

Weald of Kent Grammar School

Anti-Bullying Policy

1. Aims

The school is dedicated to building a welcoming community where every person feels secure, highly valued and empowered to thrive academically. This policy seeks to ensure that students can learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. We strive to create an open atmosphere of mutual respect in which bullying behaviour is unnecessary and unacceptable. Our school is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of all students.

The school recognises the impact that the experience of bullying can have on young people. This is set out in the Department for Education's (DfE) guidance:

"Bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals. It can be a barrier to their learning and have serious consequences for their mental health. Bullying which takes place at school does not only affect an individual during childhood but can have a lasting effect on their lives well into adulthood. By effectively preventing and tackling bullying, schools can help to create safe, disciplined environments where pupils are able to learn and fulfil their potential."

The school also recognises that how a young person feels about being bullied can be just as important as the actual events that have taken place. Therefore, the aim of this policy is to provide emotional support as well as specific anti-bullying interventions to those involved.

In our school community, allegations and experiences of bullying can overlap with friendship breakdowns, unkindness and disrespectful behaviours. Consequently, investigating and resolving these complex situations can be emotionally demanding for pupils, parents and staff alike. This policy serves as a guiding framework to help everyone navigate these difficulties and work together towards achieving a constructive resolution.

This policy outlines what the school will do to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying. The school is committed to developing an anti-bullying culture where the bullying of adults, children or young people is not tolerated in any form.

The school has a public sector equality duty (PSED), created by the Equality Act (2010), that states that public bodies must go beyond the elimination of unlawful discrimination on the protected characteristics, and further foster good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not. Weald of Kent is committed to advancing equality of opportunity for all people in the organisation.

2. Legislation and guidance

This policy is based on:

- Department of Education guidance "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" - July 2017
- Kent County Council model policy
- "Keeping Children Safe in Education" (KCSIE)
- Department of Education Guidance on 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges' - September 2021

This policy is further supported by the school's:

- Positive Behaviour Policy
- Online Safety Policy, including Acceptable User Policy Agreement

- Safeguarding Policy
- Relationships and Sex Education Policy

Furthermore, there are several pieces of legislation which set out measures and actions for schools in response to bullying, as well as criminal and civil law. These include (but are not limited to):

- The Education and Inspection Act 2006, 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children Act 1989

3. Definitions

Bullying can be defined as “behaviour by an individual or a group, repeated over time that intentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally”. (DfE “Preventing and Tackling Bullying”, July 2017).

The school recognises bullying as a form of child-on-child abuse that can severely hinder a student's emotional development. It is an emotionally abusive act that not only damages individual confidence and happiness, but also ripples outward, negatively impacting peers and fracturing our sense of community.

Forms of bullying include:

- **Physical:** pushing, hitting, kicking, and threatening gestures; damaging or stealing property that belongs to someone else; violent behaviour and assault.
- **Verbal:** name calling, teasing, taunting, intimidating, humiliating, spreading malicious gossip, sexual harassment, racial abuse, homophobic and transphobic abuse.
- **Written:** text and email messages, notes spreading rumours.
- **Cyberbullying:** name calling, teasing, taunting, intimidating, humiliating, spreading malicious gossip, sexual harassment, racial abuse and homophobic and transphobic abuse on social media, on email, in ‘chat’ rooms and forums and online gaming sites.
- **Silent:** exclusion from group activities and conversations, rude gestures.

It is important in respect of this that students learn that one person’s good-natured teasing may, to another person, be unkind and even cruel bullying. It is not necessarily the way the behaviour is intended, but the way that it is received that is important in identifying and tackling incidents of bullying.

Some young people are more likely to be bullied than others. These are recognised specific types of bullying:

- Bullying related to race, religion or culture.
- Bullying related to SEN or disabilities.
- Bullying related to appearance or health conditions.
- Bullying related to sexual orientation or gender.
- Bullying related to young carers or looked after children or otherwise related to home circumstances.
- Sexist or sexual bullying.

Students may be bullied in relation to other aspects of their lives, for example:

- Students who do not have English as a first language.
- Students who do not have a lot of friends.
- Students who are shy and sensitive.

It is important that all members of the school community can identify signs of bullying. Common indicators can include:

- Changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous or withdrawn.
- Feigning illness, taking unusual absences or truanting from school.
- Clinging to adults.
- Evidence of changes in work patterns.
- Lacking concentration.
- Uncharacteristic aggression.
- Being excluded from groups both at social times and in the classroom.

As mentioned above, the DfE definition of bullying is a “repetitive” and “intentional” act to harm another. The school recognises that there can also be single incidents of child-on-child harm as defined in KCSIE. These incidents are more likely to be dealt with under the school’s Positive Behaviour Policy which describe a range of behaviours from ‘lack of respect or kindness’ (Level 1) through to ‘threatening’ and ‘discriminatory’ behaviour (Level 4) which will be recorded in Arbor. Repeat offences will then be investigated as an allegation of bullying.

It is common for the term ‘bullying’ to be misunderstood and/or misinterpreted. While disagreements and friendship fallouts/breakdowns do occur between pupils, these are often distinct from acts/behaviours which meet the DfE definition of bullying. To support our pupils, we educate and guide them in understanding the crucial differences between repeated bullying behaviour and relationship/friendship difficulties.

4. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all members of the school community to:

- Uphold the school’s values of curiosity, compassion and courage
- Demonstrate zero tolerance for any unkind, discriminatory or abusive behaviour
- Report all forms of bullying to school staff immediately

The Board of Trustees will:

- Ensure this policy is adhered to in practice and monitored through regular meetings with Senior Leadership.
- Review the monitoring, recording and strategic actions taken to eliminate discrimination and bullying.
- Utilise anonymised data from the school’s reporting systems to identify and address any trends in behaviour

The Headteacher will:

- Communicate this policy effectively to the school community.
- Ensure that disciplinary measures are applied fairly, consistently and reasonably, across all cases.
- Identify and appoint a specific member of the Senior Leadership group to take overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy
- Implement procedures to prevent bullying among students and ensure these procedures are highly visible to staff, parents/carers and students.

School Staff will:

- Understand what bullying is and know how to follow this policy.
- Support, uphold and consistently implement this policy in their day-to-day practice
- Be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it in accordance with school policy.
- Be approachable, listening carefully and without prejudice to any students with concerns around bullying.

- Create an environment whereby they empower students to feel comfortable and confident in reporting any bullying concerns.
- Accurately and promptly record all incidents and allegations of bullying on CPOMS (the school's internal safeguarding system).
- Provide high quality tutoring and PSHCE lessons that promote welfare and wellbeing, positive relationships and friendships.

Students will:

- Follow the school's Positive Behaviour Policy and school values, showing tolerance, respect and kindness to other members of the school community.
- Promptly report any bullying concerns to a member of staff, whether they themselves are experiencing the bullying behaviour or a bystander witnessing the bullying of others.
- Understand that they can report concerns confidently through a verbal report, an email, a letter or the online reporting system (SHARP) on the student intranet.

Parents and carers will:

- Ensure that they read, understand and support the school's approach to anti-bullying and pastoral care.
- Keep school staff informed of any changes or incidents occurring outside of school that may impact on the behaviour and well-being of their child.
- Understand that the school will handle any information provided by parents/carers with appropriate confidentiality, sharing it only on a 'need-to-know' basis so as to keep our pupils safe.
- Recognise that safeguarding procedures will be followed at school when there is a risk of harm to a young person.
- Take responsibility for monitoring their child's use of technology, most notably, social media and communications.
- Work collaboratively and respectfully with the school to resolve any issues, even if their own child is the subject of an allegation.

Advice for students and parents about how to deal with bullying if it is happening to them or their child, or if they witness the bullying of another student, can be found in Appendix 1.

5. Implementation of Anti-Bullying Policy

We employ a **pro-active** and a **re-active** anti bullying strategy.

Our **proactive** approach to bullying prevention is embedded across school life through assemblies, structured PSHE lessons, form time activities, peer mentor activities, calendar-linked awareness events and our 'Girls on Board' sessions. Our Positive Behaviour Policy emphasises the importance of kindness. Our school values emphasise the importance of compassion. There is an expectation that all members of the school community, students and all staff treat one another with consideration and respect.

Annual staff safeguarding training reminds staff that they are role models for students and should set a good example of positive behaviour. They should ensure they do not misuse their power (i.e. avoid sarcastic remarks, derogatory nicknames, dominating and humiliating behaviour) and that all rewards and sanctions should be implemented within school policy.

The school will work with students to tackle bullying in school, by:

- Involving students in policy writing and decision making
- Ensuring that students understand the school's approach and are clear about the part they play in preventing bullying.
- Regularly canvassing students' views on the extent and nature of bullying.

- Ensuring that all pupils know how to express worries and anxieties about bullying.
- Ensuring that all pupils are aware of the range of sanctions which may be applied against those engaging in bullying.
- Utilising student voice in providing the above.
- Publicising the details of internal support, as well as external helplines and websites

Our **reactive** approach is employed to tackle problems that arise from bullying and social interaction problems. This includes (but is not limited to):

- No-blame meetings.
- Mediation.
- Peer Mentor scheme.
- Restorative justice
- Flexible curriculum planning for PSHCE to target issues as they are raised.
- Sanctions (also see Positive Behaviour Management Policy).

Dealing with Bullying incidents

1. All reports and allegations of bullying are taken seriously. Incidents are usually disclosed by a pupil or parent or raised by a member of school staff.
2. If a pupil makes a disclosure to a staff member, then the staff member must follow the guidance as set out in the school's Safeguarding Policy, whilst also listening to the pupil without judgement and providing reassurance.
3. Staff will seek to establish the following facts:
 - Name/s of the pupil experiencing the bullying (referred to here as the victim)
 - Name/s of alleged perpetrator/s
 - What has happened, how the pupil/s have been harmed
 - When the incident(s) occurred, and how often
 - Where the incident(s) took place, including any online platforms
 - How the pupil who experienced the bullying feels about the situation (e.g. how safe they currently feel).
 - Any supporting evidence, such as eyewitness accounts or digital screenshots.
4. Once sufficient information has been collated, the staff member must promptly report the incident to the Head(s) of Year for both the victim and alleged perpetrator. The incident must also be recorded on CPOMS as an 'allegation of bullying' (indicating a repeated intent to harm) or 'child on child abuse' (indicating a single incident of harm). The DSL team will assign the CPOMS incident to the relevant colleague and ensure all subsequent actions are recorded in the incident log.
5. Where there is an imminent risk of harm to the pupil, the initial member of staff handling the allegation must report it to the Head of Year immediately (on the same day if possible). A risk assessment should be carried out to evaluate the likelihood and severity of harm. In such events, parents/carers should be informed as soon as sufficient information regarding the imminent risk has been established.
6. The assigned Head of Year will decide on the most appropriate action. Given the wide range of alleged behaviours, the following steps serve as an indicative framework to guide decision-making. It is not exhaustive or prescriptive; each incident may require variation in actions., and the Head of Year may enlist the support of other staff, such as Student Support or Safeguarding Leads.

- a. The Head of Year will usually speak to the pupil experiencing the bullying behaviour at first to seek a first-hand account, if this has not already taken place.
 - b. The Head of Year will then inform the victim's parents that an allegation of bullying has been made and the incident has been discussed with their child. A plan of action and a proposed timeframe will be agreed upon. Occasionally the Head of Year may decide to speak to parents first, for example, if the pupil is particularly vulnerable and/or there is a wider safeguarding concern.
 - c. The Head of Year will seek further accounts (e.g. from other pupils or staff) and gather evidence in order to corroborate and establish facts.
 - d. The Head of Year will inform their senior team line manager of the investigation and may seek further guidance from a DSL or other senior member of staff.
7. Finally, the Head of Year will categorise the allegation as one of the following:
- Substantiated: there is sufficient evidence to prove the allegation
 - Unsubstantiated: there is currently insufficient evidence to either prove or disprove the allegation. The term, therefore, does not imply guilt or innocence.
 - Unfounded: there is no basis to support the allegation being made.
 - False: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation
 - Malicious: there is sufficient evidence to disprove the allegation and there has been a deliberate act to deceive or cause harm to the pupil accused.
 - Withdrawn: the allegation is withdrawn by the victim, and a record will be retained.
8. The outcome will allow the Head of Year to decide on the most appropriate further intervention. This may include, but is not limited to:
- Sharing information with key staff, e.g. classroom teachers and/or duty staff, to ensure enhanced vigilance
 - Ongoing emotional support
 - Restorative discussions between pupils
 - Education-based activities for perpetrator/s
 - Meetings with parents
 - Pastoral Support Plans
 - Sanctions from the school's behaviour policy
 - Monitor and review of situation
9. The Head of Year will record the allegation, investigation decision and subsequent actions on the Bullying Log. This will also state clearly if the bullying incident involved pupils with protected characteristics (e.g. sex, race, disability, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity).
- a. Staff must record details of all racial incidents and ensure that parents/carers are informed of such incidents and of the action taken.
 - b. Bullying relating to race must be reported to the Headteacher immediately, as schools are legally required to investigate all allegations of racial incidents. The allegation can be made by the victim, perpetrator or any other person.

The school seeks to work in close partnership with parents and carers. Parents will be informed when their child has been reported as a victim of alleged bullying, and the school will seek to agree on a collaborative course of action with parents. The school will keep parents informed of investigations and interventions insofar as confidentiality rules allow.

It is not uncommon for parents to request that the school takes no action. However, the school reserves the right to make decisions regarding intervention if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the child. This will be clearly explained to parents and carers, usually before any intervention takes place. For example, if a parent requests that the school does not interview pupils or take accounts, the school may still do so if necessary to protect the child's welfare.

6. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is any form of bullying which takes place on any online platform or through devices such as smartphones and tablets. The internet and social media have fundamentally changed how young people experience bullying. The school treats cyberbullying as seriously as any other type of bullying, recognising the compounded child protection concerns associated with the internet.

Our approach is supported by the school's clear policies on the use of mobile phones technologies. These policies are implemented not only to prevent bullying behaviour but also to encourage effective and respectful communication between pupils.

The dangers of cyberbullying are further acknowledged by the school's Online Safety Policy, Positive Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding Policy.

Signs that a student may be experiencing cyberbullying can be as follows:

- Being emotionally upset during or after using the Internet or the phone.
- Being very secretive or highly protective of one's digital life and avoiding discussions about their online activities.
- Withdrawal from family members, friends, and activities.
- Avoiding school or group gatherings.
- A change in work attitude or grades.
- Displaying uncharacteristic behaviour, such as "acting out" in anger at home or school.
- Experiencing noticeable changes in mood, behaviour, sleep, or appetite.
- Expressing a desire to stop using the computer or phone entirely.
- Appearing nervous or jumpy when getting an instant message, text, or email.

Cyberbullying can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- **Threats and intimidation:** Sent via mobile phone, email, online games, social networking sites or message boards. Threats can be made via comments or direct messages and can refer to violence, including sexual threats.
- **Harassment or stalking:** Repeatedly sending unwanted texts or instant messages, making phone calls (including silent calls) or using public forums or message boards, to repeatedly harass an individual. This also includes tacking someone's activity collecting information about them.
- **Vilification/defamation:** Posting upsetting, derogatory or defamatory remarks about an individual online. This includes name calling, general insults and prejudice-based bullying (e.g. sexist, homophobic and racist messages). It also encompasses 'slut-shaming', which is defined as attacking individuals (primarily girls and women) based on perceived or fabricated transgressions or socially acceptable sexual behaviours.
- **Identity theft/unauthorised access and impersonation:** Setting up fake sites or profiles that misuse the school's logo and name or using photographs of staff or students taken from the school website without permission.

When responding to cyberbullying concerns, the school will take the following steps:

- **Act immediately** as soon as an incident has been reported or identified.
- **Provide targeted support** for the pupil who has been cyberbullied and work with the pupil responsible to ensure the behaviour is not repeated
- **Secure evidence** by encouraging the targeted pupil to keep screenshots or records of the bullying activity to assist the investigation.
- **Identify the perpetrator** by taking all available steps, such as reviewing school system usage, interviewing potential witnesses, and, if necessary, contacting service providers or the police.
- **Contain and remove content** by working collaboratively with individuals and online service providers to stop the spread of offensive or upsetting material. This includes supporting reports to service providers to remove content, and requesting the deletion of locally held or posted content that contravenes school behavioural policies.
- **Search and confiscate devices** (such as mobile phones) lawfully, in accordance with the school's Searching and Confiscation Policy. (Note: Staff must refer to the DfE 'Searching, screening and confiscation at school' and Childnet Cyberbullying guidance to ensure powers are used proportionately and lawfully)
- **Apply appropriate sanctions** to the pupil responsible, taking steps to change their attitude and behaviour while ensuring they have access to any additional help they may need.
- **Involve the police** if there is reason to believe a criminal offence has been committed.
- **Empower and educate** staff and students on how to protect themselves online by advising targets not to retaliate, providing guidance on blocking contacts, and helping those involved manage their private information in the public domain

7. SHARP system

SHARP (School Help Advice Reporting Page) is an online reporting tool which is accessible to pupils via the Student Intranet. The system empowers pupils to make direct referrals to the safeguarding team. These reports can be made anonymously or with details of the reporting pupil attached.

8. Bullying and criminal law

"Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986." (Antibullying Alliance).

The Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) outlines a range of social media incidents that could be considered crimes. These include, but are not limited to:

- **Trolling:** A form of baiting online which involves sending abusive and hurtful comments across all social media platforms. This can be prosecuted under the Malicious Communication Act 1988 and the Communications Act 2003.
- **Online threats:** This can take many forms including threats to kill, harm or to commit an offence against a person, group of people or organisation.
- **Disclosure of private sexual images without consent:** Often referred to as "revenge porn", this broadly covers uploading intimate sexual images of a victim to the internet to cause them humiliation or embarrassment. It is a criminal offence to re-tweet or forward a private sexual photograph or film without consent if the purpose was to cause distress to the individual depicted.

- **Online harassment:** Repeated attempts to impose unwanted communications or contact in a manner that could be expected to cause distress or fear.
- **Online Stalking:** A form of harassment which can involve persistent and frequent unwanted contact, or interference in someone's life

Further helpful links and guidance can be found on the CPS website under 'Cyber and Online Crime' - [Cyber/online crime | The Crown Prosecution Service](#)

If school staff suspect that a criminal offence may have been committed, they will seek assistance from the police. This could involve filling an incident report via 101 or seeking advice from either Kent Children Services or the local child-centred policing team.

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Appendix 1 Advice for Students and Parents

What can students do if they are being bullied?

Students are strongly encouraged to report bullying in schools. If left unchallenged, students who bully others are unlikely to stop. Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon. If you are being bullied, follow these guidelines:

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied and that the behaviour is wrong.
- Be proud of who you are, it is good to be individual.
- Try not to show the perpetrator that you are upset
- Stay with a group of friends or other students if you can.
- Be assertive: let the perpetrator know that you believe you are being bullied, walk away confidently.
- Go straight to a trusted member of staff.
- Share your fears and experiences with your parent or carer.

What can students do if they know someone is being bullied?

Those who witness bullying often harbour the fear that it could happen to them next. However, it is vitally important that if you know that someone is being bullied you let a member of staff know it is happening so the school can help.

What can a parent do if their child is being bullied?

It is extremely distressing for parents whose child is being bullied but the most important things to remember are:

- Listen carefully and calmly to your child.

- Encourage them to write down the incidents that have happened, where they occurred and who, if anyone, saw them happening.
- Encourage them to report it to a member of staff.
- If they do not want to let the school know immediately that it is happening, then parents should respect the pace of the child but continue to keep a record of the incidents and consider seeking advice from external helplines (such as Family Lives or Childline) until such time the student feels ready to report the incident to the school.
- Do not get involved directly by contacting the other student involved or the parents of the perpetrator.

Appendix 2 Useful Links

DfE, 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' (July 2017)

www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

DfE 'Cyberbullying: advice for headteachers and school staff':

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/62611456e90e07168ad2b1ea/Cyberbullying_Advice_for_Headteachers_and_School_Staff_121114.pdf

DfE 'Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying':

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a81638840f0b6230269709c/Advice_for_parents_on_cyberbullying.pdf

Anti-Bullying Alliance: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Childnet <http://www.childnet.com/resources/cyberbullying-guidance-for-schools>

Internet Matters <https://www.internetmatters.org/issues/cyberbullying/>

[Top tips for staying secure online | National Cyber Security Centre](#)

Appendix 3: Student Charter

The School Council have produced a student version of this policy – an Anti-Bullying Charter - that is displayed around the school. [Anti-bullying Charter \(2\).pdf](#)

WEALD OF KENT GRAMMAR SCHOOL

ANTI BULLYING CHARTER

FORMS OF BULLYING:

Physical Pushing, hitting, stealing, violent behaviour or assault.

Verbal Name-calling, teasing, sexual harassment as well as racial, homophobic, or transphobic abuse.

Written Text and email messages, notes, spreading rumours.

Silent Exclusion from group activities and conversations, rude gestures.

Cyberbullying Any form of bullying that take place online.

If bullying happens...

- Tell them to **stop**.
- **Keep safe** and stay with a group of friends or find a trusted adult. This could be your **Form Tutor**, your **Head of Year** or a member of the **Student Leadership Team**.
- Make a **note** of what has happened and where relevant take a screenshot of any content on social media.
- **Report** it to a member of staff.
- We will ask you to share an **account** of what has happened.
- It is important to try to remember **who, what and when**.
- We will speak to the bully and share the consequences.
- We will offer you **support** and make sure you have someone to speak to.
- We will offer **mediation** between you, your friendship group and the bully, if this is something you wish to do.
- If you find it difficult to talk to someone at school or at home about being bullied, ring **ChildLine** on 0800

1111 or email AAsafeguarding@wealdgs.org.

CAN YOU SPOT THE SIGNS?

Bullying can be defined as:

'Behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time that intentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally.'

DFE Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2017

Look out for:

- Changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and withdrawn.
- Feigning illness
- Clinging to adults
- Lacking concentration
- Uncharacteristic aggression
- Being excluded from groups both in and out of class

