ROYAL HIGH SCHOOL
BATH

GDST

COUNTERING BULLYING
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Applicable to: All staff, students, and parents.

See also: **Whole School Policies** Safeguarding**,** Dignity at Work, Equal Opportunities, Exclusions, ICT Code of Conduct, Boarding
Senior School Policies Behaviour and Discipline, Rewards & Sanctions
Prep School Policies Behaviour

Aims:

- to **try and prevent bullying**, as far as possible **and**
- to help staff, students, and parents to **deal with bullying effectively when it occurs**

Our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play and we pride ourselves on our respect and mutual tolerance. The school and the GDST are committed to providing a safe and secure learning environment for all students, irrespective of race, special educational needs, disability, culture, gender, sexuality, or religion and to foster an atmosphere of openness in which bullying is collectively monitored and disapproved of.

This **ethos means** that:

- Bullying of any kind, harassment, victimisation, and discrimination are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.
- We seek to treat all our students and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate.
- We expect our students to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed but orderly atmosphere. All students should care for and support each other.
- We believe parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the school in maintaining and modelling high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and home have consistent expectations of behaviour and co-operate closely.
- We have regard to relevant national guidance, in particular the DfE publication 'Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies' 2017; and to the requirements of our regulatory bodies, such as the Independent Schools Inspectorate, with which this policy complies.
- Our anti-bullying approach also involves other school policies, especially those relating to behaviour.
- There are important anti-bullying aspects to the Student ICT Code of Conduct, Acceptable use of ICT and use of Mobile Devices policies.
- We use RSHE lessons and activities, assemblies, projects, stories and literature, current affairs, historical events, tutorials, and other curriculum approaches to discuss and tackle bullying and to help create an atmosphere where bullying is more likely to be prevented in the first place.
- We train staff to recognise the potential signs of bullying and how to deal with it when it occurs and have systems in place for investigating bullying at a suitably senior level.
- A bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm.

1. Statutory obligations

Independent schools are bound by legal requirements as outlined by the government in Independent Schools Standard Regulations 2014.

2. What do we mean by bullying?

This policy uses the definition used by the DfE: **Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.**

This definition highlights the fact that bullying can be by an individual **or a group** against another individual **or group.** It is commonly accepted that bullying is deliberately hurtful (including aggression), causes feelings of distress/fear/loneliness in the victim, is difficult for victims to defend themselves against (as there is an imbalance or perceived imbalance of power between the perpetrator and victim) and repeated over a period of time. However, it is important to remember that, depending on its nature, a one-off incident may be considered to constitute bullying (although this is not recognised in the DfE definition) and can have precisely the same impact as persistent behaviour. The imbalance of power 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.

This definition includes:

- Hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including sexual and sexist) means.
- Verbal bullying (including electronic media like chat room and SMS messages).
- Emotional bullying (by excluding someone, tormenting them or spreading malicious rumours about them).
- Manipulating other people to tease or torment someone.
- Complicity that falls short of direct participation in bullying.
- Unpleasant remarks or actions related to any of the following:
    - Race, religion, or culture
    - Sex (i.e., talking to or touching someone in a sexually inappropriate way)
    - Gender, gender identity or perceived gender identity
    - Sexual orientation (e.g., homophobic bullying)
    - Disability or Special Educational Needs
    - Intellectual or other abilities
    - Appearance or health conditions
    - Being adopted or a carer

Using ICT in these ways is also bullying – we call it 'cyber-bullying'. It can involve using mobile phones, social or networking sites, like Webo, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook and Twitter, emails, text and SMS messages, voicemails and the posting of photographs, video clips and other electronic media on the internet.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time – even in the very best schools with highly effective systems of pastoral care. Sometimes it is overt and intimidating but it is often hidden and subtle. Bullying is treated seriously in school as:

- It is against our ethos and values.
- It is hurtful to others and to the school community.
- It can cause great distress, unhappiness, and psychological damage. At its worst, persistent and severe bullying can even lead to suicide, which is why it is taken so seriously.
- It can also be a criminal offence, for example if the behaviour amounts to harassment or to threatening behaviour.

3. Being aware – possible signs of bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a student is being bullied include:

1. Unwillingness to attend school.
2. Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet.
3. Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with, or spoilt by others.
4. Books, bags, and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged.
5. Change to established habits (e.g., giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary).
6. Diminished levels of self-confidence.

7. Frequent low-level medical complaints with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches.
8. Unexplained cuts and bruises.
9. Frequent absence, erratic attendance.
10. Choosing the company of adults.
11. Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact.
12. Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares.

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.

4. Particular groups which may be affected by bullying

Children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and LGBTQ+ can face additional challenges in the area of bullying. Staff must be alert to the fact that additional barriers can exist when recognising concerns about bullying in these groups of children. These may include:

- Children with SEN and disabilities who can be disproportionately impacted by things like bullying without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in overcoming these barriers.
- LGBTQ+ students may be questioning their gender and/or sexuality, which could make them more vulnerable to bullying.

5. How we deal with bullying

We are pro-active and provide the following preventative measures:

1. There is a procedure for checking internet usage by staff and students in school. The data is analysed by the Senior Network Manager and the Deputy Head Pastoral (DSL) to check for inappropriate use and concerns relating to bullying. A log of concerns is kept in secure, password-protected student files.
2. We recognise that ICT is a rapidly changing area, and we have a member of staff in the Senior School who is a trained CEOP Ambassador. The CEOP Ambassador along with the School Network Manager can provide advice to staff and students in cases of cyber-bullying.
3. Through the Student Planner, the RHS Little Blue Book and tutorial or form time, all students should learn what to do and older/experienced ones should be reminded. Students should be encouraged not to be silent when confronted by bullying. It must be pointed out that talking about bullying of oneself or a friend is not 'sneaking' but taking steps to protect a human being from being harmed. Students must be encouraged to go to any member of staff if they feel that they or a friend are being bullied.
4. Use appropriate Assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. Our RSHE programme gives students an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school.
5. Utilise other approaches to teaching, such as through thematic learning and across the curriculum to highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills.
6. Staff are on duty at times when students are not in class. They are alert to inappropriate language or behaviour.
7. Every teacher takes their responsibility to support the Prep School Deputy Head/Pastoral Deputy Head in spotting and effectively handling incidents of bullying.
8. In the Prep School 'Students of concern' is a standing agenda item on all weekly staff meetings and briefing meetings.
9. In the Senior School 'Concerns about students' is a standing agenda item on fortnightly Pastoral Team meetings and Tutor meetings. Staff are encouraged to raise any concerns as soon as they arise.
10. The Prep School Deputy Heads/Pastoral Deputy Head gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies.
11. Staff training on anti-bullying takes place regularly as part of training in Child Protection and Safeguarding.
12. The school employs School Nurses who are an important part of our pastoral support service and who can refer students at the Senior School to an independent and confidential Counselling Service that is available at the School.
13. At the Senior School as well as other members of staff, the Student Welfare Coordinator is available for students to go to if they have any concerns about bullying.
14. There are notices and posters around both school sites giving details of external telephone helplines which enable students to call for support in private.

15. At the Senior School there is a poster 'Who can I go to?' displaying details of helplines and staff in school that they can talk to.
16. At both the Prep School and the Senior School the Student Council and student leadership teams discuss student concerns about issues related to bullying and articulate these to relevant staff. At the Senior School, the Student Council reviews this policy annually.
17. There is a Concerns Box for students in each Boarding House.
18. At the Prep School the students are encouraged to go to their form teacher with any concerns. Different year groups have different methods of talking to their teachers which are age appropriate – worry boxes, bubble time for example.
19. The school reserves the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips and that occur in the vicinity of the school, involving our students.
20. We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

The Prep School's and Senior School's Behaviour policies and the Whole School Exclusions policy provide support for the victim and the bully and support this policy.

6. School Practice – Procedures to follow

Preventing incidences of bullying:

1. Encourage all our students to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place. This could be via RSHE lessons, peer mentors, a drop box. Class teachers have individual approaches to help ensure that students can approach staff and ask for help.
2. Provide a point of contact for parents to report incidences of bullying through the Deputy Head at the Prep and the Heads of Year, Head of Boarding, Student Welfare Coordinator, Head of Sixth Form and Pastoral Deputy Head at the Senior School. The members of staff with overall responsibility for anti-bullying work is Elizabeth Cunningham in the senior school and Jemma Joakim and Michelle Fernandez in the Prep school.
3. Investigate and record all reported incidents immediately and always monitor reported incidents. Monitor bullying records so than any emerging patterns may be identified.
4. Expect all students to adhere to the ICT Code of Conduct for the safe use of the internet. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and ICT Support monitor students' use.
5. Impose sanctions for the misuse or attempted misuse of the internet.
6. Issue all students from Year 7 with their own personal school email address, these accounts being filtered and monitored.
7. Offer guidance at age-appropriate points and to parents on the safe use of social networking sites and cyber-bullying etc. Parents' information sessions and letters on e-safety are periodically issued.
8. Offer guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
9. In the Prep School use of mobile devices are not permitted during the school day. Phones are submitted to the school administrator or kept in a secure drawer in the Y5 6 classroom on arrival at school.
10. At the Senior School the use of Mobile devices varies for each year group. Year 7s are not permitted to being mobile phones in to school, unless they require them for emergency/medical purposes; Years 8&9 are not permitted to use mobile phones in school, but they may store them in their lockers; Years 10 & 11 are only allowed to use their mobile phones at lunchtime in their designated common room areas. Sixth Form students may use their mobile phones if they are not in a lesson. Mobile devices are never allowed to be taken into changing rooms or toilets.
11. Taking pupils' views into account through the Student Voice and developing the roles that pupils can play in anti-bullying work, for example the Year 12/8 Big Sister/Little Sister initiative and the Sixth Form Mentoring roles.

If an incident of bullying is reported:

All complaints of bullying should be taken seriously and investigated. It is important to take an informed view of the importance and severity of an alleged bullying incident before reacting. Young children can misinterpret others' intentions which can lead to reports of bullying, when the issue is not that pronounced. As suggested in the definition of bullying, a pattern of behaviour will often be evident, and teachers need to make a judgement about the severity of reported bullying. If it is judged that the incident is severe or likely to become so, then the following procedure would normally follow:

1. The member of staff to whom it was reported or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure, and support the students involved.
2. He/she will inform an appropriate member of the leadership team, usually the Prep School Deputy Head/Pastoral Deputy Head as soon as possible. In all serious incidents, the Head will be informed and may deal with the matter directly or delegate this to an appropriate senior member of staff.
3. The alleged victim should be interviewed on her own although staff should ask the student if she wishes to have a friend present.
4. The member of staff dealing with the bullying incident may request an additional adult to be with them during interviews with students.
5. Staff should make the alleged victim feel at ease by assuring her that they will: listen; maintain confidence as requested (whilst explaining it may be necessary to talk to other people if she is at risk); try to protect them, try to help them cope and try to help them coexist with the bully. Staff should ask the student if they wish to have a friend present. The alleged victim should be given time to explain the situation and be listened to carefully.
6. The alleged bully(ies), together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually. The staff involved should explain calmly what allegations or suspicions exist. They should not presume from the outset that the person being interviewed is guilty. The staff should listen to the person about whom the allegation has been made and pay attention to their version of events and explain that bullying is wrong and unacceptable.
7. Other teachers, as relevant will be informed.
8. The alleged victim will usually discuss support strategies with an appropriate teacher. She will be offered support to develop strategies to help herself.
9. The alleged bully may be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. She will be offered guidance on modifying her behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions.
10. The parents/guardians of all parties will likely be informed by telephone and may be invited into school to discuss the matter if it is felt appropriate. Their support should be sought, and they will be kept informed about how the strategies put into place progress through regular meetings. They will be encouraged to avoid confrontation with other parents.
11. If the parents of the person alleged to be bullying do not agree with the definition of their child's behaviour; they should be allowed to articulate their view and notes should be kept. The school's decision should be communicated in writing.
12. Factual, contemporaneous notes will be kept of the incident and all investigatory meetings, meetings with parents, telephone calls and other relevant information.
13. A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions and counselling, will be agreed. This will recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for students who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures.
14. A meeting involving all the parties, with close staff supervision, can be considered if judged helpful in developing a strategy for all concerned to close the episode.
15. A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place.
16. In very serious cases, and only after the Head has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or to the Local Authority. However, it is the policy of the school to attempt to resolve such issues internally under the school's own disciplinary procedures, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely.

7. Bystanders

- The school recognises the important part that students who are bystanders can play in preventing bullying.
- The school recognises that students who may have observed or witnessed bullying behaviour can themselves be upset and troubled by it and may be unsure what to do.
- Any other students (bystanders) who have observed the bullying behaviour will be offered appropriate support.
- Students who are bystanders are encouraged to speak out about bullying and alert staff to concerns.
- The role of the bystander is incorporated into the RSHE curriculum.

8. Record Keeping

- For serious cases of bullying records of interviews with the students, conversations with the parents, plus any action taken should be filed in the student's records in the Prep School Head or Head's files. There should be no comments which staff could not justify if a student or parent asked to see their file.
- The Head should be kept informed of all significant bullying incidents.
- Staff will be informed verbally or by CPOMS where it is felt appropriate to do so.
- A log of complaints about serious bullying incidents is kept by the Prep School Deputy Head/Pastoral Deputy Head.

9. **Sanctions in cases of bullying**

- Although each case may vary, where a student or students have been found to have bullied, then appropriate and proportionate sanctions will be applied, in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policies and taking account of any cumulative effect of a student's behaviour.

- Depending upon the particular situation, sanctions may involve such steps as

- Loss of privileges.
- Transfer to another class for short periods of time
- 'On report' to the Head Teacher, regular meetings, normally daily, to help monitor progress.
- Making appropriate apologies.
- In collaboration with parents, making restitution to the victim (for example, for items damaged or destroyed).
- Fixed-term exclusion **
- Permanent exclusion **

NB ** These sanctions will be imposed in severe or persistent cases of bullying, in accordance with the GDST Exclusions policy.

10. This policy will be reviewed annually by the Prep Head and Senior Pastoral Deputy Head.

Review: September 2022	**Next Review:** June 2023