

Anti-Bullying Policy – Senior School



**Should be read in conjunction with the
Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions policy**

UPDATED BY	DATE OF ISSUE	NEXT REVIEW DATE
Senior Deputy Head, Pastoral	August 2021	July 2022

At South Hampstead, we believe that every member of our community has the right to be safe and happy and to feel that they will be protected if they feel vulnerable. Bullying is completely in breach of our School Code of Conduct, which exhorts students to demonstrate respect and care towards each other. The aims of our anti-bullying policy are:

- to make it clear to all students that mutual respect and tolerance are expected from all members of the school community at all times;
- to prevent bullying from taking place as far as possible;
- to make sure that all students feel that they could tell someone that they are being bullied in the knowledge that it will be taken seriously and dealt with swiftly and sensitively;
- to respond effectively to any specific incidents.

Bullying is defined as taking wilful and / or persistent action to hurt, threaten or frighten someone else. Normally bullying involves repeated actions, a pattern of hurt, offence or intimidation, however a single incident that is wilful and extremely hurtful will have a lasting impact on the victim so may also be deemed bullying. It may take the form of verbal or physical attacks, misappropriation of property, persistent hurtful comments or abusive messages, written or electronic. It is not the ordinary give and take of school life, which may include disagreements, hurt feelings, joking and friendly teasing.

Bullying can manifest itself in various forms, including:

Verbal	(e.g. name calling, taunting, mocking, threatening, spreading rumours, teasing, sexism, racism, casual or deliberate use of derogatory language that demeans an individual or group for their culture, beliefs, personal characteristics or personal challenges)
Physical	(e.g. pushing, kicking, hitting, damaging possessions, blocking someone's path)
Emotional	(e.g. deliberate isolation, coercion, being made to feel uncomfortable because of religion, gender, sexuality, disability, appearance (e.g. weight), health condition (e.g. eczema), ethnicity or race);
Cyber-bullying	(e.g. offensive text messaging and emails, posting offensive comments or 'memes' on shared social networking pages, inappropriate use of chat rooms, instant messaging and websites (e.g. personal sites or posting comments on sites or via apps.)

The above is not a definitive list. At times, persistent exclusion of an individual from their natural friendship group or social activities, or inciting others to exclude an individual, may be defined as bullying. Behaviour on the part of one or more pupils towards another, which causes serious, prolonged distress or psychological damage, constitutes serious bullying and will be dealt with as swiftly and effectively as possible. This policy may also be applied to this type of behaviour between pupils when off school premises.

There is a recognition that some pupils may be more at risk of bullying than others. These include those with special educational needs or a disability, those who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or who are questioning their identity, those who are known to have a particular religious belief or pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds. The school does not tolerate any negative behaviour towards these pupils, on the basis of these differences or because of their vulnerabilities, and is quick to address anything that is seen, heard or drawn to the attention of staff. Pupils behaving inappropriately will be dealt with according to the Behaviour Policy and / or the Anti-bullying policy and the victim will be supported through the pastoral care system.

Girls are encouraged to talk directly to a member of staff if they feel that they are being bullied. This is on the understanding that the member of staff will listen carefully to the issues and help her to decide how best to proceed.

All pupils are taught and reminded, through PSHE, assemblies and form-time activities, that to be a bystander to bullying is to become part of the problem. Every pupil has a responsibility to each other to prevent bullying, through calling peers out on inappropriate behaviour and alerting staff if they have seen or heard such behaviour taking place in school, outside of school or online.

If a situation of conflict between girls comes to light, the School would help the girl or girls to consider a range of different ways of dealing with the situation, such as the examples in list below. On the whole, these options progress from the lowest level of intervention to the highest. Some incidents of conflict may not be bullying but may still require some consideration and assistance to be resolved.

- Seeing what happens over the next few weeks – it may have been a misunderstanding or it might not happen again. This option is only discussed within the context of a girl being given every opportunity to talk through any concerns and an understanding that she can seek further advice or help at any time;
- Telling the person – sometimes the person who has made another girl feel uncomfortable or hurt does not realise they have done this. The girl may decide to tell the person what happened, where and when it happened, how it made them feel, the impact it had and what they would like to happen next;
- Writing the person a letter – this involves telling the person the same as above but without having to tell them to their face;
- Having a teacher or senior pupil facilitate a small-group meeting – the girl may feel able to confront the person doing the bullying with her concerns if a teacher or older pupil is present to make sure things don't get out of hand. This needs to be done without blaming the other girl but trying to get them to understand how hurtful their behaviour can be and how it needs to stop;
- The school investigating the complaint. Sometimes, the bullying can be so serious that it needs to be properly investigated and the person doing the bullying punished. This formal method usually involves communication with parents and other people may be asked to share their experiences. The outcome will be decided by one of the Deputy Heads in consultation with the Headmistress.

Pupils are well placed to consider the handling of their situation and the School aims to work with them in that aim, but the School reserves the right to intervene, even if the pupil or her family do not support that intervention. This would be particularly the case if the School had reason to believe that other students were at risk of being treated similarly. The School has an obligation to protect all pupils in the community and, if information comes to light to suggest that someone's behaviour is in breach of this most serious of school rules, the School has an obligation to act. It is important that all cases of bullying are dealt with; bullying must not be allowed to fester under a shadow of fear or intimidation. Bullying is a Child Protection issue; it is in everybody's interest to bring bullying out into the open, including that of the bully themselves, who will often need help too.

If a case of bullying comes to light, the following procedures will be followed:

- the girl is assured that her concerns will be taken seriously;
- she will have the opportunity to discuss her concerns with a teacher, a senior girl or another member of staff;
- the range of options will be discussed and time taken to talk through different possible strategies
- in serious cases of bullying, it will be necessary to conduct an investigation and intervention will be at the discretion of the Head or Senior Deputy Head, Pastoral;
- in very serious cases of bullying, it may be necessary for girl(s) named in the allegations to stay at home pending the outcome of a full and fair investigation without prejudice;
- in cases of cyber-bullying, it is best to collect evidence of images/messages in the form of screen shots or print-outs if possible * indecent images should never be forwarded; they should be saved on the pupil's phone and the phone confiscated until Police have completed their investigation
- the students exhibiting bullying behaviour will be helped to see that their actions are totally unacceptable and have serious, possibly long-term, consequences; possible causes for their behaviour will be investigated and support put in place for that pupil, in or outside of school
- where appropriate, parents of girls involved will be informed of what has happened and invited to come to school to discuss the issue.
- if it transpires that bullying has taken place, an appropriate sanction will be imposed in order to impress on the perpetrator that what she has done is unacceptable, deter her from repeating that behaviour and signal to other pupils that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.
- fixed term exclusions are a possible sanction and; in the most serious cases, permanent exclusion. In minor cases, sanctions will be given in line with the school's Sanctions Policy.

Any sanctions will be decided upon taking into account the context for the individual pupil concerned, particularly with respect to any specific learning difficulties they may experience (in line with Schedule 10 of the 2010 UK Equality Act). The expectation and action taken for such pupils' behaviour will take into account their specific areas of disability or need. An understanding of the pupil behind the behaviour is key to our behaviour strategy for all pupils and will always be part of the consideration when deciding how best to respond to breaches of the school rules or code of conduct.

Records are kept of all investigatory meetings, meetings with parents, telephone calls etc. based on factual and contemporaneous notes. A log of bullying incidents is also kept, for the purposes of reviewing procedures and outcomes. Often pupils and parents will use the word 'bullying' to describe a situation when pupils have been unkind to each other. All of these situations will be investigated to understand the full extent of the behaviour, however, only those deemed to be bullying, according to the definition above, will be included in the log.

The school follows a range of strategies to prevent bullying, particularly through the teaching across all curriculum areas. The issue is addressed in many areas of the curriculum, in PSHE, year assemblies, whole-school assemblies, form time activities and throughout the general life and culture of the school. Kindness and mutual respect are highly valued and expected by all in the community; acts of serious unkindness or bullying are tackled head-on, both for the sake of those involved and to make clear that such behaviour will not be tolerated.

Our anti-bullying policy and procedures are outlined in all girls' homework diary, in the New Parents' Handbook that all parents receive and in the Staff Handbook. Staff are regularly reminded, through staff meetings and email communication, of the content of the School's Anti-Bullying Policy and the importance of not overlooking inappropriate behaviour.

Sources of guidance consulted for this document:

Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies; 2017
Cyber bullying: Advice for head teachers and staff 2017