



# St John's Highbury Vale C of E Primary School

Conewood Street, London N5 1DL

Tel: 020 7226 4906

E-mail: [admin@stjhv.islington.sch.uk](mailto:admin@stjhv.islington.sch.uk)

Head of School: Mrs Lindsey Hodgson

Executive Head: Mrs Tonnie Read

Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Dear Parents/ Carers,

At St John's Highbury Vale, we know students can achieve their full potential only when they feel safe, secure, and supported. To achieve this, we have clear policies around preventing and addressing bullying behaviours.

It has come to our attention in recent days that there have been separate instances in which some of our children have unfortunately, experienced bullying behaviour. Some of these incidents involve emotional bullying conducted through playground games and involved students working together to target specific individuals. We have investigated these reports, which were robust and complete, and the consequences were in line with our behaviour policy. These behaviours will not be tolerated.

The consequences that can be suffered by both the victims of bullying and those who have inflicted distress on their peers have been well documented in the media. We are clear that very few students, if any, who engage in these behaviours are fully aware of the horrible short-term and long-term scars of students targeted by bullying behaviour.

To address this, we had an assembly on Monday that was dedicated to the bystander effect and looked at discouraging these behaviours. A bystander is someone who witnesses poor behaviour, but facilitates it, simply by their presence. We explored healthy decision-making in the context of online and in person communications and relationships. Research shows that bystanders can effectively stop bullying within 10 seconds of an intervention. 85% of bullying takes place when bystanders are there. The 'audience' is cited as one of the main reasons for bullying and mean behaviour. We spoke about not physically intervening, as in most cases we don't need to. Saying that we don't approve, or even walking away shows the perpetrator that you disapprove; removing the audience, can stop the bullying. The impact of the bystander effect is now acknowledged in law. In cases of gang violence and other crimes, you can be charged just for being around a person committing a crime. This is linked to the impact that the bystander has. By being there, you are approving and even facilitating the act. The age of criminal responsibility in England and Wales is 10 years old.





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As you know, bullying behaviours occur off school grounds and outside of school hours, and to some degree our hands are tied in dealing with those situations, but we still want to be part of the solution. As a school, we understand the importance of our partnership with you. We urge you to take time to speak about this very important issue with your children so they can be clear that bullying others is not at all innocent behaviour and that it can have devastating consequences to both its perpetrators and victims. Please discuss what it means to be a bystander, and empower them to take a stand when witnessing cruel behaviours.

We urge you to reach out to us to discuss these issues further or to help you if you are concerned your child is either participating in, being targeted by, or witnessing these harmful behaviours. Please contact your child's class teacher in the initial instance.

Kind regards,

Mrs Hodgson

