



Cheer Athletics Telford **Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy**

At Cheer Athletics Telford we are committed to enabling all members of our community to be safe and secure, both physically and emotionally; enabling all athletes and coaches to reach their potential.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Cheer Athletics. We strive to maintain our anti-bullying ethos in which relationships are based on mutual respect, trust, caring and consideration for others. If bullying does occur, all athletes and coaches should feel empowered to tell someone and feel secure in the knowledge that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

What is bullying?

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) and its members have a shared definition of bullying based on research from across the world over the last 30 years. Cheer Athletics uses the ABA definition of bullying.

ABA defines bullying as:

“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.”

There are four key elements to this definition:

- hurtful
- repetition
- power imbalance
- intentional

Bullying behaviour can be:

- Physical – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.
- Verbal - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling.
- Emotional – isolating others, tormenting, hiding books, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation and coercion.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.
- Online /cyber – posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, social exclusion.
- Indirect - Can include the exploitation of individuals.

At Cheer Athletics, we differentiate between incidents where athletes are unpleasant or disrespectful to one another and bullying, which is the term we use for repeated, intentional, targeted behaviour intended to cause harm.

Cheer Athletics clearly communicates a commitment to addressing bullying which is regularly promoted across the organisation. At Cheer Athletics Telford, we intend to intervene early to resolve incidents of nastiness or disrespectful behaviour before the behaviour becomes repeated and therefore defined as bullying. This is central in our approach to preventing bullying.

We recognise the need not only to respond to and manage incidents of bullying effectively, but also to actively seek to **prevent** the occurrence of bullying. We aim to promote our culture and ethos of belonging and team in relation to the constructive management of peer relationships and co-operative behaviours. We actively promote the safeguarding of our athletes through our culture of care and support for all athletes and our non-acceptance of behaviours that do not match our culture.

Objectives of this policy

- Owners, coaches, athletes, and parents should have a consistent, shared understanding of our definition of bullying;
- Owners, coaches, athletes, and parents should know the policy regarding bullying and harassment, and follow it when bullying is reported;
- Athletes and parents should know what the policy is for bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises;
- At Cheer Athletics we take bullying seriously. Athletes and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported;
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

Bullying can be fuelled by prejudice; at Cheer Athletics we work to create a culture where prejudice and hatred is not accepted. This includes behaviour that is homophobic, transphobic, racist, targeted at faith, sexist and disablist.

Bullying thrives in cultures where name-calling, unwanted touch, rumour mongering and disrespect go unchallenged. All reported instances of bullying will be investigated by a member of staff (this includes owners or coaches). Staff will encourage athlete cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills.

All members of Cheer Athletics Telford are made aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it. All staff members receive annual training on identifying and dealing with the different types of bullying alongside safeguarding training, including looking at the safeguarding policy. Cheer Athletics staff will endeavour to build relationships that enable athletes to disclose concerns and seek help if they are being bullied.

Signs and Symptoms

An athlete may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is a target of bullying behaviour. All Cheer Athletic staff should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if an athlete:

- is frightened of coming to the gym
- is unhappy about coming to the gym;
- changes their usual routine;
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence;
- begins to do less well in classes
- has possessions which 'go missing';
- has unexplained cuts and bruises;
- becomes aggressive, disruptive, or unreasonable (and this is a change from their normal behaviour);
- is using bullying behaviour towards other children or siblings;
- is frightened to say what is wrong;
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above.

Research undertaken indicates that athletes (particularly children) are more likely to tell a family member that they are the target of bullying behaviour than tell their coach. At Cheer Athletics Telford we encourage parents to report incidents of bullying behaviour immediately, so that appropriate action can be taken.

Parents may notice signs at home including a child:

- being unduly worried about being at the gym;
- crying themselves to sleep or has nightmares;
- often feeling ill in the morning or using delaying tactics to come to the gym;
- coming home with clothes torn or possessions damaged;
- stopping eating.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems but being the target of bullying behaviour should be considered as a possibility and should be investigated.

Procedures

The emphasis is on collective responsibility, referring to the safeguarding policy. Implementing the guidelines in the safeguarding policy systematically and continuously will enable children to be ready to get the best from every class they attend. We aim to create an ethos of openness, enabling the sharing of concerns amongst staff, children and parents.

If bullying behaviour is suspected or has been reported:

- Coaches will liaise with colleagues, to establish whether bullying behaviour has occurred.
- All suspected cases of bullying behaviour must be referred to the Child Protection Officer. Staff are expected to take a restorative approach, recognising that there may be different versions of events.
- Offer support to the target of the bullying behaviour and undertake to support and guide all those involved in the bullying behaviour (not just the ringleader) to change their behaviour.
- Involve the parents of the target and the perpetrators of the bullying behaviour to reinforce the fact that we take it very seriously and to follow up the incident to check that bullying behaviour has not re-occurred. Follow up is highly effective in preventing long-term incidents.
- Further work with the perpetrator/s' family/ies to find the underlying cause of the reasons for the bullying behaviour. Consider whether contact should be made with the athlete's school.
- Consider whether the target needs continued support, even when the bullying behaviour has ceased.
- Be mindful that all behaviour is a form of communication and that it is essential that the perpetrator/s is/are given support to learn different, appropriate ways of communicating their feelings and needs.

All serious or repeated cases of bullying behaviour will be passed directly to the Child Protection Officer.

Challenging and Combating Bullying Behaviour

At Cheer Athletics, we endeavour to eradicate the incidences of bullying behaviour by ensuring everyone is clear of the culture we are working hard to achieve and being consistent in our approach to this. We have extremely high-expectations of our athletes, and this high expectation includes athlete behaviour. Athletes need to know that they will always be valued, respected, listened to and taken seriously; this is their right. Staff need to create opportunities to encourage children to communicate about issues that concern them and to support children who share information.

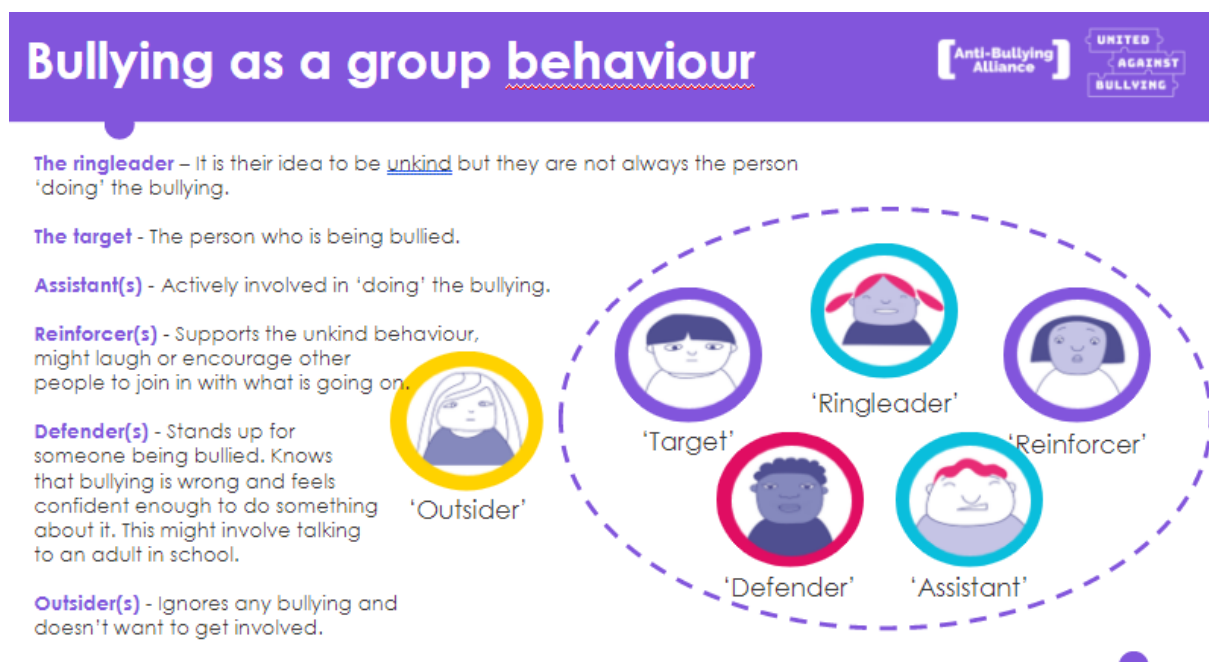
At Cheer Athletics, staff are trained to understand that all behaviour is a form of communication and that it is essential that the perpetrator is given support to learn

different, appropriate ways of communicating their feelings and needs. Staff are encouraged to talk to the perpetrator to establish the root causes for the behaviour being shown.

Parents are encouraged to communicate with Cheer Athletics about issues that concern them in relation to their child's safety and emotional well-being, and staff will inform parents about the support available at Cheer Athletics. We will provide parents with regular and up-to date information regarding policy and procedures, and we will respond promptly, in line with policy, to any parental concerns.

Education

Athletes and parents are educated about bullying behaviour through signposting them to the Anti-Bullying Alliance's website and resources at an age-appropriate level, along with other resources that will support and complement this work. This ensures that athletes and parents can become very aware of bullying behaviour as a group behaviour and that all involved or present at the time of an incident defined as bullying behaviour have played a part. The link illustrates the following:



Monitoring and Reporting

Coaches and the child protection officer regularly monitor behaviour and are vigilant if they suspect any bullying behaviour taking place.

Linked Policies

Safeguarding
E-Safety Policy

Policy information

Policy created: April 2023.
To be reviewed: As required.