

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Whole School

This Policy applies to the Whole School, including EYFS and Boarding

1. AIMS

1.1 The aim of the policy is to prevent bullying of any sort; to promote a culture of kindness and one in which bystanders are courageous and thus ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, safe and caring environment. Kent College Pembury operates a zero tolerance approach towards bullying. The school treats bullying as a safeguarding issue and any incidents are taken seriously, as it can cause damage to individual pupils, both physically and emotionally.

Bullying is an anti-social behaviour which affects everyone. We do all we can to prevent bullying, by developing, in line with Methodist principles, a school ethos in which bullying is not tolerated.

1.2 Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school but if bullying does occur, all pupils should feel able to discuss the issue and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. All staff have a duty to promote fundamental British values which do not tolerate bullying. Reports of bullying will always be taken seriously.

1.3 This policy aims to produce a consistent school response to any bullying incidents that may occur. It should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Anti-Bullying Procedures
- AI Policy
- Child Protection including Safeguarding policy (which contains the Child-on Child abuse framework)
- Online Safety and mobile devices policy
- Behaviour Policy (Rewards and Consequences)
- Equal opportunities
- Relationships and Sex Education
- SEND Policy
- Managing Allegations against other pupils (Child-on-Child Abuse)

1.4 This Anti-Bullying Policy is also compliant with:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for school Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies, July 2017
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools (2022), Standards 16 and 17: Preventing bullying, Promoting good relationships:
- Equality Act, 2010
- SEND Code of Practice 2015: 0 to 25 years

Definition of Bullying

1.5 Friendship problems and bullying behaviour can be upsetting and unpleasant but it is important to distinguish between the two, as the responses to friendship problems will be different to the strategies used to address bullying behaviour. Friendship problems may be an occasional incident where both children disagree and find it difficult to resolve the disagreement without adult help. Bullying may be defined as any deliberately hurtful behaviour, usually but not exclusively repeated over a period of time, which intentionally hurts another pupil or group physically or emotionally. It is often difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves, and it is often motivated by prejudice. Bullying behaviour is defined as “The repetitive and/or intentional hurting of one person by another(s), where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.” (Anti-bullying Alliance 2011). Examples of unacceptable bullying behaviour include:

- Physical (including sexual) assault
- Verbal abuse, by name calling, teasing or making offensive remarks
- Online abuse, which is defined as the use of IT by an individual or group in a way that is intended to upset others. Examples include using social websites, mobile phones, text messaging, photographs, video and e-mail
- Indirect emotional tormenting by excluding from social groups or spreading malicious rumours

Some bullying is done because a child is deemed to belong to a certain group. This has been labelled ‘prejudice based bullying’, and includes discrimination based on:

- Disability
- Religion (religions, Islamophobia)
- Gender
- misogyny/misandry
- Nationality, Ethnicity or Race (Black & Ethnic Minority; Gypsy Traveller Romany; Nationalism)
- Sexual Orientation (transphobic, homophobic, biphobic)

Types of Cyber-Bullying:

- Flaming: Online fights usually through emails, instant messaging or chat rooms where angry and rude comments are exchanged
- Denigration: Putting mean online messages through email, instant messaging, chat rooms, or websites set up to make fun of someone
- Exclusion: Intentionally leaving someone out of a group such as instant messaging, friend sites, or other online group activities
- Outing: Sharing secrets about someone online including private information, pictures, and videos
- Trickery: Tricking someone into revealing personal information then sharing it with others
- Impersonation: Pretending to be someone else when sending or posting mean or false messages online
- Harassment: Repeatedly sending malicious messages to someone online
- Cyber-stalking: Continuously harassing and denigration including threats of physical harm
- The use of AI to create, alter, or share images, audio, or video of another person with consent (including “deepfakes”) (see also Online Safety Policy section 7.2 for information on how Kent College will deal with such incidents involving nudes or semi-nudes).

1.6 Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidating but is often hidden and subtle. It includes actions or comments which focus on physical attributes (such as hair, colour or body shape) or any reference to Special Educational Needs and/or disability, or because a child is adopted or a carer.

1.7 The seriousness of bullying cannot be emphasised enough and is among the highest concerns that parents have about their children's safety and wellbeing. Bullying is also a primary concern of children and young people themselves. Bullying makes the lives of its victims a misery: it undermines their confidence and self-esteem and destroys their sense of security. Bullying impacts on its victims' attendance and attainment at school, marginalises those groups who may be particular targets for those who display bullying behaviours and can have a life-long negative impact on some young people's lives. It can be psychologically damaging and, at worst, it has been a factor in pupil suicide.

1.8 It is acknowledged that pupils who display bullying behaviours may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. It should also be recognised that the consequences of being allowed to 'get away with it' can be detrimental to them as well as those who experience this behaviour. All pupils deserve the opportunity to be helped to understand what acceptable behaviour is. Pupils are educated through our PSHE programme, assemblies, and the wider curriculum and culture to raise awareness, the celebration of differences between people, the importance of avoiding prejudice and understanding the criminal laws that apply to harassment, discrimination, assault and threatening or controlling behaviour. If staff feel that a criminal offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police.

1.9 We acknowledge that sometimes group dynamics can lead to negative behaviour and that assigning victim and aggressor labels can be counterproductive. In such situations we aim to educate the group around appropriate, healthy and positive behaviour through role play and other means.

1.10 We recognise that bullying may occur any time of day or night, in or outside school and may involve any members of the school community, including adults (staff or parents), and we are committed to responding to it in all its forms.

2. ACTION and PROCEDURES

2.1 The School will raise awareness of pupils' needs through staff training, including the needs of SEND, LGBTQ+ pupils and those from different ethnic backgrounds, and take action to reduce the risk of bullying at the times and places where it is most likely to occur. Anti-bullying will feature as a discussion point for pupil committees and groups, such as School Council.

2.2 It should be made clear to all pupils what forms bullying might take. The messages contained in this policy are explained to pupils in person by the Deputy Heads, the Pastoral Lead, the Head of Sixth Form, Student Managers and tutors. They will also be re-visited as necessary during PSHE sessions to all years and reinforced in other areas of the curriculum as the opportunities present themselves, such as assemblies, Drama, Literature or at the time an incident takes place and through the use of stories in the Prep School.

2.3 The importance of reporting incidents of bullying and any onlookers to an appropriate person must be impressed upon everyone in the school. When a case of bullying is reported it should be dealt with immediately before further incidents occur.

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached, or who suspects/observed the bullying.
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded in writing either by the alleged victim or the member of staff recording the alleged victim's verbal statement
- This will be recorded on the school's bullying tracker. The alleged victim, person displaying bullying behaviour and type of bullying alleged will be recorded.
- The bullying tracker will be viewed in relation to child protection records by the Designated Safeguarding Lead. This is to ensure that bullying behaviour which may be an indicator of safeguarding concerns is addressed.

- A formal investigation into the bullying allegation will take place. A member of the school's Pastoral Team, will interview all concerned and will record the incident onto ISAMS and on the bullying tracker
- Observations both in class and in free times may also take place.
- Teachers will be kept informed and asked to monitor the situation; reporting their findings.
- Once the investigation is concluded, parents will be invited to a meeting to discuss investigation outcomes.
- Staff will discuss whether there is evidence to confirm it is a bullying incident. The reported case and outcome will be recorded on ISAMS, our safeguarding record keeping system.

2.3a Similarly, if a member of staff suspects that a pupil is being bullied this should be followed up at once.

2.3b Incidents of bullying in both the Prep and Senior School will be recorded in the bullying log as well as on ISAMS (online reporting system). The Deputy Head Pastoral will monitor this frequently to check for any emerging patterns of behaviour and the document will be reviewed and signed off by the Executive who will consider the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

2.4 If the allegation of bullying is not confirmed, the incident will be recorded as 'resolved.' The Pastoral Team member will meet with the child on a regular basis to ensure no further intervention is required.

2.4a If the allegation of bullying is confirmed, the parent of the child that is bullying will be immediately informed. Bullying behaviour will be permanently recorded on ISAMS. Depending upon the severity of the bullying recorded, matters will be dealt with using the sanctions included in the Behaviour Policy. This could in the most severe instances result in the involvement of external agencies, eg police or social services, where criminal activity or safeguarding concerns arise.

2.4b. If deemed necessary, in-school support and intervention for the bully and victim will be provided by a member of the school's Pastoral Team. Mediation between parents of the children will take place, should this be required.

2.5 Members of staff who believe that they are the victims of bullying are encouraged to discuss the matter with a member of Executive, HR, the chaplain or the medical team. The school has a written grievance procedure which may be invoked in instances of bullying of staff.

3. ROLE OF THE HEAD

3.1 It is the responsibility of the Head to implement the school anti-bullying strategy, and to ensure that all staff (both teaching and non-teaching) are aware of the school policy and know how to deal effectively with incidents of bullying.

3.2 The Head ensures that all children are educated concerning bullying, and that it is understood to be unacceptable behaviour in the school.

4. ROLE OF THE TEACHER AND SUPPORT STAFF

4.1 All staff in our school are expected to take all forms of bullying seriously, and to seek to prevent it from taking place.

4.2 If teachers witness behaviour which could be seen as an act of bullying, they will either investigate it themselves or refer it to the Executive. Teachers and support staff do all they can to support the pupils concerned.

If any behaviour which could be seen as bullying is seen between members of a class, the teacher will investigate this issue immediately. We would usually invite the pupils' parents into the school to discuss the situation and refer as appropriate. Senior staff will establish action in line with behaviour policy.

5. THE ROLE OF PARENTS

5.1 Parents who are concerned that their child might be being bullied, or who suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying, should contact the school immediately, in the first instance this would usually be the class teacher in the Prep School or the Form Tutor in the Senior School. Parents should feel able to contact other members of staff in addition. If they are not satisfied with the response, they should contact the Head. If they remain dissatisfied, they should follow the school's complaints procedure.

5.2 Parents have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy, actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school.

6. THE ROLE OF PUPILS

6.1 Pupils are encouraged to tell anybody they trust if they are being bullied or if they are aware of someone else being bullied.

6.2 Pupils are invited to tell us their views about a range of school issues, including bullying through the Student Voice Committee in both the Prep and Senior School and worry boxes.

6.3 The role of pupils is vital in the prevention of bullying and at Kent College PSHE lessons, assemblies and the Tutor Programme are used as ways to promote anti-bullying as well as the use of the school's values ASPIRE which promotes Support for All, Purposeful Citizenship, Individuality and Respect for all. Additionally, Kent College has a peer mentoring programme which looks at inclusion and support. Kent College pupils have more recently embarked on the Diana Award (anti-bullying) training and have used this to encourage a culture of inclusion and support. Additionally, Kent College use the programme Girls on Board to promote healthy behaviours and empower students.

Senior Deputy Head: April 2009

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Policy

Deputy Head

Last review date: September 2026

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