### **Wild Arts: Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Introduction**

At Wild Arts, we are dedicated to creating a safe, inclusive, and nurturing environment where every child feels valued and respected. Drawing inspiration from the Reggio Emilia approach, we view challenges and conflicts as "cognitive knots"—opportunities for growth, learning, and understanding. Our approach to resolving these issues is rooted in kindness, empathy, and a democratic process that honors the needs and voices of all children. However, we also recognize the need for clear boundaries and firm actions to protect the well-being of all participants, in line with UK government guidance.

**1. Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is any behavior that is intended to hurt, intimidate, or harm another person, physically or emotionally. It can take many forms, including:

* **Physical Bullying:** Hitting, kicking, pushing, or other forms of physical aggression.
* **Verbal Bullying:** Name-calling, teasing, or making threats.
* **Social Bullying:** Excluding others from groups, spreading rumors, or intentionally damaging someone’s social reputation.
* **Cyberbullying:** Using technology, such as social media or texting, to harm others.

**2. Aims of the Policy**

* To create a positive and safe environment where all children can thrive.
* To ensure that all members of our community—children, staff, parents, and partners—understand that bullying is not tolerated.
* To empower children to resolve conflicts through respectful communication and problem-solving.
* To involve parents and the wider community in our approach to managing and resolving conflicts.
* To take firm action if bullying persists, in line with UK government guidance.

**3. Preventive Measures**

* **Creating a Positive Culture:** We foster a culture of respect, kindness, and inclusivity through daily interactions, creative activities, and forest school sessions.
* **Education and Awareness:** Children are educated about the importance of empathy, understanding, and respecting differences. We use storytelling, role-playing, and group discussions to explore these themes.
* **Empowering Children:** We encourage children to express their feelings, ask for help, and support one another in resolving conflicts.
* **Community Involvement:** Parents and community partners are encouraged to participate in our programs and to reinforce these values at home and within the community.

**4. Response to Bullying**

* **Immediate Action:** Any incidents of bullying will be addressed promptly. The safety and well-being of the affected child will be our first priority.
* **Restorative Approach:** We will bring together the children involved to discuss the issue in a calm and supportive environment. Using a restorative approach, we will help them understand the impact of their actions and work together to find a resolution.
* **Involving Parents:** Parents of all children involved will be informed of the situation. We believe in a partnership approach and will work together with parents to support the children in resolving the issue. However, if we suspect any safeguarding concerns, we will follow our referral procedure, in line with our safeguarding policy.
* **Ongoing Support:** Both the child who has been bullied and the child who has engaged in bullying behavior will receive support to ensure that the issue is fully resolved and to prevent any recurrence.

**5. Escalation and Persistent Bullying**

* **Continuous Monitoring:** If bullying continues despite initial interventions, the situation will be closely monitored by staff, and further steps will be taken to address the behavior.
* **Involving External Support:** If the bullying persists, we may seek additional support from external agencies, such as child psychologists, family support services, or local authority services, to help resolve the situation effectively.
* **Parental Involvement and Cooperation:** We expect full cooperation from the parents or guardians of all involved children. If a family is not proactive or cooperative in addressing the bullying issue, we will invite them to a formal meeting to discuss the seriousness of the situation and the steps needed to resolve it.
* **Final Measures:** If, despite our best efforts, the bullying behavior cannot be stopped, or if a child or family remains uncooperative:
  + **Exclusion from Activities:** We may limit or exclude the child from specific activities or sessions to protect the well-being of other children.
  + **Temporary Suspension:** In severe cases, temporary suspension from the Forest School may be necessary.
  + **Permanent Exclusion:** As a last resort, and only after all other options have been exhausted, the child may be permanently excluded from Wild Arts to ensure the safety and well-being of the wider community.

*These actions align with UK government guidelines, including the Department for Education's "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" (2017), ensuring that our response is fair, proportionate, and focused on the safety of all children.*

**6. Safeguarding Considerations**

* **Referral to Safeguarding Authorities:** If at any point we suspect that the bullying behavior is linked to a safeguarding concern, such as neglect or abuse, we will immediately follow our safeguarding referral procedures, in line with statutory guidance such as "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (KCSIE).
* **Zero Tolerance:** Wild Arts maintains a zero-tolerance policy for bullying. We are committed to taking all necessary steps, including referral to external authorities if required, to ensure the safety and well-being of all children in our care.

**7. Review and Reflection**

* **Ongoing Reflection:** As part of our commitment to continuous improvement, we regularly review our anti-bullying policy and practices. Feedback from children, parents, and staff is actively sought and incorporated.
* **Community Feedback:** We encourage parents and community partners to share their thoughts and experiences, ensuring that our approach remains relevant and effective.

**Conclusion**

At Wild Arts, we believe that every child deserves to learn and grow in a safe and nurturing environment. Through our commitment to kindness, empathy, and firm action when necessary, we strive to ensure that all children can flourish, free from the fear of bullying. Together, with our community, we are dedicated to creating a place where every child feels valued, heard, and respected.