



**BEDFORD
GIRLS
SCHOOL**

Anti-Bullying Policy

Review date: August 2024

Next review: August 2026

Reviewed by: Deputy Head – Student Engagement and wellbeing

This policy sets out the aims of Bedford Girls' School in relation to bullying behaviour. It provides a framework within which any actions against bullying can be implemented and their effectiveness reviewed. The school values represented here are also reflected in the Positive Behaviour Policy, which incorporates the views of students. Staff are reminded of our Anti-Bullying Policy and trained in anti-bullying strategies.

If you believe that bullying may be occurring, you should tell someone at school

Any trusted adult at BGS can receive a concern about bullying and will take you seriously. The best person to tell is normally your form tutor or Head of Year.

If you are concerned and don't know who to tell then you can find other people on the *Safeguarding – Who Can I talk To?* Posters in every classroom.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the non-statutory DfE guidance:

- Preventing and Tackling Bullying" July 2017
- Cyberbullying – advice for headteachers & staff" 2014

It should also be read alongside our

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Positive Behaviour Policy
- e-safety policy

Guiding Principles

At Bedford Girls' School we do not condone bullying in any form. Bullying is one of the behaviours that can be child on child abuse and can have devastating and lasting effects on people.

This anti-bullying policy reflects our commitment to encouraging an environment where independence is celebrated and individuals can flourish without inhibition. Every member of the community has the right to be safe and happy in school and to be protected when they are feeling vulnerable. At BGS we aim to create an environment that prevents bullying from occurring by creating an inclusive and warm environment. We have an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect.

Our three key behaviours that we promote through our positive behaviour policy are

- Being kind and inclusive,
- Respecting one another
- Allowing all to learn effectively

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1. Defining and Identifying Bullying and Cyber-Bullying

1.1 Friendship Turbulence

We are a *Girls on Board* school. This means that we take a *Girls on Board* approach to dealing with friendship fallout where students are supported to solve their own friendship issues and we are led by their experiences and wishes. We use the tools outlined by *Girls on Board* and our own experience to support students to resolve any friendship turbulence. This is a powerful and helpful tool and we teach *Girls on Board* every year to every student from Year 3 to Year 10. Friendship turbulence is still painful and difficult and requires skilful and empathic pastoral guidance.

***Girls on Board* is explicit that friendship turbulence is different to bullying and bullying is not tolerated at BGS.**

1.2 What is Bullying?

We understand bullying to be *“behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally¹.”*

This is the way that government guidance defines it and this matches our research and experience, including from our use of the *Girls on Board* approach and the *Diana Award*. The Anti Bullying Alliance adds that this often involves an *‘imbalance of power²’* which is a lens we will also use to consider when determining whether something is bullying.

Bullying can be emotional and physical and also happen virtually. We treat cyber-bullying in the same way as any other type. The public nature of some types of cyber bullying can enhance risk and the school will act quickly to prevent the wider spread of any harmful material posted online in line with our safeguarding and child protection policy. This can also cause extra harm as those who experience cyber-bullying can feel they are not able to get away from it.

1.3 Possible Signs of Bullying

Where any person believes that distress is being caused by acts that could be bullying they must report it. The best person to report it to is a trusted adult at school. Whilst a student at the school may tell someone else it is also possible we can observe bullying happening. Signs of the distress caused by bullying could include but are not limited to those listed below:

Young people may:

- be frightened of walking to and from school
- be unwilling to go to school: feigning illness, increase in absences, late arrival at school or lessons
- change their route to school
- begin doing badly in school work
- come home with possessions missing or damaged
- become withdrawn and anxious/change in their usual behaviour
- suffer psychological damage
- have nightmares
- seem to lose a lot of possessions
- ask for or steal money
- continually appear to lose pocket money
- refuse to say what is wrong
- give improbable excuses for any of the above situations
- be anxious about checking messages, socials or e-mails
- self-harm
- consider or attempt suicide

¹ From Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017.

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/625ee64cd3bf7f6004339db8/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf

² <https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/all-about-bullying/understanding-bullying/definition#:~:text=The%20repetitive%2C%20intentional%20hurting%20of,Anti%2DBullying%20Alliance>

The definitions and explanations above also apply to staff. Bullying of staff, whether by pupils, parents or colleagues, is unacceptable. It is not acceptable for pupils, parents or colleagues to denigrate and bully school staff via social media in the same way that it is unacceptable to do so face to face. Staff should report their concerns to the Headmistress if they feel they have been subjected to bullying behaviour.

2. Procedures for Reporting and responding to Bullying

Once possible bullying is reported it will be investigated and the conclusions of this will inform the response. Students have access to the steps involved in this process via the posters in every classroom that are shown in Appendix A. An investigation is likely to include taking statements, interviews and collecting of any physical evidence.

One important thing to remember for anyone concerned about or reporting bullying is to preserve any evidence. Where cyber bullying is occurring, taking screenshots or photographing a screen with another device is an important thing to do. Where in-person bullying has occurred, making a note of any witnesses, times and places is also helpful. Whilst this aids the school to investigate and stop bullying, it is essential that students or parents never investigate bullying themselves.

Bullying will lead to consideration under our Safeguarding Children and Child Protection procedures if the pupil identified may be at risk or is at risk of serious harm. If there is any risk of imminent physical or emotional harm then short term steps will be taken to ensure the safety of any students involved as a priority.

Bullying is a serious or very serious incident under our positive behaviour policy and any disciplinary procedures required will happen in line with the approaches described there.

It is also likely that restorative approaches will be used when bullying has occurred to ensure students can move forwards and share school experiences safely. This requires careful pastoral planning with all parties involved and will be handled sensitively.

If an act of bullying includes a crime or it is reported to the police then the school should be informed to ensure that no actions taken at school undermine a police investigation and to promote the safety of any students impacted by this. If the school believes a crime has been committed then we will report it to the police. If we are unsure as to whether a crime has been committed we will seek the guidance of the Bedford Integrated Front Door as to whether it should be reported to police.

When bullying is being investigated, the parents of the recipient and the perpetrator will be informed as soon as is possible. Care will be taken with any investigation to prioritise the wellbeing and safety of students at all times. Decisions made about timing of communication must also consider the need to enable an investigation to happen effectively. How parents are informed will be determined by these principles so that it happens quickly but also with care for all those involved.

Bullying is monitored and a bullying record is maintained to spot trends and address any issues of concern. This can highlight students who may need more support from our pastoral structures. Bullying and discriminatory behaviour form part of the termly and annual reporting cycle to governors. Students who are unkind (but do not meet the threshold for bullying) are also monitored and the thresholds of this being addressed and by whom are outlined in our positive behaviour policy.

3. The Roles of School Staff and Parents

3.1 School Staff

All staff are briefed and trained to deal with bullying and what to do if a concern is raised. All have a duty to report their concerns and to promote anti bullying explicitly in line with the procedures in this document. Many staff will also be involved in the school's curriculum opportunities to promote anti-bullying and positive relationships that are outlined below.

Staff will not discuss disciplinary procedures or the personal details of other students with students or their parents when bullying is being investigated.

3.2 Parents

As part of our community, parents should report or encourage their children to report bullying wherever there is a concern. Being aware of the *Girls on Board* approach is also very helpful in guiding students through friendship turbulence and the school will offer annual opportunities for parents to learn about this.

Guidance for parents about who to tell and the procedures for bullying are outlined above and in appendix a. It is important to remember that those who harm others often do so because of their own vulnerabilities and so parents should not act in a way that will be detrimental to the wellbeing of any student.

4. How the Anti-Bullying policy is supported in the curriculum

Issues such as bullying, friendships and related topics are taught in our Personal, Social and Health Education (PHSE) curriculum which runs through the school from Year 3 to Year 13. These issues are also dealt with in other lessons and all students receive Girls on Board training until year 10.

Issues are raised in assembly themes through the year where matters such as friendship, mutual respect, being different and tolerance are dealt with. These can sometimes be led by students in order to place emphasis on the prevention of bullying. The importance of peer disapproval of antisocial behaviour is underlined; the positive aspects of 'community-friendly' behaviour are stressed, and the importance of avoidance of prejudice-based language is regularly promoted.

Visits from police speakers to students and parents describe the criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour, and address issues such as grooming, inappropriate internet sites and the sharing of photographs or personal information without permission.

Workshops on anti-bullying are held or attended from time to time by students to raise awareness of the benefits of a positive culture of kindness. We train a group of anti bullying ambassadors through the *Diana Award* annually in both the Senior and Junior Schools.

The issue of cyberbullying is dealt with in Computer Science lessons, during digital citizen days and assemblies. We have an e-safety Policy of which the students and staff are made aware. All students, when issued with iPads, are asked to sign the Student's Pledge for iPad Use where they agree to follow the policy outlined in the Technology for Learning Acceptable Use Policy.

Mobile phones are not allowed in school for any Junior School student. All students from years 7-10 must keep them in a mobile phone pouch during the school day. Year 11 and Sixth form students can only use their mobile phones in designated areas for their year groups.

Anti-Bullying Week enhances the consciousness of pupils and staff through posters, discussions in form time, in Student Voice Forum and assemblies. Though this is helpful, we do address anti-bullying issues throughout the year. We refer to this national campaign alongside our anti-bullying strategies.

Students are given opportunities to reflect on and comment on our anti-bullying policy through the anti-bullying ambassador programme and student voice opportunities.

5. Useful links

CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre)	www.ceop.police.uk
Anti-bullying alliance	http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/

Kidscape	www.kidscape.org.uk
Restorative Justice Council	https://restorativejustice.org.uk/
Diana award	http://diana-award.org.uk/
LGBT advice	http://www.schools-out.org.uk/

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Appendix A – Reporting Bullying Flow Chart (found in all classrooms)

