



## **Statement of intent**

All athletes at Wolverines Cheerleading Academy are entitled to learn and practice their sport in a safe and supportive environment. This means they should be free from all forms of bullying behaviour. Our Anti-Bullying Policy outlines how instances of bullying will be dealt with by the club. All coaches, welfare staff, parents/carers and athletes will work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at our club. There is a zero tolerance policy in place at Basingstoke Wolverines Cheerleading Squads

### **1. What is bullying?**

1.1. Bullying is persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another. It is often difficult for a victim to defend themselves against bullying.

1.2. Bullying is generally characterised by:

- Repetition: Incidents are not one-offs but frequent and happen over a period of time
- Intent: The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm. It is not accidental
- Targeting: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group
- Power imbalance: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations

### **2. What does bullying look and sound like?**

2.1. Many different kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying. Bullying can be related to almost anything. Teasing another pupil because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual-orientation, home life, culture, disability, or special educational needs are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

2.2. Categories of bullying include:

- Verbal – name calling, imitating, teasing, insulting, spreading rumours, swearing, making threats.
- Physical – any unwanted or inappropriate touching, physical intimidation, hitting, pushing and shoving, kicking, pinching, poking, damaging or taking of belongings, threats of violence and extortion
- Emotional – spreading rumours, deliberate exclusion from groups, tormenting, ridiculing, isolating, refusing to work with another pupil, revealing personal information, threatening, inciting others to treat an individual in a manner that could be considered bullying.

- Cyber – online threats and intimidation, harassment/'cyber-stalking', defamation, exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation and unauthorised publication of private information or images. (It can include messages intended as jokes, but which have a harmful or upsetting effect.)

### **3. Legal issues related to bullying**

3.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, the club has a responsibility to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

3.2. Under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, all child and youth-orientated services have a legal, as well as a moral, imperative to treat bullying as a breach of human rights, and deal with it accordingly.

3.3. Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/or communications could be considered criminal offences:

- Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message, or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information in any media including internet sites.
- Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to police include: violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment or intimidation and hate crimes.

### **4. Prevention**

4.1. Staff will encourage athlete co-operation and the development of interpersonal skills through the use of team building exercises and events outside of training.

4.2. All members of the club should be made aware of the club's Anti-Bullying Policy.

### **5. Staff guidance principles**

5.1. Prevention will be at the forefront of our Anti- Bullying Policy.

5.2. Staff will treat reports of bullying very seriously.

5.3. Staff will not ignore suspected bullying.

5.4. Unpleasantness from one athlete towards another will always be challenged and never ignored.

5.5. Staff will take action immediately. This applies to all staff, not only coaching staff.

5.6. Staff will respect athletes privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying will not be discussed with others, unless in a setting that the victim gives consent to.

## **6. Roles and responsibilities**

6.1. It is the responsibility of all staff to be alert to possible harassment of athletes and deal with incidents of bullying as the highest priority.

6.2. The club will evaluate and review the Anti-Bullying Policy, and will ensure that it is non-discriminatory.

6.3. The head of welfare will review and amend the policy, taking account of new legislation and government guidance, and using staff experience of dealing with bullying incidents in the previous year to improve procedures. The head of welfare will keep a record of all reported incidents

6.4. Parent Liaison and coach will correspond and/or meet with parents where necessary. They will also provide a point of contact when more serious bullying incidents occur.

6.5. Coaches/welfare officers will be alert to social dynamics in their session and be available for athletes who wish to report bullying. They will also provide follow-up support following bullying incidents.

6.6. Coaches/ welfare officers will ensure that they are alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups.

6.7. Parents/carers should inform their child's teacher if they are concerned that their child may be bullied or be involved in bullying.

6.8. Athletes should inform a staff member if they witness bullying, or are a victim of bullying. They should not respond to bullying by making counter-threats, athletes should walk away from any dangerous situations and avoid involving other athletes in incidents. Athletes should be advised to retain all evidence of cyber-bullying.

## **7. Procedures for dealing with bullying**

7.1. Minor incidents will be reported to the coach who should investigate the incident, set appropriate sanctions for the perpetrator, and inform the Parent liaison and head of welfare about the incident and outcome.

7.2. The procedure outlined below will be adopted by all staff in serious incidents.

7.3. Interviews:

- The victim, alleged bully and witnesses are all to be interviewed separately.

- Try to ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the athletes interviewed, for example by texting.
- If an athlete is injured, take the athlete immediately to the appropriate member of staff for a medical attention
- Use a room that allows you to interview in privacy. A witness is recommended.
- If appropriate and/or necessary, ask all parties (bully, victim, witnesses) to write down details of the incident. This may need prompting with questions from you to obtain the full picture.
- Avoid making premature assumptions. It is important not to be judgemental at this stage. Listen carefully to all accounts, be non-confrontational and do not attach blame until your investigation is complete.
- Adopt a 'problem-solving' approach, asking the bully to suggest ways they could have improved the situation, and, if the victim has provoked the bullying incident, helping them to understand more appropriate ways of behaving.
- Inform all athletes concerned that they must not discuss the interview with other athletes.

#### 7.4. Record keeping:

- The coach/Parent liaison who conduct the interviews should write out a brief summary of the incident. This record should then be forwarded on to the Head coach and head of welfare.

#### 7.5. Action and sanctions:

- Conventional sanctions, such as formal warnings and or suspension/exclusion from squad training, may be pursued
- Appropriate action to deal with the bully:
- If you are satisfied that bullying did take place, help the athlete to understand the consequences of their actions and warn them that there must be no further incidents. Inform them of the type of sanction to be used in this instance and future sanctions if the bullying continues. If possible, try for reconciliation and a genuine apology from the bully. This can be in writing to the victim (and/or witnesses if appropriate), or face-to-face, but only with the victim's full consent. (Discretion should be used here; victims should never feel pressured)
- Make them realise that some athletes do not appreciate the distress they are causing, and that they should change their behaviour
- Try to reach an agreement on reasonable long-term behaviour
- Prepare the perpetrator to face their peer group - discuss what they will say to others.
- Inform parents about bullying incidents and what action is being taken. Face-to-face meetings with the coach or Parent Liason may be appropriate
- The coach should informally monitor the athletes involved over the next month.

#### 7.6. Appropriate actions to deal with the victim:

- The coach should informally check whether the bullying has stopped after the complaint of bullying
- The coach or Parent liaison should formally check whether the bullying has stopped the week after the bullying, and again during the same month of training
- Encourage the victim to tell a trusted adult at the club if bullying is repeated

#### 7.7. Follow-up:

- The progress of both the perpetrator and the victim should be monitored by their coach. One-on-one sessions to discuss how they are getting on may be appropriate.
- If the incident was sufficiently serious, follow-up correspondence with parents may be necessary. This should be from the Head coach or Parent Liason
- Athletes who have been bullied will be supported by:
  - Being listened to and having an immediate opportunity to meet with their Team coach or a member of staff of their choice.
  - Being reassured.
  - Being offered continued support.

#### 7.7.4. Athletes who have bullied others will be supported by:

- Receiving a consequence to their actions
- Being able to discuss what happened.
- Reflecting on why they became involved.
- Understanding what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour.
- Appropriate assistance from parents/carers.

## 8. Bullying outside of training.

8.1. Where bullying outside of training is reported to coaching staff, it should be investigated and acted on. In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying, the coach can only discipline the athlete at squad training, or elsewhere when the athlete is under the lawful control of the club