



Anti-Bullying Policy (Senior School)

Applies to	Senior School
Responsibility	Deputy Head (Pastoral)
Approving Body	Pastoral and Recreation Committee
Date reviewed	Michaelmas 2025
Next review	Michaelmas 2026

1. Introduction

Bullying is never acceptable in Wells Cathedral School. All members of the community have a duty to be alert to possible instances of bullying and to take action immediately. Our separate Child-on-Child Abuse Policy lays out our principles around how we expect pupils to treat each other. When a pupil is on the receiving end of inappropriate, hurtful or upsetting behaviour in any way then we encourage them to report it. When any particular kind of reported behaviour becomes repeated, is malicious in intent and is potentially hierarchical, then the Deputy Head Pastoral is alerted and will decide to define the behaviour as bullying and record it as such on our Child-on-Child and CPOMS systems.

The School has the ability to discipline pupils for bullying behaviour that occurs even when the pupil is not on school premises or under the lawful control of school staff (*Education and Inspection Act 2006*)

2. What is bullying?

Bullying occurs when an individual or group repeatedly and intentionally hurts, threatens, or targets another person over time. It often involves a power imbalance – such as greater physical strength, social status, or influence – which makes it difficult for the person being targeted to defend themselves. In some cases, a single incident may also be considered bullying if it causes significant harm to the individual.

Bullying can take a wide range of forms. Some of the different types of bullying recognised by the School include:

- Emotional bullying is when a victim is taunted and called hurtful names. Often, one who engages in this form of behaviour does not consider it to be bullying, but considers it to be "a joke". If the victim finds teasing or taunting hurtful then it is not to be tolerated. Bullying should not be passed off as harmless 'banter'.
- Physical bullying should not be seen merely in terms of a pupil being physically assaulted. It can include damage done to the victim's property, clothing or schoolwork. Bullying can be both mental and physical as, for example, when a group of pupils gangs up against an individual or isolates them.
- Cyberbullying is bullying behaviour through mediums which may include texting, phone calls and the posting of comments on social media sites, email, posting of images etc. In order to tackle cyber-bullying, staff do have a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones (*Education Act 2011*). In more extreme cases, the School can confiscate devices and ascertain evidence if necessary. Further information can be found in the School's Online Safety Policy.
- Sexual bullying including unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive comments and homophobic or gender orientation bullying which focuses on the issue of sexuality (*Equalities Act 2010*)

- Disability bullying occurs when disabled children or those with special educational needs encounter barriers to inclusion in the form of other people's attitudes and in the excluding practices of institutions (*Equalities Act 2010*)
- Racial bullying is when behaviour or language is used that makes a pupil feel unwelcome or marginalised because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, religion or national origin (*Equalities Act 2010*)
- Children can also be bullied because they are adopted or a carer.

3. Impact of bullying

Bullying can lead to physical or psychological damage and even suicide and therefore the long-term effects can be extremely serious. It is important, however, to note that what might appear to be a bullying incident could be an isolated moment of conflict or breakdown of a relationship and should be treated as such. Children and young people can be unkind and this is why it is important to differentiate between acts of unkindness and bullying.

4. Why do bullies bully?

A bully often comes from a background in which bullying is considered to be 'normal' in some way. A bully believes that they can get the respect of their peers by bullying. They often feel inadequate, unhappy and insecure. Frequently, the only means by which they can feel superior is to dominate those whom they perceive to be weak or weaker than themselves. The bully may need help. Research suggests that to regard bullying as a straightforward discipline problem is not acceptable. Pre-emptive discipline could make the problem worse. It could reinforce the bully's perception of their esteem among their peer group, and exacerbate their antagonism towards the victim. It is important that a bully is helped to see the hurt they inflict on their victims and made to understand that their behaviour cannot be tolerated. In the long term, if a bully is able to get away with bullying they are likely to continue to bully in later life.

5. Who gets bullied?

It is important to state that anyone can be bullied and that no-one deserves to be bullied. Whatever the reason, a victim must be helped and protected. They need to be assisted to develop the personal resources they need in order to overcome the difficulties they are facing.

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 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 Medical Centre with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches, unexplained cuts and bruises.
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class.
- Choosing the company of adults.
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact.
- Difficulty sleeping, experiencing nightmares.
- Talking of suicide or running away.

6. How does a pupil report bullying?

Where a pupil is experiencing behaviour they believe to be bullying, they should:

- avoid engagement and interaction with the bully where possible
- retain any evidence of bullying (e.g. texts, emails, screen shots, photos etc.)
- report the incident using the procedures below:

Tackling bullying is the responsibility of all staff. A pupil may report concerns related to bullying to any member of staff in the School that they feel comfortable speaking to. This may often be the pupil's Tutor, House Parent or Head of Year. Such staff will liaise with other appropriate members of staff as outlined below. Sometimes concerns about bullying may be reported by the pupil's friends, or parents in a similar manner. Pupils can also report concerns using a confidential reporting form.

7. Procedure for following up a report or allegation of bullying

Please remember that to ignore is to condone!

The member of staff receiving the report should add an incident on CPOMS (the School's Pastoral and Safeguarding Reporting System) or pass on the information to the Tutor/Houseparent/Head of Year as relevant to investigate. Serious or repeated incidents should be reported directly or indirectly to the Deputy Head (Senior or Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep as relevant.

The perpetrator(s) and the victim(s) should be questioned separately to hear both sides of the story as soon as possible. Both parties may be given the opportunity to come face to face to discuss the incidents so that there is a chance to put right any disagreements - but only if both parties agree to this. Mediation, particularly when feelings are raw, can fuel a conflict situation if not handled carefully. If there are disagreements then witnesses should be spoken to (separately from the pupils involved) as part of an investigation. If, in the view of the staff member, there is a major issue, a written record of what takes place must be given to the Deputy Head and/or Head Master.

The 'lead' investigating member of staff (depending on the seriousness of the incident) should inform both sets of parents of the case and discuss with them the course of action. It must be made clear that the incidents should stop straight away and that it is expected that any recurrence must be reported straight away by the victim. It must be pointed out that this is not telling tales - motive this is the primary difference between snitching and reporting.

Written records of interviews and actions should be taken.

8. Procedure for dealing with a case of bullying

If the case is deemed to be bullying, it should be passed on to the Deputy Head (Senior or Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep as necessary. Incidents of cyberbullying may be supported by the IT Manager in accordance with the Online Safety Policy.

The case will be recorded on CPOMS as 'Bullying' with written records of the investigation. This information will be used to inform the development of the School's anti-bullying work. It also helps to identify patterns of behaviour over time of a pupil or a group of pupils.

A meeting will take place between the 'lead' member of staff (Tutor / Houseparent / Head of Year), the bully and the Deputy Head (Senior or Prep) or Head of Pre-Prep as relevant.

9. Actions

A set of actions will be agreed in line with the relevant Behaviour Management Policy:

- Senior School Behaviour Management Policy
- Prep School Behaviour Management Policy
- Prep School Little Wellies Behaviour Management Policy

10. Restorative Action

Our aim is to make bullying stop and this can be achieved initially by talking through the situation with both bully and victim, potentially without the need for punishment. Evidence suggests that when the problem is tackled in this way a mutual understanding and empathy can develop. Both parties must be assured that they are safe and that the most relevant staff member(s) is/are dealing with the problem. Clear boundaries and expectations of future behavioural choices must be established with both parties. In addition the School will offer help and support to bullies in order to sustain positive development and long term change. Pupils will be given the opportunity to see a counsellor.

11. Sanctions

Depending on the severity of the behaviour, the impact on the victim and the track record of the perpetrator(s), the bully may be suspended with a clear written warning given to the bully and their parents that such behaviour will not be tolerated and that continual bullying may mean removal of the bully from school.

These actions will be recorded on CPOMS, the sanction on iSAMS and necessary parties communicated with. The School will discuss with parents any incidents of bullying in which their child has been involved, either as victim or perpetrator.

12. After Care

It is the responsibility of the most appropriate members of staff to monitor the situation thereafter; to check that victimisation is not continuing and that patterns of behaviour haven't fallen back into place.

If further incidents occur involving the bully (involved with the same pupil or another pupil) then it will be necessary to ask parents to come into school to discuss the matter. The interview will involve the Tutor or Head of Year and the Deputy Head (Prep or Senior) or Head of Pre-Prep as relevant. The Head Master may also be involved at this stage as necessary. It should be made clear that continual bullying will mean removal of the bully from school.

13. Involving Other Agencies

Under the Children Act 1989, a bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that the victim is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In such cases, the School's concerns will be reported to the Local Authority Social Services Department. The School may also engage with other outside agencies, such as the police, where it is believed there is the potential for a criminal case to be processed or in cases where a parent believes the police should be involved for legal benchmarking.

14. Our responsibility to the perpetrator as well as the victim

As a school we are responsible for looking after the best interests of the perpetrator as well as the victim involved in a bullying situation. Following as thorough an investigation as possible and, if necessary, a sanction in line with our Behaviour Management Policy, we consider how best to support the development and safety of the perpetrator.

15. Wells Cathedral School: Creating an Ethos of Awareness, Responsibility, Kindness and Respect

Our ethos must be one in which all pupils are valued not only by the teaching staff but also by

their peers. The way in which staff treat pupils and each other must reflect this ethos:

- Pupils should not be humiliated and made to feel inadequate.
- All members of the community must be vigilant and observant, particularly in areas which are slightly out of sight and where pupils might be vulnerable.
- All areas of the School will be appropriately supervised.
- All members of the community should be sensitive to changes in behaviour, moodiness, and patterned absenteeism.
- All members of the community should draw to the attention of the Heads of Year, House Staff or Deputy Head (Prep or Senior School) pupils about whom problems may be sensed.
- Whole school pastoral trends including bullying are referred to the Welfare Team, and reviewed on a weekly basis.
- Alleged bullying which focuses on the areas of equality and diversity (bullying on the basis of race, colour, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability) will be seen in the context of the School's commitment to promoting an environment where all members of the community are valued and celebrated equally for their differences
- As part of the School's PSHE and Tutor programme, various issues to do with bullying are discussed across all ages. In addition the use of drama, historic and current events etc. are used to raise the topic
- All staff receive training to understand the principles and purpose of the School's policy, its legal responsibilities regarding bullying, how to resolve problems, and where to seek support.

ACTION ON BULLYING

Every person in Wells Cathedral School belongs to a caring community in which we try to live together happily and where we always respond to anyone who is unhappy or worried about anything.

Every person in the School has the right to be treated with courtesy and respect. No one should be bullied.

Bullying is when a more powerful person or group of people intentionally intimidate anyone in order to cause physical or emotional distress.

BULLYING IS ALWAYS WRONG

Anyone who stands by while someone is bullied and does nothing is helping the bully.

If you are being bullied or know of anyone else who is being bullied you **MUST** tell. You could tell a parent, older pupil, teacher or adult whom you trust. The important thing is to let somebody know so that the School can deal with it.

If we all work together we can make Wells Cathedral School bully-free.

Remember, there is nothing wrong with you if you are being bullied. You need help in stopping the bullying. The bully needs to be helped too.

BULLYING HAS NO PLACE IN WELLS CATHEDRAL SCHOOL