



**WOODCOTE HOUSE SCHOOL
SEPTEMBER 2023**

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

At Woodcote, our community is based upon tolerance, respect and good manners. 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 pupils can develop to his full potential. We expect our pupils to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed, but orderly, atmosphere. All pupils should care for and support each other, in a selfless way.

Woodcote prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents have an important role in supporting Woodcote in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together.

This policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on our website and on request and for reading in the school office during the school day. It is also communicated to all staff and pupils. This policy has been developed taking due regard to the DfE advice 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017) and Cyberbullying: Advice for Head Teachers and School Staff (2014)

Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to respect the staff, the school and each other, in return. All forms of bullying are unacceptable at our school and any instances will be recorded to the DSL and, where appropriate, will result in disciplinary action.

This policy applies to all day and boarding pupils in the school.

DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying can be defined as "behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally" (Guidance on Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Department for Education)

Put another way, bullying is the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including any threat of or use of violence of any kind), sexual, verbal (including via email, social media and SMS or other instant messages), and emotional (including by excluding, being sarcastic, name-calling, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours) means. It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone, or actions that fall short of direct participation, where someone encourages others to bully, or joins in with laughing at a victim. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory.

Bullying may involve actions or comments that are sexual or sexist, homophobic, racist, which focus on religion or cultural or family background, special educational needs, disabilities or physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). It may also be unpleasant in other ways.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone - pupils, other young people, staff and parents. Bullying can also ensue because of a child being adopted or being a carer.

DEFINITION OF CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying can be defined as "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" (Belsey, <http://www.cyberbullying.org/>). It is an aggressive, intentional act carried out repeatedly over time, often against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/ herself.

Cyber-bullying could involve communications by various electronic media, including for example:

- Texts, instant messages or calls on mobile phones;
- The use of mobile phone camera images to cause distress, fear or humiliation;
- Posting threatening, abusive, offensive or humiliating material or comments on websites (including blogs, personal websites and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube);
- Using e-mail to message others in a threatening or abusive manner; or
- Hijacking/ cloning e-mail accounts.

THE SCHOOL'S RESPONSE TO BULLYING

At Woodcote, we always treat bullying very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school's social and moral principles, and potentially with its policy on equal opportunities, and will not be tolerated.

Bullying can be so serious that it causes physical, emotional and psychological damage, eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide. Whilst bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and to violent and threatening behaviour. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying: everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are victims of bullying will be supported. Pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be subject to

appropriate disciplinary sanction and will also, where possible, be supported in learning different ways of behaving.

Bullying which occurs on school trips or outside of the school's premises will not be tolerated any more than bullying on school premises. Teachers will, where appropriate, discipline pupils for misbehaviour outside school premises and outside school hours.

SIGNS OF BULLYING

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 poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others;
- Books, bags, money 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 which may relate to stress or anxiety, such as stomach pains or headaches;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises;
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance or late arrival to class;
- Choosing the company of adults rather than peers;
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;
- Difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares; or
- Talking of suicide or running away from home or school.

Although there may be other causes of some of the above symptoms, a repetition or combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers and reported/recorded as appropriate (see below).

BULLYING - PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

We take the following preventative measures in order to ensure that bullying does not become a problem which is associated with Woodcote:

Pupils

- All new pupils (including boarders and our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the school's expected standards of behaviour. They are told what to do if they encounter bullying. We guarantee that those who report bullying in good faith will not be punished and will be supported;
- We use appropriate assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. Our PSHEE programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. The programme is structured to enforce messages about community involvement and taking care of each other;
- Other lessons, particularly TPR, English and Drama highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by developing social skills and by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable;
- All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know or suspect that bullying is taking place;

- All boarders know how to report anxieties to the Matrons or to another member of the pastoral team;
- Our Medical Centre displays advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and websites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline;

Staff

- Upon induction, all new members of staff are given guidance on the school's anti-bullying policy and on how to react to and record allegations of bullying at Woodcote. All school staff understand the principles of the school policy, their legal responsibilities, actions to be taken to resolve and prevent problems and sources of further support;
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents. Records of any incidents are sent to a private Child Protection email to which the DSL and Deputy DSL have access, in order that patterns of behaviour can be identified/monitored and the effectiveness of the school's approach evaluated;
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Matrons, led by the Head of Pastoral, who support the Headmaster and are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and who are alert to possible signs of bullying;
- Our School Counsellor is an important part of our pastoral support service. They are available to give confidential advice and counselling support to pupils who can refer themselves when they have social, emotional or behavioural concerns. On occasion, a member of our pastoral team may refer a pupil to them as appropriate;
- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class and patrol the school site, particularly areas where bullying might occur. They are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour; and
- The school has the right, and duty, to investigate incidents of bullying involving our pupils which take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips or that otherwise occur outside of school. The school has the right to take disciplinary measures in respect of such acts.

Parents

- We encourage close contact between the Form Teacher/Tutors and parents, and will always make contact if we are worried about a pupil's well-being; and
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures and all other aspects and results of this anti-bullying policy.

CYBERBULLYING - PREVENTATIVE MEASURES

For the prevention of cyber-bullying, in addition to the measures described above, Woodcote:

- Expects all pupils to adhere to its policy for the safe use of the internet/ E-Safety Policy. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors pupils' use;
- May impose disciplinary sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse, of the internet;
- Issues all pupils with their own personal school email address. Access to all social media sites are not allowed from school computers/ tablets inside school;
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying in PSHEE lessons, which covers blocking, removing contacts from "friend" lists and sharing personal data;
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe;
- Does not allow the use of mobile phones; and

- Does not allow the use of cameras in toilets, washing and changing areas or in the bedrooms of boarding houses.
- Ensures that there is an age appropriate awareness of grooming through tutor groups
- Ensures information is shared between home and school through links with parents
- Maintains and implements an effective E-Safety Policy (Please see our E-Safety Policy for roles and responsibilities for online safety, etc.)

PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTED BULLYING

Woodcote ensures that all instances of, or concerns about, bullying and cyberbullying on and away from school premises are easy to report and that they are recorded properly. Records of instances of bullying and allegations of bullying will be kept by the DSL and also on pupil files and files relating to safeguarding where appropriate, in order to enable the school to identify patterns of behaviour and to evaluate the effectiveness of our anti-bullying policy.

If an incident of bullying is reported, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The member of staff to whom it was reported, or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved;
- He/she will inform the DSL as soon as possible, who will inform appropriate members of staff (Tutor, HOB etc)
- The victim will be interviewed on his/her own (or, if appropriate, with a suitable person present for support)
- The bully/ bullies, and all others who were involved, will immediately be interviewed individually (or, if appropriate, with a suitable person present for support)
- The incident should be recorded and signed and dated before it is given to the DSL who is responsible for keeping all records of bullying and other serious disciplinary offences
- The victim will be interviewed again at a later stage by the DSL separately from the alleged perpetrator. He will be offered support to develop a strategy to help himself. It will be made clear to him why revenge or retaliation is inappropriate;
- The alleged bully will be interviewed again at a later stage by the DSL separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why his behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. He will be offered guidance on modifying his or her behaviour. The school's Behaviour Management Policy may also be invoked. Sanctions under the Behaviour Management Policy might include, for example, detention, withdrawal of privileges or suspension from school. The school may exclude a pupil, either temporarily or permanently, in cases of severe or persistent bullying or in the event that the support put in place for the bully does not result in the modification of behaviour to an acceptable level.
- The parents/ guardians of all parties will be informed and may be invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support will be sought;
- A way forward, including where appropriate disciplinary sanctions and counselling, should be determined, and where possible agreed with all parties. This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for pupils who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with disciplinary measures in accordance with the school's Behaviour Management Policy if appropriate;
- As part of this process, a meeting involving all the parties, with close staff supervision, may be convened to help develop a strategy which enables all concerned to close the episode;
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place and put on record;

- In very serious cases, the DSL and Headmaster will decide the threshold at which it may become necessary to make a report to the Police or to Social Services. The Headmaster will also decide, in consultation with the DSL, whether a bullying issue has become a child protection issue and implement appropriate action. However, in many cases it will be possible to resolve such issues internally under this policy and the school's Behaviour Management Policy.

September 2023