaint has been made.

Investigation: The following is an outline of the procedure that is followed when a complaint has been brought to the Head of School. An impartial investigation of the complaint is conducted by the Head of School or other appropriate staff members. That investigation may include (but will not necessarily be limited to) interviews with the person who made the complaint, with the student who was the target of the alleged bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, with the person or persons against whom the complaint was made, and with any students, faculty, staff or other persons who witnessed or who may otherwise have relevant information about the alleged incident. Depending upon the circumstances, the Head of School may also choose to consult with other staff members.

Resolution, Notification, and Follow-up: Following interviews and any other investigation undertaken, the Head of School will determine whether and to what extent the allegation of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation has been substantiated. If it is determined that the policy set forth in this Plan has been violated, the Head of School will determine what consequences are appropriate. If the investigation determines that an individual has knowingly made a false report of bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation, the School will take appropriate disciplinary action.

The goal of an investigation and any resulting consequences are to correct the situation to the extent it is reasonably possible and to take such steps as can be taken to prevent a repeat of the situation. The goal is also to prevent the student or students targeted and others who participated in the investigation from being subject to retaliation.

The School may make a referral for counseling or other services, as needed.

In appropriate circumstances, such as when a crime involving stalking, criminal harassment, or use of the telephone to make annoying phone calls may have been committed, law enforcement or another appropriate government agency may be notified.

Upon completion of the investigation, the Head of School and/or other appropriate staff members will meet individually with the student or students who were the target of the alleged incident and the student(s) or staff member(s) against whom the complaint was made and their parents/guardians to report the results of the investigation and, where resulting consequences are appropriate, to inform everyone of the steps that will be taken to correct the situation. The amount of information shared at these meetings may be limited by confidentiality laws protecting student records.

Follow-up contacts will be made with any student found to have been targeted in violation of this policy and his/her parents/guardians to inquire if there have been any further incidents.