



14 December 2022

Behaviour at Lunchtimes

Dear parents and carers,

At Dereham Junior Academy, we continually analyse pupil behaviour so that your children can enjoy school life as much as possible. Thankfully, for the majority of the time and for the majority of our pupils, behaviour is very good and our school is a very safe and respectful place.

Nevertheless, we want to improve further. Despite our continued efforts and relentless promotion of positive behaviour, during the Autumn term, we saw an increase in disrespectful and unsafe pupil behaviour at **lunchtimes**. In particular, this included:

- Rudeness towards each other – including name calling and hurtful comments
- Rudeness towards adults when spoken to about behaviour
- Physical aggression – children hurting each other (often arising from ‘play fighting’ games gone wrong or football in some year groups).

We have already spoken to all year groups about these points and have reminded pupils of our expectations.

When asked, all pupils can explain our simple rules and they know what they look like in action. The children know how to behave according to our rules but some forget this ‘in the heat of the moment’. ‘The heat of the moment’ is nothing new - we all experience this on occasion - but what is becoming more frequent is pupils justifying and excusing their disrespectful or unsafe behaviour. Accepting responsibility for what we have done is a key life skill and is one we teach at every opportunity. Nevertheless, we often hear the following as a response:

- ‘Someone did it to me first...’
- ‘Someone else was doing it...’
- ‘Someone told me to...’
- ‘I only...’.

How can you help?

We will continue to monitor behaviour at lunchtime and look to how we can improve things to bring it in line with behaviour during the rest of the school day. As we do this, we would greatly appreciate your support at home by reinforcing the following messages from school:

- If something goes wrong, take a moment and try to stay calm. Maybe even walk away
- Talk to an adult in school as soon as possible, do not save it up until just before bedtime
- Physical violence is **never** allowed, even if someone has hurt you (it could have been an accident)
- Play fighting is not a game. It is not allowed in school and it never ends well
- If you did something wrong, **own it!** The only person responsible for your actions is you!

From all the staff at Dereham Junior Academy



The word 'BULLYING'

The word '**bullying**' is a very strong and emotive word; therefore, it is very important that it is used correctly.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (a group of organisations who, among other things, organise 'Anti-Bullying Week') use the following definition for bullying:

'Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.'

This is a very carefully crafted definition and we want to draw your attention to the following words and phrases in particular:

- '*repetitive*'
- '*intentional hurting*'
- '*imbalance of power*'.

What do these mean in the context of bullying?

'Repetitive'

Bullying **is not** an isolated incident or, indeed, something that happens two or three times. Bullying **is** when something happens time and time again, often lasting for weeks.

'Intentional hurting'

Bullying **is not** someone fouling in a football match or reacting aggressively because a friend called them an unkind name; it doesn't happen in the 'heat of the moment'. Bullying **is** when someone intentionally seeks out another person to hurt him or her emotionally or physically.

'Imbalance of power'

Bullying **is not** two friends falling out or being aggressive with one another. Bullying **is** when one person or a group of people are physically stronger and use that imbalance to hurt another person. Bullying **is** when one person or a group of people has embarrassing information about a person and uses it to hurt them. Bullying **is** when one person or a group of people uses their greater popularity to hurt another person.

It is very important that we clearly distinguish between acts of unkindness (some listed above) and bullying. Whilst acts of unkindness are unpleasant and have no place in school, they are not as potentially harmful or as serious as bullying, which can have longer lasting consequences.

At Dereham Junior Academy, we respond to everything we are made aware of, including acts of unkindness that often occur in the heat of the moment. However, investigating and responding to claims of bullying, deservingly takes more time to investigate and hopefully resolve.

We will never tolerate bullying but it is very important we understand what **is** and **is not** bullying.