



Anti-Bullying and Anti-Cyberbullying Policy

Policy number	BS014 10a
Applies to	Whole School
Endorsed by	Head Master
Responsibility	Vice Master
Date reviewed	January 2024
Next review	January 2025

Definition and general principles

Bedford School is zero tolerance for all forms of child-on-child abuse, including bullying and cyber bullying. The headings below can be used to find out how we approach an anti-bullying and anti-cyber bullying culture.

1. Aims and Definitions
2. Types of Bullying
3. Reporting Bullying
4. Signs of Bullying
5. Anti-Bullying Strategies
6. Dealing with bullying allegations
7. Support for students
8. Cyber Bullying
9. Legal Duties and powers
10. Dealing with sending sexual images

1. Aims and Definitions

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally (DfE, Preventing and tackling bullying 2017). The school recognises that bullying can take a variety of forms, including cyber-bullying (i.e. the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others). It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability, or because a child is adopted or is a carer. Bullying often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim which can manifest itself in several ways: it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Bullying is a safeguarding issue and this policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Therefore, it should also be read in conjunction with the Behaviour Policy.

Bullying can be a form of child-on-child abuse. It is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at Bedford School or in our community. Abuse should never be passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. The school recognises that bullying in all its forms may take place here and actively seeks to eradicate it. Staff must be alert to signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it.

The school takes account of the DfE Guidance, Behaviour in Schools (September 2022), Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017) and also acknowledges its legal duties under the Equality Act 2010, particularly with respect of pupils with Special Educational Needs or disabilities. It also has regard to 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (2023). The policy applies to all aspects of the school but, in accordance with National Minimum Boarding Standards 8, 15 and 16, particular regard should be given to those pupils that are in boarding. The extra requirements of that standard are met in this policy.

Bullying and cyber-bullying are safeguarding issues and the school will respond to these in line with its Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy and procedures.

Our school aims to adopt anti-bullying strategies and intervention systems in order to:

- Prevent, de-escalate and/or stop any continuation of harmful behaviour.
- React to bullying or cyberbullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way.
- Safeguard the pupil who has experienced bullying; to trigger sources of support for the victim as well as the perpetrator where appropriate.
- Apply disciplinary sanctions and provide education and support to the pupil doing the bullying to ensure they learn from the experience, possibly through multi-agency support.
- Safeguard the pupils in the in-person and digital worlds
- Ensure that pupils, staff and parents are educated to understand what bullying and cyberbullying are and what their consequences can be
- Have procedures in place to prevent incidents of cyberbullying in school or within the school community, especially through effective filtering and monitoring of device use
- Ensure that we monitor the effectiveness of our prevention measures

2. Types of Bullying

The three main manifestations of bullying are:

- Physical (hitting, kicking, pushing, theft)
- Verbal (name calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive remarks, making inappropriate comments about someone's disability or learning difficulty, racist, sexist or homophobic remarks)
- Indirect (spreading rumours, gossiping, excluding someone from social networking groups and websites, sending inappropriate messages, photographs or emails; other cyber bullying).

The school recognises that some children may be particularly vulnerable to physical, sexual and emotional abuse by their peers, including students with SEN and/or disabilities. Such abuse is taken as seriously as abuse perpetrated by an adult.

The school actively seeks to prevent bullying and promote tolerant attitudes to all, regardless of any differences of background, belief or character. We recognise the serious effect of all forms of bullying and the potential for psychological damage to victims. This includes initiation and hazing type rituals and violence. Though bullying itself is not a specific criminal offence, the school nevertheless takes a very strong stance against all threatening behaviour and harassment, and there are criminal laws which apply to some such behaviour. All pupils are actively encouraged to pass on information about any incident of bullying against either themselves or others.

There will be no disciplinary action taken for any 'whistle blowing' done in good faith.

3. Reporting Bullying

We encourage pupils to speak to one or more of the following individuals in school:

Upper School	Prep School
1. Tutor	1. Tutor

2. Housemaster	2. Heads of Year
3. Vice Master (DSL)	3. Assistant Head – Pastoral (PS DSL)
4. Head Master	4. Deputy Head
5. School Chaplain	5. Headmaster
6. School Nurse	6. House Master
7. School Counsellor	7. School Nurse
8. Any Other Member of Staff	8. School Counsellor
9. School Monitors	9. Any Other Member of Staff
10. Independent Listener (for boarders)	10. Independent Listener (for boarders)

All of the above are trained in child protection issues in order to prepare them on how to deal with disclosures and other sensitive information. Anti-bullying training takes place for all staff as part of induction and is regularly renewed through child protection inset. Pupils are educated about what to do about bullying via school and year-group assemblies.

Making Reporting Easier

- Pupils may contact their Tutor, Housemaster, Head of Year, the DSL, Assistant Head (Pastoral), or any member of staff, when they are concerned about a bullying or cyberbullying issue
- The school regularly publicises and promotes the message that asking for help is the right thing to do and shows strength and good judgement
- The school provides information on external reporting routes including Childline, CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) and the NSPCC
- Provision of an online form for students to report worries about themselves or others that can be completed anonymously
- Wide distribution of posters around school with details of who to contact about worries that is also held online

Further guidelines can be found in the school's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy and its Behaviour Policies, the latter of which both outlines sanctions against serious bullying and strategies to encourage positive behaviour as a preventative measure.

4. Signs of Bullying

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 bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags 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 Centre with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiencing nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying, should be investigated by parents and teachers.

5. Whole School Anti-bullying Strategies

Prevention

- Creating an environment within which individuals feel safe, care about each other, value and respect each other, recognise and reward achievement and progress.
- Assemblies and talks addressing bullying and telling pupils who to talk to when they have concerns
- Staff training
- Addressing bullying, cyberbullying and sharing sexual images through the PSHE curriculum and continuing to look for opportunities to address bullying through other curriculum areas
- The availability of the School Counsellor and Chaplain, and the wider pastoral network of Tutors, Housemasters, Heads of Year, Matrons, and other trusted adults
- Improving the school environment, looking in particular at staff supervision patterns; the physical design of the building(s); targeting attention on key times and locations. The site and dayhouses are supervised on a rota that provides adult presence at times they are used most. Boarding houses are staffed 24/7
- Promoting kindness as one of the school's core values, we call it our 'bottom line'

6. How the school deals with allegations of bullying

The following steps will be taken when dealing with incidents of bullying:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded and sent to the relevant Housemaster(s)/Head of Year and/or the Vice Master/Assistant Head (Pastoral), often via CPOMS
- An investigation will take place. All concerned with the incident will be interviewed and a record kept of interviews
- Staff and pupils should be advised to preserve evidence and a record of abuse; where possible, they should save phone messages, record or save-and-print instant messenger conversations, print or produce a screenshot of social network interactions, print, save and forward to staff whole email messages
- If images are involved, determine whether they might be illegal or raise child protection concerns. If so, contact the Vice Master immediately, who may involve the LADO (Local Authority Designated Officer) or the police in cases of actual or suspected illegal content.

- Tutors will be kept informed and where necessary appropriate subject teachers notified.
- Parents will be kept informed.
- Sanctions will be used as appropriate; there will also be an attempt to support the perpetrator of the bullying by talking through what lay behind their actions and ensuring they understand why a sanction is imposed. Where unsure if this is appropriate, BIFD guidance will normally be used to query our approach
- Monitoring of the situation by staff who work with the pupil(s) regularly will take place.
- Further information on how the school deals with sending nudes and semi nudes and cyberbullying is set out in the 'Responding to Cyberbullying' section below.

Whenever there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, any such abuse will be referred to the Local Authority as a Child Protection concern. In the event of disclosures about abuse, including child-on-child abuse, all children involved, whether perpetrator or victim, are treated as being at risk. The school will follow statutory guidance in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children', even where the alleged perpetrator is a child. The school will refer to the LADO or Social Services where advice will be sought regarding further action. Where allegations of child-on-child abuse by one or more of the school's own pupils are made, a thorough risk-assessment of the situation will be carried out with a view to ensuring the safety of all pupils. Decisions arising might include, for example, whether the accused pupils should be removed from school for a period, or from certain classes, whether sleeping arrangements should be changed for boarders, whether contact with certain individuals should be prevented or supervised, the availability of counselling, the adequacy of arrangements for listening to children and other methods of risk mitigation.

Staff should be clear as to the school's policy and procedures with regards to child-on-child abuse, as explained in the school's Safeguarding Children and Child Protection Policy and this is included in annual training. If in doubt at any time, they are advised to consult with the DSL, the Head Master or the Headmaster of the Prep School.

7. Support for victims of bullying

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a member of staff
- Reassurance
- Offering continuing support
- Restoring self-esteem and confidence

Pupils who have bullied will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why they became involved
- Establishing the wrong doing and need to change
- Informing parents/guardians to help change the attitude of the pupil

Support for the person being bullied – advice for staff

- Members of staff should contact the relevant Housemaster(s)/Head of Year(s) and the Vice Master/Assistant Head (Pastoral) in all cases
- Offer the child emotional support; reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling;
- Advise the child not to retaliate or reply. Instead, keep the evidence and take it to their parent or a member of staff

- In cases of cyberbullying, advise the person to consider what information they have in the public domain; unless the victim sees it as a punishment, they may be advised to change e.g. mobile phone number, social media handle, etc. If hurtful or embarrassing content is being distributed, try to get it removed from the web. If the person who posted it is known, ask them to remove it. Alternatively, contact the host provider and make a report to get the content taken down;
- In some cases, the person being bullied may be able to block the person bullying from their sites and services.
- Recognition that for boarders who are bullied in ways that don't have a digital dimension it can be especially hard to escape bullying and further support may be needed.

8. Cyberbullying

The school recognises that digital technology plays an important and positive role in everyone's lives, both educationally and socially. We are committed to helping all members of the school community to understand both the benefits and the risks, and to equip children with the knowledge and skills to be able to use technology safely and responsibly.

Cyberbullying can involve Social Networking sites, messaging apps, emails, mobile phones and smart devices used for SMS messages and as cameras. In addition:

- It can be used to carry out all types of bullying and as an extension of face-to-face bullying
- It can also go further in that it can invade home/personal space and can involve a greater number of people. It can therefore feel like something that can't be escaped.
- It can take place across age groups and school staff and other adults can be targeted
- It can draw bystanders into being accessories if they become aware but do not come forward about it
- It may include threats and intimidation; harassment or 'cyberstalking'; vilification/defamation; exclusion or peer rejection; impersonation; unauthorised publication of private information or images, 'peer on peer abuse' 'harassment'
- It can be an illegal act

8a. Preventing Cyberbullying

Policies and Procedures

- Ensuring regular review and update of existing policies, especially through the annual filtering and monitoring review
- Provide opportunities for policies to be addressed and for children to be involved in the process of updating and improving them
- Keep good records of all cyberbullying incidents
- Keep Acceptable Use Policies (AUP) under review as technologies develop
- Publicising rules and sanctions effectively
- Use of filtering, monitoring, firewall, anti-spyware software, anti-virus software and secure connections to safeguard the pupils.
- Ensure the PSHE curriculum addresses online harms and age-appropriate digital threats

Promoting the Positive use of Technology

The school will:

- Make positive use of technology across the curriculum

- Use training opportunities to help staff develop their practice creatively and support pupils in safe and responsible use
- Ensure all staff and children understand the importance of password security and the need to log out of accounts.
- Have clear behaviors for devices, set out on posters and in clear instructions that staff are trained in

8b. Responding to Cyberbullying

Most cases of cyberbullying will be dealt with according to the general procedures for bullying as outlined above. However, some features of cyberbullying differ from other forms of bullying and may prompt a particular response. Some of the key differences are:

- Impact: the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than other forms of bullying;
- Targets and perpetrators: the people involved may have a different profile to traditional bullies and their targets;
- Location: the 24/7 and anywhere nature of cyberbullying that means it can't be escaped
- Anonymity: the person being bullied will not always know who is bullying them;
- Motivation: some pupils may not be aware that what they are doing is bullying;
- Evidence: unlike other forms of bullying, the target of the bullying will have evidence of its occurrence;
- It is possible that a member of staff may be a victim and these responses apply to them too.
- Any allegations against staff should be handled as other allegations following guidance in Safeguarding Children and Safer Recruitment in Education
- Confiscate mobile phones or other devices if appropriate, in line with guidance.

8c. Working with the bully and applying sanctions for cyberbullying

The aim of the sanctions will be:

- To help the person harmed to feel safe again and be assured that the bullying will stop
- To hold the perpetrator to account, getting them to recognise the harm caused and deter them from repeating the behaviour
- To demonstrate to the school community that cyberbullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving similarly
- Sanctions for any breaches of AUPs or internet/mobile phone agreements will be applied
- In applying sanctions, consideration must be given to type and impact of bullying and the possibility that it was unintentional or was in retaliation
- The outcome must include helping the person demonstrating bullying behaviours to recognise the consequence of their actions and providing support to enable the attitude and behaviour of them to change.
- A key part of the sanction may well involve ensuring that the pupil deletes files.

9. Legal Duties and Powers

- The school has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment
- School staff may request a pupil to reveal a message or other phone content but should seek advice from the DSL where possible and ensure they are not putting themselves or a child at risk from the content they might see. Staff may confiscate a phone.

- If they consider that a mobile phone may contain evidence of bullying or a crime or the potential of a crime they should confiscate that device and refer this on to the DSL in line with the safeguarding and child protection policy.
- Some cyberbullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws including Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015 (eg “Revenge Porn”).

10. How we respond to sending sexual images

This section deals with when someone sends or receives a sexually explicit text, image or video. This includes sending ‘nude pics’, ‘rude pics’ or ‘nude selfies’. Pressuring someone into sending a nude pic can happen in any relationship and to anyone, whatever their age, gender or sexual preference. The school will refer to guidance by the UK Council for Child Safety ‘Sharing nudes and semi nudes: How to respond to an incident (overview)’ in dealing with all cases where it becomes aware of a sending nudes and semi nudes. Staff who become aware of sending nudes and semi nudes or youth produced sexual imagery should also make themselves aware of this government guidance. The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. This guidance provides more detail on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable.

If a member of staff becomes aware of an incident involving sending nudes or semi nudes, they should act in line with the school’s Safeguarding Children and Child Protection policy and inform the DSL immediately. The DSL should hold an initial review meeting with appropriate school staff. There should be subsequent interviews with the young people involved (if appropriate). Parents should be informed at an early stage and involved in the process unless there is good reason to believe that involving parents would put the young person at risk of harm. At any point in the process if there is a concern a young person has been harmed or is at risk of harm a referral should be made to children’s social care and/or the police immediately. In nearly every situation BIFD guidance will be sought anyway. The school includes educating children about the dangers of sending nudes or semi nudes in its bullying prevention strategy outlined above and the PSHE program.