Counter-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 Office.

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

Date of last Review: September 2025
Date of next Review: September 2026

Linked Polices:

- Behaviour and Rewards Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

BACKGROUND

At Woldingham, 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 our lives, 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.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

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 girls fall in or out of 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, voicenotes, 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

The 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, we 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 BEHAVIOUR INCLUDES:
- **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 our 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. The strategy should include 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 and Rewards 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 policy.
- 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, the Deputy Heads, 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 or Deputy Heads. 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, she or he must report this to the Head of Year, Deputy Heads and the DSL.
- 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 you pass on the malicious message or image, you 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). Regular
- All students and staff agree to the ICT and Mobile Communications Acceptable Use Policies. Any breach of these guidelines will be sanctioned, as appropriate.

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that she is 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.

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

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

Stand up to Bullying
www.standuptobullying.co.uk

ADVICE FOR PARENTS AND CHILDREN ABOUT DEALING WITH BULLYING

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