



## Shikshantar Peer Dignity and Respect Policy

At Shikshantar, we understand that the environment a child grows up in is crucial for their development, self-awareness, and sense of identity. We believe that each stage of Primary school, also known as 'Finding Feet', plays a vital role in this process of holistic development.

Throughout this journey, we encourage children to recognize their strengths, embrace challenges, and adapt to changes while coexisting in a community. We believe that every child's respect and dignity are of utmost importance in our inclusive setup. Therefore, we are committed to fostering a supportive and inclusive learning environment where differences are celebrated as strengths, and all members of the classroom have mutual respect.

We firmly believe that every child has the right to attend school and learn in a safe environment. Our facilitators establish a strong bond with each child, highlighting their strengths and interests, which are then incorporated into lesson plans as a part of their facilitation process.

In case of any challenging behaviour, we delve deeper into the context, look beyond the behaviour and have one-on-one conversations with the child to understand the root cause. We believe that by giving responsibilities and working together, we can empower every child to achieve their full potential. Our themes, reflective experiences, and circle time discussions are designed to make them feel heard and valued. We take pride in fostering a safe and nurturing environment where every child can thrive and coexist.

### **Purpose of the Policy:**

Bullying, harassment, discrimination, or victimisation hinder the development of a positive and inclusive culture and environment. It negatively impacts the affected child's self-worth and wellbeing. When certain behaviour patterns get established, it becomes important to define boundaries with a purpose. This policy confirms that the school does not and will not accept any behaviour or action which undermines a child's value and dignity. **The school will take any allegation of inappropriate behaviour extremely seriously and will take the necessary action, while providing support to all involved.**

We expect the parent community/ family of each child to extend their help in transitioning through these developmental stages, educating their child about peer dignity and respecting the agreements of the learning space.

- **The School will do whatever is reasonably necessary and possible within its authority to stop bullying in all forms**
- **The School will take action against bullying.**
- **Bullying is unacceptable in school and will not be tolerated.**

### **What is bullying?**

We recognise that many children will experience conflicts in their relationships with their peers or other children. As a school we are committed to developing empathy and the skills to manage relationships in a peaceful way that does not harm others.

Our definition of bullying is: **“The repetitive, intentional hurting or acts of abuse that undermine, intimidate, humiliate, take advantage of or injure another child. It can happen face to face or online.”**

The school will consider it as peer abuse/abuse when a child is bullied and/ or harmed (intimidating, offensive or abusive behaviour) by their peers who are of the same or a similar age group (repeated occurrences). We will be categorising them as below.

#### **Categories:**

- Verbal abuse
- Physical abuse
- Mental and Emotional abuse
- On school property, such as School Bus, School premises, etc.
- At internal events in school or external events where the school is being represented
- Bullying on phone call / email / letters and other communication media

#### **Verbal Exchanges/Abuse**

- Abusive language directly or indirectly involving an individual child or relating to his/her family members
- Incidents of expressing/ using vocabulary beyond age appropriateness and that which is not acceptable in a social context,
- Spreading rumours or encouraging others to spread

#### **Physical Abuse**

- Physical abuse may include, hitting, kicking, punching, biting, hair pulling, throwing objects at, or otherwise causing physical harm to another member of the school (fellow student or facilitator)
- Seeking a physical touch or sitting close to a peer that may cause discomfort, be perceived as threatening behaviour, or invasion of personal space
- Gestures which can be perceived as a threat, or creates discomfort to another member of the school (e.g., student, facilitator, security staff, admin/housekeeping staff, etc.)

#### **Mental and Emotional Abuse**

- Passing disparaging remarks or letters/chits and singling out a child in the group/class
- Body shaming, commenting on the looks or appearance of another individual (student, facilitator, support staff, etc.)
- Exclusionary behaviour such as forming groups and singularly excluding other children
- Hiding the belongings of a peer/another child and causing emotional trauma
- Writing inappropriate /abusive words on another child’s notebooks, textbooks or furniture

#### **Bus Mannerisms**

- Seats have been allocated for Primary children in the bus. Children are expected to be seated accordingly.
- Children are expected to listen to the helper Didi and bus duty parent in the bus and follow all rules as per transport policy.

#### **Online / Phone / Email**

- In Primary School years, children do not have access to computers / mobile phones within the school premise. If a peer connect is beyond school hours without adult supervision, the same

needs to be addressed by respective parents. In situations, where one of the parents are unwilling to co-operate, the school can only provide a platform for discussion between both families.

Any of the above-mentioned incidents of bullying or those which cause a discomfort or hurt another child will be liable for action and resulting consequences.

### **Preventing Bullying and Empowering children**

We believe that preventing bullying is the responsibility of our whole school community and when there are incidents of bullying, we will work together to deal with the situation and to learn from what has happened.

- Using circle time, stories, themes in class to ensure that pupils understand the differences between relational conflict and bullying.
- Building a positive ethos based on respecting and celebrating all types of differences in our school.
- Creating a safe and happy environment, with consequent positive relationships that have an impact on learning.
- Work in groups/classrooms which develops empathy, social skills and emotional understanding. Health Education Programme. Reflection on what we have learnt.
- Provide assurances to the child/children that concerns have been listened to and action will be taken.
- Reflect and learn from bullying episodes –consider what needs to happen next to prevent future bullying.
- Empowering facilitators to address such incidents and concerns through trainings and sessions.

### **Reporting discomfort/ bullying:**

Children at Shikshantar are empowered and encouraged to talk to their didis/bhaiyas, peers or adults around them when they sense a discomfort or have concerns. They understand that they have a right to feel and be safe and a responsibility to support others to feel and be safe.

Children can talk to:

- A trusted adult
- Their group facilitators
- Peers or buddies

Each group has a 'drop your worries box' where children can share their concerns if they do not feel confident speaking to an adult. When children report their concerns our team members are trained to LISTEN.

### **Action and consequences will be as below:**

- a) Dialoguing/counselling the child. We believe in involving children as far as possible in resolving conflicts.
- b) Depending on the nature of the incident, the child can be asked to move away from the class and sit in the library to reflect and settle, or even send the child home for the day.
- c) If the child's behaviour is aggressive – hitting, kicking, causing physical harm to self or others, the facilitator is authorized to hold the child and address the self-harm/harm to peers.
- d) The first time will be reported to the parent through a call/mail on the same day after informing the respective Curriculum Coordinator/ Head of School.

- e) The second time, parents will be called for a meeting by the group didis to highlight the same. The meeting would be in presence of the Curriculum Coordinator.
- f) If it's a repeated pattern, a meeting with the Head of School will be organised. The school can ask the parents to be present in school and provide support till the child settles in school.
- g) Repeated behaviour manifestations in the school bus can lead to suspension from the school transport.
- h) The school will work with both the child and the parents to ensure that any bullying is stopped, and that support is given where needed.
- i) Parents should not confront the child/children bullying or their parents. This can complicate the situation and distress the child, and lead to unwanted complications in resolution.
- j) The school and the School safety and Security Committee will deal directly with all children involved and their parents directly. Parents will be kept informed of any actions the school is taking.
- k) **Legal threats of any nature from parents or threatening behaviour will not be accepted or tolerated.**

**Implementation of the Policy:**

- a) Orienting the facilitators for a clear understanding and a sensitive and mindful implementation.
- b) Orienting the parents through open house sessions.
- c) Orienting the children through age-appropriate contexts, discussions and themes.
- d) Periodic reminders and linkages in classrooms.
- e) Uploading on the school website.
- f) Clear expectation from all parents for supporting the policy and cooperating with the school.

Policy created on 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2023