

# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Including Early Years Foundation Stage

Last reviewed:	<b>September 2024</b>
Next review date:	<b>September 2025</b>
Responsibility:	<b>Senior Deputy Head</b>
Governance:	<b>Education Committee</b>

The Anti-Bullying Policy is founded on the educational aims and ethos of Plymouth College.

This policy is available on the School website, the staff School Policies folder in Google Drive and on request from the School.

It should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Behaviour Management Policy
- SEND Policy

This document also complies with:

- DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2024) [Keeping children safe in education 2024 - GOV.UK](#)
- DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies (July 2017) [Preventing and tackling bullying - GOV.UK](#)
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding School (2022), Standard 16: Preventing Bullying [National Minimum Standards for boarding schools - GOV.UK](#)
- Equality Act, 2010 [The Equality Act 2010 and schools](#)
- SEND Code of Practice 2015: 0 to 25 years [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)
- [Childline](#)
- [Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff - GOV.UK](#)

## Policy Statement

The Independent School Standards Regulations 2019 provide that the Headteacher of an independent school is required to ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is drawn up and implemented.

The Equality Act 2010 covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty has three aims. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

1. eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act
2. advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
3. foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not share that characteristic.

Bullying is among the highest concerns that parents have about their children's safety and well-being; it is also a primary concern of children and young people themselves.

As a result, Plymouth College takes all forms of bullying very seriously and strives to ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. All members of the community, including teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is and be familiar with the School policy on bullying: therefore the aim of the policy is to help members of the school community to deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly, to prevent it. Bullying is an anti-social behaviour which affects everyone; it is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that comes to their attention and these reports will always be taken seriously.

We wish to encourage an environment where independence is celebrated and individuals can flourish without fear. Every pupil has the right to be safe and happy in School, and to be protected when they feel vulnerable. We will endeavour to respond quickly, appropriately and sympathetically to any disclosure of bullying.

It is acknowledged that bullies 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 to their victims. All pupils deserve the opportunity to be helped to understand what acceptable behaviour is.

## What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, 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 or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.

Many experts say that 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. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially

isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Emotional bullying can be subtle and must be taken seriously as it has the potential to lead to longer term psychological damage.

## Types of bullying

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. Examples of unacceptable bullying behaviour include:

<b>Physical</b>	Hitting, kicking, taking, moving or hiding belongings including money.
<b>Verbal</b>	Name-calling, threatening, teasing, insulting, writing unkind notes.
<b>Indirect Emotional</b>	Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, spreading rumours, spiteful looks.
<b>Racial/ culture</b>	Can be identified by the motivation of the bully, the language used, and/or by the fact that the victims are singled out because of the colour of their skin, the way they talk, their ethnic grouping or by their religious or cultural practice.
<b>Sexual/Gender</b>	Can range from sexualised name-calling and spreading rumours about someone's sexual behaviour to criminal offences such as assault or rape.
<b>Homophobic/ LGBTQ+</b>	Occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer (or questioning) or other people. As with other types of bullying, schools have a legal duty to ensure homophobic bullying is dealt with in schools.
<b>Disability</b>	Children with special needs or disabilities are far more likely to become victims of bullying than are other children. Schools need to be especially vigilant in this area.

## Cyberbullying

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.

Pupils will also be made aware that there is zero tolerance towards cyberbullying involving members of the school. Even if an incident occurs outside of school hours, or off-site, the school reserves the right to deal with it very seriously if it impacts in any way on the school community. Such actions will most likely result in a suspension and, if repeated, ultimately end in permanent exclusion. Police will also be notified if the attack is deemed serious enough.

Further information on cyberbullying is found in the E-safety policy.

## Safeguarding children and young people

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'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to their local authority children's social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, schools may need to draw on a range of external services to support the pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

Some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, and therefore if school staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

## Educating Pupils on Anti-Bullying

Pupils are educated through Pupil Personal Development (PPD) Time. This includes tutor time, PSHEE, assemblies (including the Big Anti Bullying Assembly in October).

We celebrate Anti Bullying Week in November e.g. Odd Socks Day.

The wider curriculum is also used to raise awareness, with discussions of differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice. PSHEE and assemblies also cover cyberbullying regularly.

Pupils and staff are offered the chance to be trained as Anti-Bullying Ambassadors by the Diana Awards.

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school. Pupils are encouraged to look out for these signs and seek help for their peers.

## Action

Members of staff and all members of the community must be alert to the signs of bullying; legal responsibilities are known and community members all should act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with the policy.

At Plymouth College we are very concerned to prevent bullying, and should it occur, to protect the victim. If you feel that you are being picked on you must talk to someone: you will be given all necessary help to protect you. There are lots of people you can approach: a prefect, a teacher, the school nurse or chaplain, parents or a friend. Never suffer in silence. It is important that we create an atmosphere in the College where pupils who are being bullied or know about someone who is a victim, feel that they will be listened to and believed, and that action taken will be swift but sensitive to their concerns. Not telling protects the bully or bullies, and gives the message that they can continue, perhaps bullying others too.

Whilst the School deplores all types of bullying, it is essential that any allegation of bullying is substantiated and that the bully, as well as the victim, is listened to: there may have been provocation. It should also be noted that there may be background reasons for the bullying behaviour which need careful addressing and support, perhaps relating to deeper issues in that child's life and circumstances. This resonates with the School's focus not merely on sanctions for poor behaviour but a close scrutiny of the reasons that might lie behind it.

There are criminal laws that apply to harassment, assault and threatening behaviour. If staff feel that a criminal offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police.

## Procedures

### If you are the victim:

1. If you feel able to, confront the bully by verbally making him/her aware that you think that what he/she is doing is wrong.
2. Share your feelings with someone else.
3. If possible, talk to a member of staff. At the Senior School, this might include your tutor, your Head of Year or Head of Boarding, whilst at the Prep School, this might include a Playground Deputy, Duty Teacher, Meal Time Deputy or a teacher about the incident. If you would rather not go straight to a member of staff, talk to your friends, to older pupils in your House or the School, a prefect, the School Counsellor, the Independent Listener or any trusted adult. They may well be able to advise you on an appropriate course of action, or will be able to involve other people who can. There are also people outside the School who would be willing to help:

Childline: 0800 1111

Children's Commissioner: 020 7783 8330.

Email: [info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info.request@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk)

The School Counsellor may be contacted via: [counselling@plymouthcollege.com](mailto:counselling@plymouthcollege.com)

### Procedure if a pupil witnesses bullying behaviour

1. Support the victim by offering your friendship and make it clear that in your opinion what is happening to them is wrong.
2. Encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully yourself.
3. Accompany the victim to a trusted adult, or suggest that you see their Head of Year or Tutor on their behalf.

### Procedure for members of Staff

1. Reassure and support the pupils involved as necessary. Advise that you are required to pass details on to the relevant member of the pastoral team.
2. Inform the relevant Head of Year or the Deputy Head who is also the Anti-Bullying Coordinator. In the case of incidents involving boarders, the Head of Boarding should also be informed. All incidents of bullying will be recorded by the Head of Prep at the Prep School or Senior Deputy Head who will keep a Bullying Log (a central log of all complaints or incidents of bullying and the ways with which they were dealt). Grave instances will be shared with the Head.
3. In cases of low-level bullying, the Head of Year or Key Stage is best placed to deal directly with the perpetrators, often in consultation with the Head of Prep or Senior Deputy Head.
4. In cases of physical bullying and those involving Protected Characteristics (including disability, race, religion/beliefs, gender, sexual orientation) the Head of Prep (for Prep pupils) or Deputy Head must be informed immediately. In such cases, a single instance, if sufficiently grave, may result in the Head applying the highest of sanctions.

## What will happen?

- Plymouth College takes all bullying very seriously and will tackle any such behaviour firmly and, if necessary, involve the police.
- The Police are increasingly likely to be involved in cases of cyberbullying.
- Sanctions (of the kind identified in the College's *Behaviour Management Policy*) will be applied in a way appropriate to each individual case and the victim(s) may be consulted before action is taken where this is deemed to be in the best interests of all concerned.
- The victim will be interviewed by a HOY or the Senior Deputy Head at the Senior School and Head of Key Stage or the Head of Prep at the Prep School and may be asked to write an immediate account of events.
- The process for dealing with bullying will be explained.
- The victim is also given the opportunity to discuss their own reactions and behaviour towards the bully.
- The victim is given support and advice and counselling is suggested if deemed appropriate.
- Once it is clear that a bullying offence has been committed, the bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually and may be asked to write an account of events.
- The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them.
- It will be made clear why the behaviour was unacceptable.
- An appropriate sanction will also be given in accordance with the Behaviour Management Policy.
- Support and counselling may be offered and, if appropriate, all parties brought together to resolve the situation as a form of Restorative Justice using trained staff.

## Serious cases

- If necessary, the case will be passed on to the safeguarding team and the relevant procedures followed according to the Safeguarding Policy.
- Actions may involve inter-agency cooperation.
- If the bullying is sufficiently grave, or if it is a pupil's repeat offence, the Head of Prep (at the Prep School) or Senior Deputy Head will become involved.
- The following sanctions may be applied in accordance with the School Behaviour Management Policy.
- Formal Warning: Head of Prep or Senior Deputy Head will speak to the pupils involved and will contact the parents or guardians giving details of the offence and inviting them into School to discuss the matter and to be present when their child is given a Formal Warning.
- Their support for the School's actions should be enlisted, if possible.
- Internal or external Suspension at the Head's discretion
- Exclusion at the Head's discretion
- In very serious cases it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or Social Services.
- However, it is the policy of the School to attempt to resolve such issues internally using



our own disciplinary sanctions, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely.

- After bullying incidents have been dealt with careful monitoring takes place to ensure that the problem has been resolved.
- If the bullying was linked with harassment of a sexual nature, this will also be recorded in a log specifically aimed at recording incidences of child on child Sexual Harassment, Assault and Sexting.

## Parents

Plymouth College works together with parents to tackle bullying. If parents think their son or daughter may be being bullied, they are encouraged to let the school know straight away. They will be reassured that we will deal with it sensitively but firmly. If a child is being a bully, we may contact the parents to discuss how we can work together to prevent further bullying.

## Staff

If a teacher has any concerns that bullying is happening, tell the Class Teacher, Tutor or Head of Year / Key Stage. If in a boarding environment, tell the House Parents or Boarding Tutor. We need to be vigilant at all times, out of lessons and around School. There are times and places where victims are more vulnerable and bullying is not easily seen. The playground, toilets and changing rooms could become particular hot spots for bullying. Appropriate staff training will be arranged on a regular basis to ensure that teachers and other staff are properly informed and made aware so that the school remains a safe and happy environment for all. Certain staff will be trained in restorative justice techniques.

## Prefects

Senior Prefects at the Senior School assigned to tutor groups have appropriate guidance on child protection issues, mentoring and listening skills to help victims, as do boarding prefects.

## Monitoring and Review

This policy and its effectiveness is reviewed regularly by the pastoral and the safeguarding teams. The bullying and cyberbullying logs will be used as a tool so that patterns can be identified. Governors are made aware of the level of bullying and actions taken as part of the annual safeguarding review. Views will also be sought to allow parents to contribute to the School's actions to prevent bullying. Annual pupil and parent surveys will be used to facilitate an understanding of the level and type of bullying that pupils might have experienced.

## Training

Anti-bullying policies are most effective when all school staff understand the principles and purpose of the school's policy, its legal responsibilities regarding bullying, how to resolve problems, and where to seek support. Therefore, strategies for preventing and tackling bullying are addressed annually during the Safeguarding update training for all staff. Staff are made aware of their legal responsibilities and know the procedures to follow for tackling incidents in school using the school anti-bullying policy. Many staff are also trained in Restorative Justice. Staff are trained in online safety also and aware of online risks to children and signs to look out for online.

Plymouth College has used the specialised skill of colleagues to help staff understand the needs of certain pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disability (SEND) and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning or other LGBTQ+ pupils

## **Communication**

This Policy is made available to parents, current and prospective, and all staff and pupils through the College's Intranet site, as well as the College's website. It is also sent directly to the parents of all boarders as required under the National Minimum Standards for Boarding.