# Anti-bullying Policy

This policy, which applies to the whole school, inclusive of boarding, is publicly available on the school website and upon request a copy (which can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required) may be obtained from the school Compliance Officer.

**Owner**: Deputy Head Pastoral
**Approving Body**: Safeguarding and Wellbeing Committee

**Date of last Review:** September 2026
**Date of next Review:** September 2027

**Linked Polices:**

- Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions Policy
- EAL Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- SEND Policy including Reasonable Adjustments
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Woldingham Handbook
- Staff Handbook

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**BACKGROUND**

At Woldingham School ('the School'), the School Code of Conduct is underpinned by the Goals and Criteria of the Sacred Heart. The School community is based on:

- Respect for Self
- Respect for Others
- Respect for the Environment
- Responsibility for our Actions

Although bullying at Woldingham is not a wide-spread issue, it would be naïve to think that it might not exist in some form. More recently, as mobile phone and internet use has become so much a part of modern living, so has the misuse of this technology and cyberbullying is an unpleasant form of bullying, particularly out of school.

Bullying behaviour is wholly and always unacceptable. Downplaying certain behaviours can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for students and, in worst case scenarios, a culture that normalises bullying. An example of this would be tolerating behaviour or dismissing it as 'just banter' or part of 'growing up'.

The School aims to create an environment where individuals can grow and flourish without fear. Each student has the right to be happy and safe in school and to be protected when they are feeling vulnerable. The School has a duty of care to those in its charge and all members of the community need to be alert to signs of bullying behaviour.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Bullying** is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally causes harm, either physical or emotional. Bullying could also be a single incident over which action needs to be taken. This behaviour may be towards another individual or group which makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Bullying behaviour is not when students fall in or out of being friends with each other. However, if as a result of a friendship issue any student feels that they are being deliberately and repeatedly 'picked on' or excluded, then that may be perceived as bullying behaviour. Bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves.

**Cyberbullying** involves the use of a mobile device or the internet to harass, threaten, intimidate, exclude, impersonate, taunt, or ridicule a victim. Those who cyberbully may use text messaging, voice notes, images, video images, social networking sites, video hosting sites, chat rooms, email etc. Cyberbullying may, for example, involve directly contacting the victim or may involve sending or posting messages or images of the victim without their explicit consent.

Cyberbullying can have far greater impact on an individual victim than other forms of bullying. It must be remembered that people react differently, and it is often very difficult to tell if someone is upset or hurt. No one should underestimate the serious consequences, including psychological damage and even suicide, that bullying behaviour may cause.

While bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment, violence and threatening behaviour, sexual violence, and assault, upskirting, malicious communications, defamation and sexting, Online misconduct which takes place out of school – in holiday time as well as term time – but which affects students or staff can also be dealt with by the school.

**ZERO TOLERANCE APPROACH TO ISSUES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE**

Woldingham School stands against any form of discriminatory act and has a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment and sexual violence. To reinforce the seriousness of acts of sexual harassment and sexual violence, the School will follow a developmentally age appropriate and stepped response to all such incidents. Behavioural sanctions will reflect the severity and/or frequency of any reported incident. In any cases where the law may have been broken, the police will be informed.

**BULLYING BEHAVIOURS INCLUDE:**

- **Physical:** hitting; kicking; use of violence or aggressive behaviour; deliberately damaging or defacing property; taking, damaging, or hiding belongings, including money.
- **Verbal:** name calling; teasing; insulting; sarcasm; spreading rumours; derogatory language
- **Written:** writing unpleasant and derogatory comments, sometimes anonymously, that are intended to upset and unsettle the recipient
- **Emotional:** being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, giving unpleasant looks, spreading hurtful and/or untruthful rumours
- **Cyber**: all areas of internet, such as email/social media misuse/threats by text message/calls/posts; posting or sending inappropriate text messages/emails e.g., sending offensive or degrading images by mobile phone or via the internet. Misuse of associated technology i.e., camera and video facilities
- **Sexual**: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals** (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

**MOTIVATIONS FOR BULLYING INCLUDE:**

- bullying related to race, religion or culture;
- bullying related to SEN or disabilities;
- bullying related to appearance or health conditions;
- bullying related to sexual orientation or gender identity;
- bullying related to home circumstances e.g. personal circumstances such as a child who is adopted or has caring responsibilities, pregnancy, matters connected to parents
- sexist or sexual bullying;
- bullying of a young person who is at risk due to other vulnerabilities.

**BULLYING CAN TAKE PLACE:**

- between students;
- between students and staff;
- by individuals or groups;
- face to face, indirectly or using a range of cyberbullying methods.

**THE SCHOOL AIMS TO:**

- Create a happy, safe and secure environment for all.
- Promote behaviour based on respect for self and others and responsibility for ones actions.

- Educate students, staff, and parents to understand what bullying (including cyber-bullying) is and what its consequences can be.
- Train all school staff to recognise bullying and know who to go to, if required, in order to ensure bullying is dealt with.
- Facilitate a culture of open communication between staff and students so that concerns can be reported without fear of reprisal or judgement. Students are encouraged to see that asking for help is the right thing to do and shows strength and good judgement.
- Ensure, as far as possible, that the needs of all students, including boarders, and staff are met so members of the school community feel safe knowing that bullying, physical threats or abuse are not tolerated, and that they belong.
- Ensure that all forms of bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory), at the school, are prevented in so far as reasonably practicable, by the drawing up and implementation of a proactive and effective anti-bullying strategy (Appendix 1). The strategy includes accessible and effective systems for children to report bullying.
- Challenge bullying behaviour, either directly or by dealing with bullying behaviour in the curriculum, as a Wellbeing (PSHE) topic, and by using teaching methods that encourage cooperation and emotional health in and out of the classroom.
- Deal effectively with incidents of bullying when they arise, either in or outside of school.
- Encourage students to discuss areas of concern with staff to enable potentially 'bullying' situations to be averted and minimised.
- Provide support for the victim and perpetrator of bullying behaviour.

**PROCEDURES:**

- Students will be aware of acceptable behaviour through the Woldingham Handbook and Behaviour, Rewards and Discipline Policy. Awareness of bullying issues will be raised through assemblies, Wellbeing (PSHE) and Thrive, among other appropriate places. Talks with external speakers will also be organised from time to time.
- The School promotes the safe and responsible use of technology and encourage students to view technology in a positive manner. All users of the school computer system sign an acceptable use agreement.
- The School operates proportionate systems to monitor and control the use of electronic communications in order to detect abuse, bullying or unsafe practice by boarders.
- The School will deal with individual cases sensitively and appropriately. If a student feels that they have been a victim of bullying, the School will always listen to them and take their views seriously.

- Students are encouraged to report bullying behaviour to any member of staff they feel comfortable speaking to, academic or pastoral, such as a Tutor, Head of Year, Housemistress, Chaplain, School nurse, Counsellor, DSL or a Deputy DSL.
- If a student makes an allegation about bullying, the member of staff who receives the allegation must take any notes as soon as they can and pass them on to the relevant Head of Year  Safeguarding Manager or Deputy Head Pastoral. No student will be punished for making an allegation in good faith.
- If a member of staff hears of bullying or suspects that it is taking place, either in or outside of school, they must report this to the Head of Year, Safeguarding Managerand the Deputy Head Pastoral.
- Staff and students should be advised to preserve electronic evidence and a record of abuse; save and record phone messages, save and print instant messenger conversations, save, or print off a screen shot of social networking site pages, save and print/forward to a member of staff any email messages. Copies should be kept in case evidence is later deleted from the original source.
- A member of staff should ascertain whether the victim has responded to the bullying, and record evidence of any response, making sure the victim understands that there should be no retaliation.
- The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be investigated so that the bullying may be stopped as quickly as possible.
- The School may take steps to try to identify a person who is anonymously bullying a victim in writing or via messages online. This may include examining handwriting, school system logs, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, and contacting the service provider and the police if necessary.
- Where images are involved, contact may need to be made with the local police (where there is a case of actual/suspected illegal content) or CEOP (Child Exploitation and Online Protection).
- The School reserves the right to search any files or other material contained on personal electronic devices brought into school. Such searches may be carried out where the student is reasonably suspected of being involved in cyber-bullying or where the student is reasonably believed to be storing pornography or any other inappropriate material on such a device.
- A personal mobile device may need to be confiscated so that checks can be carried out and inappropriate content can be captured and/or deleted. Such checks will be carried out in the presence of the student who can assist in identifying the offending material. Parents will be informed if such a search is deemed necessary. If the material is of particular concern, the school reserves the right to forward the device and/or material to the appropriate authorities as further action or investigation may be appropriate.
- A student suspected of cyberbullying may have their internet access suspended and their access to mobile devices restricted whilst at school.

- Incidents will be recorded on CPOMS and the Head will always be informed.
- A bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. In such cases the procedures contained in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed.
- Support will be provided as appropriate for the victim(s) and for the perpetrator(s).
- There is another aspect to bullying – bystander bullying. If a person passes on the malicious message or image, they are engaging wilfully in bullying and could be committing a criminal offence. All students will be made aware of their role in countering bullying behaviour, including the significance of the role of bystanders.
- If a student has been a witness to bullying it is their duty to report it.
- Students are encouraged to avoid rumour and gossip which may exacerbate a situation.
- Sometimes behaviour is thoughtless or is not deliberate or intended to hurt. Some students may see their hurtful conduct as 'teasing' or a 'game'. This behaviour is unacceptable but may not be malicious and may be corrected by advice. However, if unchallenged or dismissed, this type of behaviour can have a wearing and significant impact on targeted individuals. The school will never dismiss bullying as 'banter' or 'horseplay' and all reported incidents of bullying will be dealt with by staff in accordance with this policy.
- Staff will be alert to signs of bullying behaviour and the signs and symptoms a student may show if being bullied (see below).
- All students and staff agree to the ICT and Mobile Communications Acceptable Use Agreements. Any breach of these guidelines will be sanctioned, as appropriate.

**A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that they are being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and investigate if a child:**

- Is unwilling to go to school
- Doesn't want to go on the school bus/public transport
- Changes their usual routine
- Begins to truant
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, or late arrival to class
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence
- Is frightened to say what is wrong
- Loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Has lost or damaged possessions
- Unexplained injuries
- Frequent visits to the medical centre with symptoms that may relate to stress or anxiety such as headaches or stomach aches

- Difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive, or unreasonable
- Stops eating
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is choosing the company of adults rather than peers
- Self-destructive behaviour, talking of suicide or running away from home or school

These signs and symptoms could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and considered.

Bullying incidents meet the threshold for safeguarding procedures if the incident puts students at risk of significant harm. These will be dealt with by the DSL in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

**APPENDIX 1: ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

At Woldingham School, we provide an education underpinned by our Catholic ethos rooted in our Sacred Heart values. Bullying is contrary to our core values and expectations of those within our school community. Bullying in any form, whether physical, verbal, emotional, or online can take place within student groups, between students and staff, and between staff. If this does occur, we aim to deal with allegations and incidents promptly and effectively. We encourage students, parents and staff to speak up and call out unacceptable behaviour. This strategy aims to prevent bullying, address incidents effectively, and promote a positive and inclusive school community.

## 2. DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is defined as repeated behaviour that is intended to cause harm, fear, or distress. There are various types of bullying:

- **Verbal Bullying** including name-calling, teasing, or making hurtful comments.
- **Social Bullying** including excluding someone, spreading rumours, or damaging relationships.
- **Cyberbullying**: using digital platforms, including social media, texting, and online forums to cause harm as described above.
- **Physical Bullying** including hitting, pushing, tripping, or damaging someone's belongings.

## 3. OUR ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY

At Woldingham school, we will not tolerate bullying within our school community. We believe education is key and take every opportunity to teach students how to treat one another well, in line with our school ethos and values.
We recognise the increased risks and impact of bullying incidents in boarding schools where children cannot escape their bullies for long periods of time.

<u>Prevention strategies</u>

- **Promoting Positive Behaviour**. Our school Behaviour, Rewards and Discipline Policy is regularly reviewed and reminders given about expected behaviours. Students are recognised and praised for good conduct with merits and Head's Commendations. We encourage respect and celebrate diversity through events, assemblies and classroom activities that promote inclusion and respect for all. All staff and students partake in training annually, to tackle racism and intolerance.
- **Staff Training**. We provide regular anti-bullying training for staff to ensure they can identify, respond to, and prevent bullying and intervene quickly. This is delivered through our safeguarding shorts series at half termly pastoral meetings. All staff must understand the importance of creating a safe and supportive classroom environment

and responding to all forms of bullying promptly by reporting them to senior pastoral staff and recording incidents on CPOMs.

- **Clear Expectations.** We regularly communicate our expectations to students, staff, and parents through assemblies, workshops, wellbeing (PSHE) lessons, Thrive and Tutor time. 'Pupil Voice' is routinely used to check for issues of bullying and for measuring the confidence that it will be quickly and effectively addressed should issues be reported.
- **Consequences for bullying behaviour.** Consequences for bullying behaviour are in line with our Behaviour, Rewards and Discipline policy and can include sanctions at every level, including suspension and expulsion in severe cases.
- **Open culture**. Students are encouraged to raise any concerns quickly and are reassured that they will be supported. All students have a form tutor who should be there first point of contact and will ensure they know them well so that they can become their trusted adult. Heads of Year, House Mistresses and other key pastoral staff are a visible presence and act as additional trusted adults for students.

<u>Reporting incidents</u>

Students and staff may wish to report concerns and are supported in doing so. Students are encouraged to report incidents to a trusted adult, which may include but will not be limited to their form tutor, Head of Year or House mistress. They can also use our anonymous online reporting tool (whisper) and our half termly wellbeing survey.

Students will never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment or any other concerns. They will never be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

<u>Managing incidents</u>

We treat any allegation of bullying very seriously and an investigation will be undertaken by their Head of Year and/or the Deputy Head Pastoral and/or the Safeguarding team. We will provide support for the alleged perpetrator and the victim, and staff will keep close contact with their parents/guardians. Our aim will always be to support the victim and ensure that no further occurrences take place, to ensure the school community is safe and inclusive for all. A restorative meeting between the victim and perpetrator/s will always be encouraged, and we consider this a vital part of the strategy to deal with bullying in school effectively.

<u>Investigating allegations</u>

Allegations will be investigated by the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or the DDSL team, supported by the appropriate Head of Year where necessary. The Deputy Head Pastoral who is the DSL will review all evidence relating to the incident before making a decision regarding the outcome. The investigation summary and any supporting evidence will be recorded on CPOMS.

Any allegations that are substantiated will be reviewed by the Head and the perpetrator will be sanctioned accordingly in line with the school Behaviour, Rewards and Discipline Policy. The sanction is likely to be at least Level 3. Following the sanction, an appropriate warning will be issued.

The Deputy Head Pastoral will respond to the person who has reported the incident to ensure they know that their concern is being dealt with. The alleged perpetrators' parents will be contacted as soon as possible to inform them of the allegation, ideally within 24 hours after an incident has taken place or been reported, both parties will provide a statement about the incident, and other students or staff who may have witnessed the incident will be asked to provide a statement, in order to gather a range of evidence. In the event of bullying being online, students will be invited to provide staff with sight of the evidence on their phones.
Parents of the victim and the perpetrator will be informed of the investigation, kept updated throughout and informed of the outcome. The outcome will be recorded on the school's bullying log and on CPOMS. Following any incidence of bullying, steps will be taken to minimise the likelihood of a repeat occurrence, and a risk assessment may need to be put in place.

## 4. IMPACT OF BULLYING

The School recognises the seriousness of bullying and its impact:

- **Barrier to learning** – missing school and inability to concentrate
- **Retaliation** – getting into trouble in school
- **Self-harm** – expressing and coping with emotional distress and trying to feel in control; a cry for help
- A **range of mental health issues -** including depression and thoughts of suicide
- **Negative effect on relationships** – current and future
- **Physical effects** – headaches, stomach issues, weight changes, altered immune function, sleep disturbances

Prejudice-based bullying in relation to protected characteristics is particularly serious.

## 5. SUPPORT FOR VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS

The school pastoral team will provide support as appropriate for students who have been bullied, ensuring they have a safe space to discuss the situation. This may include coaching or counselling if necessary to support their wellbeing. This will help victims to build resilience, self-confidence, and coping skills. Perpetrators will be supported to understand the consequences and impact of their behaviour and will be supported to make positive changes.
We encourage restorative meetings to facilitate open discussion between the victim and perpetrator in a safe and controlled environment. Staff will support both the victim and the perpetrator.
Pastoral staff will follow up with the victim and their parents to ensure that no further issues have occurred.
We regularly review our log of bullying incidents to identify trends and areas needing additional attention. Student voice will be used to monitor students' perception of and experience of bullying.

## 6. STAFF

Allegations of bullying that relate to staff will be dealt with as set out in the staff handbook.

## APPENDIX 2: USEFUL ORGANISATIONS AND ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN ABOUT DEALING WITH BULLYING

**CONTACTS**
**Childline**: 0800 1111
**NSPCC**: 0808 800 5000
**Samaritans**: 116123
**National Bullying helpline**: 0300 323 016

Stand up to Bullying
www.standuptobullying.co.uk

**ADVICE**
**Kidscape**
Grosvenor Gardens, London, SW1W ODH. Tel: 0207 730 3300
Fax: 0207 730 7081
Has a wide range of publications for young people, parents and teachers. Bullying counsellor available Monday to Friday, 10-4.
https://www.kidscape.org.uk/who-we-are/history/

**Bullying UK**
www.bullying.co.uk
Telephone: 0808 800 2222

**The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA)**
http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/advice/support-from-the-sector/

**ChildNet International**
http://www.childnet.com/

**Cyberbullying Research Center**
www.cyberbullying.org