



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

1. Scope

1.1. Downside School understands that this is a regulatory policy. This policy and its effectiveness will be reviewed regularly by governors (at least annually) and will be amended as necessary according to the latest statutory guidance and advice.

1.2. This policy is written for pupils. For staff, a Dignity at Work Policy, bullying is addressed in the Employee Handbook in the Chapter, Equal Opportunities and Dignity in the Workplace.

“In the first place, to love the Lord God with our whole heart, our whole soul, our whole strength, then our neighbours as ourselves” – Rule of St Benedict, Ch 4

2. Aims and Objectives

2.1. The Rule of St. Benedict sets out our standards for the life of a community. 'They try to be the first to show respect to one another with the greatest patience in tolerating weaknesses in body or character... No one aims at personal advantage but is rather concerned for the good of others.'

2.2. Bullying, whether verbal or behavioural, is about intimidation, persecution and abuse of power directed towards the vulnerable in any community. The Rule of St. Benedict, by contrast, speaks of a community of tolerance, wholeness, service and respect for others; a place where a person can grow as God intended. A community living by the Rule of St. Benedict must offer a stable and peaceful home to people of every temperament and ability, background and outlook. All will be helped to reflect on the ways in which they can contribute to and live up to this ideal. Bullying is the antithesis of a community of faith and virtue, and so must be confronted firmly and with compassion. It is an injustice which must be challenged.

2.3. Downside School supports the right of all members of the School community to be free from all forms of bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination. We wish to create and maintain a caring and supportive school environment by making clear that bullying will not be tolerated and that positive steps will be taken to eradicate it. We aim to create an atmosphere in which staff, parents and pupils are encouraged to bring out into the open any incident of bullying, knowing that measures to deal with it will have the support of the whole School community.

2.4 Effectively tackling bullying creates a safe, calm and disciplined environment where pupils are able to live and learn and fulfill their potential.

3. Policy Statement

3.1. This policy applies to all pupils and staff at the School irrespective of their age and whether or not a pupil is in the care of the School when or if bullying behaviour occurs. While this policy focuses mainly on the bullying of pupils by other pupils, it is recognised that other forms of bullying may occur and this is addressed in section 4.

3.2. This policy is provided to all parents, carers, guardians, pupils and staff via the School's website. It can be requested from the Head's PA and can be made available in large print or other accessible format if required.

3.3. This policy has been drawn up with assistance from guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), Preventing and tackling bullying (July 2017) and will be reviewed against any new government guidance issued from time to time. The guidance against which the school will be inspected is *Part 3 para 10 of the inspection commentary*.

4. Assumptions

4.1. All forms of bullying are unacceptable.

4.2. Every person in Downside has the right to live their life and pursue a career without the threat or the occurrence of being bullied.

4.3. Bullying, and in some cases being the object of bullying, is a pattern of behaviour acquired either consciously or by habit and can be unlearned.

5. Definitions

5.1. Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group; a single incident or repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and may be motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted or is a carer. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

- Bullying is serious and can have a devastating effect on individuals. It can be a barrier to their learning and have serious consequences for their emotional wellbeing and mental health and can cause physical harm. It can be a barrier to learning.
- Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously and is distinguished in the My Concern records.
- Bullying is a form of child on child abuse.

5.2. Bullying may be:

- Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing people around, spitting; or taking, damaging or hiding possessions.
- Verbal: name-calling, taunting, threatening, teasing, insulting or demanding money.
- Exclusionary Behaviour: intimidating, isolating or excluding a person from a group.
- General Unkindness: spreading rumours or writing unkind notes, mobile phone texts, messaging or e-mail.
- Cyberbullying: using the internet, mobile phones, gaming, social networking sites, AI generated images/ text, sharing intimate or sexual images to deliberately upset someone else (see section below).

Bullying may also be:

- Sexual: talking to or touching someone in a sexually inappropriate way.
- Sexist or transphobic related to a person's gender or gender reassignment.
- Racist, or regarding someone's religion, belief or culture.
- Related to a person's sexual orientation (homophobic).
- Related to pregnancy and maternity.
- Related to a person's age or home circumstances; or related to a person's disability, special educational needs, learning difficulty, health or appearance or economic status.

5.3. Not all hurtful behaviour is intentional. Some individuals may see their hurtful conduct as “banter” “teasing” or “a game” or “for the good of” the other person. These forms of bullying are equally unacceptable but may not be malicious and can often be corrected quickly with advice and without disciplinary sanctions. Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language must be challenged. Early interventions will set clear expectations of behaviour that is and isn’t acceptable. A bully who does not respond appropriately to advice or sanctions would ultimately have to leave the School.

5.4. It is everyone's responsibility to ensure, whatever the circumstances, that no-one becomes a victim of bullying. A person may be vulnerable to bullying because of their age, physical appearance, nationality, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, culture or disability, or because they are new in the School, appears to be uncertain or has no friends. They may also become a target because of an irrational decision by a bully.

6. Cyber bullying

6.1. Cyberbullying is the use of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. For instance cyberbullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video. The School deals with bullying in any form, whether online or in person , in exactly the same way described within this policy. More information can be found in Appendix 4 of the Child Protection Policy.

7. Bullying which occurs outside the School premises

Where bullying outside the School is reported, it will be investigated and acted on. The School will follow this policy and disciplinary sanctions may be applied by the school, even if the behaviour was not carried out on the School premises.

8. Safeguarding children and young people

8.1. When there is “reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm” a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern under the Children Act 1989. Where this is the case, the school staff should discuss with the school’s designated safeguarding lead (DSL) who will liaise with the Somerset Safeguarding Partnership Board and work with them to take appropriate action. Further information can be found in Part 1 of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

8.2. All staff should be aware that children can abuse other children, often referred to as child on child abuse. This may include bullying, including cyberbullying. Child on child abuse must be reported to the DSL who will follow the procedures in the Child Protection Policy.

9. Criminal law

9.1. Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour, or communications, could be a criminal offence. If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed, the Head, Deputy Head or DSL will seek assistance from the police.

10. What will be done to prevent bullying at Downside

10.1. We will take active steps to create an anti-bullying culture and an expectation of all members of the School community to uphold the principles of Living at Downside contained in the School’s Behaviour Policy:

10.1.1. We (staff and pupils) will do all we can to create a climate in which bullying is not tolerated, and in which pupils can report bullying incidents without feeling that they are ‘telling tales’. Staff, pupils and parents will be involved in this process of creating and supporting a whole school anti-bullying culture.

10.1.2. We will ensure that all members of staff are aware of their responsibility to watch out for and respond appropriately to any possible bullying behaviour. They should refrain from any words or actions in the classroom which might be seen as an encouragement to bullying or as bullying behaviour in itself.

10.1.3. We will make pupils aware that expressions of prejudice which include racism, sexism and homophobia, will not be tolerated.

- 10.1.4. We will give pupils the opportunity to see the School counsellor or contact the Independent Person. All Houses have a notice which gives pupils guidance if they have any worries or complaints and lists of organisations outside school who can be contacted if victims of bullies prefer to talk to someone who is independent.
- 10.1.5. We will educate pupils on the use of the social media and the internet so as to try to prevent the occurrence of cyber bullying. Our approach will be to educate rather than restrict access, but restrictions which are deemed necessary will be enforced in the use of social networking sites. Pupils and staff will be made aware of the School's 'Acceptable Use Policy..
- 10.1.6. We will encourage pupils to talk openly and regularly about the issue within tutor groups, in their Houses, in the School Council, or in conversations with other appropriate members of staff or chaplain. We will also seek to ensure that the School and House prefects are fully supportive of this policy and play an important role in its successful implementation.
- 10.1.7. We will ensure that the School curriculum addresses issues of bullying and encourages pupils and staff to share ideas on preventing it. There will be a strong Anti-Bullying presence within the PSHEE programme and within the Tutor Programme.
- 10.1.8. We will do all we can to resolve issues of bullying through mediation, discussion and making bullies aware of the effects of their actions, but we will use sanctions against them when this is deemed necessary. These sanctions will be in line with School Behaviour Policy. We will often use pupils to encourage their peers not to continue with their behaviour.
- 10.1.9. We will encourage bullies willing to seek help themselves in changing their behaviour. This will be catalysed by educating pupils as to why they and their peers may find themselves bullying others.
- 10.1.10. We will give protection and support to any victims of bullying and to anyone who brings such issues to our attention.

II. Equal Opportunities

II.1. In School and in every year group:

- discriminatory words, attitudes and behaviour are treated as unacceptable;
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- We aim to foster positive attitudes towards both sexes through the curriculum, co-curriculum, house communities, PSHEE and tutorials
- We aim to foster good relations and belonging within the School community to all pupils and have regard to the need of those who have a protected characteristic
- We aim to advance the equality of opportunity for all pupils and have regard to the need of those who have a protected characteristic

12. Staff

12.1. The awareness of members of staff is raised through training and they are expected to understand the principles of the School policy, to know their legal responsibilities, what action to take to resolve and prevent problems, and what sources of support are available; where appropriate, the School will invest in specialised skills to understand the needs of pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils.

12.2. Staff are expected to promote an anti-bullying culture by:

- celebrating achievement;
- anticipating problems and providing support;
- disciplining sensibly and fairly;
- making opportunities to listen to pupils; and
- acting as advocates of pupils.

13. Pupils

13.1. Through our pastoral care systems, pupils are informed and taught that bullying will not be tolerated in the School.

13.2. They are encouraged:

- to celebrate the effort and achievements of others;
- to show concern for the individual;
- to hold and promote positive attitudes;
- to feel able to share problems with staff;
- to turn to someone they trust, if they have a problem;
- not to feel guilty about airing complaints.

14. Anti-bullying systems

14.1. Approach: Our systems for detecting and dealing with bullying are designed to operate:

- vertically, through all year groups and Houses; and
- horizontally, within year groups and in the classroom and other activities.
- Our anti-bullying systems are implemented and driven in the way described below.

15. Vigilance

15.1. Members of staff are vigilant at all times but particularly:

- Before and after lessons; in the School corridors, in the queue at the Refectories and in the Refectories themselves;
- in Houses;
- in social areas;
- on the games field, and

- on School transport.

16. Meetings

16.1. Bullying is regularly discussed in meetings between:

- members of the School Student Council and House Councils;
- HsMs and prefect teams;
- House Masters and House Mistresses;
- tutors and pupils in their tutor group;
- Pastoral House teams; and

The result of these meetings is to feedback information about friendship patterns, particular incidents, any pupil who seems to be isolated, any growing "power base" and any known conflict between a member of staff and a pupil, or between pupils.

17. Education

17.1. Measures are taken throughout each year to educate pupils about bullying.

17.2. The PSHEE Curriculum and Tutor Programme includes courses on bullying covering:

- What is bullying?
- What defines a victim?
- Forms of bullying – physical, emotional, psychological, mental, cyber
- Who bullies whom?
- Defining the anti-bullying policy.
- Human rights – everyone has the right not to be bullied.
- Bullying – what to do?
- What to do if you feel you are being bullied.
- What to do if you witness another being bullied.
- No-one deserves it – ever.
- To whom can you turn?
- Victim and bully both need help.

17.3. Anti-Bullying messages are given in assemblies by the House Masters and House Mistresses and the Deputy Head (Pastoral) addresses every year group at the beginning of each term reminding them of the School's approach to any incident of bullying. The Designated Safeguarding Lead addresses each year group about safeguarding issues and child on child abuse at the start of every year. Anti-Bullying week is also part of the Tutor Programme.

18. Staff training

18.1. Appropriate training in all aspects of care is arranged to ensure that House Masters and House Mistresses and other staff involved in the pastoral management of pupils have the necessary professional skills, especially:

- awareness of the risk and indications of child abuse and bullying, and how to deal with cases; and, in Houses, ensuring that:
- there is an adequate presence of staff;
- staff are actively involved with pupils in all areas and year groups when they are on duty;
- measures are taken to avoid boredom and lack of purpose among pupils;
- there is space available for pupils' quiet withdrawal;
- there is no crowding in bedrooms or common rooms; and
- good behaviour and discipline is maintained.

19. Pupils' responsibilities

19.1. We emphasise with senior pupils the role which is expected of them in setting a good example and being helpful to younger pupils and each other. Older pupils are encouraged to keep an eye on younger pupils and offer support, where it is needed, and in particular:

- all senior pupils have the opportunity for House duties but senior pupils who do not wish to have extended pastoral responsibilities are not coerced; the responsibilities of senior pupils are appropriately limited and clearly defined;
- members of staff expect School Prefects, House Prefects offer supervisory support; and
- School and House Prefects receive training on safeguarding, including how to recognise and report bullying and deal with younger pupils sensitively.

20. Record Keeping and monitoring

Every complaint or report of bullying must be entered on MyConcern. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will record serious incidents of bullying on a database.

20.1. Serious incidents may lead to a case review in order to reflect and review policy and practice and provide targets for improvements. This will be co-ordinated by the Deputy Head (Pastoral)

21. Why incidents might not be reported

21.1. Victim: There are many reasons why a pupil who has suffered bullying may be reluctant to report it. They may become demoralised and may say, for example:

- it is telling tale or “snitching”. They won't believe me because the person I am complaining about is popular and I am not, and I will become even more unpopular;
- the things they are saying and doing are too embarrassing to discuss with an adult;
- it is all my fault anyway for being overweight/too studious etc.;
- there are too many of them - there is nothing the staff can do;
- it will get back to my parents and they will think less of me;
- I will just try and toughen up and grow a thicker skin; or
- I will avoid potential problems and not audition for a part in the School play etc.

21.2. Witnesses: There are also reasons why a pupil who has witnessed or learned of bullying behaviour may not want to make a report. They may say:

- it is "snitching" and I will become unpopular;
- it is none of my business anyway; or
- I don't like the victim and I would find it embarrassing to be associated with them.

21.3. Culture: Any of these responses would be contrary to our culture at the School. When we drive and implement this policy we encourage every pupil to understand that:

- Every allegation of bullying will be taken seriously;
- members of staff will deal with a complaint correctly and effectively in accordance with their experience and the training they have received;
- there is a solution to nearly every problem of bullying;
- a pupil who complains will receive support and advice and in many cases the problem can be dealt with on a no-names basis; and
- the primary aim will be for the bullying to cease, not the punishment of the bully unless this is necessary

22. Anti-bullying Procedures

22.1. Downside School's procedures have been formulated to make it easy to report bullying, including cyber-bullying and bullying outside school. They also give guidance as to the threshold for reporting a bullying issue to external agencies (such as police/children's social care). Records are kept to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted or to enable patterns to be identified; It should be noted that a bullying incident should be treated as a Child Protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm.

22.2. Guidelines: The following procedures are a guideline except where expressed in the terms "should" or "must". The best guide is the experience and training of the staff.

23. Reporting bullying

23.1. Pupils: A pupil who is being bullied, or who is worried about another pupil being bullied, should make a report without delay and can do so in several ways. They can:

- tell their parents, their House Master/House Mistress, Assistant House Master/House Mistresses, House Parent, Tutor, teacher, Chaplain or a responsible older pupil; alternatively;
- leave a note for their House Master/House Mistress or other trusted adult;
- contact the Independent Person whose details are published on House notice boards and in the Pupil Handbook for advice;
- contact a School doctor or a nurse in the Health Centre;
- contact Childline (0800 1111); or
- contact the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy Safeguarding Lead; or
- Somerset Direct (telephone: 0300 123 2224)
- Report anonymously online using MyVoice

23.2. Parents: Parents who are concerned that their child is being bullied should inform their child's House Master or House Mistress without delay.

23.3. Staff: This policy focuses on the bullying of pupils although it is recognised that staff can be the victims of bullying. Staff members who are concerned about being bullied or harassed by pupils report their concerns to the Deputy Head or directly to the Head.

23.4. Initial complaint: A person in authority who learns of alleged bullying behaviour should:

- firstly, respond quickly and sensitively by offering advice, support and reassurance to the alleged victim, then report the allegation;
- They must record the report and any action onto MyConcern immediately.

23.5. Assessment: The Deputy Head (Pastoral) or Designated Safeguarding Lead will task the relevant members of staff with investigating the allegation. This will usually be the House Master or House Mistress but may be delegated to their Assistant. The assessment will consider:

- the nature of the incident/s - physical? verbal? exclusionary? etc.
- is it an "isolated" incident involving an individual or a group?
- is it part of a pattern of behaviour by an individual or a group?
- has physical injury been caused? Has a criminal offence been committed? Who should be informed - Parents? Social Services? The police?
- can the alleged bully be seen on a no-names basis?
- what is the likely outcome if the complaint proves to be correct

23.6. Response: In the case of first minor offences, misunderstandings, unintentional hurtful behaviour or unkindness, the Deputy Head (Pastoral), in conjunction with the HsM and DSL will agree on a course of action which may include:

- advice and support for the victim and, where appropriate, establishing a course of action to help the victim;
- advice and support to the bully in trying to change their behaviour. This may include clear instructions and a warning or final warning, and involvement of the Chaplain or other supportive member of staff;
- a supervised meeting between the bully and the victim to discuss their differences and the ways in which they may be able to avoid future conflict;
- action to break up a "power base";
- a disciplinary sanction against the bully, in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy such as gating, HsMs detention, additional duties, written work or an act of service to the community. It may be appropriate to place the pupil on the Sanction ladder relating to Extremely Poor Behaviour;
- The HsM will inform the parents of both the victim and the alleged bully.

23.7. In the case of a serious incident and/or persistent bullying, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) and DSL must inform the Head and the Safeguarding team. Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'.

- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will ensure that the victim is safe; If necessary, a Risk Assessment will be drawn up by the House Master or House Mistress and shared with the victim and their parents;
- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will co-ordinate an investigation which will include interviewing the alleged bully, victim and any witnesses and ensure that all information is recorded onto MyConcern;
- The HsM will inform the parents of the alleged bully and victim of the investigation.

23.7.1. The Deputy Head (Pastoral) and Head will consider the evidence and, after consultation with the DSL will decide on the most appropriate course of action which may include:

- requiring the bully to leave the School permanently in accordance with the School's Exclusions Policy;
- moving either the bully or victim to another House after consultation with the pupil, their parents and the relevant staff;
- a restorative justice process;
- involving Social Services or the police;
- Suspension of the bully, in line with the School's Behaviour Policy;
- such other action as may appear to the Head to be appropriate;
- noting the outcome in the relevant pupil file;
- The Deputy Head or Head will inform the parents of both the bully and the victim of the outcomes of the investigation;
- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will co-ordinate support for both the bully and victim;
- The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will record the incident on the Bullying Register.

23.8. Monitoring: The position should be monitored for as long as necessary thereafter and updates recorded on MyConcern. Other action may include:

- sharing information with some or all colleagues and with pupils in the House so that they may be alert to the need to monitor certain pupils closely;
- ongoing counselling and support;
- vigilance;
- Informing relevant staff ;
- reviewing vulnerable individuals and areas of the School;
- liaison between House Masters and/or House Mistresses;

24. Formal complaint

24.1. If the victim or their parents are not satisfied with the action taken, they should be advised to make a formal complaint, according to the School's Complaints Procedure.

25. Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures

25.1. Please follow the link to the Child Protection & Safeguarding Policy and Procedures available from the school website: [Downside School Policies - Downside School](#)

26. Review

26.1. This policy will be reviewed by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) annually and authorized by the Chair of Governors.

26.2. This Policy has been created with regard to DfE 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying'. (July 2017)

Downside School Policy Approval Record

Reviewed by Head of Nursing & DSL
Senior Deputy Head (Pastoral) & DDSL

Date January 2026

Authorised by Chair of the Board of Governing Body



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