

Bullying Prevention Policy

A) PURPOSE

As part of our commitment to the fairness, dignity and respect of each employee, any form of bullying will not be tolerated by this Gym. The aim of this Policy is to indicate what constitutes bullying and what action the Gym will take if it becomes necessary to deal with an offence of this nature.

B) SCOPE

This Policy is applicable to all members, visitors and employees (temporary and permanent) irrespective of length of service, both inside and outside the Club environment.

C) POLICY

The Gym acknowledges the right of all employees to a workplace and environment free from any form of bullying. Every member of staff has an obligation to be aware of the effects of their own behaviour on others.

Any instances of bullying will be dealt with in an effective and efficient manner. In cases where the behaviour is proved to be repeated and consistent, causing unnecessary stress and anxiety, this will be considered gross misconduct. The Gym reserves the right to use the disciplinary procedure up to and including summary dismissal.

As part of this Gym's code of conduct, it is imperative that all staff and suppliers respect the dignity of every colleague. Please consider the multi-cultural beliefs of all of your colleagues regarding your code of conduct, with particular reference to remarks, dress code, posters, e-mails and anything which may cause offence on the grounds of a person's race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religious belief, political opinion or affiliation, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, age or disability.

D) DEFINITION

The Gym defines bullying as:

"Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at the place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incident of the behaviour described in this definition may be an affront to dignity at work but, as a one off is not considered to be bullying".

The following are examples of the types of behaviour that may be considered as bullying and are prohibited by the Gym:

- a) Purposely undermining an individual
- b) Targeting an individual for special negative treatment
- c) The manipulation of an individual's reputation
- d) Social exclusion or isolation
- e) Intimidation, aggressive or obscene behaviour
- f) Jokes which are obviously offensive to one person
- g) Intrusion by pestering, spying and stalking

Bullying can occur between:

- An adult and young person.
- A young person and young person.
- A parent and own child.

Bullying may take many forms and may be conducted in person or through the actions of another person/other people. These include: -

- Emotional: for example, being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding belongings, threatening gestures), name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing/taunts, graffiti. "banter" can be classed as a disguised form of bullying.
- Physical: for example, pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
- Sexual: for example, unwanted physical contact or sexually offensive comment/s.
- Cyber: for example, email & internet chat room misuse, mobile phone threats by text messaging & calls, misuse of technology (camera & video footage) or misuse of social media.

Bullying may also take the form of singling out individuals because they belong to a particular group or are different in some way from others (prejudice-based bullying) and may include: -

- Racist and religious based bullying.
- Homophobic/ bi-phobic/ trans-phobic: because of their sexual orientation, or perceived, or actual gender identity.
- Disablist: might focus on, or exploits, a particular aspect of the individual's disability.

It is acknowledged that the competitive nature of sport can result in tensions that may lead to bullying but bullying cannot be condoned in any circumstance.

In addition to the above, examples of **bullying in gymnastics** could be:

- A gymnast who intimidates fellow gymnasts inappropriately.
- Excluding a gymnast from a group activity.
- A coach who adopts a win-at-all costs philosophy.
- A parent who pushes too hard.
- An official who places unfair pressure on a person.

In order to discourage Bullying, we at RGTC:

- Create an open environment and always provide adequate supervision.

- Encourage children to speak out and share any concerns with the coach in charge, the Welfare Officer, or any other responsible adult.
- Take all signs or allegations of possible bullying seriously.

Our Coaches endeavour to:

- Foster in our gymnasts self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our gymnasts.
- Discuss bullying with all groups, so that every gymnast learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully and the importance of telling a coach about bullying when it happens.
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
- Listen to our gymnasts who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
- Report suspected cases of bullying to one of our Designated Welfare Officers, Melissa Visser and Julie Jordan.
- Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken.
- Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

The Responsibilities of our Gymnasts:

We expect our gymnasts to:

- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- Intervene to protect the gymnast who is being bullied unless it is unsafe to do so.
- Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:

- Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.

The Responsibilities of Parents, Guardians or Carers:

We ask our parents, guardians, or carers to support their children and the Club by:

- Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying.

- Advising their children to report any bullying to their coach or our Designated Welfare Officers, Melissa Visser or Julie Jordan and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other gymnasts.
- Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying.
- Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken.
- Keep a written record of any reported instances of bullying and informing the Club of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved.
- Co-operating with the Club, if their children are accused of bullying, try to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves.

The Responsibilities of all:

Everyone should:

- Work together to combat and, hopefully in time, to eradicate bullying.

The above list is not exhaustive and only serves as a guideline to employees. Each case will be taken in isolation and dealt with in the appropriate manner.

From time to time, disciplinary and corrective action may be taken against an employee and, where such action is taken in respect of an employee in good faith, this will not be considered to be bullying behaviour. Furthermore, where actions are taken which can be justified based on protecting the safety, health and welfare of employees then such actions will not be considered to be bullying behaviour.

E) PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH BULLYING

Informal Procedure

An informal approach can often resolve difficult situations with the minimum of conflict and stress for the individuals involved. This in no way diminishes the issue of the effects on the individual.

If you feel you are being bullied, you should attempt to explain to the alleged bully that their behaviour is unacceptable. If you find it difficult to approach the alleged bully alone then seek help and advice from the nominated contact person. He/she will listen, be supportive and explain the various options open to you.

You may ask the contact person to assist you with raising the issue with the alleged bully. The contact person will approach the alleged bully in a confidential, non-confrontational discussion to try to resolve the matter in a low-key manner.

If you decide to bypass the informal procedure, for whatever reason, and choose to go down the formal route then this will not reflect negatively on you in any way.

Formal Procedure

If the informal approach is not appropriate, or if after using the informal procedure, the bullying continues, then the formal procedure will be invoked.

A formal written complaint must be given to the Manager or nominated person. The complaint should only contain precise details of actual incidents of bullying.

A letter will be sent to the alleged bully to inform him/her that a formal complaint has been made against them. A copy of the complaint will be given to him/her, and he/she will be given the opportunity to respond to the allegations.

An initial examination will be carried out by a designated, impartial person who will determine the appropriate course of action to be taken e.g., a mediated solution or attempt to resolve the situation informally or decide if it should be progressed to a formal investigation. If these courses of action prove to be inappropriate or inconclusive, then a formal investigation of the complaint will take place to determine the facts and credibility of the allegations.

Investigation

The investigation will be carried out by a designated person or, if necessary, in the case of any possible conflict of interest, an agreed external third party. In either case, the person nominated should be familiar with the procedures involved. The investigation will be thorough, objective and confidential. It will be conducted with sensitivity and respect for the rights of the complainant and the alleged bully.

The designated investigator will meet with the complainant, the alleged bully and any witnesses or other relevant persons individually. The purpose of these meetings is to establish the facts about the allegations, set a timeframe, all of which will be completely confidential.

The complainant and the alleged bully have the right to be accompanied by a work colleague or employee / trade union representative.

The person investigating the complaints will make every effort to carry out and complete the investigation as quickly as possible. When the investigation is complete, a written report will be submitted to Management which will contain the findings of the investigation.

Both the complainant and the alleged bully will be given the opportunity to comment on the findings of the investigation before any action is decided by Management.

Management will inform the complainant and the alleged bully, in writing, about the findings of the investigation.

Outcome

For behaviour to be bullying, it must be behaviour which can be described as outrageous, unacceptable, and exceeding all bounds tolerated by decent society. If it is decided that the complaint is well founded, then a formal interview will be conducted with the alleged bully to determine an appropriate course of action. This may include counselling, monitoring, or progressing the issue through disciplinary and grievance procedures.

In the event of the findings of the investigation concluding that the complaint was untrue and was brought with a malicious or vexation intent then disciplinary action will be taken against you up to and including dismissal.