

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

DEFINITION

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another student or group either physically or emotionally. It is a deliberate act done to cause distress, often in order to give a feeling of power, status or other gratification to the bully, and can have serious physical and emotional consequences which may cause psychological damage. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour. A bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a student is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

The School recognizes that bullying can happen to all children and young people and it can affect their social, mental and emotional health. We support all students who are bullied by being alert to the effect any form of bullying can have and being especially alert to where it may have a severe impact. We are aware that students who are badly bullied in school are more likely to be bullied out of school, for instance either on their way to or from school or through cyberbullying.

Some students are more likely to be the target of bullying because of the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves, including prejudice-based bullying because of a protected characteristic, and we take any such bullying particularly seriously. These young people are often the same young people who might need greater support to deal with the impact of bullying, for example those who are going through a personal or family crisis, or who have special educational needs. There will also be a range of other factors that result in some students being more vulnerable to bullying and its impact than others.

The School promotes the view that bullying is totally unacceptable in school, on school buses, during off site expeditions and visits and indeed anywhere, albeit beyond the jurisdiction of the school. Bullying should never be dismissed as 'banter' or accepted as a normal part of growing up. Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can have a significant impact on its target, and if left unchallenged or dismissed as banter it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and is not acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Bullying includes:

- Hurtful behaviour such as swearing, unpleasant nicknames, personal insults often motivated by prejudice against particular groups for example on the grounds of religion, race, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability or because a student is adopted or a carer. It may occur directly as malicious gossip, persistent teasing or 'banter', aggressive and insulting gestures, spiteful practical jokes or through digital technology (cyberbullying) Examples of this may include: social media, inappropriate use of AI, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and email.
- Deliberately leaving a student out of a friendship group or activity, or online by deliberate replication of this behaviour.
- Making a student do something against her will.
- Physical assaults.
- Vandalism or removal of personal belongings including work.

How does bullying differ from friendship difficulties?

Sometimes students can feel hurt or upset because they have fallen out with a friend. This is not the same as bullying.

Bullying:

- Is deliberately intended to hurt or humiliate.
- Involves a power imbalance that makes it hard for the target to defend themselves.
- Is usually persistent.
- Often involves no remorse or acknowledgement of the target's feelings.

School staff are ready to help and support students who have fallen out with friends, but such situations will not be treated in the same way as a case of bullying. However, the strategies we use may be similar because we acknowledge that over a period of time the impact on the student may be the same, and the situation could become bullying if it escalates.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is any bullying that takes place using technology, for example on social media sites, through a mobile phone or on a gaming site, typically through messages or actions that are threatening and/or intended to cause offence, anxiety or humiliation.

Examples of cyberbullying:

- Abusive comments, rumours, gossip and threats made using digital communications and/or technologies; this includes internet trolling.
- Sharing pictures or videos (including AI) or personal information without the consent of the owner and with the intent to cause harm or humiliation.
- Hacking into someone's email, phone or online profiles to extract and share personal information, or to send hurtful content while posing as that person.
- Creating dedicated websites that intend to harm, make fun of someone or spread malicious rumours.
- Pressurising someone to do something they do not want to such as sending a sexually explicit image.

PREVENTING AND ADDRESSING BULLYING

We follow the guidance given by the Department for Education in *Preventing and Tackling Bullying – Advice for School Leaders staff and Governing Bodies* (July 2017) *Cyberbullying: advice for headteachers and school staff* (November 2014), *Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying* (November 2014) and *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (2025)

In order to promote a culture which rejects bullying, we take the following steps:

- We focus on creating an environment of good behaviour, mutual respect and kindness with helpful examples set by staff and students, and celebration of success.
- We foster emotional and social skills and empathy, mainly through form time, the PD programme and assemblies.
- We challenge discriminatory and prejudice-based language and make it clear that it is not acceptable.
- We ensure all students, staff and parents are aware of the school's Anti-bullying policy by putting a copy on the School website. Students have condensed forms in their planners and on form noticeboards.
- We make it easy for students to report bullying to any member of staff in the confidence that they will be listened to and that procedures are in place for the resolution of the problem. We ensure that all students have access to information about whom to talk to in school and which outside agencies are available outside school. Personal guidance is always available from pastoral staff including, in

particular, Form Tutors, Heads of Section, Deputy Heads of Section, the School Chaplain, the School Counsellors and the Pastoral Deputy Head.

- We provide ongoing support for both the young person doing the bullying and the young person being bullied to address the problem and evaluate procedures, taking a restorative approach whenever possible.
- We support teaching staff to identify bullying and understand the actions to take, for example through an annual refresher on the policy, and providing resources for anti-bullying week for them to teach in form time. This policy provides teachers with updated knowledge of what their legal responsibilities are and how to address different forms of bullying e.g. by mobile phone text messaging, email and chat rooms.
- Staff will:
 - Never ignore suspected bullying
 - Never make premature assumptions about the situation
 - Listen carefully to all accounts and deal with them sensitively and effectively
 - Adopt a problem solving/no blame approach so students are not required to justify themselves
 - Follow up repeatedly to check bullying has not returned
 - Record all incidents of alleged bullying on CPOMS
- We discuss bullying, its definition and possible consequences as well as how to prevent it using form time, assemblies, PD lessons, School Council forum and lessons, for example drama and history. This includes openly discussing differences between people that could motivate bullying such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference, and also children with different family situations, such as looked after children or those with caring responsibilities. We want students to understand the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders to the action, with older students setting a good example for the rest of the school community helping to reinforce this. Appropriate use of social media is also reinforced through assemblies, PD and form time, and we help build resilience in our students to protect themselves and their peers through education and information.
- We monitor bullying by
 - regularly canvassing students' views on the extent and nature of bullying through form time and School Council
 - recording on CPOMS by Heads of Section all incidents of bullying so that any patterns of behaviour can be identified by the Pastoral Deputy Head and strategies employed as appropriate to counter any trends.
- We ensure that parents are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and they are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their daughter or another student is being bullied. Parents should feel confident that the school will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issues in a way that protects the student. We work with parents in supporting all students involved. We also seek to support parents by providing information and awareness on online safety to parents and carers through the pastoral page on the parents' portal and other information sent home, as appropriate. Online safety is also a key element of advice given at Welcome evenings. Further sources of advice are available in the pastoral area of the parent portal.
- We will remove from the school system access to any website or chat room if it is used to send bullying or threatening messages.
- We require all students to understand and abide by the School's Behaviour Policy and ICT Acceptable Use Policy – Students. See also Safeguarding - Online Safety Policy
- In addition, the Safeguarding - Online Safety Policy includes the following information:

- clearly defined roles and responsibilities for online safety as part of the school's wider safeguarding strategy and how this links with other safeguarding policies
- clear guidance on the use of technology in the classroom and beyond for all users, including staff, students and visitors, that references permissions/restrictions and agreed sanctions
- information on the school's technical provision/infrastructure and safeguards in place to filter and monitor inappropriate content and alert the school to safeguarding issues
- staff safeguarding professional development that includes online safety
- the management of personal data in line with statutory requirements.

DEALING WITH ALLEGATIONS OF BULLYING

1. In the first instance a student who feels that she or another student is being bullied should talk to her Form Tutor or to any member of staff with whom she feels comfortable. Factual notes will be made of this conversation afterwards and entered on CPOMS for discussion of how best to proceed. This includes bullying outside school (involving our students), as teachers have the power to discipline students for misbehaving outside the school premises "to such an extent as is reasonable".
2. Although confidentiality cannot be promised, the student will be reassured that she will be informed about the plan of action and her views/advice sought, as appropriate. Should a student's parents be concerned that bullying may be taking place they may also wish to contact the Form Tutor, Deputy Head of Section or Head of Section. We actively encourage parents to also report sooner rather than later if there are friendship difficulties as early management may well avoid the establishment of a bullying dynamic. Students and parents need to be aware that if a bullying incident is reported, we will need to investigate it. If the term 'bullying' has been used we are obligated to carry out an investigation. We view this term as a very serious allegation. It is not possible for us to be informed and then be asked not to act. We will always endeavour to keep sources confidential but in some cases, where the only possible source of information is from parents, this may not be possible. In making an allegation, parents and students will be expected to reveal the names of all parties involved.
3. The student or students who have made an allegation of bullying and those who have been accused of bullying will then be seen individually by the Form Tutor, Deputy Head of Section, Head of Section or Pastoral Deputy Head and an investigation will be carried out.
4. A written record, including timeline where appropriate, will be made of all reported incidents that require further action and of the action that is proposed. This is entered into CPOMS, usually by the Head of Section. Bullying allegations prior to the academic year 2021-22 (when CPOMS was introduced) are stored by the Head of Section and passed on the next Head of Section when students move up the school and change sections; this handover takes place at the weekly Head of Sections meeting at the start of the academic year when the past year is reviewed by the Pastoral Deputy Head and Heads of Section.
5. This record will distinguish any incidents of bullying that are based on protected characteristics. This will help enable us to monitor how effectively we are instilling values of tolerance and respect and actively promoting the well-being of students.
6. As part of the investigation it may be necessary to carry out a search of a student's bag or locker. See the Behaviour policy appendix for **Searching, screening and confiscation-protocol**.
7. The nature and level of support will depend on the individual circumstances and the level of need, and any SEND will be factored into decisions made on how to proceed. This can include a quiet word from a teacher that knows the student well, asking the pastoral team to provide support, providing formal counselling, engaging with parents or referring to external services.
8. In most cases, parents of all the parties involved will be contacted

9. In some cases the investigation may find that there has been a friendship breakdown and there have been actions on all sides that have caused distress. In these circumstances, students will be involved in the restorative process, either in ending the friendship in a civil manner or moving forward together. Apologies and owning misjudgements will be integral to this process. If there has been found to be bullying, support will be given to all students involved in to help them to understand the situation and the School's planned management strategy to resolve the incident. The Head will be informed that bullying has taken place and consulted about the proposed plan of action.
10. Strategies to address an incident of bullying may vary, however the School will always apply some form of disciplinary measure to students who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong: these disciplinary measures are applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities that the students may have and taking into account the needs of any vulnerable students. The School will consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the student who is alleged to have bullied. Where this is the case the student engaging in bullying may need support themselves. The action that is proposed will be regularly monitored and reviewed by the member of staff dealing with it to ensure that the bullying has ceased. They will liaise with the pastoral staff responsible for the student and with parents and records of this will also be kept on CPOMs.
11. We will do all we can to ensure students that have been bullied continue to attend school in order to prevent disruption to education. We will respond sensitively where an absence arises as a result of bullying and encourage the student to return, providing support.
12. Serious and/or repeated bullying will result in a serious sanction (see the Exclusion Policy and the Behaviour Policy) as, and as such, be referred to the Head and the parents of the students concerned will be informed. Depending on circumstances, persistent bullying may be dealt with by the Head through a contract of behaviour between the student and the School which the student and her parents are asked to sign or may lead to an alternative serious sanction. If a student has been set a contract, failure to comply with this contract may result in a temporary fixed term internal or external exclusion from the school community. A contract is a serious sanction.
13. If the consequences of bullying lead to a student experiencing pronounced social, emotional or mental health difficulties, we will make appropriate provision for a student's short-term needs, including setting out what actions we are taking when bullying has had a serious impact on her ability to learn. If the bullying leads to persistent, long-lasting difficulties that cause the student to have significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of those of the same age, then we will consider whether she will benefit from being assessed for SEND. We will follow the guidance given in *Preventing and Tackling Bullying – Advice for School Leaders staff and Governing Bodies* (July 2017) where students are vulnerable and/or seriously affected.
14. A bullying incident will be treated as a Safeguarding concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In such cases the bullying issue will be reported to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who may report the concerns to the local authority social care department. See Safeguarding Policy (Child Protection).
15. School staff members have the power to discipline students for misbehaving outside the school premises. Sections 90 and 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 state that a school's disciplinary powers can be used to address students' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff, but only if it would be reasonable for the school to regulate their behaviour in those circumstances. This may include bullying incidents carried out by our students occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport or in the local community. Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The Head will also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the action taken against a student. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed. While school staff members have the

power to discipline students for bullying that occurs outside school, they can only impose the disciplinary sanction and implement that sanction on the school premises or when the student is under the lawful control of school staff, for instance on a school trip.

16. If staff feel that an offence has been committed, they should report this to the Head for discussion and agreement prior to the Police being informed. Serious consideration will be given to whether it is appropriate to inform parents or if advice on this should be taken from the Police.

DISSEMINATION

Copies of this document will be available for inspection by parents, students and staff on the school website. Reference to this policy will also be made in the students' planner.

GOVERNOR SCRUTINY OF IMPLEMENTATION

This takes place through Governor visits to school, including lesson visits and events, and the annual review of this policy. The Safeguarding Governor regularly checks the serious sanctions file and the bullying allegations log which is compiled by the Pastoral Deputy Head. Any trends are reported to the Governance committee and noted in the termly Safeguarding report to Governors

Policy last reviewed:Trinity 2026

Next review due: Trinity 2027

Person responsible for review: Pastoral Deputy Head

Audience:Students/Staff/Parents