

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Any form of bullying, whether verbal, physical or psychological, is completely unacceptable at Sherborne International.

The purpose of this policy document is to enable the School to provide a clear statement about its attitudes to bullying, about the action which will be taken to prevent it happening and the response if it should occur. It aims to ensure that:

- each individual is treated with consideration and respect at all times
- all individuals and groups are aware that they must not exploit or cause unhappiness to others
- staff are aware of the ways in which bullying can happen, and of the strategies for preventing it, and dealing with it should it arise
- that opportunities exist for students to express their worries, and for them to be aware of the support available
- that although each situation is unique and should be dealt with appropriately, staff, students and parents feel confident that a consistent approach will be taken, and that concerns will always be treated seriously and sensitively

Definitions of bullying:

Bullying may be defined as “Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally”. (*DfE advice “Preventing and Tackling Bullying” July 2017*)

Children’s definitions often place more emphasis on the effect than on the intention:

- the bullied child often feels isolated, lonely and powerless.

Students are bullied for a variety of reasons – and for no reason. Specific types of bullying include: bullying related to race, religion or culture; bullying related to special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities; bullying related to appearance or health conditions; bullying related to sex, gender or homophobia, or otherwise related to home circumstances.

Bullying includes: name-calling; taunting; mocking; making offensive comments; kicking; hitting; pushing; taking belongings; inappropriate text messaging and emailing; sending or posting offensive or degrading images or messages by phone or online; producing offensive graffiti; gossiping; excluding people from groups; and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours. Although sometimes occurring between two individuals in isolation, it quite often takes place in the presence of others.

Bullying can seriously damage a young person’s confidence and sense of self-worth, and they will often feel that they are at fault in some way. It can lead to serious and prolonged emotional damage for an individual, and, at its most extreme, suicide. Those who conduct the bullying or witness the bullying can also experience emotional harm, and the impact on parents and school staff can be significant.

It is the School's view that all members of the community have a responsibility to ensure that bullying does not happen; students who stand by and do not report this kind of behaviour are in fact complying with it. We aim to create an atmosphere of openness and trust, where concerns can be raised at an early stage and dealt with swiftly.

The School approaches the issue through:

- **education**
- **student pastoral survey**
- **the pastoral system**
- **disciplinary action**

1) Education

In this area, as in others, students learn by example. They should experience the adults in School and in the boarding houses behaving in a civilised, kindly way towards them and towards each other at all times.

The PSHE course deals with the subject of bullying in PSHE lessons and in assemblies: discussion includes experiences of bullying, the reasons why it might happen, strategies for dealing with it and ways of finding support, both in and out of school.

When appropriate, staff address the subject during lessons and on other occasions, and Housemasters/mistresses will discuss it formally and informally in the boarding houses.

In particular, Housemasters/mistresses will explain the points outlined in this policy to students when they first arrive at the School and with the whole House at the beginning of each year. The full policy is also available on the School website and parents and guardians are directed to this through their respective handbooks. All other interested parties are urged to contact the School promptly in order to raise any concerns

Students will regularly be reminded of the sources of help and advice available to them both in and out of School, and telephone numbers of organisations such as ChildLine, and also those of our independent listeners will be available to them.

Anti-bullying training is given to all School staff within their child safeguarding training as part of both legal requirement and good practice. The issue is revisited frequently by teaching and care staff through weekly pastoral meetings and bi-termly meetings of Heads of Year and Heads of Department. Information on safeguarding is available to parents through the School website or a hard copy can be requested from the Registrar.

2) Student Pastoral survey

The student pastoral survey is reviewed each year and is delivered through the Heads of Houses to ensure that each child fully understands the questions. This allows the children to tell the truth confidentially and anonymously, however there is a space for them to put their name if they want help. There is also the opportunity to give information about incidents that observe as bystanders. This is carefully explained to the students who are then given time to answer the questions. Any issue that arises from the survey is sensitively discussed with the child who raises it. This survey also allows children to inform us indirectly (thus not being a 'snitch') in the hope that we can identify the issue and deal with it appropriately. The responses are read and summarised by the relevant Head of House and passed to the House and Pastoral meeting for information and action.

3) Pastoral Care

Prevention:

Staff will make a point of building students' confidence and self-esteem by recognising the achievements and positive qualities of every individual, both in private and in public where appropriate. They will adopt strategies to ensure that every individual is properly involved in lessons and group activities. They will make a point of expressing disapproval of unkind remarks; they will not allow students to exclude others from groups in class or at meals, during sport and activities or other formal occasions.

At times such as break, lunchtime and social activities or outings when there is naturally less formal supervision, Staff will nevertheless keep a careful eye on behaviour and relationships within groups. Housemasters/mistresses and the Vice-Principal (as part of their academic tutorials) will routinely see students on a one-to-one basis so that there are regular opportunities for any worries to be expressed.

All staff will be vigilant for possible signs of bullying, which might include, for example:

- (on the part of the target) physical distress, tearfulness, withdrawal from group activities, isolation in class, prep, dormitory, social activities.
- (on the part of the perpetrator/s) exclusion of others in class, prep, dormitory, social activities. Passing comments - sometimes apparently mild or joking - obvious silence in the presence of the victim/s.

By being alert, staff may help to prevent the friction caused by normal changes in adolescent relationships from developing into more serious, long-term problems.

Reporting suspicion of bullying by staff or bystander pupils:

Any concerns (however trivial) will be passed to the Vice-Principal (who is the Anti-bullying Officer) at an early stage. These are compared to any records in the House log and the iSAMS journal so that an overall picture can be established, and action taken if necessary. Early intervention is important as patterns of behaviour can become entrenched and more difficult to change if they are left unchallenged. All records of concerns about each student are monitored *at least* once each 3 weeks by the Vice-Principal/Anti-bullying Officer (in line with the academic reports) to look for patterns emerging that may require further investigation. These are reported to the House and Pastoral meeting for information and action.

Reporting of Bullying by the victim

Students may report bullying by a number of routes:

- To the Anti-bullying officer/Vice-Principal
- Members of the school's boarding staff or trusted teachers
- During one to one sessions with the Vice Principal/Housemasters/mistresses or house/ academic staff
- To other agencies (such as Childline) as outlined in the 'Worried' Poster, that is posted in the Houses and School.

Action

REMEMBER: Where there is reasonable cause to believe that a student is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, a bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern and appropriate procedures followed in accordance with the School's *Safeguarding (Child Protection) Policy and Procedures*.

Listening and discussion

If a student complains of being bullied, they will be taken seriously. They will be listened to, and any specific incidents noted in writing, as well as their more general feelings.

The matter will be reported to the Anti-bullying Officer/Vice-Principal at this stage, and joint decisions will be taken about the best way to proceed. The Principal, Vice-Principal and Housemaster/mistress will be informed and consulted.

The initial concern may be raised by a parent; the same process will apply in this case. The member of staff contacted will arrange to report back on progress within a specified time.

The student will normally be informed about any action to be taken. Students may often be reluctant to support further action for fear of making the situation worse, and staff will take note of these fears. They will respect students' desire for confidentiality as far as possible; equally, they have a duty to the community as a whole to take action on bullying and cannot stand by and allow it to continue once they are aware it is happening. They will make it clear to the student concerned that the School cannot condone bullying, and they will be reassured that they will be supported through any continuing difficulties, as one aim of the School is to repair relationships.

Investigation

The staff concerned will investigate the situation carefully. Any evidence in the form of text messages or emails, or notes passed to students will be retained. In the case of bullying via the use of various communication technologies, please see the Anti-Cyberbullying policy for advice on how to proceed.

Staff may have observed specific actions; on other occasions there may be only complaints from the victim and possibly a series of counter-accusations from other students. These should also be listened to, without condoning the bullying response. Investigation may take a number of forms, depending, for example, on the apparent seriousness of the situation, the age of the students concerned and the level of distress involved. The 'bully' or 'bullies' will be talked to separately, initially, perhaps with other students who are not directly involved. It may be useful, if a group is involved, to ask them to write individual versions of events which can then be checked against each other; a meeting between 'bully' and 'target' may be arranged, where a member of staff encourages an exchange of views, while making it clear that bullying behaviour is unacceptable. Such a meeting would only be arranged with the agreement of both parties and care will be taken to ensure that support is given if necessary.

Staff will consider carefully whether another member of staff should be present to take notes and whether individual students should be supported by a friend or another adult.

Responses

There are a number of options, depending on the seriousness of the situation, and the certainty with which responsibility can be attributed.

At the lowest level the aim will be to resolve the situation and re-establish reasonable relationships and acceptable behaviour as quickly as possible.

Staff will explain firmly and clearly the ways in which behaviour has been unacceptable and leave the students concerned in no doubt as to what constitutes bullying. They will make it clear that any evidence of bullying in the future will result in disciplinary action.

Staff will then discuss the future with both sides and establish agreed ground-rules about any specific issues which may have arisen. A number of follow-up meetings may be arranged, so that developments can be monitored. The relevant staff (Head of Year, subject teachers, House staff) will be informed so that they can monitor the situation closely at all times. An individual welfare plan may be part of this process.

If this process is not successful, and there is no obvious responsibility for continuing problems, other options such as a change of house or class may be considered in order to encourage the students concerned to make a fresh start.

It is sometimes the case that the 'target', while not responsible for their treatment by others, can be shown how to modify their behaviour in ways which may help to avoid further conflict.

Any action taken will be recorded, and kept on the confidential personal file(s) of the student(s) concerned.

In the case of cyber-bullying, the perpetrator will be asked to remove the upsetting post(s) from websites or asked to delete photographs or texts which have been used to upset others. In more serious cases, internet usage may be suspended for a period of time. The School may decide that parents will be made aware of the content of texts or web posts as part of the disciplinary process.

Staff will consider carefully at what stage parents should be informed, if they are not already aware of what is happening. Some complaints of 'bullying' are the result of normal (albeit distressing) changes in friendships, temporary exam stress or friction within a group about a particular issue. These are best approached in a low-key way, as part of the everyday running of the house or class, and the aim will be a speedy resolution and reconciliation without undue disruption to normal routine. Parents will not automatically be informed in such cases.

Parents of all the students involved will always be informed if a situation continues or becomes serious, or if it is established that behaviour which constitutes bullying has taken place.

4) Discipline

(See also the School *Behaviour Policy, Procedures, Sanctions and Rewards*)

The School reserves the right to protect the community from persistent bullies and will remove such individuals from the School on a temporary or permanent basis should the need arise and no other sensible procedure be thought applicable. The School would first ensure that

- the Principal and Vice-Principal have seen the individual concerned;
- they have acted in full consultation with the Housemaster/Housemistress/Junior Boys' Housemaster and staff;
- they have previously contacted the parent/guardians of the student(s) concerned in writing with the aim of asking for their support in dealing with the problem;
- they have usually issued a formal warning prior to removal and attempt to work away from the stigma involved with "expulsion".

If possible, and in the genuine belief that a fresh start may provide the stimulus required for change, the School would help to find a new school for the removed student. The new school, however, would be provided with a full history of the problems.

If thought applicable, and non-inflammatory, the incident and its ramifications would be explained to all members of the School.

References

Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DfE, 2014)

Original policy written by Sue Shaw, January 2012

Reviewed by Mr I Elliott (ICSS Governor), Nov 2012

Reviewed and adapted for Sherborne International by SJB, January 2014; checked by PAH, June 2014; approved by MA, Sept 2014

Reviewed and revised by SJB, September 2015

Review and revisions by SJB, checked by PAH, August 2016

Reviewed by SB-B and AH, October 2017

Reviewed by AEH, November 2018

ANTI-BULLYING PROCEDURES (STAFF)

There is a Grievance Procedure available to staff. Attempted bullying of staff by students will be dealt with as misbehaviour under the School's "Behaviour Policy, Procedures, Sanctions and Rewards".