



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

How we define bullying, how we try to ensure it doesn't happen and what we do if it does

ASCENSION EAGLES CHEERLEADERS and TALENT CENTRAL CHEER & DANCE

Last updated:
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Trustee lead for this policy:
Peter Sharp

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1. Statement of intent

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our staff and athletes so that they can learn and work together in a relaxed and respectful atmosphere.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our programme. If bullying does occur, anyone affected must be able to report it and feel confident that we will deal with it appropriately, promptly and effectively.

2. Who does this policy apply to?

This policy applies to athletes/members of and to anyone working on behalf of:

- Ascension Eagles Cheerleaders
- Talent Central Cheer & Dance.

In this document the above organisations will also be referred to as “**the Group**”, “**We**” or “**Us**”.

People working on behalf of the Group includes senior managers (known as “the senior team” or “the management team”), the Board of Trustees, paid staff, volunteers, sessional workers, agency staff and students.

Wherever this document uses the expression “parent” or “parents” this includes the responsible adult/s who is/are the principal caregiver/s for a child (e.g. guardians).

3. Objectives of this policy

The purpose of this policy statement is:

- to ensure that our staff, athletes and parents are clear about our understanding of what bullying is and that our staff know what they need to do if bullying is reported
- to prevent bullying from happening between children and young people who are a part of our organisation or take part in our activities
- to make sure that if it does happen, any bullying is stopped as soon as possible and that those involved receive the support they need
- to provide information to all staff, volunteers, athletes and their families about what we should all do to prevent bullying and what to do if bullying does occur.

4. What is bullying?

We describe bullying as unwanted behaviour from a person or group that is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting; that undermines, humiliates or causes physical or emotional harm to someone.

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding personal items, making threatening gestures etc)
- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, hair-pulling, punching or any use of violence
- **Racist:** racial taunts, graffiti, making gestures
- **Sexual:** unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments

- **Homophobic:** because of/focusing on someone's sexual identity or how they choose to identify
- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber:** this includes -
 - All aspects of the internet, such as email, social media platforms and internet chat room misuse
 - Threats by messaging services (e.g. text, Whatsapp etc) or phone calls
 - Misuse of technology (e.g. recording sound or images/video using a mobile phone or webcam without them knowing; sharing a recording of someone without their permission).

5. Why is it important to respond to bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect.

People who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

The Group accepts that it has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to concerns about bullying.

6. Signs and symptoms of bullying

A person who is a victim of bullying may not feel able to tell someone about it – but their behaviour may indicate that he or she is being bullied. We should all be aware of these potential signs. For example, is the person –

- frightened of walking to or from the programme?
- suddenly unhappy about using public transport?
- begging to be driven to practice?
- changing their usual routine for no obvious reason?
- unwilling to go to cheerleading practice for no reason?
- beginning to truant?
- becoming withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence?
- starting to stammer?
- threatening to attempt suicide or are they running away?
- crying themselves to sleep at night or are they having nightmares?
- regularly feeling ill in the morning?
- beginning to do poorly in gym practice or at school?
- coming home with clothes torn or damaged?
- having their things damaged or "gone missing"?
- asking for money or starts stealing money (i.e. to pay a bully)?
- continually "losing" money?
- becoming aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable?

- bullying other children or siblings?
 - not eating?
 - avoiding telling you what is wrong when asked?
 - avoiding using the internet or their mobile phone?
 - nervous or jumpy when they receive a message on their phone?
- ... giving improbable excuses for any of the above situations?

Of course, any of these behaviours could indicate other problems too - but bullying should always be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

7. How to report bullying and how we will respond

Any bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated, to make sure it's stopped quickly - so it's important to take action as soon as you suspect there is an issue.

- Report bullying incidents to coaching staff or to the senior team at the Group. You can always report your concerns in confidence – and then, to find out what is happening and to prevent future bullying, we will conduct an investigation.
 - If the incident involves the coaching staff or senior team, you can report the bullying to the Director directly via email at director@ascensioneagles.com.
- If possible, try to give examples of what has happened, including when and where the bullying has taken place.
- In cases of serious (e.g. repeated) bullying, details of incidents will be recorded by coaching staff. This information will be held securely and confidentially.
- In serious cases the Group will inform the victim's and the bully's (or bullies') parents/guardians.
- The parents/guardians of the bully (or bullies) will be asked to attend a meeting at Talent Central; at this meeting the bullying behaviours and its impacts will be discussed with a view to agreeing the actions required to prevent further incidents. This will include discussing what support is appropriate to help the bully change their behaviour.
- If necessary - and appropriate - the police will be consulted (i.e. in serious cases where the law may have been broken, such as homophobic or racist behaviour).

8. What happens when bullying is reported?

All reports/suspicions of bullying will be investigated by a panel of at least two members of the senior team at AEC. If the bullying accusation/suspicion involves a member of the coaching team, they will not be part of the investigating panel to avoid any risk of a conflict of interests.

Depending on the outcome of the investigation, the bully/bullies may be asked to apologise to the victim/s.

Sanctions may be applied to the bully – for example, in serious cases (e.g. involving repeated behaviour, no remorse, physical/emotional harm to the victim), the bully may face temporary suspension or permanent exclusion from the programme.

Those involved will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

9. Prevention

We will use different methods to raise awareness of our anti-bullying policy among our athletes and staff. As and when appropriate, these may include:

- writing a set of practice rules
- signing a behaviour contract
- having group discussions about preventing bullying and why it matters
- making our staff and the athletes aware of this policy, so that they understand what to do if they are concerned about bullying or want to report a bullying incident.

10. Related policies and procedures

This policy statement should be read alongside our organisational policies and procedures including:

- Child And Adults At Risk Protection (“CAARP”) Policy, which includes details of our procedures for:
 - responding to concerns about a child or young person’s wellbeing;
 - dealing with allegations made against a child or young person and
 - managing allegations against staff and volunteers
- The Group’s Code of Conduct for staff and volunteers
- Our Fairness and Equality Policy.

11. Contact information for key personnel

The AEC Director:	Angela Green	07854 487309
AEC management team:	Robert Horton	07714 631336
	Paula Brown	07866 612610 (gym mobile)
Chair of Board of Trustees:	Sue Winston	07975 688644
Safeguarding Trustee Lead:	Peter Sharp	07990 561562
Board of Trustees - email:	trustees@ascensioneagles.com	
Designated Officer (Newham Council)	lado@newham.gov.uk 0203 373 3803 0203 373 6706	

12. Policy updates and next review date

This policy will be reviewed every year in May, or whenever there is a major change in the organisation, in relevant legislation or relevant legislation or any changes in the cheerleading industry.

This policy was updated on:	15 May 2024
Updated by:	Sue Winston
Reviewed by:	Angela Green, Director
Other reviewers:	Peter Sharp, Safeguarding Trustee Lead
	Paula Brown, Community Manager
Approved by the Board:	28 May 2024
Next review due:	May 2025
To be reviewed by:	The Director The Community Manager Nominated Safeguarding Trustee Lead
Review to be approved by:	The Board of Trustees

13. The category of this policy

This policy is categorised as:

Category	Description
1.	This document is publicly available and is published on the AEC website.

14. Change log

The following changes have been made to this document since it was last approved by the Board:

Date	Heading of section	Details