



ALDENHAM SENIOR SCHOOL

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

**Revised February 2023
by Head of Senior School (AMW)**

The School seeks to engender good relationships between pupils and will treat allegations of bullying seriously. All staff, pupils and parents should be aware of the negative effects that bullying behaviour can have on individuals and the School in general, and should work towards ensuring that pupils can work and socialise in an environment without fear. Students are encouraged to treat others with respect and abide by the expectations laid out in the School's Behaviour Policy.

Bullying behaviour of any kind is unacceptable; it will not be tolerated at Aldenham and the School's Anti Bullying Policy will be rigorously enforced. The School will also take note of bullying perpetrated outside school which spills over into school and will do what is reasonably practicable to eliminate such bullying behaviour. The School will try to deal with cases of bullying behaviour through internal procedures which can involve significant disciplinary sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion.

All incidents where bullying behaviour is confirmed or suspected will be recorded centrally within School. These records are regularly reviewed by the Deputy Head Pastoral and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) to pick up any patterns of peer-to-peer abuse.

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 will report their concerns to 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 a pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

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, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 and the Public Order Act 1986.

If Aldenham staff feel that a criminal offence may have been committed then they will seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, 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.

The School understands that while some unpleasantness is clearly deliberate and aggressive, other incidents are known to be unintentional and the result of simply not thinking about the consequences of their actions ('Safe to Learn: Embedding Anti-Bullying Work in Schools', DCSF 2007). In such situations, it may be more appropriate to support both victim and perpetrator through education and increased awareness rather than punishment.

Definition of 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), it may be motivated by differences or perceived differences between children, or example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, parents, financial background, disability etc or simply as a result of disagreements between pupils. Increasingly bullying takes place online via social media or as a combination of face to face and cyberbullying.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is our first priority. It is important to remember that violence against another person is not bullying but assault or actual bodily harm and may be seen that way. However, emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical violence so we take care to investigate each case carefully before making judgements about how to proceed.

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 through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils in the hope that each pupil can fulfil their potential, build self-esteem and be uniquely valued by others.

Aims and Objectives of our Anti-Bullying Policy

Our aims and objectives are:

- To demonstrate that the School takes bullying seriously and that it will not be tolerated.
- To put in place measures to prevent all forms of bullying, both inside and outside School.
- To encourage all staff and pupils to report incidents of bullying.
- To promote an environment where the School takes a collective responsibility to monitor and, as far as possible, eliminate bullying.
- To protect those who might be victims of bullying and to promote the safety and wellbeing of all pupils.

Prevention

Aldenham's response to bullying does not start at the point at which a child has been bullied. The training provided within the Life Matters and Tutorial programmes, and through the work of the School Council, the Diversity group and the Prae Team, aims to ensure that:

- The principles of the School policy are understood.
- Legal responsibilities are known.
- Action is defined to resolve and prevent problems.
- Sources of support are known to be available.

At Aldenham, pupils are actively encouraged to talk about issues of difference; in lessons, through anti-bullying week, through student-led groups including the Diversity group and regularly through assemblies.

We aim at Aldenham to create an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the School staff with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave. We aim for the values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others, to permeate the whole school environment and be reinforced by staff and older pupils who set a good example to the rest.

Examples of Bullying

Bullying may take many forms. Although it sometimes occurs between two individuals in isolation, it quite often takes place in the presence of others. It takes place through means which can be verbal (e.g. name-calling, taunting, mocking and making offensive comments), online (e.g. via Snapchat messages and group chats) indirect (e.g. taking/breaking belongings, producing offensive graffiti, gossiping, excluding people from groups in the knowledge that it will cause distress, spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours) and physical (e.g. kicking, hitting, pushing or physically intimidating someone – although this may actually be judged to be assault).

Other forms of bullying include racial, religious and cultural bullying; homophobic, sexist, sexual or gender related bullying, bullying related to special educational needs and disability and cyberbullying (including

inappropriate text messaging and emailing; sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet, posting hurtful descriptions or comments on social networking sites such as Instagram or Snapchat) - see appendix for the **Aldenham Anti Cyber Bullying Policy**.

It is not bullying when:

- Two people have an occasional dispute;
- Senior pupils direct younger pupils to carry out daily routines to ensure the smooth operation of the School as per their responsibilities.
- House or School Praes administer accepted sanctions fairly, openly and appropriately. Examples include tidying up or litter picking. All such sanctions must be agreed with the relevant Housemaster/Housemistress (HSM) beforehand and recorded in the House diary.

Signs of Bullying

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour and staff, Tutors and parents/guardians should be vigilant for this. Pupils may become shy or nervous, feign illness, take unusual absences, truant, show a change in work patterns or concentration or seek out the company of adults.

How can the School deal with incidents of bullying?

Education

It is not our intention to wait for bullying to happen before we act; we wish to pre-empt the problem. The following steps are taken:

- The skills required for building relationships and living in communities features as a central component of the Life Matters programme. Pupils learn how to recognise and manage their own emotions and respond to the emotional needs of others. They also learn how to build trust and resolve conflict.
- Pupils learn about appreciating others, the importance of altruism, disability awareness and sexual and racial tolerance through the Life Matters programme, PRE lessons and school assemblies, amongst others.
- As part of their leadership and team building training, senior pupils learn to appreciate that they have a vital role to play in looking after the younger pupils. This develops as they undertake roles as School and House Praes or within the Student Leadership structures of committee and other groups.
- We have a system to select and train peer mentors who can be approached by their peers on any matter.
- The subject of bullying is visited as part of whole school INSET training for staff. To further raise awareness, staff are encouraged to attend conferences and courses that include advice on the prevention of bullying.

Action

Our initial concern is to prevent bullying rather than to punish the bullies. However, bullying is a major offence and will be dealt with firmly.

In a case where bullying has occurred our action will be:

- To support the victim in any appropriate way.
- To educate the bully, for the bully's own sake as well as for others.
- To deter the bully. Any bullying offence will be recorded in writing centrally in the Bullying Log, kept by the PA to the Head of the Senior School.

- To apply sanctions appropriate to the incident. These are likely to range from House or School detentions to suspension or expulsion for persistent offenders or very serious incidents of bullying.

Recording incidences of bullying

Many incidents of unpleasantness may be dealt with by the teacher on the spot and reported to the appropriate HSM and Tutor. The HSM should follow up reported incidents with the pupils involved and seek a resolution by education and discussion. If the unpleasantness is deemed to constitute bullying, the HSM must conduct interviews and ask pupils to provide written statements, including details of the circumstances, protagonists and witnesses. This should then be referred to the DHP to be investigated further, if necessary, and a record kept on file. In the case of serious or persistent incidents of bullying parents/guardians will be contacted - they may be invited into School to discuss the matter and may be involved in finding a solution to the problem. In extreme cases or habitual bullying, the DHP will refer the matter to the Head of Senior School who will apply sanctions in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

In each case, the Tutor/HSM will offer guidance, support and advice to both victim and perpetrator with the aim of eliminating further incidents. Additional support may be offered by the Welfare Team. Support may be given to the victim by reassuring him/her that they are not alone, building up self-esteem, trying to analyse if there is something they do that causes them to be bullied, teaching them to be more assertive and resilient. Once a resolution has been reached, the Tutor and HSM will continue to monitor and review the situation.

While the School will seek to resolve bullying incidents internally, in very severe cases the Head of Senior School may choose to make a report to the police or to social services. A bullying incident will 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.

Boarders

Both full and flexi boarders should feel safe and at ease in their Boarding Houses and should have free access to the HSM, matron or the member of staff on duty if they wish to raise concerns or report incidents of bullying. Tutors on duty should be an active presence in the House in the evenings and supervise and manage the behaviour of pupils to minimise any likelihood of unpleasantness.

House Praes and other pupils can also play an important role in monitoring behaviour and reporting concerns to the HSM. Boarders' access to the internet via the School network is restricted by the School's electronic filters, in order to safeguard pupils from potential harm via means of communication. All boarders are provided with the School's IT handbook and agree to abide by the School Acceptable Use Policy. Boarders must never be subjected to any type of "initiation ceremony" and should be able to report any instances of cyber bullying, abuse and suspicious or dangerous behaviour to their Tutor or HSM in confidence.

Advice to parents

Watch out for distress or a change of behaviour or attitude in your child. For example, there may be a reluctance to return to School and its cause may be bullying. **Persistent bullying** can result in:

- Depression
- Low self-esteem
- Shyness
- Poor academic achievements

- Isolation
- Threatened or attempted suicide

Take an active interest in your child's social life. Discuss friendships and how free time is spent. Be aware of their use of social media and give advice about the type of information it is appropriate to share.

Encourage your child to report bullying, either of themselves or others. If you think your child or any pupil is being bullied, contact your HSM at once. Try to be as specific as possible about what your child says has happened, give dates, places and names of other pupils involved.

Further information on dealing with bullying may be obtained from websites such as <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/> or <http://www.digizen.org/>

Advice to pupils

What should you do if you feel you are being bullied?

If you are being bullied, you may feel scared, vulnerable and alone but you owe it to yourself to try and sort out the situation so that the bullying stops. **Remember, no-one deserves to be bullied.**

Bullying will exist as long as you remain silent. If you are being bullied, or you observe someone else being bullied, there are various things you can do:

- Talk to someone you trust and get them to help you take the right steps to stop the bullying. This may be your HSM, your Tutor, a Prae, the Chaplain, the DHP, the Counsellor, a friend or your parents.
- Write down the information, put it in an envelope and put it under the DHP's office door.
- Send an email or Teams message to your HSM or the DHP. You can also forward inappropriate or unpleasant emails or messages that you have received to this address. If the bullying is taking place online, make sure you screenshot any unpleasant messages.
- If the bullying is happening in person, try to stay calm and look as confident as you can. Be firm and clear and tell them to stop. Ensure you get away from the situation as quickly as possible. Tell an adult what has happened straight away or, if you do not feel comfortable telling an adult, tell another pupil.
- Do not be intimidated by a bully saying it will be worse for you if you report bullying.

If you witness another pupil being bullied

- If you feel confident enough, tell pupils to stop what is going on and check on the wellbeing of the victim.
- Try to remember the details of the event e.g. location, time, pupils involved, witnesses.
- Tell a teacher or your Tutor/HSM immediately. If no teacher is available, tell the School Secretary in the School Office.
- Write a statement of your observations while they are fresh in your mind.

What can you do if you think you are a bully?

If you feel you are bullying other pupils, you should try to do something about it. There are many reasons why an individual might bully others. This theme is explored in the Kidscape document found at <http://kidscape.org.uk/assets/downloads/kschildrenwhobully.pdf>

Kidscape suggest people may be bullies because they:

- Are taking out their unhappiness on others.

- Enjoy a sense of power achieved by hurting someone else's feelings.
- Were bullied in the past and are 'getting their own back'.
- Are dealing with difficult circumstances which may add pressure to their lives and their relationships.

If you think you may have bullied or be bullying others, you should follow these three steps: **admit, atone and apologise.**

You may not have been aware of the hurt of suffering you were causing others. Once you have accepted that your behaviour has been hurtful or unkind you should be prepared to make a verbal or written apology to the victim and seek to amend your behaviour in future. This can be achieved by:

- Thinking before you act or speak – a delay of even 10 seconds can help you to temper your behaviour.
- Asking yourself if you would like to be treated in the way you are treating others.
- Telling yourself that you do not need to be a bully – you can be nice.

Appendix A: Cyber Bullying

Cyber bullying can be defined as use of information and communications technology, particularly mobile phones and the internet, deliberately to upset someone. Cyber bullying is when a person, or a group of people, uses the internet, mobile phones or other digital technologies to threaten, tease or abuse someone. It can be an extension of face-to-face bullying, with technology providing the bully with another route to harass their target. However, it differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; and perceived anonymity.

Aldenham School treats cyber bullying, like all bullying, very seriously. Cyber bullying is never acceptable, either in or out of School. There are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment and threatening and menacing communications, and schools should contact the police if they feel the law has been broken.

Examples of cyber bullying include (but are not limited to):

- Threats and intimidation
- Harassment or 'cyber stalking'
- Sending unwanted texts and messages
- Exclusion or peer rejection
- False impersonation
- Unauthorised publication and distribution of private images

While some cyber bullying is deliberate and aggressive, it is important to recognise that there may be cases of cyber bullying which are unintentional and the result of simply not knowing about the consequences. The School reserves the right to make judgements about the severity of cyber communications. What may be sent as a joke may not be received as one and indeed the sender may not even see the impact of the message on the receiver. It is easy for bystanders to become perpetrators in cyber bullying by passing on humiliating images, or taking part in online polls or discussion groups, thus compounding the misery for the person targeted. Cyber bullying may take place between children, between adults or also across different age groups. Targets may be adults or pupils.

Cyber Bullying and the Law

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) includes legal powers that relate more directly to cyber bullying. It outlines the power of Headteachers to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site and provides defence in relation to the confiscation of mobile phones and other items. Headteachers have the power "to such an extent as is reasonable" (digizen.org/cyberbullying) to regulate the conduct of pupils when they are off site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff.

School staff have the right to confiscate mobile phones as a disciplinary penalty and have a legal defence in respect of this in the Education and Inspections Act 2006 and Searching, Screening and Confiscation Guidance (DfE 2022). Staff can examine or erase files on mobile phones if they have 'good reason' to suspect it will be used to cause harm, disrupt teaching or break school rules. Where a pupil refuses to allow the contents of his/her phone to be searched, the matter can be referred to the police who have more extensive search powers. All pupils at Aldenham School sign the School's Acceptable Use policy and are expected to conform to the School's e-Safety strategy.

Responding to Cyber Bullying

Any person being bullied using mobile phones or ICT should keep examples/screen shots of all communications received as these may aid investigation. Additional reporting routes include contacting mobile phone companies, internet service providers and social networking sites, as well as looking at the

School computer system and log on accounts. It is expected that most cases of cyber bullying can be dealt with through the School's existing Anti-Bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy, though consideration will be given to the scale and scope of cyber bullying, the number of people involved, the location and nature of the cyber bullying and the anonymity of the perpetrator.

Some important tips to protect pupils from being caught up in cyber bullying are as follows:

- Always respect others.
- Think before you send.
- Don't share your password.
- Block the bully.
- Don't retaliate or reply.
- Never send pictures of yourself that you don't want in the public domain.
- Save the evidence.
- Make sure you tell.

Extent of School Responsibility

In cases of cyber bullying the School has a responsibility to act in accordance with its Anti Bullying Policy. The School also has statutory powers to investigate incidents of bullying which occur outside school hours and may apply appropriate sanctions, especially if it causes problems in School. The School will treat all cases of cyber bullying seriously but, given the nature of modern technology and communication, we recognise the limits of our ability to investigate certain areas of cyber bullying. Our duty of care cannot automatically extend beyond the school gates so incidents of cyber bullying which take place entirely off site may not always be matters which come under our jurisdiction.

It should be noted that in the case of *Leah Bradford-Smart v West Sussex County Council (2002)*, the Lord Justice Judge said "the school does not have the charge of its pupils all the time and so cannot directly protect them from harm all the time. At a day school that charge will usually end at the school gates ...". He went on to add "the school cannot owe a general duty to its pupils, or anyone else, to police their (the pupils) activities once they have left its charge. That is principally the duty of parents and, where criminal offences are involved, the police". (Ref. Education Law Update, Issue 103, September 2010, page 4, author Kerry Trewern).

Pupils should be aware that issues of cyber contact can lead to criminal action if guidelines/laws are breached.

Reporting Cyber Bullying and Taking Action

The school community is obliged to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment. All staff have a duty to be vigilant in preventing any form of bullying and reporting any concerns to the DHP as the designated member of SLT responsible for coordination and implementation of cyber bullying prevention and responding strategies. In cases of cyber bullying, staff should follow the same guidelines for reporting as outlined in the Aldenham School Anti Bullying Policy.

In cases of cyber bullying the school has responsibilities to:

- Work with and take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully.
- Take care to make an informed evaluation of the severity of the incident, taking into account the ways in which cyberbullying differs from other forms of bullying.
- Deliver appropriate and consistent sanctions, in accordance with the Anti Bullying Policy.

For more information on cyber bullying, please refer to Digizen.org or the DfE 'Safe to Learn' document on cyber bullying. Further information on dealing with bullying may be obtained from websites such as <http://www.kidscape.org.uk/>