

# Policy to Counter Bullying

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## 1 Aims

- To help all pupils, staff and parents understand what bullying is.
- To provide pupils with relevant information, skills and attitudes to help them to resist bullying and have the courage to confide in staff, parents or pupil leaders on these issues.
- To provide guidance for staff in managing unkindness and bullying cases.
- To explain what actions the School takes to prevent bullying.

## 2 Statement of principle on bullying

Oakham School community is one based on the values of **Care, Courage, Contribution** and **Connection**. The School is committed to providing a safe, open, caring and supportive environment, where every pupil is free to discover their strengths and develop the knowledge skills and values to thrive and confidently contribute at Oakham and beyond.

We believe that bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It affects those pupils who watch and those pupils who can be drawn in by group pressure. We do not accept that bullying is an inevitable part of school life, or a necessary part of growing up that will sort itself out given time. We realise that certain jokes, insults, intimidating and threatening behaviour, written abuse, electronic abuse and violence are to be found in society and that sometimes the line between “having a joke” and bullying can be thin, but usually the distinction is clear. In whatever form the bullying takes place, including cyberbullying, harassment, victimisation, prejudice-based bullying and discrimination of pupils or staff, or where it can be disguised as “banter” or ignorance of other people’s feelings, bullying will not be tolerated within the school community.

Bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals. It can be a barrier to a pupil’s learning and have serious consequences for their mental health and well-being. Bullying which takes place at School does not only affect an individual during childhood but can have a lasting effect on their lives well into adulthood.

The School believes that parents and guardians have an important role in supporting the school in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that there are consistent expectations of behaviour both at school, online and at home, and that the School and parents co-operate closely together.

This policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on the School’s website and is communicated to all staff and pupils. The School aims to treat all pupils and their parents fairly, and with consideration, and expects them to respect all members of the community including staff and each other. Any instances of bullying will be recorded and, where appropriate, will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the School’s Rules and Expectations.



This policy applies to all pupils in the school and applies to actions undertaken both inside, and outside of the school.

### 3 Definition of bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group that sets out to intentionally hurt or harm another individual or group either physically or emotionally. It may take many forms, including:

- Physical (including any threat of or use of violence of any kind)
- Sexual (including the sharing of nudes/semi-nudes, using sexual words or touching someone in a way that makes them feel uncomfortable, and 'upskirting' which is a criminal offence)
- Verbal (including cyberbullying via text messages, email, social media, gaming, or other instant messages, and can include the use of images and video)
- Emotional (including, being sarcastic, name-calling, excluding, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours).

Bullying 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.

Practices that involve frightening or harming others or interfering with or damaging others' personal property or space, under the guise of being 'initiation ceremonies' ('hazing') or 'rites of passage', are unacceptable. As deliberate, planned, organized acts, carried out by groups against others who are less powerful, they are a form of bullying and will be treated as such.

Bullying may be motivated by prejudice against particular groups and may involve actions or comments regarding a person's race, religion, sex, gender, sexual orientation, special education needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions, or because of a child's familial or financial circumstances. Bullying may be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. For example, bullying can still be homophobic if directed towards a child that is perceived to be gay, whether or not this is the case.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone - pupils, other young people, staff, and parents. Bullying can be a single isolated act or repeated over time.

Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidating, and often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s) whether that be a physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), or intellectual imbalance, or by the perpetrator(s) having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate the victim(s).



Bullying can sometimes amount to child-on-child abuse, which is defined as abuse by one or more pupils against another pupil. It can be standalone or as part of wider abuse and can happen both inside and outside of school, and online. Further information about child-on-child abuse, including the procedures to follow when an incident on child-on-child abuse is reported can be found in the School's Child-on-Child Abuse and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies.

#### 4 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 room 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
- 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 or teachers and reported and recorded, as appropriate, in accordance with this policy.

#### 5 What a pupil should do if they believe that they or other pupils are being bullied

Any pupil who believes that they are being bullied, or that another pupil is being bullied, whether in person or online and either within school or outside school, should show share their concerns by speaking with, or emailing, their tutor, HM, matron, the Chaplain, a member of the Safeguarding Team, the Senior Deputy Head or any other member of staff. Pupils may report concerns to pupil leaders including Prefects and members of the Decem or anonymously via the online system 'Whisper'. It doesn't matter what avenue a pupil chooses to report a concern of bullying, it matters that it gets reported.

All reports of possible bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with sensitively and robustly.



### 6 Being a by-stander

It is acknowledged that pupils who find themselves witnessing acts of bullying may be in a difficult position. They may feel powerless to intervene or stop the bullying, or fear being targeted themselves if they speak out. Pupils are encouraged not to be 'bystanders' and to report bullying that they have seen or heard. The School aims to create an environment where pupils have the courage to speak up for what is right. Pupils who have actively assisted in or encouraged the bullying will be deemed to have been complicit and to have a degree of culpability, for which they may be sanctioned.

### 7 Management of bullying incidents and sanctions.

The School always takes incidents of bullying very seriously. When incidents of bullying are reported they will be dealt with quickly and will never be dismissed or downplayed as banter, teasing or a game. Pupils who are victims of bullying will always be supported and reassured that they will be kept safe. The School understands the importance of control for those who have suffered bullying and victims wishes in the management of bullying incidents will be taken into account whenever appropriate. Pupils who are discovered to have been present during an incident of bullying will be spoken with as witnesses as part of the investigation into the incident. Pupils who have engaged in and are sanctioned for bullying behaviour will also, where possible, be supported in learning different ways of behaving and offered support for their own circumstances, where appropriate.

At Oakham, we believe young people will make mistakes and must be allowed to learn from them. We also believe that an environment of respect and tolerance is created through developing mutual understanding and empathy. We seek to give Oakhamians the social skills to thrive both in School and beyond by showing care, having courage, creating connections, and contributing positively to society. Depending on the severity of the situation and the wishes of the victim, the School will address any bullying concern at one of the following levels:

**Level 1:** When the victim feels that a relationship has broken down, the bullying behaviour has not been necessarily deliberate and is keen to take a restorative approach to rebuild friendships. This offers a "no blame" approach to both parties. The victim(s) and the bully(ies) may have a discussion together, usually with a teacher chosen by the pupils present or supporting. Or, a member of staff will speak to each pupil separately on the other's behalf. This discussion allows both parties to give their opinions and to try and work out a solution which is mutually agreeable. The aim is to allow bullies to realise that they are causing unhappiness and that their behaviour will not be tolerated. Everything in this discussion is likely to be recorded, in writing, kept by the teacher and filed by the HM. Parents will be kept informed of what has occurred and the outcome of any discussions. This will be confidential although HMs and tutors will be informed.



**Level 2:** When there is deliberate bullying behaviour, when the victim does not feel that a restorative approach would be beneficial, or for a repeated incident following a Level 1 resolution. The incident will be formally investigated and sanctions awarded. Sanctions will depend on the severity of the bullying. All parents will be notified of any outcomes.

**Level 3:** Following a repeated incident of deliberate bullying following a Level 2 resolution, it will be assumed that the pupil has no respect for those around him/her and this will not be tolerated within the school community. As a minimum the perpetrator will be fully suspended and it is likely that the Head will require the pupil to leave the school. All parents and will be notified of any outcomes.

HMs record all bullying incidents and report them to the Senior Deputy Head, who will determine the appropriate sanctions for bullying. All cases of bullying will be investigated in the interests of all concerned and appropriate guidance / support will be offered as necessary.

### **8 Safeguarding responsibilities**

Where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm as a consequence of an incident or bullying, the matter will be treated as a child protection concern and reported to the DSL who will follow the School's procedures as set out in the School's Child-on-Child Abuse and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies liaising with relevant agency as appropriate. Depending on the circumstances, the police may also be informed of the actions of the perpetrator(s).

### **9 Monitoring patterns of bullying in relation to protected characteristics**

Staff log behavioural concerns on the schools online pastoral recording system (CPOMS). HMs will investigate and, where appropriate, tag the appropriate bullying category. The Senior Deputy Head and Heads of Section monitor the numbers and details of entries so that patterns can be identified and addressed.

### **10 Measures to prevent bullying**

The School takes active measures to tackle bullying proactively and create an environment which prevents bullying from being accepted or allowed:

The School promotes an ethos of respect and good behaviour through its system of values and the School Rules and Expectations.

Issues relating to bullying, friendship, respect, equality and diversity, peer group influences and self-esteem are discussed appropriately with all pupils at all levels, especially in Lower School and the Middle School, in the PSHE programme, in assemblies, tutorials, and through a programme of talks from external speakers. Talks and discussions, as well as many online resources on the school portal, are also provided for parents.



Tutors draw their tutees' attention to this policy at the start of each term. Tutors also arrange regular 1-2-1 conversations with their tutees to establish how their relationships with others are manifesting.

The School celebrates and promotes anti-bullying week. Posters that clarify acceptable behaviour and actions a pupil can take if they suspect they or someone is being bullied are displayed in houses all year round.

A bullying questionnaire is conducted annually by the Senior Deputy Head to assess bullying, identify patterns and discover ways in which the School can tackle bullying more effectively. The Senior Deputy Head uses the responses to create an Action Plan which is then discussed and reviewed by pupils and staff via houses before being put into place.

Appropriate training is given to all staff on safeguarding and pastoral concerns including how to respond to and record allegations of bullying, including cyber bullying. The School recognises that certain children may be more at risk of bullying than others and may require additional support, for example children with SEND, certain health conditions, and LGBTQ+ pupils. The School will ensure staff receive appropriate training to understand the specific needs of pupils and to promote an inclusive environment for all pupils. For reference, guidelines for staff on how to manage bullying incidents are published in the Staff Handbook.

Reported cases of bullying are collated each year by the Senior Deputy Head and reviewed by the Head and Trustees.

### 11 Cyberbullying

is the use of Information Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones, social websites, Photographs, email, text messaging and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. It can be particularly unpleasant as it can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe or personal.

The audience can be very large and reached rapidly. The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages, including sexting, means the scale and scope of cyberbullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying.

The school community has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment. Any member of Oakham School who is involved in cyberbullying, **be it in or out of school hours** can expect to be subject to the school bullying sanctions.



### 12 Measures to prevent cyberbullying

Pupils are encouraged to understand and talk about cyberbullying, including sexting, in tutorials, assemblies, House time, and PSHE and IT lessons.

Pupils are asked by their tutor to read the Policy to Counter Bullying and ask any questions to help them understand it.

Pupils are expected to:

Demonstrate **connection** by respecting others.

Show **care** in their language by thinking before they send.

Take **care** of their personal security by treating their password like their toothbrush – keep it to themselves.

Show **courage** by blocking and reporting someone who is behaving badly, not retaliating or replying but making sure to save any evidence.

To **contribute** by helping victims of cyber-bullying.

Pupils can report to parents, their tutor or HM, a Prefect or member of the Decem, the Senior Deputy Head or any other member of staff. Pupils can also report anonymously via the online platform Whisper.

Parents are encouraged to know what their children are reading and posting online, keep an open relationship to understand how relationships in the school are playing out, and report any cyber-bullying to the School via their child's HM, even if it is taking place outside school.

*Guidelines for staff on how to handle cyber bullying concerns are issued to all staff.*

*Cyberbullying is another form of bullying and is therefore dealt with in the same way as other bullying incidents.*