



# Anti-bullying Policy

<b>POLICY DOCUMENT 3</b>	
<b>Title</b>	<b>Anti-bullying Policy</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	Board of Trustees
<b>Date approved</b>	31 August 2023
<b>To be reviewed</b>	Every three years, on legislative changes; or in the event of a serious incident
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## **1.0 Purpose**

1.1 This document sets out the Centre for Self Managed Learning Limited's (hereafter referred to as "the Charity") commitment to operating in an environment free of discrimination, harassment or victimisation. The Charity's statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sets out our zero tolerance to any action or inaction that is counter to the Equality Act of 2010.

1.2 The procedure that follows has been based on the ACAS statutory Code of Practice which came into effect on 6<sup>th</sup> April 2009.

1.3 The aims of this policy are to:

- To assist in creating an ethos in which attending SMLC is a positive experience for all members of the community.
- To make it clear that all forms of bullying are unacceptable at SMLC.
- To enable everyone to feel safe while at SMLC and encourage students to report incidences of bullying they have experienced or witnessed.
- To support and protect victims of bullying and ensure they are listened to.
- To help and support bullies to change their attitudes as well as their behavior and understand why it needs to change.
- To ensure all members of the SMLC community feel responsible for combating bullying.

## **2.0 Scope**

2.1 Whilst the scope of this policy legally applies to only to those directly employed by the Charity, its intent is to provide a guide on acceptable behaviour to all colleagues, including those with whom we contract for services and also our volunteers.

## **3.0 Context and Philosophy**

3.1 The basic document that spells out general arrangements as to rule breaking is the 'Principles, Rules and Procedures' document. All the matters laid down here have to be read in the context of that document, which is binding on parents and on SMLC. Specifically, because SMLC is a project within an educational charity it is not a school and does not work to arrangements common in schools. Also, SMLC works to principles of Self Managed Learning where individuals have responsibility for their own behaviour. That being said, we wish the College to operate in a way that provides support for individuals so any behaviours that could be viewed as bullying will be addressed. Because of the community ethos of SMLC all members of the community need to pay attention to behavioural issues – it's important that students do not put all problems on to the shoulders of adults but recognise their own responsibilities to maintain a caring environment.

3.2 In the context of employees and Learning Advisors, this document should be read alongside the Charity's Code of Conduct and statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

3.3 Our Philosophy is that:

- Bullying is undesirable and unacceptable.
- Bullying is a problem to which solutions can be found.
- Seeking help and openness are regarded as signs of strength not weakness.
- All members of the SMLC community will be listened to and taken seriously.
- Everyone has the right to work and learn in an atmosphere that is free from fear, including disturbance by others. All of us have a responsibility to ensure that we do not abuse or bully others.
- Young people have a right to expect that their concerns will be listened to and treated seriously.

- We all have a duty to work together to protect vulnerable individuals from bullying and other forms of abuse. Our work as a learning community is central to how SMLC operates.

## 4.0 Definitions

4.1 What do we mean by bullying? The accepted definition of bullying is 'behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'. This can include but is not limited to:

- Physically hurting or attempting to hurt, harm or humiliate another person or damaging their property.
- Cyberbullying, i.e. via social networking websites, phone calls, text messages, photographs or emails
- Unpleasant remarks or actions related to any of the following:
  - Race, religion or culture.
  - Sex (i.e. talking to or touching someone in a sexually inappropriate way).
  - Gender, gender identity or perceived gender identity.
  - Sexual orientation (e.g. homophobic bullying).
  - Disability or Special Educational Needs.
  - Intellectual or other abilities.
  - Appearance or health conditions.
  - Being adopted or a carer.

4.2 Bullying is different from teasing or personality differences, but one may lead to another. Sometimes students can feel hurt or upset because they have been teased or have fallen out with another student. Bullying is deliberately intended to hurt or humiliate, involves a power imbalance that makes it hard for the victim to defend themselves and is usually persistent. It also may involve no remorse or acknowledgement of the victim's feelings.

4.3 The community needs to help and support students who have fallen out with other students, but such situations will not be treated in the same way as a case of bullying. However, the strategies we use may be similar because we acknowledge that over a period of time the impact on the student may be the same, and the situation could become bullying if it escalates. We also recognise that boisterous behaviour and negative comments can occur, which may need to be addressed, but does not necessarily involve bullying.

## 5.0 Preventing Bullying

5.1 We aim to prevent bullying by:

- Fostering an ethos of good behaviour, mutual respect, and consideration. We aim to create a safe, happy, and inclusive environment for learning.
- Developing a culture in which diversity is championed and celebrated and in which SMLC takes a proactive role in educating students in issues around equality.
- Developing a culture in which the vulnerable are protected and incidents which might demonstrate prejudice or intolerance are tackled and addressed, for example by challenging inappropriate or prejudicial language.
- Encouraging all members of the SMLC community to have high expectations and model how to behave towards each other.
- Developing students' social skills, confidence, resilience and self esteem; and defining the value of assertiveness in relationships as opposed to aggression, whether direct or indirect.
- Informing students about how to keep themselves safe when online or using social media or other electronic means of communication, so they take maximum precautions to help prevent themselves being victims of cyberbullying.

- Encouraging students to report instances of anything they perceive to be bullying.
- Making it clear to all that incidents of cyberbullying or bullying of any kind that occur off the premises but have an impact on the SMLC environment or relationships between students will be pursued with the same seriousness as bullying occurring within SMLC.
- Making it as easy as possible for students who are being bullied to talk to someone they trust and get help confidentially.
- Encourage all students to make sure nobody is isolated and encourage a bullied person to join in activities and groups.
- Encourage all students to show the bully that they disapprove of their actions.
- Expect all students and tutors to adhere to our Ground Rules.
- Impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.

## 6.0 Managing bullying

6.1 The process we use has a series of stages.

- Stage 1. The students involved may find that they can resolve matters themselves. For instance a student may be used to using what can appear to be aggressive language, such as swearing, because this is common in their peer group outside SMLC or within their family. In discussion the student objecting to such language may help the other student to see the need for a change.
- Part of this stage may include discussion in learning group. Here a student is able to raise anything of concern to them while in the College. The learning groups are confidential environments that genuinely allow students to raise anything pertaining to their work in the College. A tutor is present at such meetings and can offer advice to students. Also peers in the group who know the student can offer assistance.
- The daily community meeting is also a place where students are able to raise any matter of concern – and bullying can come into this category.
- It should also be noted that generally there are three tutors present at all times, along with volunteers, any of whom can be approached about any immediate issues. By keeping SMLC very small and having a high ratio of adults to students we aim to provide as safe an environment as is possible.

Stage 2. If informal modes do not work then we suggest the use of Peer Mediation. On the noticeboard is a list of students who can facilitate Peer Mediation on any particular day. These students have had training in the use of this method. They can be assisted by tutors if needed.

Stage 3. If the matter cannot be resolved by Peer Mediation or if any interested party is not prepared to use this, then the ideal process is through Restorative Justice. This process provides a basis to address directly any issues in the relationship between students where a person has been bullied and where resolution of the problems can be sought. The process is led by a tutor and is designed to encourage behaviour change. It is a positive approach that helps students to learn to behave appropriately. It recognises that both sides – the bully and the bullied – may have things to learn and that instances that in the future might lead to inappropriate behaviour can be headed off.

Stage 4.

- If any person in the situation is not prepared to engage in Restorative Justice then the matter can be referred to the Problem Solving Committee. Also if in the Restorative Justice process the person alleged to have bullied does not agree to change then the matter could go to the Problem Solving Committee. There is a form for any person to complete if they have any issues about discipline and behaviour. This form is collected in by a tutor and then tutors arrange for a Committee to meet.
- This Committee consists of one tutor and two students who are not party to the alleged bullying issue. At this stage the Committee is empowered to hear from all witnesses and to impose sanctions. Sanctions vary and must be proportionate to the offence. As an example one student took another student to the Committee as a result of violence off the ball in a football match. After hearing the

evidence, the Committee adjudged that this was not bullying but that it was inappropriate. Both students were banned from football for a week and the Committee recommended a red card system for football so that any future incident would lead to the offenders being sent off the pitch. Other sanctions have included washing up for a defined period. If there is judged to be a significant and persistent bullying situation then the student doing the bullying can be given a formal Warning. Students know that formal Warnings are serious. Current rules state that three formal Warnings will lead to automatic suspension. In that case the Governors will decide on further action which, in the case of bullying where the person doing the bullying appears unable to change, could lead to permanent exclusion. The appeals process for this is elaborated in the document on 'Principles, Rules and Procedures'.

- Allowing for all the above processes it could be that, for example, the use of serious violence means that tutors on duty use their discretion to send a student home. This could lead to a suspension where Governors have to judge as to the required action, which could lead to a formal Warning or to permanent exclusion, if there is sufficient concern about the level of violence used.

### **7.0 Links to other policies**

This policy operates in conjunction with:

- SMLC Ground Rules
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Statement on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Code of Conduct

## **Appendix One**

### The Bully

People bully for different reasons. We stress that it is the behaviour that is unacceptable not the person - if the behaviour changes, then the person will find it easier to make good friends.

Some people bully because they feel unhappy about themselves or lack the skills to make good friends.

Bullies are often bullied themselves and need our support.

### Selection

The selection process we use is in part designed to make the recruitment of children who might bully less likely. Not being a school, we are able to select and to reject any applicants who might not be able to work in a democratic learning community and use the Self Managed Learning process.

The first stage in selection is informal contact with parents and potential applicants. This might occur on a visit or at an Open Day. Any adult in contact with a parent/carer or potential applicant may be alerted to problematic issues and discourage an application.

The second stage is to receive an application to undertake a trial week. If such an application indicates potential problems the child may not be allowed on a trial week.

The third stage is a trial week during which tutors especially, but also students, can see how the person is in a real situation. After a trial week students and tutors can express a view on the suitability of an applicant given the experience of their behaviour. The admissions officer will review this information and make a decision. If it is needed, e.g. in the case of any doubts, the admissions officer will consult the Chair of Governors.

The fourth stage is a formal application if the child is accepted after the trial week. The registration document demands full disclosure from the parent of any issue such as a school exclusion, time with a counselor or with CAMHS, etc. Parents are warned on the form that any failure to disclose material information can lead to the suspension of the student.

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## Appendix 2

### Dealing with Bullying

If you are being bullied:

- Stay calm and try to appear confident. Tell the bully to stop and get away from the situation as quickly as you can
- You may want to go to a designated quiet area in order to be away from someone behaving badly.
- Do not suffer in silence. Telling does not make you a 'grass' or 'snitch': not telling means that the bullying is likely to continue. Remember you may not be the only victim
- Remember being bullied is not your fault – nobody ever deserves to be bullied
- If you feel you are being bullied by a tutor you should take the same action as if it were another student, that is, report the matter to someone you trust. All forms of bullying are unacceptable and all reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with irrespective of who the person responsible for the bullying incident might be

If you know that someone else is being bullied

- Talk to a tutor, so that SMLC can take steps to help the victim
- Stand up for them – studies show that one of the most effective ways of stopping bullying is for fellow students to show their support for the victim
- Be sceptical about rumours concerning other students. Don't add to them. Put yourself in the position of the person targeted
- Don't be drawn into simply standing by. Many perpetrators will not persist in bullying unless they have an audience to play to, and by not taking action it could be argued you are condoning what is happening

When you are talking to an adult or another student about bullying be clear about:

- What has happened to you
- How often it has happened
- Who was involved
- Who saw what was happening
- Where it happened
- What you have done about it already

If you experience bullying by mobile phone text messages or e-mail :

- Tell a friend, parent or tutor.
- Be careful who you give your mobile phone number or e-mail address to.
- Make a note of exactly when a threatening message was sent and save the message if possible

A bullying incident will be regarded as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' (Children Act 1989). Where this is the case, after the Designated Safeguarding Lead has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to MASH and in certain cases the police.

## Appendix Three

### Partnership with Parents

We believe that working with parents/carers is essential to establishing SMLC's anti bullying ethos and resolving any issues that arise. Parents/carers are required to attend a termly meeting with the Learning Group Adviser and their own student. This is one context for raising concerns. However this does not preclude contacting a Learning Group Adviser at any time if there is real and immediate concern.

- Parents are encouraged to reinforce the principles of the Anti- Bullying Policy at home
- If your child has been bullied:
  - Calmly talk with your child about his/ her experiences.
  - Make a note of what your child says including who was involved, how often the bullying has occurred, where it happened and what happened.
  - Reassure your child that he/ she has done the right thing to tell you about the bullying.
  - Explain to your child that should any further incidents occur he/she should report them.
- If your child is bullying others:
  - Talk with your child and explain that what he/she is doing is unacceptable and makes other children unhappy.
  - Discourage other members of your family from bullying behaviour or from using aggression or force to get what they want.
  - Show your child how he/ she can join in with other children without bullying.
  - Make an appointment to see your child's Learning Group Advisor and explain the problems your child is experiencing as well as discussing how you can work together to stop him/ her bullying others.
  - Give your child lots of praise and encouragement when he/ she is co-operative or kind to other people.

In any serious case of bullying parents will be informed by SMLC and may be invited in to discuss the matter.