

Anti-bullying Policy

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Preface

The anti-bullying policy ensures that students learn in a supportive, caring, and safe environment, free from fear of being bullied. Bullying is anti-social behaviour that can have profound consequences, potentially leading to severe mental health issues or, in the worst cases, suicide. Bullying affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Only by addressing all issues of bullying can students fully benefit from the opportunities available at the school.

Purpose

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment where all students can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable, whether on school premises or elsewhere. If bullying occurs, students must feel empowered to report it, knowing incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

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.' In such cases, staff must report concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), who will refer them to the local authority children's social care.

This policy is linked to the school's **Student Behaviour Policy**, the **Disability, Discrimination and Accessibility Plan**, and the government guidance on tackling bullying:
[Preventing and Tackling Bullying](#).

What is Bullying?

The school defines bullying in accordance with the NSPCC as:

Bullying is behaviour that hurts someone else. It includes name-calling, hitting, pushing, spreading rumours, threatening, or undermining someone. It can happen anywhere – at school, at home, or online. It is usually repeated over a long period of time and can harm a child physically or emotionally.

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, including those with protected characteristics. Prejudice-based bullying, discriminatory behaviour, or microaggressions based on any protected characteristic must be challenged immediately. Staff must address incidents on the spot, in front of others, to make it clear that such behaviour is unacceptable. A record of the incident must be made.

Bullying can range from relatively minor one-off incidents to severe, ongoing concerns causing significant psychological or physical harm. All staff have a duty to challenge and report any incidence of bullying.

Recognising Bullying

Students who are bullied may exhibit changes in behaviour, such as becoming withdrawn, anxious, or aggressive. Signs include:

- Reluctance to travel to or attend school.

- Declining academic performance.
- Unexplained injuries or damaged belongings.
- Fear of using the internet or mobile phones.
- Sudden behavioural changes, such as truancy, aggression, or self-isolation.

These signs could indicate other issues, but bullying must be considered and investigated.

Online Bullying

Definition:

Online bullying uses technology, such as social media or messaging platforms, to harass, threaten, or upset someone. It often extends beyond school hours, affecting home life and personal space. It may involve:

- Abusive or threatening messages.
- Posting derogatory or defamatory content.
- Sharing embarrassing images or videos.

Online bullying can affect both students and staff and may constitute a criminal offence under the Harassment Act 1997 or the Telecommunications Act 1984.

Responding to Bullying

Bullying must be addressed immediately to protect victims and educate perpetrators.

1. Student Support

- Victims should be reassured that the matter is taken seriously and monitored closely.
- A Pastoral staff member or the Wellbeing Counsellor will provide ongoing support to help the student regain confidence.

2. Perpetrator Support

- A restorative conversation will help the student understand the impact of their actions.
- Sanctions, in line with the school's behaviour framework, will be applied to reinforce boundaries.

3. Staff Responsibilities

- All staff must challenge bullying on the spot unless there is a safeguarding concern requiring discreet handling.
- Bullying disclosures should be dealt with in the same way as a safeguarding disclosure (see Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).
- Bullying should not be perceived as a child protection concern unless when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

- Incidents should be recorded on SharePoint and reported to the relevant Pastoral Director(s)/Assistant Headteacher Pastoral.

4. Parental Involvement

- Parents of both victims and perpetrators will be informed and involved in addressing the issue.

Prevention and Education

The school prioritises prevention through:

- **PSHE/RSE Curriculum:** Students learn about the effects of bullying and develop resilience, empathy, and online safety awareness.
- **Assemblies and Workshops:** Raising awareness about the impact of bullying and fostering a culture of respect.
- **Student Voice:** Empowering student leaders to report concerns and contribute to anti-bullying initiatives.
- **Staff Training:** Regular training ensures staff can identify, challenge, and address bullying effectively. This can include information and awareness of emerging forms of bullying, inclusivity training and reinforcing the importance of fostering strong, trusting relationships between staff and students to encourage disclosure of bullying.

Boarding Considerations

Guildhouse School recognises the unique risks for boarders who are being bullied and might find it difficult to escape their tormentors as they are not going home as day students do. This risk is mitigated at Guildhouse School because of the school's accommodation and the policy on its use and management by means of:

- Small, private flats with secure, hotel-style locks providing personal space and privacy.
- Flexible meal and activity arrangements, reducing unavoidable contact with others.

Cyberbullying of Staff

Staff experiencing online bullying from students or parents can report incidents confidentially. The Headteacher will investigate and may contact parents or authorities as appropriate. Staff are reminded to follow the **ICT Acceptable Use Policy** and avoid using personal contact details with students or parents.

Complaints from Parents

If a complaint is received from a parent or agent that a student is being bullied, the member of staff should immediately report it to the Assistant Headteacher Pastoral.

Key Contact Information

Students can report bullying to any trusted adult in person, via email at concern@guildhouseschool.com, or through Microsoft Teams.

The Anti-Bullying policy ensures that bullying is not tolerated, and that students and staff feel supported, respected, and safe always.

Monitoring and Evaluation

The policy is reviewed annually. Incident logs are regularly analysed to identify patterns and improve preventative measures.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Further sources of information, other departmental advice, and guidance

Specialist organisations

The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) - founded in 2002 by NSPCC and National Children's Bureau, the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) brings together over 100 organisations into one network to develop and share good practice across the whole range of bullying issues.

Kidscape - charity established to prevent bullying and promote child protection providing advice for young people, professionals and parents about different types of bullying and how to tackle it. They also offer specialist training and support for school staff, and assertiveness training for young people.

The Diana Award - anti-bullying Ambassadors programme to empower young people to take responsibility for changing the attitudes and behaviour of their peers towards bullying. It will achieve this by identifying, training and supporting school anti-bullying ambassadors.

The BIG Award - the Bullying Intervention Group (BIG) offer a national scheme and award for schools to tackle bullying effectively.

Restorative Justice Council - Includes best practice guidance for practitioners 2011.



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