



Gosfield School

Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy should be read in conjunction with our School's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding Policy and Acceptable Use of Mobile Phones and Other Electronic Devices.

Table of Contents	Page
Statement of intent	1
Different types of bullying	2
Compliance guidance	2
Definition of bullying	3
Signs of bullying	4
Preventative Measures	4
Cyberbullying	5
Procedures for dealing with reported bullying	6

STATEMENT OF INTENT

At Gosfield School, our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that every one of our students, including Early Years students, can develop their full potential. 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. This is expressed in our code of conduct.

Gosfield School prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians, students and staff have an important role in supporting the whole school in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and home have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they cooperate closely together. An approach which involves parents and students ensures that all are clear about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders. We treat all our students and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to show similar respect towards each other, the staff and the School.

Any kind of bullying should be taken seriously and be thoroughly investigated whilst offering support for the victim. Isolated or one-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour, including a one-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging, do not fall within the definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the School Behaviour Policy. Students are spending increased amounts of time on devices and mobile phones. We monitor the online behaviour and respond where any action is inappropriate. It is

paramount that teachers are vigilant and that parents are kept informed of any bullying behaviour.

Consideration as to why bullying has taken place is necessary and intervention will be put in place to support all our students navigating the challenges of growing up and taking responsibility for their actions.

All staff are aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child-on-child abuse, child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. This includes, of course, sexual harassment and sexual violence. Bullying is also a safeguarding issue. This includes cyber bullying via text messages, social media or gaming. Should a student be involved in requesting inappropriate material in particular self-generated intimate images and/or videos including those generated using AI e.g. deepfakes or live streams by young people under the age of 18 online or the sharing of this type of material, an investigation will take place and support for the victim and perpetrator will be provided by the pastoral team. Such instances of bullying are often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, or revenge against an individual.

Staff are also trained to be alert to the importance of dealing with incidents involving the sharing of nudes or semi-nude image/ videos (sexting)/ self-generated intimate images and/or videos including those generated using AI, and gender based harassment/ violence or sexual assault, which might for example target children on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities and certain health conditions, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities, has a parent or carer in custody or is affected by parental offending, or mental health issues. These groups are more vulnerable and staff should always be clear that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as "banter" or "part of growing up". Gosfield School has a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and all reported issues are investigated.

Gosfield School complies with the following guidance

- "Preventing and tackling bullying Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies", DfE July 2017
- "Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and school staff", DfE, November 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education DfE 2026
- NSPCC- When to call the police
- Ofsted - Review of sexual harassment in schools and colleges June 2021
- UKCIS (UK Council for Internet Safety) Guidance on sharing nudes or semi-nude images/video December 2020
- Equality Act 2010
- DfE Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges – March 2022
- Gov.UK – Bullying at school

The policy is made available to all parents, staff and students via the School website.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying may be defined as the intentional hurting, harming, humiliating or belittling of another person in one or more of the following ways:

- physical bullying, including unwanted physical or sexual contact
- verbal bullying including sexist or abusive comments, sometimes involving the use of mobile phones or online
- cyber bullying through the use of an electronic device, including chat room, mobile phone SMS/text messages, email, social networking sites and photographs,
- and emotional bullying by taunting, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours, excluding someone from a social group, extortion, wilful destruction of someone else's work or property.

Such examples of bullying may be repeated over time and are intended to hurt another student or group, for example, on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability or because a child is adopted or is a carer. It may also be an isolated incident where a person has premeditated an act that sets out to intentionally hurt another person through a malicious act.

A bully may be a person who habitually seeks to harm or intimidate those who they perceive as vulnerable. It may be someone who uses their physical stature or mental ability to inflict harm, embarrassment, or other hurtful acts on a person not previously known to them but can manipulate or harm through use of force, social media, or intimidation/ blackmail.

It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It can involve complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory. As a school we challenge low-level disruption and the use of offensive language which can in turn have a significant impact on others. We do not allow this to be dismissed as banter. Early intervention helps to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and helps stop negative behaviours escalating.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time, and be physical and emotional. We always treat it very seriously particularly severe or persistent bullying, this can result in psychological problems for the victim. It conflicts sharply with the School's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986 and the Public Sector Equality Duty of the Equality Act 2010.

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

SIGNS OF BULLYING

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a student 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 bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags 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 Sick Room with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Unexplained cuts and bruises or signs of assault
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Unexplained gifts or new possessions could also indicate that children have been approached by, or are involved with, individuals associated with criminal networks or gangs.

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.

PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

We take the following preventative measures:

- We raise the awareness of staff through training, so that the principles of the school policy are understood and legal responsibilities are known. Measures and recommended actions are in place to resolve and prevent problems of bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying. Students are aware that various forms of support are available.
- We take action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely.
- Staff are always on duty and patrol the school site, particularly areas where bullying might occur at times when students are not in class. Staff are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour.
- All our students are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place. This is then passed to the relevant tutor/class teacher for investigation.
- We use appropriate assemblies to explain the School policy on bullying. Our PSHEE/ RSHE programme and our tutor programme are structured to give students an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. The programmes are structured to enforce the message about community involvement and taking care of each other. Through discussion we acknowledge the differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice-based language. Through the RSHE curriculum we encourage children to discuss views on sexual harassment and sexual

violence and the wider context of normalised behaviour within society and how students can navigate situations and report incidents to members of staff.

- Other lessons, including Religious Education, Drama and ICT, PSHEE highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. Students may be asked to record a written statement to support investigations; in such cases all students are separated and supervised. We always continue to monitor reported incidents.
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Tutors/ Class Teachers, Heads of House, Heads of Section, and a Pastoral Assistant. They are supported by the Assistant Principal Pastoral. They are alert to possible signs of bullying and are expected to handle any incidents as an immediate priority.
- Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies.
- Where necessary, and if requested by the parents, the School can provide details of external support services. Such services are advertised in school and coordinated by the safeguarding team in conjunction with the pastoral team. We also provide information on useful apps as increasingly this is the platform that resonates with students.
- At various locations around the school, such as in tutor rooms or in the washrooms, advice is displayed on where students can seek help. These include details of Childline and the NSPCC and other local support groups.
- We have banned initiation/hazing type ceremonies designed to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation.
- We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips or that occur in the vicinity of the school, involving our students.
- The policy is provided to parents and staff and is presented to recently appointed staff as part of their induction programme.
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

CYBERBULLYING – DEFINITION

Mr Bill Belsey, the creator of the web site: <http://www.cyberbullying.org> defined this unpleasant phenomenon in the following terms:

"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others."

Cyberbullying can involve Social Networking Sites, such as FaceBook, Instagram, TikTok, Discord and Snapchat. It also includes emails and mobile phones, used for SMS messages or as cameras, and online streaming platforms.

CYBERBULLYING - KEEPING STUDENTS SAFE

In addition to the preventative measures described above, Gosfield School:

Expects all students to adhere to its rules for the safe use of the internet. Certain sites are blocked by using firewalls, antivirus protection and filtering systems. Our Network Manager in conjunction with the pastoral team monitors students' use of devices and ICT communications regularly reviewing the security arrangements in place. With new technology come new levels of risk as well as opportunities. As a school we aim to raise awareness of the potential risks and the consequences of students' media use. They are taught how to make informed decisions about the use of the internet and appropriate behaviour. We take appropriate action to sanction any poor conduct or risky behaviours with all types of media. Any sharing of nudes or semi-nude images or videos, or creation of deepfakes will be investigated and procedures in conjunction with the Safeguarding Policy will be followed. Any acts of bullying, intimidation, racism, inappropriate language or blackmail will be dealt with and sanctions will vary according to the severity of the act.

In addition to the preventative measures described above, Gosfield School:

- May impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.
- Issues all students with their own personal school email address.
- Adheres to the BECTA guidelines regarding E-teaching and the internet.
- Adheres to the DFE Meeting digital and technology standards in schools and colleges – Published 23 March 2022 - Updated 29th March 2023
- All staff are vigilant to the risk's online safety, staff must understand what filtering and monitoring is, and that it is in place to prevent children accessing inappropriate and harmful content online while students are in school.
- Offers guidance on cyberbullying in ICT and PSHE lessons, which covers blocking and removing contacts and how to report abuse.
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
- Does not allow the use of cameras on mobile phones in washing and changing areas.

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTED BULLYING

If an incident of bullying is reported, including cyber bullying and bullying outside school, the following procedures are adopted:

- 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.
- They will inform the Tutor and/ or Head of Section/ Assistant Head (Prep) / Assistant Principal Pastoral as soon as possible.
- The appropriate member of staff will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved.
- A member of the pastoral team will interview the victim on their own as soon as possible, if the child is deemed to be vulnerable they may require support from the SENCo, or a Trusted Adult in support. They will be interviewed separately from the alleged perpetrator and asked to give an account of events in a written statement. It will be made clear why revenge is inappropriate. They will be offered support to develop a

strategy to help them. Students are required to write and sign an account of the incident which may be helpful to staff as the investigation progresses.

- The alleged bully, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually afterwards by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim, and asked to provide a signed written account. It will be made clear why their behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. They will be offered guidance on modifying their behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions, as stated in the School's behaviour policy.
- The incident is recorded and passed to all relevant members of the pastoral team.
- Where incidents of Cyberbullying have taken place, the Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by an authorised member of staff, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone.
- If an incident of bullying outside the school premises or online is reported to the school, it is important that it is investigated, and appropriate action is taken. We believe this sends a strong signal to students that bullying will not be tolerated and perpetrators will be held to account.
- We take child on child abuse extremely seriously and should an incident occur where this has taken place, it will be recorded as such on our Anti-Bullying Log and the sanctions for such offences will be serious. The Principal will make the decision once all investigations are complete. The victim and the bully will require support in terms of safety and reintegration.
- Incidents involving sexual harassment, sexual violence or exploitation will be investigated and referrals to other safeguarding partners or social care and the police will be made where required, it is not necessary to gain parental consent if the incident is deemed that serious. The DSL will be involved and seek advice from the Children and Families Hub and the guidance in the DFE KCSIE 2026 document gives additional support. Staff should follow the safeguarding policy for child protection in such circumstances.
- Incidents of AI deepfake generated material may require us to refer to the police, especially if the content is harmful, illegal, or could potentially endanger students or staff. Schools should follow their safeguarding policies and consider involving law enforcement when the deepfake involves threats, violence, hate speech, or child sexual abuse material.
- The Assistant Principal Pastoral maintains a central log of any incidents, monitors progression and identifies patterns. Dates and details of ongoing situations are logged and the Senior Leadership Team are kept informed. A holistic picture is maintained between different aspects of school provision such as teaching and health care and the Assistant Principal Pastoral forwards relevant information to all concerned.
- All appropriate staff will be informed. In very serious incidents, the Vice Principal, Head of Prep and/or Principal will be informed.
- When necessary, the parents/guardians of all parties will be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support will be sought.
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions and counselling, will be agreed. It is important to recognise that suitable support is needed both for students who are

- being bullied and for students who bully others, in addition to appropriate disciplinary measures.
- A meeting involving all the parties, with a member of staff present, can be helpful in developing a strategy for all concerned to close the episode.
 - Those involved will be closely monitored by the pastoral team, led by the Assistant Principal Pastoral.
 - Strong sanctions such as behaviour contracts or exclusion may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying.
 - A bullying incident is treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm. The School may look for support from Family Help.
 - In very serious cases, and only after the Principal has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or to Social Services. However, it is the policy of Gosfield 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.
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Ratified by the Governing Council of Gosfield School

Signed _____
Chair of Governors

Date: 14.9.26

Date of next review: September 2027

Signed _____
Principal

Date: _____

14/9/26