

COGNITA



DOWNSEND
SCHOOL

Inspiring Young Minds

LITTLE DOWNSEND

ASHTEAD • LEATHERHEAD • EPSOM

Anti-Bullying Policy

September 2023-2026

1 Introduction

- 1.1 We aim to establish a whole school positive culture in which all members of the community feel safe and confident, and treat each other with respect and courtesy, particularly with regard to individual differences. The School prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that there are consistent expectations of behaviour both at school, online and at home, and that the School and parents co-operate closely together.
- 1.2 We believe that pupils should have the right to feel safe, secure and valued and that creating a safe environment and dealing with bullying is everyone's responsibility.
- 1.3 We support a range of positive strategies to deal with bullying and actively challenge the use of humiliation, fear, ridicule and other similar approaches in an effort to reduce bullying.
- 1.4 We treat all of our pupils and their parents fairly, and with consideration, and we expect them to respect the staff, the School and each other, in return. All forms of bullying are unacceptable at the School (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying) and any instances of bullying will be recorded and, where appropriate, will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy.
- 1.5 This policy should be read and understood in the context of our Behaviour Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Safeguarding Policy, Suspension, Expulsion and Removal in Other Circumstances Policy and our approach to personal, social, healthcare and economic education.
- 1.6 Our policy has been written in the context of our responsibilities under:
 - The Equality Act 2010.
 - The Independent School Standards Regulations 2014 (as amended)/British School Overseas Standards.
 - Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2025
- 1.7 As a Cognita school, we have signed up to the principles embodied within our group associate membership of the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA), linked to the National Children's Bureau, NSPCC, The Diana Award, Online Safety, including access to specialist training of staff to support our best efforts to eradicate bullying in school.
- 1.8 This policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on our website and on request. It is also communicated to all staff and pupils.
- 1.9 This policy applies to all pupils in the School [including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) and applies to actions undertaken both inside, and outside of the School.
- 1.10 All bullying incidents should be considered in the context of the Safeguarding Policy and School staff should ensure any response to bullying is aligned with the provisions of this policy. If the staff member is in doubt, they should discuss the matter with the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

2 What do we mean by bullying?

- 2.1 Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.
- 2.2 Put another way, bullying is the intentional hurting, harming, or humiliating of another person. It may take many forms, including physical (including any threat of or use of violence of any kind), sexual (including the sharing of nudes/semi-nudes), verbal (including cyberbullying via text messages, email, social media, gaming, or other instant messages, and can include the use of images and video), and/or emotional (including by excluding, being sarcastic, name-calling, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours). It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone, or actions that fall short of direct participation, where someone encourages others to bully, or joins in with laughing at a victim. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidating, and often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s) whether that be a physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), or intellectual imbalance, or by the perpetrator(s) having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate the victim(s).
- 2.3 Bullying can sometimes amount to child-on-child abuse, which is defined as abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil. It can be standalone or as part of wider abuse and can happen both inside and outside of school, and online. Further information about child-on-child abuse, including the procedures to follow when an incident of child and child abuse is reported can be found in the School's Safeguarding policy.
- 2.4 Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups and may involve actions or comments regarding a person's race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, special education needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions, or because of a child's familial circumstances, such as they are adopted, in care or that they have caring responsibilities. Bullying may be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. For example, bullying can still be homophobic if directed towards a child that is perceived to be gay, whether or not this is the case.
- 2.5 Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone - pupils, other young people, staff, and parents. School visits are a part of everyday school life and, as such, this policy applies to conduct of our pupils outside School (including online). Bullying incidents occurring off the premises, such as on public transport, school buses or in the local community or online will fall under this policy and be treated accordingly. Teachers will, where appropriate, discipline pupils for misbehaviour online, outside School premises and outside School hours.
- 2.6 Whilst bullying itself is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment, sexual violence and assault, sexting, the sharing of nudes/semi-nudes (in certain circumstances), upskirting and to violent and threatening behaviour. If we feel that an offence may have been committed our staff will seek assistance from the police.

Where an incident of bullying causes or is likely to cause significant harm to a pupil, the School will follow the procedures set out in the School's Safeguarding Policy.

3 Signs of bullying

- 3.1 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 poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with, or spoilt by others;
- Books, bags, money, 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 which may relate to stress or anxiety, such as stomach pains or headaches;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, or late arrival to class;
- Choosing the company of adults rather than peers;
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;
- Difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares; or
- Talking of suicide or running away from home or school.

Although there may be other causes of some of the above symptoms, a repetition or combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers and reported / recorded, as appropriate, in accordance with this policy.

4 Objectives

4.1 Our objectives are to:

- Enable pupils to understand clearly what constitutes bullying and to understand that bullying, whatever its form, will not be tolerated by the school community;
- Make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted upon;
- Enable parents to feel confident that bullying incidents will be firmly dealt with by the School;
- Create a safe environment and promote an inclusive ethos in the school where pupils can discuss the cause of bullying without fear of further bullying or discrimination;
- Raise staff awareness of the presence of different types of bullying, and an awareness of groups of pupils who are bullied disproportionately;
- Establish guidelines for action where bullying is evident;
- Develop a range of effective strategies for pupils to learn about moral and social issues;
- Ensure pupils are able to explain how we expect them to behave; and
- Celebrate success as an important way of creating a positive school ethos around anti-bullying.

5 The School's Response to Bullying

5.1 At the School, we always treat bullying very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the School's social and moral principles, and potentially with its policy on equal opportunities for pupils, and will not be tolerated. When incidents of bullying do occur, they are dealt with quickly and taken seriously. The School will never dismiss or downplay bullying as banter or horseplay, and all reported incidents of bullying will be dealt with by staff in accordance with this policy. Staff will reassure any victim(s) that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

5.2 The School understands that bullying can be so serious that it may cause physical, emotional, and psychological damage, such as eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide. Stopping violence and ensuring the immediate physical safety of pupils is the School's first priority, however, the School acknowledges that emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical bullying, and therefore staff will use their discretion when dealing with an incident of bullying within the parameters of this policy and the Behaviour Policy.

- 5.3 The School recognises that children with SEND or certain health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges and may be more prone to peer on peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children. The school also recognises that certain children may face additional barriers to reporting an incident because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.
- 5.4 Pupils who are victims of bullying will always be supported and will be reassured that they will be kept safe. Pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be subject to appropriate disciplinary sanction and will also, where possible, be supported in learning different ways of behaving and offered support for their own circumstances, where appropriate.

6 Preventative Strategies

- 6.1 The School's response to bullying does not start at the point in which a pupil has been bullied. We take the following preventative measures in order to create an environment that prevents bullying from becoming a problem at the School in the first place:
- 6.2 As a successful school, we create an environment that prevents bullying from being a serious problem in the first place.
- 6.3 We proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. We talk with pupils through the curriculum about issues of difference and use dedicated project time and events such as special assemblies. We keep lines of communication open so pupils feel included.
- 6.4 We are aware that schools which excel at tackling bullying have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know this is the right way to behave. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, British values, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment. We reinforce these messages through the behaviour and attitudes of our staff, who set a good example.
- 6.5 Effective staff training is an important aspect of our work to prevent and tackle bullying, including the different types of bullying. All staff have had relevant training and understand the importance of this policy. In particular, our Senior Leadership Team ensures that all staff understand the principles and purpose of the School's policy, the legal responsibilities, how to resolve problems and where to seek support. We use specialised skills to help our staff understand the needs of any pupils, including special educational needs and/or disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBTQ+) pupils.
- 6.6 We all understand that bullying can occur in any school and that we have a responsibility to be vigilant for incidents, especially at times and in places where it is more likely to occur. We ensure that the physical layout of our buildings and our safety mechanisms, such as CCTV, to the extent reasonable and possible, help to discourage and reduce the risk of bullying.
- 6.7 We aim to ensure staff feel confident to consistently tackle all forms of bullying and that pupils are empowered to say "no" to bullying.

7 Successful Intervention Strategies

- 7.1 We apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong. In accordance with our Behaviour Policy, we apply sanctions fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account of any special educational needs or disabilities that pupils may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable pupils.
- 7.2 We also carefully consider the motivating factors which may have affected the bullying behaviour and whether it indicates any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the child engaging in the bullying behaviour may need support themselves.
- 7.3 We involve parents to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and that they are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. We make sure that our parents feel confident that we will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way which protects the child.
- 7.4 We involve pupils so they understand our approach towards bullying and so they are clear in the part they have to play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders.
- 7.5 We regularly evaluate our approach and ensure that our policy and practice is up to date.
- 7.6 We make sure that the consequences of bullying reflect the seriousness of the incident, so that others see that bullying is unacceptable.
- 7.7 We teach pupils that using any prejudice-based language is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.
- 7.8 We work with the wider community, such as the police and children's services, where bullying is particularly serious or persistent and where a criminal offence may have been committed.
- 7.9 We make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted upon.
- 7.10 We draw on the expertise of specialist organisations with a proven track record in dealing with bullying to ensure our practices are effective and keep children safe.
- 7.11 We ensure that notices are placed around school which provide appropriate telephone numbers and email addresses for children to contact organisations such as ChildLine, Kidscape and CEOP.
- 7.12 We listen to our pupils' voice at all times and act accordingly.
- 7.13 We aim to use restorative approaches in school which focus on reconciliation with those who have been harmed. This enables all those affected by any incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward, enabling everyone to prevent conflict and build relationships.

8 Our Procedures

- 8.1 If a member of staff suspects that bullying is taking place, or a disclosure is made to them about an incident of bullying, they should always consult a senior member of staff. Under the guidance of a senior staff member, an age-appropriate investigation should take place. Separate meetings would usually be arranged with those involved to establish their version of events and assure them that the situation will be dealt with sensitively but firmly and fully. Appropriate notes of the meeting will be taken by the staff member either during or after the conversation, as appropriate.
- 8.2 Parents of both parties will be kept informed about how the alleged bullying is being handled, as appropriate.
- 8.3 The School will Bullying behaviour will normally be addressed through the provision of counselling for all parties involved. A proven allegation of serious bullying may be considered under our Suspension, Expulsion or Removal in Other Circumstances policy. Following the incident, a senior staff member oversees the monitoring of the situation, liaising directly with the relevant teacher to check that further bullying is not occurring.
- 8.4 Parents are asked to keep the School and staff informed of any concerns, and encourage their child to report any incidents immediately to an appropriate staff member. The Headteacher will ensure that the incident and any action taken are formally recorded in the behaviour incident log.
- 8.5 The immediate priority is to stop the bullying, so instances will be dealt with without delay. The school takes the standpoint that most pupils involved in bullying do not intend to inflict significant harm. As a first recourse, those who bully will be counselled by pastoral staff, an appeal will be made to 'better nature' and a commitment to correct the behaviour will be elicited. The bully should apologise to the victim.
- 8.6 It is important for the school to understand the motivation behind any bullying and whether it reveals any cause for concern about the safety of the perpetrator. This is because the bully may need support themselves.
- 8.7 In serious or persistent cases, parents should be informed and may be asked to come into a meeting to discuss the problem and, if necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted. All attempts will be made to help the bully or bullies change their behaviour. This may include referral to outside agencies or specialist programmes of support.
- 8.8 Our school uses restorative practice, where appropriate, which includes a facilitated meeting being held to enable individuals and groups to work together to improve their mutual understanding of what has taken place and to jointly agree the best solution moving forwards. Sometimes a less formal approach is used with the same principles in place, depending on the nature of the incident. Restorative practice provides an opportunity for everyone to reflect on how they interact with each other and consider how best to prevent harm and conflict, recognising everyone has a part to play and is responsible as such.
- 8.9 Incidents of bullying will be recorded by relevant pastoral staff. This will enable patterns to be identified, and keeping records of bullying incidents will also enable the school to:
 - Manage individual cases effectively;
 - Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies;
 - Celebrate the anti-bullying work of the school; and
 - Respond effectively and swiftly to concerns from parents.

8.10 In response to an allegation of cyberbullying, certain staff are permitted to conduct a search for electronic devices, such as a pupil's mobile phone, with the authority of the Head. Staff do not require the consent of the pupil, or their parents to undertake a search, provided they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the pupil is in possession of a prohibited item, or an item that has been, or is likely to be, used to commit an offence, or to cause personal injury to any person (including the pupil being searched), or cause damage to property, and provided they have the Head's prior consent to undertake a search.

9 Monitoring and Evaluation

- 9.1 Each Headteacher is responsible for maintaining a behaviour log which includes instances of bullying. The School's leadership team is responsible for the implementation and procedural monitoring of the policy.
- 9.2 The Headteacher or a designated member of SMT will review all incidents of reported bullying to help identify patterns of behaviour, so that the School can take appropriate steps to address bullying behaviours within the School. Records of bullying incidents will also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the School's anti-bullying procedures, and to highlight any necessary amendments.
- 9.3 Headteachers report on behaviour and bullying at governance meetings. This forms the monitoring and evaluation function of the proprietor.
- 9.4 Where there are concerns regarding the school's approach to dealing with bullying, these will be explored by the European Director of Education.

Anti-Bullying Policy

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