

Anti-Bullying Policy

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Next review by: July 2026



This Policy is available to current and prospective parents on the School's website or as a paper copy on request.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The School aims to provide a happy, secure, caring and supportive environment in which each student feels respected as an individual. We encourage pupils to show respect, care and responsibility towards others so that all have the opportunity to achieve their full potential and to contribute positively to the community. We expect all members of the school community to treat each other with respect, tolerance and consideration.
- 1.2 The School has a duty of care to pupils and to staff to ensure they are safe to work, learn and develop unimpeded by fear. Where bullying is found to have taken place by any means, and whether on or off the school site or online, robust action shall be taken to protect the wellbeing of pupils and staff.

2 Definition of Bullying

- 2.1 Bullying is anti-social behaviour that involves making someone feel vulnerable and/or inadequate, miserable and often isolated. It can be directed against and by any member of the school community, staff as well as pupils. Acts of bullying can be perpetrated by individuals or by groups against individuals or groups; they are usually repeated or sustained over a period of time and are designed to cause emotional and/or physical hurt.
- 2.2 Bullying behaviour can be directed at pupils because of many issues, including: high or low ability within the context of the school's ability range, appearance/health conditions, disability/SEN, friends/social issues, wealth/status/home circumstances, race/religion, culture/interests/politics, gender reassignment and sexuality (here bullying may be sexual, sexist, transphobic or homophobic). School Council representatives have highlighted as recurring areas of concern: ability, wealth or lack of wealth, appearance, and in the case of older students, behaviour outside of school.
- 2.3 Bullying behaviour can be:
 - **Physical** - any form of violence, deliberate jostling, pushing, shoving, moving, taking, disrespecting others' possessions;
 - **Verbal**-taunting, name calling, whispering, note writing, texting, emailing, spreading rumours, laughing at another's expense;
 - **Emotional** - ignoring/exclusion, manipulation;
 - **Cyber** - see below;
 - **Devaluing behaviour** – comments or behaviour which are designed to undermine a person's sense of self-worth.
- 2.4 Staff are aware that any type of bullying behaviour may also constitute child on child abuse and therefore warrant a response under safeguarding as well as, or instead of, anti-bullying procedures. This will always be the case if there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Below this threshold, it is more likely to be the case if the allegation: is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger or more vulnerable pupil; is of a very serious nature; or raises risk factors for other children within or outside the School.

3 Definition of Cyber-bullying

3.1 Cyber-bullying is the use of information and communication technologies to support bullying and could involve various media including:

- Texts, instant messages or calls on mobile phones;
- The use of mobile phone camera images to cause distress, fear or humiliation;
- Posting threatening, abusive, extremist, offensive or humiliating material or comments on websites (including blogs, personal websites and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok or YouTube);
- Using email to message others in a threatening or abusive manner;
- Hijacking or cloning email or other online accounts;
- Using artificial intelligence ('AI') programs, models or chatbots to generate inappropriate content (including 'deepfakes') or participate in bullying behaviour.

3.2 Every bit as damaging and unacceptable as bullying by more direct, face to face means, cyber-bullying has become increasingly common and has additional potentially harmful consequences; through the use of mobile phones, the internet and social media, bullying can become public and may expose a victim to unwanted attention, danger, phone calls, and harassment by strangers.

3.3 The following distinctive features of cyber-bullying need to be recognised and taken into account when determining an effective response:

- **Impact:** the scale and scope can be greater than in other forms of bullying;
- **Targets and perpetrators:** may be unlike traditional bullies and their targets;
- **Location:** the 24/7 and any-place nature of cyber-bullying is particularly unsettling and invasive. Perpetrators may not be connected to school and yet can bully directly while the victim is in school;
- **Anonymity:** the victim will not always know who is attacking them;
- **Motivation:** perpetrators may not always be aware that they are bullying;
- **Evidence:** the target of the bullying will have evidence of its occurrence.

3.4 A student will be held responsible for content that they send, post or share regardless of whether that content was originally conceived of and/or generated by the student themselves, by another person or by AI.

4 The School's Response to Bullying

4.1 Consequences of bullying can be extremely serious. Patterns of behaviour can continue into adulthood and may result in severe physical, emotional and psychological damage, even suicide.

4.2 Our objectives are to ensure that all recognise bullying behaviour when it occurs, and know that it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Sanctions are applied as appropriate to the individual case and suspension is likely if such behaviour persists (see the School's Behaviour Policy).

4.3 Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws that can apply, e.g. in terms of harassment, threatening behaviour or communication.

- 4.4 Teaching and form staff must be alert and aware of the dynamics within their groups. It is important that we help students develop the skills and assurance to stand up for others and themselves as far as possible; they should also know that the school is a supportive listening environment, that they can communicate concerns without fear of reprisals, and that school procedures will be implemented.
- 4.5 Similarly, parents are asked to let the School know directly if they have cause for concern, either on behalf of their own daughter or regarding incidents involving others. The School will always try to handle information discreetly, but parents will be asked to provide as much detail as possible when reporting incidents, including the names of those involved and any available evidence such as screenshots. Although the school cannot promise secrecy, if matters need to be followed up the staff will do so with sensitivity. It is always much easier to address and counter problems at an early stage.
- 4.6 The Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and PSHE programmes will consider, and aim to discourage, bullying in all its forms, and in particular with regard to the protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010. Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics (e.g. sexist, racist, homophobic or transphobic bullying) will be taken particularly seriously.

5 Signs of Bullying

- 5.1 Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:
- Unwillingness to return to school;
 - Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet;
 - Failure to produce work, or producing unusually poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others;
 - Books, bags, money and other belongings suddenly go "missing", or are damaged;
 - Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary);
 - Diminished levels of self-confidence;
 - Frequent visits to the Medical Room with symptoms which may relate to stress or anxiety, such as stomach pains or headaches;
 - Unexplained cuts and bruises;
 - Frequent absence, erratic attendance or late arrival to class;
 - Choosing the company of adults rather than peers;
 - Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;
 - Difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares; or
 - Talking of suicide or running away from home or school.
- 5.2 Although there may be other causes of the above changes in behaviour, a member of staff observing any of these signs in a pupil should report it immediately to a member of the pastoral team or to the Designated Safeguarding Lead depending on the severity.
- 5.3 Students who may be more vulnerable than others because of their behaviour or circumstances should be carefully monitored.

6 Preventative Measures - Pupils and Parents

- 6.1 All new pupils are briefed on the School's expected standards of behaviour. Guidance on expectations of behaviour is printed in pupil diaries along with advice on where to turn for support if they encounter bullying.

- 6.2 If bullying occurs, pupils know that they should tell a member of staff immediately and that they are able to seek appropriately confidential advice and guidance. They could tell a friend, teacher, Form Tutor, School Counsellor or parent. If a student is told, then they should report it to the Form Tutor or another member of staff. If parents are aware of bullying behaviour, they should contact the Form Tutor and/or the appropriate Head of Section or Head of Year as soon as possible. Pupils are encouraged, if bullying occurs, to be assertive, not aggressive.
- 6.3 Topics pertinent to bullying are addressed in the Personal Development Curriculum; through assemblies, year group or section meetings, presentations by visiting speakers, form time activities. Where appropriate, these topics will also be addressed in the curriculum. Ongoing efforts are made within the Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education programme to address issues of social interaction such as communication skills and having respect for others. Other areas of the curriculum, such as English and Drama, highlight the importance of tolerance.
- 6.4 Induction to the School's ICT network includes guidance and instruction related to the Code of Conduct for Pupils' Use of ICT and the issue of cyber-bullying. Within the Lower school ICT curriculum, in PSHE lessons and periodically in assemblies, issues connected specifically with cyber-bullying are discussed and revisited.
- 6.5 The School provides leadership training to senior pupils.

7 Preventative Measures – Staff

- 7.1 Staff must be familiar with this and related school policies and be ready to tackle bullying when it occurs. New staff will focus on bullying in their induction programme and the issue of bullying is raised in whole staff training sessions.
- 7.2 All staff are encouraged to be vigilant, as a matter of course, as they move around the school, paying particular attention to less public areas of the site both during and outside lesson times and before and after the school day (see the School's Health and Safety policy, and the section of the Staff handbook regarding staff duties).
- 7.3 Staff know that bullying behaviour is unlikely to be made obvious to staff and will occur most frequently out of lesson times. All staff must therefore be aware of the possible signs that a child is a victim of bullying (see above) and should note changes in friendship groups within their forms or classes and any snide or negative comments.
- 7.4 Staff are made aware of specific issues when they occur, for example through case conferences for staff.
- 7.5 The School has a strong and experienced pastoral team who support the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and are trained in handling any incidents as a priority. The pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents and on monitoring those involved in an incident after it occurs.
- 7.6 All Heads of Section are involved in monitoring and investigating incidents of bullying, including cyber-bullying and share best practice at pastoral meetings.

8 School Procedures when bullying behaviour is apparent or reported

- 8.1 When bullying behaviour is reported, the individual making the report should be reassured that there is always support available in school.

- 8.2 The member of staff informed, or who has witnessed an incident, should inform the relevant Head of Year as soon as possible. The Head of Year will then be responsible for informing other members of the pastoral team including the Head of Section and Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- 8.3 Parents may be contacted at this stage, especially if the bully is known to the victim but is not a member of the school community. All staff should be encouraged to keep an eye on the pupils concerned. It is important that there is understanding of and concern for the health and well-being of the perpetrator as well as the victim and that any safeguarding issues are dealt with promptly. If the Form Tutor was not the initial point of contact, he or she should be informed of the situation as soon as possible. Notes of the meetings should be written up promptly and kept in the files of the pupils concerned. (See the School's E-Safety Policy for more information about the collection and preservation of online/electronic evidence.)
- 8.4 The Head of Section must be kept informed, is responsible for ensuring that the incident is logged with the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and will need to step in if the problem has not been resolved. Disciplinary sanctions will be applied as appropriate, taking into account any special educational needs or disabilities that the pupils might have and the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- 8.5 If bullying still persists, there will be a disciplinary meeting with the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and parents. Severe or persistent bullying may result in expulsion in accordance with the School's Expulsion, Removal and Review Policy.
- 8.6 The School will always consider whether the bullying behaviour under review gives cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. The School will also consider whether the perpetrator or the victim might have unmet educational or other needs, and therefore whether a multi-agency is appropriate. In either instance, the procedures set out in the School's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy should be followed.
- 8.7 In some cases, the School will need to consider whether there are any concerns that the perpetrator or the victim might be at risk of radicalisation or being exposed to extremist ideology. If so, the procedures set out in the School's Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy should be followed.

9 Record Keeping

- 9.1 All allegations of bullying are recorded in the Anti-Bullying Log, together with all details of any investigations.
- 9.2 The Anti-Bullying Log is monitored by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) for patterns and trends.

10 Further Guidance

- 10.1 The School Council has produced its own guidelines about preventing and dealing with bullying. These can be found in the homework diary, given to each student. Guidance is also available from the DfE.

11 Appendices

- 11.1 This policy has one appendix:

- Appendix 1: Specific Advice in cases of Cyber-Bullying

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1. Where the identity of the bully is unknown

- 1.1. Although the technology seemingly allows anonymity, there are ways to find out information about where bullying originated. However, it is important to be aware that this may not necessarily lead to an identifiable individual. For instance, if another person's phone or school network account has been used, locating the original source will not, by itself, determine who the bully is.
- 1.2. In cases where the identity of the bully is unknown, some key questions to look at:
 - Was the bullying carried out on the school system? If yes, are there logs in school to see who it was? Contact the school ICT staff or ICT support to see if this is possible.
 - Are there identifiable witnesses that can be interviewed? For example, there may be children who have visited the offending site and left comments.
 - If the bullying was not carried out on the school system, was it carried out on a mobile or a particular internet service (e.g. IM or social networking site)? As discussed, the service provider, when contacted, may be able to take some steps to stop the abuse by blocking the aggressor, or removing content it considers defamatory or breaks their terms of service. However, the police will need to be involved to enable them to look into the data of another user (see below).
 - If the bullying was via mobile phone, has the bully withheld their number? If so, it is important to record the date and time of the message, and contact the mobile operator. Steps can be taken to trace the originating phone, but the mobile operator can only disclose this information to the police, so police would need to be involved. If the number is not withheld it may be possible for the school to identify the caller, e.g. another student may be able to identify the number, or the school may already keep records of the mobile phone numbers of their pupils. Content shared through a local wireless connection on mobile phones does not pass through the service provider's network and is much harder to trace. Similarly, text messages sent from a website to a phone also provide difficulties for tracing for the internet service or mobile operator.
 - Has a potential criminal offence been committed? If so the police may have a duty to investigate. Police can issue an RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000) request to a service provider enabling them to disclose the data about a message or the person sending a message. This may help to identify the bully. Relevant criminal offences here include harassment and stalking, threats of harm or violence to a person or property, and any evidence of sexual exploitation (e.g. grooming or inappropriate sexual contact or behaviour). A national agency called the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) was set up in 2006 to deal with child sexual exploitation, and it is possible to report directly to them online. However, it is important to note that it is the sexual exploitation of children and young people, not cyber-bullying, which forms the remit of CEOP.

2. Support for the person being bullied

- 2.1. See school procedures in the Anti-Bullying Policy. Key principles include reassuring the victim that it is right to talk, recognising that the situation must have been hard for them to deal with, and stressing that no one has a right to treat them in that way.

2.2. Advice on online empowerment (essential in all cases but particularly crucial if the bully is known to the victim and not a member of the school community):

- It is important to advise the person being bullied not to retaliate or return the message. Replying to messages, particularly in anger, is probably just what the bully wants, and by not replying the bully may think that the target did not receive or see the message, or that they were not bothered by it. Instead, the victim should keep the evidence and take it to their parent or a member of staff.
- Advise the pupil to think about the information they have in the public domain and where they go online. It is important that pupils are careful about who they give their mobile phone number to and that they consider whether they should stay members of, for example, chatrooms where people are treating them badly.
- Advising the child to change their contact details, such as their mobile phone number, can be an effective way of stopping unwanted contact. However, it is important to be aware that some children may not want to do this, and will see this as a last resort for both practical and social reasons, and they may feel that they are being punished.

3. Containing the incident

3.1. Some forms of cyber-bullying involve the distribution of content, or links to content, which can exacerbate, extend and prolong the bullying. There are advantages in trying to contain the 'spread' of this. If bullying content, e.g. embarrassing images, have been circulated, it is important to look at whether this content can be removed from the web.

3.2. Members of the school staff, as well as pupils, have been bullied online with insulting comments and material posted about them. This material should be dealt with seriously and incidents contained in the ways described below to ensure the wellbeing of staff.

3.3. Steps that can be taken to try to stop it spreading:

- The quickest and most effective route to getting inappropriate material taken down from the web will be to ask the person who originally posted it to remove it. If you know who the person responsible is, ensure that they understand why the material is hurtful and ask them to remove it. Contact the host (e.g. social networking site) to make a report to get the content taken down (see When and how to contact the service provider). The material posted may breach the service provider's terms and conditions of use and can then be removed.
- Confiscation of phones containing offending content/asking pupils to delete the content and say to whom they have sent it: school staff can confiscate a mobile phone as a disciplinary penalty, and have a legal defence in respect of this in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 (s 94). The Education Act 2011 gives schools the power to search electronic devices and to delete data where appropriate, or to hand phones or data to the police. Procedures in relation to searching and confiscation must be reasonable (more information can be found in the School's Searching and Confiscation of Banned Items Policy).
- Contact the police in cases of actual/suspected illegal content. The police will be able to determine what content is needed for evidential purposes, potentially allowing the remaining content to be deleted.

4. Preventing recurrence (e.g. blocking or changing contact details)

- 4.1. There are some steps that the person being bullied can take, depending on the service that the bully has used, which can allow users to manage who they share information with and also who can contact them. These features can help a person being bullied to stop further contact from the person harassing them, e.g. blocking the person from their email will mean that they will not receive messages from that particular sender anymore.
- 4.2. Pupils or their parents should be advised to contact the service provider or host (i.e. the chatroom, the social network provider or mobile operator) to inform them of what has happened, and get their advice on how to stop this happening again. The service provider may be able to block particular senders or callers (for landlines), or advise on how to change contact details and potentially delete the accounts of those that are abusing the service.

5. Working with the bully and applying sanctions

- 5.1. With any form of bullying, steps should be taken to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully, and to ensure access to any support that they may need. Mediation between the bully and the victim can work well. When determining the appropriate response, it is important to consider the ways in which cyber-bullying incidents might differ in impact to other forms of bullying. Key considerations may include the bully's attempts to disguise their identity, the public nature of posted material (and the extent of the humiliation), and the difficulty in controlling copies of the material (the difficulty in gaining closure over the event).
- 5.2. All students should know that bullying behaviour is unacceptable but it should be recognised that some cyber-bullying has been known to be unintentional, or at least carried out with little awareness of the consequences. Determining appropriate sanctions for incidents will then require sensitivity to the impact on the person being bullied, as well as any misunderstanding or thoughtlessness on the part of the cyber-bully. Consideration should also be given to the possibility that the cyber-bullying could be a part of retaliation to previous bullying endured by the perpetrator.

6. Sanctions for bullying behaviour

- 6.1. See the School's Behaviour Policy for a full list of possible sanctions.
- 6.2. Technology-specific sanctions for pupils engaged in cyber-bullying behaviour could include limiting internet access for a period of time within school. However, depending on the frequency or pattern of bullying in each individual case, more serious sanctions, including suspension and exclusion, may apply. Although bullying or cyber-bullying is not a specific offence in UK law, there are criminal laws that can apply, e.g. in terms of harassment, threatening behaviour, or indeed — particularly for cyber-bullying — threatening and menacing communications. In such cases, it is likely that the police will be involved.