

General Welfare Policy

Aim:

At Wimbledon Language Academy we try to provide our students are provided with an enjoyable and profitable learning experience.

Our Principles

- The general wellbeing of our students is extremely important. We believe that if a student is happy this will have a beneficial effect on their studies. Together these factors enhance their self-confidence and consequently their development as an individual.
- All students have the right to a safe and secure learning environment, regardless of their age, gender, disability, racial origin, religious beliefs, sexuality, language, socio-economic status or appearance.
- All members of staff, students and representatives of Wimbledon Language Academy work together to promote a good working environment, where bullying and harassment of any kind is in no way condoned.
- Students should be able to feel comfortable asking for advice of any kind and feel supported by their peers and school staff.

Anti-Bullying and Harassment

Introduction

Bullying and Harassment are extremely serious issues that can cause significant distress to individuals. It is a very real problem in many classrooms and workplaces, as well as at home and online. Our aim is to combat bullying and harassment before it happens. We promote a supportive student body and team of staff who work in harmony to create an environment of mutual trust and respect.

Definition of Bullying and Harassment:

Bullying is the persecution of a victim through intimidating, unfair, sarcastic, physical, malicious or angry behaviour that causes them to feel uneasy or threatened.

Harassment is any inappropriate, unwanted or unsolicited behaviour that the victim feels is unacceptable. It can cause the person stress and unease.

A list of the different types of bullying and harassment are listed below:

- Physical Bullying – (Causing physical harm to a person. e.g. Hitting, kicking, punching, slapping)
- Verbal Bullying – (Saying hurtful things to cause deliberate upset. e.g. Name calling, Threats)
- Cyber Bullying – (The use of text messaging, email, internet and social networking sites to cause offence)
- Social Bullying – (Repetitive & aggressive social behaviours. e.g. Spreading rumours, or ignoring a person)
- Stalking – (Unwanted or obsessive attention e.g. Monitoring or following them)
- Sexual Harassment - (Intimidation or coercion of a sexual nature. e.g. Unwelcome sexual advances or requests for sexual favours)
- Racial Harassment - (Unwanted behaviour based on race, ethnic or national origin. e.g. verbal threats or insults based on skin colour)
- Religious Harassment – (Unwanted behaviour based on religious beliefs or practices. e.g. Ridiculing a person for wearing a religious item, or derisory comments against a religion)
- Disability Harassment – (Patronising comments which creates an intimidating or hostile environment for a disabled person. e.g. inappropriate references to disability)
- Sexual Orientation Harassment – (Unwanted behaviour based on known or presumed sexual orientation. e.g. name calling, stereotyping, derogatory comments)

Both bullying and harassment may occur as a single incident or a series of incidents over any length of time. It may be committed by an individual or by a group.

Staff and Student Responsibilities:

- Bullying and harassment are deemed as completely unacceptable at Wimbledon Language Academy. Providing an environment of equality is the responsibility of everyone.
- All staff, students and school representatives must be resilient and make themselves aware of the different types and signs of bullying and harassment. Everyone must take immediate action to stop unfair treatment of another person.
- If signs of bullying or harassment are spotted they should never be ignored or kept secret. If the signs are disregarded, this will be regarded as condoning the bullying or harassment, and appropriate disciplinary measures will be taken.
- The Principal is the main point of contact for any concerns or comments. If there are any concerns regarding a student's welfare, or if a person has witnessed bullying and harassment taking place to someone else it must be reported. The Principal will then conduct an investigation immediately.
- Students should be encouraged to mix with other students of different ages and gender, and from different countries, cultures and religious backgrounds. This should reduce the possibility of bullying and harassment between peers.
- All staff members and representatives should be prepared to act as witnesses if they are needed in an investigation.
- All concerns regarding bullying and harassment will be dealt with in a confidential way, and any information will be stored in line with the Data Protection Act.
- The Principal will contact any relevant authorities, including the Police if necessary.

Reporting and Monitoring Procedures

Procedure- Student-Student

- If a staff member thinks bullying or harassment may be taking place between students, they should report it immediately to the Principal.
- A student who is experiencing bullying or harassment can approach any staff member to raise their concern. All incidents will be reported to the Principal by staff members so the student must be told that this will happen. The student can also go straight to the Principal to talk about any concerns.
- The Principals will deal with any incidents immediately and conduct an investigation. If the incident is a minor complaint the victim will be spoken to, and then the perpetrator. Everything that is said will be documented and then a decision will be made as to what the best plan of action will be.
- Students will always be encouraged to try to resolve any minor problems with their peers. If both students agree, it is possible to hold a meeting with the Principal to talk to each other under supervision and with mediation.
- If a case is reported and is deemed severe, Wimbledon Language Academy will exclude the offending student. The Principal will then conduct an investigation and discuss the matter with the DOS where a decision will be made about the future of the perpetrator at the school. If the complaint is upheld the student will be expelled.
- All investigations will be held in a sensitive manner. If a student ever feels unsure or uncomfortable whilst an investigation is being conducted every effort will be made to alleviate their concerns. We are able to offer 'short term' solutions if needed, such as change of class or homestay.
- Any incidents and outcomes will be recorded by the Principal in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Procedure- Staff Member or Wimbledon Language Academy Representative- Student

- Any complaints regarding bullying and harassment which involves staff members or representatives should be reported directly to the Principal.
- The Principal will conduct an investigation. He will document what is said by the student, and any witnesses will be interviewed. The accused staff member will then be spoken to.
- If the complaint is against a staff member they will be suspended whilst the complaint is being investigated. All documents will be assessed by the Principal. If the complaint is upheld against the staff member they will be dismissed, and if necessary the complaint will be passed on to the appropriate authorities.

Procedure- Student - Staff Member or Wimbledon Language Academy Representative

- It is important to remember that bullying and/or harassment can be carried out by a student against a staff member or representative of the school. As in all cases, any concerns will be dealt with extremely seriously and will be investigated immediately.
- Staff members should go straight to the Principal if they feel threatened.
- An investigation will then be held. The Principal will document what the staff member tells him, and will then speak to any witnesses. The student will then be spoken to. If it is felt the complaint is minor, the Principal will decide the best course of action to resolve the matter.
- If the complaint is serious, the student will be suspended in the first instance. If the complaint is upheld they will be expelled and the relevant authorities contacted.

General Welfare of Students (Particularly concentrating on Culture Shock)

Wimbledon Language Academy has students from all over the world. We understand that whilst they are studying with us they are away from their usual home and support structures, and they will be experiencing a different culture and language. It's sometimes possible for students to get 'culture shock'.

Culture Shock can be experienced if a person moves from a familiar culture to one that is not familiar. There are a number of different factors that could help trigger the shock, a list of which can be found below:

- **Language.** When learning a different language it can be very tiring, no matter what the ability of the student. Both in class and out, students are surrounded by English, and while this "immersion" is invaluable for their language acquisition, it offers very little respite. In addition, they may feel embarrassed, uncomfortable or intimidated by having to use the language away from the safe environment of the classroom. This can lead to isolation and depression, and is something we constantly monitor
- **Climate.** Adjusting to a different climate can be a struggle for some students, especially those from hotter climates. If they study through the winter months they may feel down because it is dark, rainy and cold. It can take some time to get used to the different temperature.
- **Food and drink.** Every country has its own traditional foods and ways of cooking. English food will be completely different to other countries and some students may find it unappetising. Most drinks will be similar, but they may differ in taste. Some students will find it difficult to understand that they can drink water from most taps in England.
- **Social Etiquette.** The social behaviour of the locals is likely to be different from the student's home experiences. If a student is staying in a town or city they could find people quite rude or they could feel offended by others because people are often in a hurry. Conversely, they may meet with hostility from locals who believe that their behaviour is rude (e.g. pushing in queues).
- **Values and beliefs.** All countries have different values and beliefs. While many values are universal, others can be extremely culture-specific. It is possible that a student may feel uncomfortable or less understanding of different values. It is important that students find a way to accept and tolerate the values and beliefs of others, even if they disagree with them.

To understand Culture Shock, there are 5 stages to be aware of:

- **Stage 1: The Honeymoon Stage.** Students are likely to feel excited about their new surroundings and feel invigorated being in London. They are likely to feel curious and stimulated and will want to explore.
- **Stage 2: The Distress Stage.** Differences in cultures between the home country and England will start to become apparent. What once felt new and exciting may become stale, and people can begin to miss contact with their family and friends.
- **Stage 3: Re-integration Stage.** Students are likely to feel angry and frustrated. It is not unusual to feel dislike for England and London, and students will often idealise their home country. While this can be viewed negatively on one level, it must be remembered that this is an important part of adjusting to the new culture.
- **Stage 4: Autonomy Stage.** The first stage of acceptance. The student will start to feel more positive about England and will start to embrace the culture.
- **Stage 5: Independence Stage.** The student will return to their normal self. They will feel comfortable and happy living in England.

Through our awareness and understanding of these stages, Wimbledon Language Academy will always support students throughout all stages of Culture Shock. While most people will adjust to life in the UK, some students will find it difficult and they may not be able to move on from Stage 3. In such cases they should speak to the teacher and a decision will be made with the student about the best way forward.

Procedures to help with Culture Shock

Our main concern when a student arrives in the UK is that they feel comfortable in their new surroundings and that they feel supported by all staff, students, homestay providers and representatives of Wimbledon Language Academy. There are a number of ways we help to try to combat the possibility of Culture shock.

Staff Support

- Before the student arrives in the UK we encourage them to make contact with their homestay so that they can make a connection with them before they arrive.
- All students are provided with the emergency telephone number which can be called 24 hours a day.
- Individual attention is given to each student on their arrival by the Office Manager. Each student will have different needs, and we aim to help them accordingly. For instance, some will need help understanding their visa regulations and may need to register with the Police if they are required to. Advice can also be given on bank accounts, health care, dental care, how a student can find their own accommodation and places of worship, among many other things. This list is not extensive and the answers to any other questions will be answered as quickly as possible by the Office Manager, if they are not immediately available.
- If a student is finding their lessons too challenging or they think they are not being challenged enough they can speak to their teachers directly, or to the Director of Studies or Principal.
- For those students who have a lower level of English we understand it can be a daunting experience to approach the school with problems, but staff are experienced with the appropriate levels of English a student will understand.
- Students are encouraged to take part in some of the social activities offered at the school by tour operators. It can stop students feel lonely at the weekends and allows them to see different parts of England.

Academic Welfare

Students may sometimes find that their studies have an adverse effect on their welfare or wellbeing. The causes for this may include:

- frustration at a lack of progress, or perceived lack of progress;
- feeling that the course is too difficult;
- feeling that the course is not sufficiently challenging;

- feeling that the course is not particularly stimulating;
- feeling that the course is not particularly relevant to their needs.

Students are encouraged to talk to their teachers about their course at any time, and teachers will always make time for the student; any concerns raised will then be passed on to the Director of Studies (DoS). However, in cases where the student feels it is not appropriate to talk to the teacher (such as discussing problems with their classes), or the student would prefer to speak to a member of the academic management team, the following options are available:

- Students may speak on an informal basis to the DoS at any time; a formal appointment may be arranged as a follow-up where appropriate.
- Students may request a formal appointment with the DoS at any time – request forms for such appointments are available at Reception.
- Students may speak to the Office Manager, who will pass on any relevant academic concerns to the DoS.

We aim to deal with any problems immediately, or as soon as it is possible. While many concerns raised are relatively minor, we treat all concerns with equal seriousness.

Accommodation

Homestay

Students are encouraged to speak to the Office Manager, the Accommodation Officer or Principal, or to their agent or parents who will in turn contact us, with any issues they may have regarding the accommodation. We act immediately to resolve any issues, and are quick to change a student's homestay as necessary.

Where an incident or complaint is regarded as serious, we have procedures in place to deal with the matter as quickly and fairly as possible.

After a student makes the initial approach to the school, the following steps are carried out:

- The Accommodation Officer will document the incident or complaint. If the case is of a more serious nature, the relevant authorities will be notified immediately and their advice will be acted upon.
- If the nature of the problem is sufficiently serious, we will arrange alternative accommodation for the student immediately, either in an alternative homestay or in bed and breakfast accommodation until a suitable homestay can be found.
- The incident or complaint will be forwarded to the Accommodation Officer to investigate and respond.
- The homestay family will be given the opportunity to offer an explanation for the incident or complaint.
- The negligent homestay family will be removed from the school database with immediate effect, and any relevant authorities will be informed.

We are also aware that complaints may come from the homestay provider regarding the students in their charge. In such cases, the procedure is as follows:

- Homestay families who have cause to make a complaint or report an incident concerning the student staying with them should initially contact the Accommodation Manager or Office Manager.
- The Accommodation Manager will document the facts and following liaison with the Office Manager will decide if the matter should be taken further and discussed with the student. The homestay family will be informed of the decision. If the homestay family requests that the student be moved out of their home, this will be facilitated.
- If the Accommodation Manager and Office Manager decide it is appropriate to discuss the complaint or incident with the student, the meeting will be fully documented. The student will

also be invited to bring a representative to any meeting to provide support and act as a witness. The student will be informed that their behaviour is not in accordance with Wimbledon Language Academy Policies and Procedures and will be asked to explain their behaviour.

- If the situation cannot be resolved satisfactorily, Wimbledon Language Academy reserves the right to withdraw homestay accommodation from the student. In such cases, the school will assist the student in finding their own accommodation, and interim arrangements are made by the school to ensure students are not left homeless.

All our homestays are visited as a matter of course at least every 2 years, and in the case of complaints are visited immediately. Our management team will always work with both students and homestay providers to ensure the best possible service is offered.

Serious Problems or Concerns.

If any student has a problem of any kind they are encouraged to discuss it with the Office Manager or the Principal. All staff members of Wimbledon Language Academy will always make time to speak to students if they are asked. All staff are asked to show compassion and consideration, and they are expected to report any matters to the Office Manager.

Confidential advice is always available for both staff and students if the Office Manager feels other authorities should be contacted. However, we will not act in such circumstances without first consulting the people involved (unless we feel the matter is such that we may take the initiative - e.g. reporting a crime or allegations of abuse)

Reporting and Monitoring General Welfare

It is important to document significant issues, as such documentation may be required by ourselves or other agencies (e.g. evidence in criminal or civil proceedings, or insurance claims). However, it should be borne in mind that the majority of problems are usually minor and they are resolved instantly so there is no need to document them. However, if a serious concern or problem occurs it will be documented by the Office Manager and the appropriate action will be taken.

October 2013

This policy is reviewed on an annual basis. However, if any issues relating to the policy should arise, the policy will be reviewed immediately.

Date of next scheduled review: October 2014