

3 February 2020

Dear parents/carers

We have recently experienced a number of situations in school of pupils falling out. Although the tricky business of learning to manage personal relationships is unfortunately part of growing up, I am writing to ask for your help in guiding our children through the relationship challenges they will face.

Many of the recent situations we have had to deal with follow the same general pattern:

Person 1 says (or posts on social media) something unkind about another pupil.

Person 2 tells the person it was said about (person 3).

Person 3 overreacts and confronts person 1 – leading to arguing, name-calling or, sometimes, fighting.

Firstly, if this is a one-off event, it is important to note that **does not** meet our definition of bullying:

*“Bullying is **repeated** behaviour which is intended to hurt someone either emotionally or physically.”*

Secondly, in similar situations, we have found that ‘person 2’ and ‘person 3’ often do not feel responsible for their actions, having justified their responses on the unkind things said by ‘person 1’.

I would, therefore, like to ask for your help in making sure our children understand how they can avoid a situation like this and why **each** person involved might be in trouble if they do not.

Person 1: Saying or posting anything unkind about someone else is obviously never okay. Unkind comments can stem from worry, jealousy, feelings of being left out or isolated, from being unnecessarily judgemental about someone else or in retaliation to something. None of these are acceptable reasons for making unkind comments but some might be reasons to discuss your feelings with an adult and get some support instead.

Treat others how you wish to be treated yourself.

If you are feeling worried, sad or hurt, get support from an adult in school.

Person 2: Spreading gossip will only ever escalate a situation. Telling the person who has had something unkind said about them is only ever going to make them sad or angry (or both). Sometimes this person will also tell other people as well, which usually increases the sadness or
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anger. Sometimes this person will misunderstand or exaggerate what was said, which also increases the hurt and escalates the situation.

If you hear something unkind, tell an adult and no-one else.

Do not be a gossip or a stirrer.

Person 3: This person is a victim of both person 1 and person 2, who will already be in trouble. We understand that having something unkind said about you feels horrible, but person 3 now needs to make a good and mature choice about how to deal with it. Person 3 will only be in trouble if they confront person 1 (or 2). Confrontation nearly always escalates into a bigger and worse situation: nastier name-calling, more people involved and even fighting. Also, they cannot be sure that person 1 has actually said what they have been told person 1 has said – person 2 may have misunderstood or exaggerated. At Nottingham Girls' Academy, we will never accept that the way to deal with someone being unkind to you is to be more unkind in return.

Never confront someone – seek help and support from an adult instead.

Kindness, respect and tolerance are all part of our BUILD qualities that we expect all pupils to develop as Nottingham Girls' Academy pupils. Other BUILD qualities such as positivity, integrity and empathy are also very relevant in this scenario.

Developing the BUILD qualities is important for coping with the stresses of school, examinations and further study, for preparing and succeeding in the world of work and for forming positive relationships as an adult and citizen.



I would, therefore, be grateful if you could work with us to ensure your daughter understands how to treat others, how to react if she is mistreated and how to seek adult support in those difficult situations.

We will follow this letter with a series of assemblies and discussions in tutor time. By working together, we can make a big contribution to our children's positive mental health and wellbeing by teaching them how to have happier, stronger and more positive relationships.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and your support.

Yours faithfully

**Mr D Tungate
Principal**

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