ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Last reviewed:	August 2023
Next review due:	August 2025
Reviewed by:	Director of Pastoral Care and Well-being

1. Policy basis

A fundamental tenet of our school ethos is a commitment to creating a strong sense of community and an environment in which all students can feel happy, safe, valued and motivated to realise their full potential, personally as well as academically. Bullying in any form is fundamentally at odds with this ethos and, therefore, completely unacceptable. As a school, we are wholly committed to:

- Preventing bullying – by continuing to maintain a culture which celebrates diversity and does not present fertile ground for bullying in any form to flourish;

- Involving the whole school community (students, parents/guardians and staff) in discussions about bullying and the school's anti-bullying policy;

- Countering bullying when it does occur – by ensuring that, when instances of bullying do occur, they are dealt with promptly, robustly and consistently.

It is the responsibility of everyone at the school, whatever their capacity, to prevent, identify and tackle bullying in whatever form it appears, as part of their safeguarding duties.

2. Definitions

Bullying is defined, in the DfE document 'Preventing and tackling bullying - advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies', July 2017, as *'behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'*. Bullying can also result from a one-off incident.

Bullying generally involves an imbalance of power between perpetrator and subject. Such an imbalance of power may be physical or psychological (knowing what upsets someone); it may derive from an intellectual imbalance or through having access to the support of a group or through the capacity to isolate someone else socially. It can result in the intimidation of the person who is the subject of the bullying through the threat of violence or through efforts to isolate them either physically or online.

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of
- race
- religion
- culture
- age
- sex
- gender
- sexual orientation

- special educational needs or disabilities
- appearance or health conditions
- intellectual or other abilities, or
- because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities.

It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between children. Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously.

3. Recognising bullying

Bullying can manifest itself in a variety of forms, including:

- Physical (eg, pushing, hitting, kicking, pinching, poking, biting, taking/damaging belongings);

- Verbal, in English or another language (name-calling, homophobic abuse, racist abuse, threats, belittling, spreading rumours, taunts, teasing, making disparaging or offensive remarks, sarcasm);

- Emotional (tormenting, ridiculing, humiliating, spreading rumours, ignoring, isolating, threatening gestures, manipulation, coercion, intimidation, hiding belongings);

- Cyber-bullying – in which emotional, psychological (eg, social exclusion) or verbal bullying can be conducted through a digital medium, such as text messages, social media or gaming and email, all of which may be used to transmit offensive or embarrassing messages and photographs.

Cyber-bullying has grown to become a widespread phenomenon globally as a result of the rapid development of technology and the widespread access to it by young people. It is especially malicious in that it can occur at all times of the day or night, in or outside of school, with a potentially bigger audience which can grow exponentially as offensive messages or images can instantaneously be forwarded on to any number of others. See section 8 below.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give schools stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, to delete inappropriate images or files on electronic devices, including mobile phones. More detail on this point can be found in our 'Conducting a Search' policy.

4. Why bullying is serious

4.1 **Bullying is always serious.** It is well known that bullying in any form can have far-reaching and potentially devastating effects on children. It is, therefore, something that must always be taken very seriously and addressed as decisively and as quickly as possible.

4.2 **When does bullying become a child protection issue?**

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'.

Where this is the case, then as a school we have a duty to report the concern to the local authority children's social care (via the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead) and work with them to take appropriate action (see Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education).

4.3 **When might bullying constitute a criminal offence?**

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to be aware that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could constitute a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 or the Public Order Act 1986.

It is, for instance, an offence under the Malicious Communications Act 1988 for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

Any concerns of this nature will be reported to the police and their advice and assistance sought.

5. Bullying outside school premises

Schools are within their rights to discipline students for misbehaving outside school premises 'to such an extent as is reasonable'. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring physically away from school premises (eg, on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre) or online.

If an instance of bullying outside of school involving one or more of our students is reported to us, we will investigate it and deal with it in line with the principles and procedures set out in this policy.

6. Signs and indicators

Early signs of bullying may include:

- erratic attendance/ late arrival to lessons;
- changes in behaviour;
- reluctance to go to school (eg, increasing signs of distress at the end of the holidays);
- deterioration of work / diminishing achievement;
- frequent reporting of illness;
- isolation and / or withdrawal;
- appearing ill at ease in the school environment or in the company of peers;
- unexplained physical problems such as recurring headaches and stomach aches;
- changes in eating habits;
- sleeping badly;
- seeming upset, withdrawn or outraged after using phone/ tablet/ computer;
- unwilling to talk or secretive about online activities and mobile phone use;
- signs of depression;
- desire to remain with adults.

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7. PREVENTING AND COUNTERING BULLYING AT D'OVERBROECK'S

7.1   **Principles**

- Bullying in any form, by or towards any member of our school community, is not tolerated at d'Overbroeck's.

- We are committed to the prevention of bullying through the promotion of the school's ethos of mutual respect, non-discrimination, equity and collective responsibility.

- The school's stance on bullying is made known to all members of the school community, students, staff and parents.

- Any incident or allegation of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated immediately and thoroughly (unless there is a suspected child protection issue, in which different guidance applies).

- Bullying is not always easy to detect. It is important that students feel able to recognise it and to report it. We promote a culture of open and frank communication, and we encourage our students to report any incidence of bullying immediately to a member of staff.

- Our response will be informed by an awareness of the importance of reacting to incidents promptly and firmly and in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent manner; the need to safeguard and support the student who has experienced bullying; the importance of applying appropriate disciplinary sanctions to those responsible for bullying. It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour; bullies can themselves be victims and concerns for the safety of the perpetrator may be revealed. Where this is the case, the person engaging in bullying behaviour may need support themselves.

- Action will be taken as appropriate in each instance. The principle set out in this policy should always guide the response and action taken. Beyond that, we do not lay down hard and fast rules since all incidents and all individuals are different. We will always seek to involve the parents of the student(s) involved and to ensure communication is as open and as frequent as is necessary.

- Any sanctions applied to those who are responsible for bullying should have a number of purposes: to make clear to the perpetrator that his or her actions are unacceptable; to deter him or her from repeating that behaviour; to ensure that they learn from the experience; and to signal to all members of the school community that bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

- If sanctions are warranted, the person(s) responsible will receive a sanction in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. Any sanctions imposed will be fair, proportionate and reasonable, take account of any special educational needs or disabilities that students may have, and consider the needs of vulnerable students. In any serious case of bullying the Principal will be informed and the school will work with the parents of both the victim and the perpetrator. The school will remain in regular contact with parents until the situation is resolved. In the most serious cases, the sanction may be fixed term or permanent exclusion.

- It is everybody's responsibility to put a stop to any form of bullying by intervening or reporting suspected incidents.

- We encourage parents to support our anti-bullying stance and to become involved in the resolution of problems if and when they arise.

- The school will not accept 'banter' as a valid reason or excuse for perpetrator to use as justification for misinterpretation of their actions.

7.2   **Procedures and guidance**

This section sets out actions to be taken by the school, staff and students. It also offers some guidance for parents.

a) **The school**

We recognise that, although relatively rare in this school, bullying can happen and needs to be addressed by the whole school community. Consequently, we will:

- Take any allegation or instance of bullying very seriously and ascertain the full facts of any incident.

- Do all we can to support any student who is being bullied.

- Take all possible steps to help those who are involved in bullying to change their behaviour.

- Act firmly and promptly where bullying is identified, matching action to need since all cases are different. This may involve some or all of the following:

    i.   meeting those concerned individually;
    ii.   if appropriate, meeting those involved together;
    iii. involving parents at an early stage;
    iv.   helping children to develop positive strategies and assertion;
    v.   applying sanctions as appropriate;
    vi.   involving wider friendship group to promote kind and supportive behaviour and actively discourage bullying.

- Be equally concerned about any bullying that may occur outside of school.

- Record incidents of bullying in a consistent way that allows for monitoring of behaviour.

- Follow up bullying incidents by appropriate monitoring (including identifying trends) to inform preventative work in the school and to help review and develop policies and procedures.

- Promote an atmosphere in which students will feel free to report any instances of bullying and provide opportunities for children to discuss bullying issues and policy in age-appropriate contexts such as PSHE, school council and other co-curriculum contexts. Raise awareness about bullying and the school's procedures for reporting, investigating and tackling bullying through the PSHE curriculum, assemblies and any other appropriate opportunities within the curriculum and beyond.

- Help to prevent bullying through supporting students with managing their relationships with others, including relationship conflict.

- Regularly review our approach to take account of developments in technology which might impact bullying (eg, updating our acceptable use policies for the internet and other electronic devices).

- Ensure that our IT monitoring and filtering systems are effective in protecting members of the school community.

- Ensure that all staff are fully aware of the school's policy on bullying and of their responsibility to report any known, alleged or suspected instances of bullying to senior staff as soon as possible.

- Raise awareness of bullying by providing appropriate staff training, such that staff understand the principles of the anti-bullying policy, know their legal responsibilities, know the action they should take to prevent and resolve problems and know where sources of support are available.

- Where appropriate, invest in specialised skills to understand the needs of our students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) students.

- Involve all members of the school community in refreshing the anti-bullying policy.

b) **Staff**

Procedures to be followed:

- Staff must be alert to signs of bullying and act promptly where there is a concern.

- All reports of bullying must be taken seriously, recorded on CPOMS (the school's software for monitoring issues relating to students) and investigated thoroughly – unless there is a suspicion of anything that might constitute child abuse. In such cases, allegations must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (or a member of the DSL team) who will then deal with the issue in line with the school's Safeguarding policy. No investigation should be carried out by any staff members where a child protection issue is suspected.

- If a bullying incident is witnessed, the subject of the bullying should be removed from the situation immediately.

- In some instances, it may be appropriate for the member of staff to deal with the situation there and then. In addition, senior staff must be kept informed from the outset.

- Any investigating member of staff should be able to invest sufficient time to listen to the students involved and to avoid rushed responses. Staff should remember that bullying usually has a cause and that bullies can themselves be victims.

- Staff should provide support and understanding for the student who has been subjected to bullying and involve other students and staff to ensure that they do not feel isolated or alone. It is important to avoid the 'natural victim' syndrome and the idea that the victim is somehow to blame. As far as possible, staff should inform students about the next steps being taken and reassure them that the reported incident is being followed up.

- Staff should be sensitive to issues of confidentiality (confidentiality cannot be promised to a student) and to the needs of all the children involved.

- Staff should ensure that they have all the facts of the case and speak to relevant witnesses. Staff should ensure also that the bully understands that they must take responsibility for their actions, that they know the seriousness of the offence, and that any repetition will invite further action.

- Full records should be kept of incidents, investigations and final outcomes by staff involved in dealing with such situations. All records should be added to CPOMS. The Director of Pastoral Care will also maintain a separate bullying log.

- Parents will be involved as necessary by senior staff with pastoral responsibilities.

- The school will endeavour to deal with any issue of bullying in a positive manner that will achieve outcomes that are constructive for both parties.

- A range of sanctions may be employed which, where the seriousness of the behaviour is deemed to warrant it, could involve suspension or expulsion.

- When following any course of action, it is imperative that staff watch out for 'comeback' on the victim. Bullies must be informed that this cannot happen, even to the extent of being warned that if it should happen, their place at the school could be in jeopardy. Staff may need to maintain a 'watching brief' for a considerable time.

c) **Students**

Bullying is any behaviour which causes someone else to feel frightened or hurt or humiliated; it must have no place in our school.

- Everyone has the right to be safe and happy at school.

- Everyone has the right to enjoy the best possible conditions to make the best of their talents whilst at school.

- No-one should have to suffer name calling, teasing, taunts, physical violence or cyber-bullying. No-one should feel isolated or excluded. No-one should have their property interfered with.

In short, you should not have to suffer in any way as a result of the words or actions of someone else. It is the responsibility of the whole school community, staff and students, to make sure that it does not happen – and, if it does, to put a stop to it.

Prevention is better than cure. All students can play a part in preventing bullying by:

- showing respect for each other whatever our differences may be;

- dealing fairly with each other;

- going out of our way to include others in our activities, especially those who might need encouragement to get involved;

- avoiding actions such as name calling or 'borrowing' equipment without permission;

- avoiding 'teasing' or 'banter'; one person's 'joke' could be another person's misery;

- good student-staff relationships and opportunities for students to talk one-to-one with staff about any concerns;

- a shared understanding that speaking out against bullying is not 'telling on someone' or 'being a grass' but looking out for others;

- noticing when bullying is happening and feeling confident to speak out against it.

If you feel you are being bullied…

- You should not have to put up with feeling bullied. You have a right to be treated with respect as an individual.

- In the short term, try to stay calm, appear confident and remove yourself from the situation.

- Tell a trusted adult about what is happening. Tell your parents, your form teacher or Director of Studies, or any other member of staff you feel particularly comfortable talking to. Trust that you will be listened to and involved in the next steps if you would like to be. If you have thoughts about how best to deal with the situation, your suggestions will be listened to.

- It is very helpful when talking to an adult about bullying if you are able to share the detail. The adult may ask: What happened? When and where did it happen? Who was involved? Who saw it happening? If something similar had happened before, how often and when did it happen?

- The school will make sure that action is taken, and every attempt will be made to ensure that you will not suffer any comeback; you will be supported throughout the process and beyond.

You can also be confident that anything personal you may tell us will remain as confidential as possible (provided nobody is at risk of harm as a result).

If you witness bullying…

- Don't stand by and watch.

- If you witness an incident of bullying and feel confident enough, it is a really powerful message if you are able to intervene and show that you disapprove of the bullying behaviour.

- If you know that bullying is happening, tell a trusted adult. Students can sometimes feel uncomfortable about this but it is not telling tales – the victim(s) may be too scared or lonely to report it. You will be listened to seriously and in confidence. If you do not tell someone, then the bullying may go on. Remember that there may be other victims.

- Avoid teasing or personal remarks yourself and be sceptical about rumours concerning other students – don't add to them. Imagine how it would feel if it were happening to you.

d) **Parents**

We offer the following advice for parents:

- It is helpful to take an active interest in your child's social life and chat about friends and activities inside and out of school. As well as keeping up to date with their friendships, you may well learn of disagreements or difficulties.

- Watch for signs of unhappiness, such as an unwillingness to go to school in the morning, recurrent headaches or stomach aches for which there is no apparent physical explanation, changes in eating or sleeping habits, etc.

- There are many reasons why a student might be unsettled at school, but bullying is a possibility. If you think a young person is being bullied, please let us know immediately and ask for a meeting with a senior member of staff. We will treat the issue very seriously and investigate it thoroughly.

- An investigation may take some time, but you will be kept apprised of developments as appropriate. Equally, we ask you to keep us informed of your child's demeanour and

behaviour outside of school to help us judge the impact of our response. It is also important that the student is aware that parents and the school are working together to take action against bullying.

- It is our aim to resolve the situation so that the bullying stops. Should you have continuing concerns, you are encouraged to share these with us so we can address them.

8. Cyberbullying

8.1 Definition

"Cyberbullying is the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else."
(Department for Education)

Many young people and adults find using the Internet and mobile phones a positive and creative part of their everyday life. Unfortunately, technologies can also be used negatively. Our e-Safety policy provides clear guidance on the use of technology in the classroom and beyond for all users, including the permissions/restrictions in place and agreed sanctions.

When children are the target of bullying via mobiles phones, gaming or the Internet, they can often feel very alone, particularly if the adults around them do not understand cyberbullying and its effects. A once safe and enjoyable environment or activity can become threatening, harmful and a source of anxiety.

It is essential that students, staff and parents understand how cyberbullying is different from other forms of bullying, how it can affect people and how to respond and combat misuse. Promoting a culture of confident users will support innovation and safety.

8.2 Impact
Cyberbullying can have a serious impact because of a number of factors including:

- invasion of home and personal space (it is not possible to 'walk away');

- the anonymity (at least initially) of the bully;

- the ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images rapidly to a potentially huge audience and to continue to do so repeatedly over a long period of time.

8.3 Forms of cyberbullying
Cyberbullying may take a number of different forms including:

- threats and intimidation via electronic means;

- harassment or 'cyberstalking';

- sending nudes and semi-nudes (sexting);

- vilification/defamation;

- setting up website pages to invite others to post derogatory comment about someone;

- the sending of insulting and vicious text messages;

- exclusion or peer rejection;

- impersonation, identity theft or unauthorised access.

Publicly posting, sending, forwarding or manipulating personal or private information or images. Whilst some cyberbullying is clearly deliberate and aggressive, it must be recognised that some incidents of cyberbullying may be unintentional and the result of simply not thinking about the consequences.

Students may need reminding that under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

8.4   **Prevention of cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying (along with all forms of bullying) will not be tolerated at d'Overbroeck's, whether the bullying originates inside or outside school. Cyber-bullying and e-safety fall within the broader context of safeguarding, and are therefore the responsibility of the Designated Safeguarding Lead, who works closely with colleagues such as the IT Manager, the Director of Computing Science, the Head of Boarding and the members of staff who have designated roles in respect of safeguarding and child protection (please also see d'Overbroeck's policies on Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, and on e-Safety).

Education around safe and effective use of the internet (including privacy settings etc) is key prevention of cyberbullying and will be promoted through discussion and student activities around what cyberbullying is and how it differs from other forms of bullying. The aim is to provide students with the ability to deal confidently and effectively with any problems that might arise in their use of the internet.

Cyberbullying education will be delivered through PSHE, Computer Studies lessons, assemblies, and special e-safety events for students and parents as well as through the curriculum as a whole. The idea is to embed this awareness as part of daily life at school so everyone can avoid, recognise and, above all, to manage such activity through a confident awareness of who to approach in such a situation. This includes external reporting routes (contacting service providers directly), advice about not retaliating or replying, 'blocking' and removing 'friends', thinking carefully about what private information they might have in the public domain.

Staff safeguarding training and other staff professional development includes training about e-safety and the management of personal data in line with statutory requirements.

8.5   **Responses to cyberbullying**

Activities conducted outside of school premises and outside of school hours that in our opinion constitute cyberbullying are also covered by this policy.

The school will take reasonable steps to identify the person(s) responsible for any instances of cyberbullying such as examining system logs, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses and contacting the service provider and the Police if necessary.

Students are encouraged to save any evidence (eg, to take a screenshot) of any examples of texts, images, posts or emails etc which may aid an investigation.

Where students are found responsible for cyberbullying, parents/guardians will be informed and sanctions may include:

- the withdrawal of privileges, eg, the privilege of bringing a phone into school or using the school internet facilities;

- the person(s) responsible being instructed to remove any material deemed to be inappropriate;

- temporary or permanent exclusion in the most serious cases;

- the Police being contacted if a criminal offence is suspected.

Steps will also be taken to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully as well as ensuring access to any help that they may need.

8.6 Recording incidents

All incidents of cyberbullying will be recorded on CPOMS whereby all relevant staff can be informed.

See also our more detailed e-Safety policy.

8.7 Complaints procedure

Parents and students are encouraged to use our Complaints Procedure for Parents if they feel that their concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly.

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This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

School policies (available from the [policies page of the website](#) or upon request from the school office):

- Behaviour, rules, rewards and sanctions policy
- Complaints procedure for parents
- Equal opportunities policy for students
- e-Safety policy
- Health and safety policy
- Safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children
- Special educational needs and disabilities policy

Department for Education guidance:

- Keeping Children safe in Education (2023)
- Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers. Staff and governing bodies (2017)

Specialist organisations – sources of advice and support

A number of organisations offer specialist information and support on issues of bullying, such as:

- **The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA)** https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/

- **Kidscape** https://www.kidscape.org.uk/

- **Childline** 0800 1111

- **Samaritans** 08457 90 90 90

- **NSPCC** 0800 800 5000

- [Protecting children from bullying and cyberbullying | NSPCC Learning](#)

- [Show racism the red card](#)

- [EACH (Education Action Challenging Homophobia) 0808 1000 143](#)

- **Family Lives** www.familylives.org.uk

  Family Lives (formerly known as Parentline Plus) is a national charity that offers help for parents on a very wide range of issues. Bullying is one of them.

  Family Lives operates a 24-hour helpline which is there to offer advice and to help children and parents deal with bullying. The helpline is operated by trained volunteers and calls are free and confidential. The Family Lives helpline may be reached on 0808 800 2222.

And, specifically on cyber-bullying and online safety advice and information:

- **ChildNet International** https://www.childnet.com/

- **Think U Know** https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/

- **UK Council for Child Internet Safety** (UKCCIS)
  https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-council-for-internet-safety

- [Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying (publishing.service.gov.uk)](#)

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