



CHIPPING NORTON
SCHOOL



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Monday 11 November 2019

Dear Parents and Carers

National Anti-Bullying Week – 11- 19 November 2019

Once per year, all schools across the country come together to focus on how we can reduce or even eradicate bullying. Bullying is often the most terrible experience in a child's life and can turn a happy-go-lucky individual into one that is nervous, frightened and loses trust in others.



#ANTIBULLYINGWEEK

NeverAlone@CNS



I wish to use this special letter to families to announce the launch of our brand new Never Alone @ CNS campaign. It is a confidential service that provides a single email address that will be picked up by one of our four Pastoral Support Assistants (PSAs): Mrs Davis-Batchelor, Mrs Cottrell, Mrs Hargrave or Mrs O'Brien - during school hours.

Through a mixture of assemblies and poster campaigns, we will be explaining what this new service is all about to students, so that they know they are never alone at CNS and

that advice and support is always close at hand. **It is not a 24/7 emergency helpline** – but it is a doorway or signpost to the people at CNS who can help students or parents when they need some advice and support.

Our campaign will seek to encourage students to reach out and let one of a number of highly trained and experienced colleagues help when it's needed. We are able to help your children when they feel bullied but also try and solve a wide range of other problems or difficulties they face: worries about their friends and family; worries about identity and appearance; worries about exams and pressures or worries about physical or mental health.

When an email is submitted an automated reply is sent that provides details of emergency services, but also a comprehensive list of the people who might be able to help – along with their contact details. Then, once school is next open, one of our PSAs will be able to personally respond to each email and get the ball rolling to provide that help and support.

Don't forget, we not only employ teachers at CNS. There are PSAs, counsellors, a Family Support Worker, a School Nurse and many others who are ready to help.

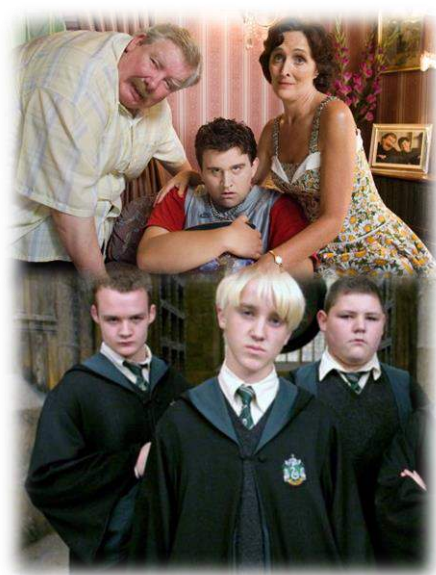


Chipping Norton School is an academy which is part of the River Learning Trust which is an exempt charitable company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales with registered company number 7966500 and its registered office is The Cherwell School, Marston Ferry Road, Oxford OX2 7EE.

What is bullying?

Bullies often start on what someone is wearing, their hair colour or maybe their skin colour. If not, then maybe their beliefs, accent, gender or sexuality. Sometimes, it's simply about what phone they have in their pocket or the arrangement of stripes, ticks or crests on a pair of trainers. Bullies often keep going until they find the thing that hurts their intended victim.

Traditionally, "the school bully" was often portrayed as masculine, big and academically weaker than others. The bully was often followed by an inadequate bunch who giggled and mocked like hyenas - certain of the physical protection of the bully. In the BBC's *Grange Hill*, first there was [Gripper Stebson](#) and then things got evened up with [Imelda Davies](#).



More recently, who can forget JK Rowling's Draco Malfoy or Dudley Dursley? JK Rowling took it one step further by portraying spoilt bullies with head-in-the-sand parents – all determined to deny there was a problem.

Such screenwriters and authors have tried to offer victims some solace in their mocking portrayal and simple depiction of bullies and bullying. Sadly, they rarely come close to showing what it is truly like to be bullied or how great children from great families can make really bad decisions.

Perhaps as damaging is the typical portrayal of the victim of bullying in books, TV and films. Victims are often stereotyped as loners, overweight or in some way not quite fitting in. Often, this is strangely reinforcing society's simplistic grasp of bullying. Imagine how radical it might have been to portray a bully who is otherwise a wonderful child from a fabulous

family. Or the victim as being completely and utterly normal and is picked on for absolutely no reason whatever. This is much closer to the truth of bullying today.

I love *Grange Hill* and still adore the Harry Potter series, but both explain bullying about as well as *Emmerdale* explains the complexities of modern day farming.

Contrary to what is often perceived there is no typical profile for a bully! Most schools would agree that 'traditional' playground bullying that involved the theft of lunch money, being 'duffed up', heads shoved down toilets in search of blue goldfish, or the public mockery of an individual, day after day, is far less common than it might have been in the past. This particular type of nasty stuff can still happen but bullying now operates on multiple levels – including right across social media.

S.T.O.P. Bullying at CNS

When a person harasses, mocks, intimidates or insults another person **Several Times On Purpose** we call that bullying.

Our recently updated [Behaviour for Learning Policy](#) states that when a child at CNS behaves in a way that threatens or intimidates others then he or she will be severely punished. This document sits alongside our [Anti-Bullying Policy](#).



Initially, a bully would be detained but also isolated for a long period of time at break and lunchtime (known as Leadership Team Supervision). If they fail to get the message, then they will be temporarily excluded from our school and then may end up leaving CNS for good.

As adults we have no excuse to be a bully, to harass others, to be rude, to be obscene or to be deliberately nasty. When adults behave in this way they lose their jobs, their friends, their reputation and others' respect. But children are works of art in progress; they are under construction. This is why we don't eject a child from our school when they make their first, or even their second, mistake. There has to be a degree of restorative justice in every school, but such forgiveness does not equate to endless chances! It's a very delicate and nuanced balance.

Building Character at CNS

At CNS we are working hard to educate the whole child and part of that goal is their character development. This relates closely to the problem of bullying in our society.



It takes enormous **courage** for a child to admit they are being bullied. To admit this can be embarrassing and most of us can remember that we never wanted to worry our parents and so we often just put up with it and hoped it would go away. We call upon our students to be **courageous** and choose the right person in our school to talk to about what they are experiencing and then we can help decide what to do next. That's partly what NeverAlone@CNS is all about.

But once a bully has been exposed, he or she is required to show even greater **courage**. The **courage** to admit he or she has been less than their best self is very hard. All too often, a bully might blame others, blame the victim or claim that the victim is merely exaggerating or fabricating the problem. It is often very hard for a bully to truly own the fact that they have hurt another person. It takes them time and a lot of patience from us all.



Likewise, **compassion** works both ways: Starting with the bully – he or she has to open their eyes and ears to the hurt they have caused. Bullies are often perceived as having very low levels of empathy. However, we must not underestimate how hard it is to realise that we have been the source of deep pain towards another person and sometimes that journey takes time. We often see truly vile comments made by adults on social media who probably have no idea that they are harassing and bullying others and if challenged would issue some sort of defensive justification for their behaviour as well.

As tough as it sounds, the victim of bullying also needs to wrestle with some **compassion** – towards themselves and even towards the bully. The victim has to be protected from assuming they are ever the problem or beginning to believe that they are a bit worthless after all. When the victim of bullying understands that the problem always lies with the bully, they begin to get back on track. Understanding why people become bullies is often the start of a victim's own recovery from the experience.



Curiosity is not confined to libraries and laboratories. We must all be curious about what brings out our best and worst sides. Those who have bullied have to process why they have treated another person so badly. How aware were they of their behaviour before and after the act? Did they lack empathy or did they simply not care enough about what they were doing? When you sit back and think about it, it must be a pretty shameful thought to wonder how we ended up becoming a bully – this is never any child's ambition! At that precise moment of self-realisation, a child needs to be with another adult who nudges them down the path of greater self-awareness and not down the paths of denial or shame.



Can we actually solve the phenomenon that is bullying? Yes, it is possible but we have to be **creative**. We need children who have bullied others (and their parents) to openly engage in conversations about how it happened and how to avoid it ever happening again. But we also need those who have been victims to **creatively** consider how to reduce the risk of it happening again by discovering more about what we call 'protective behaviours' and working out the virtual or physical places where they are at greatest risk or exploring how they initially respond to others' comments or actions that might increase or reduce the risk

of then becoming a victim. It's a complex territory but at CNS there are so many people ready and able to help out.

And so, do we ever have a problem with bullying at CNS?

That is such a daft question. Any headteacher who claims that bullying is not an issue for every school during every day is either naïve or dishonest. Unlike the 1970s or 80s, bullying is a 24/7 experience for some. Social media alerts, for example, are the source of incredible anxiety for so many children as they await the arrival of the latest comment, post, gossip or social judgment.

We must remember that all behaviour is learned and that all behaviour is a form of communication. As parents and adults we have to be mindful of everything we say and do. We must also be mindful of what we appear to passively condone or overtly praise. For example, highly entertaining TV programmes like *Gogglebox*, *The Apprentice* or *X-Factor* routinely entertain us with cutting jibes, personal assassinations or carefully contrived villains and fools for us to mock or even despise; the modern day stocks. Criticism and mockery often feels louder than kindness and humility – it's why I am a big fan of *The Great British Bake-Off*. I wonder what the ratio of kindness to criticism is for a child exposed to TV and films today?

And so, if we are to succeed against bullying, we must develop the character of our students so that they stand up to bullying whenever and wherever it happens. I've never met a bully who would do it if they knew their audience would disapprove.

Bystanders – Stand Up!

[Barack Obama recently criticised](#) young people for not doing enough to positively change the world. He introduced me to a new word – 'woke' – and spoke of the way in which we casually condemn the wrongs of this world but too infrequently do something that is going to bring about real and lasting change.

This is why we continue to call on CNS students to avoid becoming passive bystanders. They cannot simply observe or silently disapprove of bullying or any other form of unkindness. They have to actively do something to stop it and prevent it. This begins with all forms of social disapproval, moves on to supporting the victim and has to involve speaking to someone who can help bring it to an end.

I hope this special letter provokes some thinking, assures families and also presents the challenges and the opportunities to make school and life a happier place for all young people.

Yours sincerely,

Barry Doherty, Headteacher

If there's a problem...

1. Speak to your child's **form tutor** in person or by telephone or email.
2. Speak to your child's **Head of Year or PSA** in person or by telephone or email.
3. Speak to **Ms Hancock, Deputy Headteacher**, in person or by telephone or email.
4. Speak to **Mr Doherty, Headteacher**, in person or by telephone or email.

If the concern is serious, then do not hesitate and contact either Ms Hancock or Mr Doherty!