



Prevention of Bullying Policy

September 2025

Policy Lead: Mr Jonathan Stevens, Deputy Headmaster
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PREVENTION OF BULLYING POLICY

This policy should be read in conjunction with the School's Promoting Good Behaviour Policy.

Policy Statement

Whether on the School site or not, all forms of bullying as described in this document are unacceptable. In particular, the School Rules point to expectations: the importance of being courteous and show consideration towards others (Rule 3) and dealings with others will be open, considerate and respectful (Rule 5). All staff who work in the School will have knowledge of the School's prevention of bullying policy and procedures. All members of the School community are expected to base their behaviour on respect for others, regardless of differences of age, status, physical ability, belief, race, gender or sexual orientation. Bullying is always an abuse of power and cannot be allowed to continue whether it be in School or off the School premises.

Every person at Cokethorpe:

- Has the right to live his or her life and pursue a career without the threat or the occurrence of being bullied and be able to recognise that bullying behaviour, and in some cases being the object of bullying, is a pattern of behaviour acquired either consciously or by habit and can be unlearned
- Must understand and support the School's stance against bullying
- Must be aware of how to report bullying.

Objectives

- To eliminate any form of discrimination, harassment, or victimisation of any pupil irrespective of who they are
- To create an environment that prevents bullying being a serious problem in the first place
- To ensure the protection of all of our pupils and staff from all forms of bullying
- To prevent and/or deal with any behaviour that might constitute bullying in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent manner
- To encourage open communication, good listening and a high level of tolerance and kindness for each other
- To ensure that staff are informed of national initiatives to maintain good professional standards
- To ensure that staff follow internal procedures, including any updates as necessary
- To ensure that pupils and their parents are fully aware of the School's expectations, our prevention of bullying policy and the procedures to be followed.

Definitions

At Cokethorpe we define bullying as any behaviour which the recipient finds unwanted, hurtful, embarrassing, frightening, dominating, threatening or a cause for anxiety; this includes cyberbullying, racial, religious, cultural, homophobic, biphobic, sexual or targeting pupils with special educational needs and disabilities, taking property belonging to another pupil.

We regard bullying as not only a children's transaction, but something which may be inflicted or suffered by an adult. We take due regard and follow the broad principles of the DfE document 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017,' the Equality Act 2010 and Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025). Staff training through INSET raises the awareness and highlights ways to reduce the risk of bullying.

Patterns of Behaviour

Observation suggests that a rough differentiation can be made between three types of bullying: one which is physical, another which may be described as verbal/psychological and also cyberbullying.

Physical bullying can involve repeated jostling, hitting, pretend fighting, interfering with property, damaging property, stealing property, extorting money, sexual molestation, inflicting physical pain, tying or confining, and physical humiliation rituals of various kinds.

Verbal/psychological bullying can include insults, using offensive nicknames, teasing about a person's family, cyberbullying, drawing attention to physical characteristics, special educational needs and/or

disabilities, sexual harassment including homophobia, racial harassment, insulting because of academic success or failure, threats, intimidation, gesturing, distracting from work or any pattern of behaviour which causes isolation or distress.

Online Bullying

Online bullying includes posting abusive or demeaning comments on social networking sites such as Twitter/X, Instagram, Snapchat and Facebook to cause offence, isolate or exclude someone. This includes inappropriate use of mobile phone images intended to demean, harass or isolate a person whether through texting, 'sexting' or any other way. Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for any 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 and not in keeping with the School rules. For further details, please refer to the School's Social Media Policy.

Responsibility

All pupils and staff are expected to speak out if they have suspicions that bullying is taking place or if they witness an incident of it. Colleagues may need to remind themselves that incidents of adults bullying children in a low-level fashion are relatively commonplace, but this does not make it acceptable. For some adults, especially those who feel insecure or who themselves were treated in a similar way when young, an automatic reaction can be when encountering children, to speak to them in a patronising, contemptuous or humiliating way.

As far as child on child incidents are concerned, it is difficult to isolate the situations which cause them, other than by making the broad observation that once a child has been singled out for exclusory treatment by his peers, then the transactions which reinforce his or her exclusion become habitual and difficult to break – to the extent that once a child is a victim in this way, then even if he/she changes schools the bullying may continue.

It is also worth pointing out that the perpetuation of such a relationship between a pupil and his/her peers is almost always linguistic. Physical incidents are usually part of what takes place, but the linguistic transactions which initiate them are repetitive and after a while almost unthinking and automatic.

It is the duty of all staff and prefects to watch out for signs of distress in any pupil who may feel unable to report a problem. Staff are regularly made aware of the times and places where bullying is most likely to occur. Pupils are made aware of this through Head's assemblies, House assemblies, Prep School assemblies, tutor group discussions, Drama activities, LIF-Ed and AOB activities and by engaging with outside agencies and groups aimed at raising the awareness of bullying at School. New members of staff will be made aware of the School's Prevention of Bullying Policy through the staff induction programme.

Parents are asked to inform the School if they think that incidents of bullying are taking place, whether to their own child or any other. Contact can be made through the child's tutor or Housemaster in all cases. In all cases pupils, parents and staff can expect that they will be taken seriously and that the information they give will be dealt with as confidentially as possible.

Where appropriate, the School will invest in specialised skills to understand the needs of the pupils, including those with special educational needs or disabilities, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning (LGBTQ+) pupils.

Bullying behaviour can only be stopped if information is shared

A pupil who is being bullied or who sees another pupil being bullied is urged to approach any member of staff or other responsible person. The School Governor with responsibility for Safeguarding is The Right Reverend Colin Fletcher. Those who can help might include:

- Head
- Deputy Headmaster

- Head of Prep School
- A friend
- A responsible older boy or girl (School prefects or House prefects)
- Parents
- Housemaster or Housemistress or other member of the House staff
- Tutor
- Any member of staff or trusted adult
- The School Nurse
- The School Counsellor
- Childline.

PROCEDURES

Complaint of Bullying by an Alleged Victim

A member of the School staff, or a prefect, to whom someone makes the complaint must:

- Write down the details immediately, either during the conversation or if it is likely to cause distress, immediately afterwards, using wherever possible the actual words which the complainant uses
- Give no promise of confidentiality but also make it clear that the complainant will be told before information is passed to anyone else
- Reassure the complainant that no harm will come as a result of making the allegation and that their complaint will be taken seriously
- Report the matter at once to the School's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy Headmaster, Mr Jonathan Stevens or to the Head of Prep School

Allegation by a Third Party

A member of the staff, or prefect, who receives such an allegation, either from a pupil in the school or from a colleague, must:

- Observe carefully the behaviour of the person who makes the allegation or expresses the suspicion
- Record as much detail as possible, in writing, of what is said. Actual words used must be written down wherever possible
- Give no promise of confidentiality but reassure the complainant that his or her identity will not be disclosed without his or her permission
- Report the matter to the DSL, who will approach the Housemaster or Head of Prep School of the alleged victim.

Receipt of an Anonymous Allegation

A member of the staff, or prefect, who receives such an allegation must:

- Record in writing the words used so far as is possible. Where the allegation is received in writing, the paper must be retained and a copy given to the Deputy Headmaster
- In all cases refer the matter to the DSL.

Suspicion of Bullying

A member of the staff or prefect whose suspicion is aroused must:

- Write down what he or she has observed or heard which gives rise to the suspicion
- Communicate the suspicion to the DSL.

These procedures apply to all allegations of bullying whether by a pupil or a member of the staff.

Action to be Taken

Cokethorpe prescribes a robust procedure for what action is to be taken once a situation of bullying has been established. The action will be decided upon in consultations between the DSL, the Head of Prep School, or Housemasters of the children concerned, and any other members of the House or teaching staff whose input is seen as desirable. This is likely to include tutors and may also include the Head.

However, there are certain general principles which are normally observed:

- The victim of bullying will be counselled on coping with such situations
- The victim will be seen at regular intervals by a specific member of the staff who has been assigned to take particular care of him or her, or more than one colleague may be involved
- The victim will not be blamed for bullying incidents but given help to adapt their behaviour in such way as to discourage further occurrences
- Parents of the victim may be involved at an early stage
- The children involved in bullying will be spoken to and the facts established
- Parents of the bullies will be informed and informed of the School's plan of action
- The aim thereafter is to make them recognise the unacceptable nature of their actions, partly by raising the awareness of how much distress has been caused by it.

Further Action

Where further action is required it will depend on the type of bullying, how the initial phase is dealt with, and any previous history. A combination of any of the following may result from continued bullying incidents:

- A statement placed in a pupil's file for a set period of time
- A verbal/written apology given to the victim
- A verbal/written apology to his/her parents by any pupil involved in bullying
- Restitution for damage
- Targets and contracts drawn up for changes in behaviour
- Monitoring of behaviour over a specific period
- Referral to the Head and possible suspension or expulsion if bullying persists and there is no likelihood of the problem being solved
- Should there be reason to believe that the child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, then the issue will be dealt with as a Safeguarding matter and referred to the Local Authority Children's Social Care
- The Head will keep the School Governor responsible for Safeguarding informed of developments. The School Governor responsible for Safeguarding is The Right Reverend Colin Fletcher.

Guide for Staff Interaction with Pupils

It is necessary for members of the teaching staff to be aware of the dangers of any behaviour on their own part which might spark off a bullying problem or aggravate one which already exists. A school must involve close relationships between adults and children and among children themselves. All members of the community have to feel safe and at ease with one another, in a way similar to the ideal in a family. For this atmosphere to be maintained, there must be not only professional practice but also common sense on the part of the staff. A school teacher must cultivate a sense of what is **appropriate** and seek advice and guidance from colleagues if unsure.

- Every person must be treated with respect, both when present and when absent
- Always respect a child's right to privacy
- Do not permit abusive peer activities, such as initiation ceremonies, ridiculing or anything else that amounts to bullying
- Do not tolerate verbal abuse or in any way facilitate it
- Never compare a child with brothers or sisters, even by the remotest suggestion
- Do not jump to conclusions about children or about events without checking the facts
- Do not either exaggerate or trivialise matters that are of concern to pupils
- Do not make salacious, suggestive or demeaning remarks or gestures
- More teaching is done by example than by precept
- Do not show favouritism to an individual, or behave in any way that might be interpreted in such a way; and do not fall into the temptation of becoming excessively intimate with the families of children, however hospitable or kind they may be

- Do not indulge in any physical horseplay that a pupil or indeed another adult might misinterpret, no matter how well intentioned the action might be. Any physical contact between a member of staff and a pupil must be for the purposes of instruction or immediate care
- The use of physical restraint on a pupil is sometimes necessary. It must involve the minimum of force necessary and is permissible only when you are certain that he is at imminent risk of endangering himself, you, others or property. Where possible, summon a colleague to witness the situation and give you help. Refer to the Physical Intervention and Restraints Policy for full guidance.
- If a situation arises where your relationship with a pupil or your feelings towards a pupil are placing you at risk of unprofessional behaviour, you must immediately seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- If you suspect that a pupil is becoming inappropriately attached to you, then you must share your concern with the Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Do not allow a pupil/student to drink excessive alcohol in your presence, nor be in the presence of a pupil/student while under the influence of alcohol.
- It is worth remembering that the failure to keep personal and professional life separate, or worse, to make the two co-existent, retards a teacher's development in both areas and causes inappropriate behaviour towards pupils and fellow members of staff
- Do not get involved in any form of electronic communication other than that required for academic work
- Staff must be careful about the use of nicknames or of any verbal transaction which isolates a pupil, draws attention to specific characteristics or in any way sets a cue for subsequent verbal bullying and the worse incidents into which it may escalate.

In general, it is necessary for an adult to keep a very careful guard on his or her tongue and to be cautious in the extreme about any kind of personal remark made to a child.