Countering Bullying Policy

DRW

Last updated September 2023

Review and Amendment Record

Date	Person Conducting the Review	Changes Made
November 2017	MJF	None
October 2018	MJF	New para 2.8 confirming that holiday bullying can be taken into account when resolving issues of bullying at school
July 2019	MJF	Clear statement that cyber bullying is a safeguarding risk and can take place wholly online
September 2020	DRW	Review and update for the 2020-21 academic year with specific reference to development of the Behaviour Policy.
September 2021	DRW	Review and update for the 2021-22 academic year with specific reference to the role of the RSE syllabus and expansion with regard to cyber bullying following the experiences associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
February 2022	DRW	Amendment of the date of publication of non-statutory guidance from the Department of Education
September 2022	DRW	Review and update for the 2022-23 academic year with specific reference to the new National Minimum Standards for Boarding.
September 2023	DRW	Review and update for the 2023-24 academic year with specific reference to the role of monitoring and filtering in preventing cyber bullying.

1. Introduction

This policy outlines the strategy at Summer Fields to proactively and effectively prevent bullying (as detailed in standard 16 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding).

At Summer Fields we aspire to a community free from bullying. When it does occur, we want bullying to be reported immediately so that the victim (and the perpetrator) can be given help and support. Dealing with bullying effectively is important in order to eradicate it.

The strategy detailed in this policy reflects the fact that, unlike day schools, boarders cannot escape bullying for long periods of time as they are not going home as often.

1.1. The Countering Bullying policy is designed to support the aims of the Behaviour policy, namely;

(i) To promote principles of good behaviour amongst the pupils at Summer Fields, namely;
  ➢ Care and consideration for others
  ➢ Common sense
  ➢ Courtesy
(ii) To promote self-discipline and mutual respect
(iii) To regulate the conduct of pupils for the safety and well-being of all
(iv) To support the educational progress of all pupils
(v) To set out the sanctions to be adopted in the event of pupil misbehaviour

NMS 16 requires the policy to be compliant with relevant legislation and to be understood by pupils and staff.

1.2. The National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools – specifically part G, promoting positive behaviour and relationships - requires that the Behaviour and Countering Bullying policies are implemented effectively and consistently and include;

(i) Measures to combat bullying in any form (e.g., physical, verbal on-line cyber-bullying, etc.) and to promote positive behaviour
(ii) Safeguards the protected characteristics as outlined in the 2010 Equality Act
(iii) Details of disciplinary sanctions

The Countering Bullying policy outlines in further detail the school's approach to the above.

1.3. References

(i) *Preventing and tackling bullying* (Department for Education, 2017)
(ii) The Anti-bullying Alliance web site (http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
(iii) Cyber Bullying Advice for Head teachers (Department for Education, 2014)
(iv) Keeping Children Safe in Education (2022)

2. Definition of Bullying

2.1. The Department for Education details that, whilst there is no legal definition of bullying, it is usually defined as behaviour that is;

  ➢ repeated
  ➢ intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
  ➢ often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation

The Department for Education further outlines that bullying takes many forms and can include:

- ➢ physical assault
- ➢ teasing
- ➢ making threats
- ➢ name calling
- ➢ cyber bullying - bullying via mobile phone or online (for example email, social networks and instant messenger)

2.2. The Anti-bullying Alliance defines bullying as: *"the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online."*

2.3. Bullying includes: name-calling; taunting; mocking; making offensive comments; kicking; hitting; pushing; taking or hiding belongings; inappropriate e-mailing; sending offensive or degrading images via the internet; producing offensive graffiti; undermining; excluding people from groups; and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours.

2.4. Bullying is often hidden and subtle, but it can also be overt and intimidating.

2.5. Specific types of bullying include that which is related to the protected characteristics as outlined in the 2010 Equality Act. The characteristics – and examples of bullying related to them – are outlined below. Whilst both discrimination and unconscious bias are utterly unacceptable, the details below specifically relate to acts of bullying.
   (i) **Age - this** includes bullying that is motivated by a prejudice against older or younger people.
   (ii) **Disability** – this includes special educational needs. Bullying might include taunting a boy who has Learning Support lessons, name-calling and innuendo based on a boy's perceived academic or intellectual ability, and exploiting a boy's inability to react physically or mentally to what is happening to him.
   (iii) **Gender reassignment -** this includes bullying that is motivated by a prejudice against gender reassignment.
   (iv) **Race -** this includes bullying that is motivated by a prejudice against or in favour of a specific racial identity. It may also involve behaviour which seeks to define racial identity on the basis of colour or physical appearance, i.e., "but you're black, you can't be British" or assuming someone is of a specific race because of how they look or their name.
   (v) **Religion or belief -** this includes bullying that is motivated by a prejudice against or in favour of a specific religion or set of beliefs. It can involve using reference to religious beliefs to suggest difference and/or inferiority or offensive language about religious beliefs designed to subordinate, humiliate or intimidate.
   (vi) **Sex –** this includes bullying that is motivated by a prejudice against or for a specific sex. It can include using terms to suggest inferiority such as "you catch like a girl".
   (vii) **Sexual orientation** - this includes bullying that is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people. It can also include spreading rumours about someone's sexuality; suggesting someone is inferior because of their sexuality; or using the term "gay" to suggest inferiority.

2.6. Bullying can also be related to;
   (i) Appearance or health conditions - this includes hurtful teasing or exclusion from a group because of physical appearance or health issues.
   (ii) Bullying related to a child's family circumstances (e.g. because a child is adopted, or has caring responsibilities at home).

3. Methods of bullying

3.1. In addition to the characteristics of sex and sexual orientation outlined above, bullying may also be sexual in nature. Sexual bullying is a type of bullying behaviour that has a specific sexual dimension; and it may be physical, verbal or non-verbal/psychological. Behaviours may involve suggestive sexual comments or innuendo, including offensive comments about sexual reputation; making unwanted sexual advances to another and/or ignoring the principles of consent; or using sexual language that is designed to subordinate, humiliate or intimidate.

Following the "Everyone's invited" campaign, there is heightened cultural awareness of sexual bullying and the importance of consent.

3.2. Cyber bullying includes all bullying related to the internet, mobile phones, social networking sites or any other form of electronic communication. It can include all the above types of bullying but technology is the method by which the bullying is carried out. It differs from other types of bullying in that it invades home/personal space and is difficult to control once information is circulated. It may also include sexting/use of methods of communication to undertake bullying of a sexual nature. In this circumstance the bullying would constitute both sexual bullying and cyber bullying.

3.3. Boys, parents and staff should understand that serious cases of bullying can cause psychological   damage and have a profound impact on both mental and physical health; it can also lead to thoughts about or acts of self-harm. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which relate to harassment and threatening behaviour.

3.4. Staff should be careful never to pass off bullying as mere "banter".

3.5. Bullying is treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe a child is either suffering or likely to suffer from significant harm.

3.6. Bullying which takes place during school holidays can constitute an issue upon which the school is entitled to act. The school is likely to take into account events that have taken place during the holidays where there is a continuing issue of bullying during term-time involving the same parties.

3.7. As with all issues of child protection, we heed the Threshold of Needs Matrix issued by Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board.

4. Prevention

4.1. The school aims to maintain and promote a culture within which bullying does not occur. The Summer Fields Mission Statement declares that it is part of the school's ethos *to create a happy and caring environment in which boys respect each other* and to promote *a positive, safe and well-disciplined environment.*

4.2. Educating pupils – through the Behaviour Policy; the School Rules, the RSE syllabus; the PSHE curriculum; the programme of Assemblies and Chapel services; external speakers; individual tutor meetings; form taker periods; the work of lodge parents (and all other staff); children are made aware that bullying is not tolerated. They are also made aware of the importance of reporting incidents of bullying and how to go about it.

4.3. Staff Training and Responsibility – staff receive training through periodic InSET provision so that the school policy is understood and supported. Staff understand that they share a responsibility for the welfare of every boy in the school. Staff gather and share intelligence about issues between boys which might provoke conflict. Formal staff meetings twice a week and daily informal staff conversations provide an opportunity to share this type of information.

4.4. Supervision of the boys – Appropriate levels of staff duty provision are maintained during boys' free time. Staff are made aware of particular locations and times of the day that might allow greater opportunities for bullying incidents to take place.

4.5. Reporting bullying – The boys are encouraged to report all instances of bullying, whether in the position of witness or as the victim. All victims will be supported, as will witnesses who make a disclosure. "Are You Happy" posters are posted throughout the school, and give boys advice on whom to talk to if they are unhappy at school for any reason.

5. Recognising Signs of Bullying

5.1 In addition to a direct disclosure of bullying from a child, their friends or another adult, children experiencing bullying may display some of the following behaviours. All staff should understand that the following characteristics may indicate that bullying is taking place when a child;

- Is unwilling to come to school, or shows a fear of attending specific lessons or going into a specific area of the school, or are frequently late/absent.
- demonstrates a marked change in normal routine for no apparent reason;
- displays excessive anxiety, becomes withdrawn or unusually quiet or lacking in self-confidence;
- fails (uncharacteristically) to produce work, or produces work that is unusually poor or that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others;
- has books, bags, clothing or other possessions that 'go missing' or are damaged;
- visits Hobson's frequently with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches or feeling 'unwell';
- has unexplained cuts, bruises or other injuries;
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable and may start to bully others;
- is reluctant to mix with others in public places such as the Dining Room;
- is afraid to use the internet;
- threatens or attempts to run away or harm themselves.

5.2 Although there may be other causes for the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated; any member of staff with concerns should share them with the Headmaster, the Deputy Headmaster or, where appropriate, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

6. Procedures

6.1 All forms of bullying will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately and decisively. Bullying is not tolerated at Summer Fields.

6.2 If an allegation of bullying is reported to, or an incident witnessed by, a member of staff, the first priority is to ensure the safety of any boys involved. Immediately thereafter, they will control the situation and reassure or support children as necessary.

6.3 All incidents of bullying or alleged bullying must be reported to the Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster or Head of Pre-prep (and DSL if appropriate). The relevant Head of Year should also be informed. An investigation will be undertaken including the interviewing of all parties involved in which pupils may be asked to write an account of the incident(s). The investigation will be co-ordinated by either the Head of Year or Headmaster/Deputy Headmaster as appropriate in the prep school and the Head of Pre-prep in the Pre-prep.

6.4 If, on investigation, an allegation of bullying proves to be unfounded but poor behaviour has been undertaken, appropriate sanctions will be administered as per the Behaviour Policy.

6.5 If an allegation of bullying is found to be substantive, it will be dealt with as per the Behaviour Policy. In the prep school, bullying type behaviour (first offence) is dealt with at phase 3 of the sanctions policy; bullying is dealt with at phase 4 and phase 5. At phase 4, the following information is written in the Black Book (kept in the Deputy Headmaster's study) and also entered on iSAMS; date, boy's name, details of the offence, details of the victim, and details of the member of staff giving this punishment (usually the Headmaster or the Deputy Headmaster). Parents of a boy found to have bullied another will always be informed. In the Pre-prep, appropriate sanctions will be undertaken with regard to the age of the perpetrator and the nature of their actions.

6.6 In cases of severe and persistent bullying, sanctions at phase 5 in the prep school involve suspension or exclusion. In extreme cases in the Pre-prep, suspension and exclusion are sanctions that may be applied.

6.7 Details of bullying are kept in the comprehensive record of sanctions at phase 2 and above that are maintained by the Deputy Headmaster (or the records maintained by the Head of Pre-prep, if appropriate). These records are helpful in identifying patterns of behaviour by an individual or by groups and in evaluating the effectiveness of the punishment.

6.8 Relevant staff, including tutors and lodge parents are informed of the results of an investigation of bullying if they have not already been involved in its undertaking. They have a role to play in supporting and, if necessary, comforting the children concerned.

6.9 A strategy will be put in place with appropriate support for both the victim and perpetrator to bring the matter to a close, and to monitor and review the situation. Counselling may be considered for any of the involved parties. In the extreme case that there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern (*Children Act, 1989*).

7. Cyber Bullying

7.1 Summer Fields fully supports the importance and usefulness of modern technology and aims to be at the forefront of its use in education. However, as detailed above, one of the risks associated with its use is cyber bullying. Exposure to and use of technology increased significantly throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, reemphasising the need to educate children on the potential dangers of technology and empower them to use it for the good of all and harm of none.

7.2 Cyber bullying is the use of technology to hurt or upset someone. As detailed in section 3 above, it can be a forum through which all types of bullying are undertaken. Because of the nature of cyberspace, cyber bullying has distinctive features as it can;
● be conducted without face-to-face contact and can take place wholly online without any visible actions
● involve large numbers of people (both as victims or perpetrators)
● invade the privacy of the victim's own home or expose the victim to ridicule across the internet
● be used against every person in the community including boys, their siblings, staff and parents.
● draw bystanders into being accessories.
● take the form of: harassment and cyber-stalking, threats and intimidation, defamation, exclusion and rejection, impersonation, public humiliation, manipulation and spying.
● constitute a serious safeguarding risk.

7.3 The school uses proportionate systems of monitoring and filtering to control the use of electronic communications in order to detect cyber bullying, abuse, or unsafe practice by all pupils, including boarders (as detailed in standard 12 of the National Minimum Standards for Boarding).

7.4 Through appropriate education we aim to;
● Ensure that pupils, staff and parents are educated to understand what cyber bullying is and what the consequences of undertaking it are.
● Have in place policies and procedures to prevent incidents of cyber bullying within the school and its wider community.
● Have in place effective measures to report cyber bullying and to deal effectively with any perpetrators of it, whether members of the community or outsiders.
● Monitor the effectiveness of our counter measures.

7.5 Through the RSE curriculum and the PSHE and ICT syllabi, pupils are taught to understand the issues around cyber bullying. Pupils are taught what constitutes cyber bullying and the consequences of this behaviour.

7.6 Pupils and their parents are required to sign and agree to the Technology Policy prior to a boy being allowed access to the School Network. This details acceptable use and explains what is meant by inappropriate behaviour (see ICT Policy and Technology Policy). Access to technology capable of facilitating cyber bullying is limited to networked computers. Boys are not permitted to

bring into school any mobile electronic device capable of communication or recording. An area identified as a potential tool for cyber bullying is email. The only email capability available to boys is the School's own Microsoft Exchange. They do not have any access to social networking sites, nor are they able to access web-based email. Internet filtering also reduces the chances of cyber bullying. Parents are encouraged to support the online safety of their children at home, and are made aware of the dangers and problems associated with allowing unrestricted, unmonitored Internet access, whether by computer or by mobile technology. This takes the form of periodic fliers and documents as well as talks arranged for parents by the school. Staff and boys are encouraged to stay safe by being regularly told the importance of password security and the need to log off from accounts.

7.7 Pupils are clearly told that they should report cyber bullying, whether against them or witnessed, immediately to staff. Additional guidance is provided by several links on the school homepage and there is a 'Report Abuse' button prominently displayed, linking directly to the *CEOP* (Child Exploitation and Online Protection) Advice & Help Centre, which offers advice and provides support. E-Safe software helps monitor cases of cyber bullying and aid the reporting of them to the Deputy Head, Pastoral; the Deputy Headmaster/Headmaster; and DSL (if appropriate).

7.8 The Head of ICT is trained as a *CEOP Ambassador Trainer* and maintains a position at the forefront of technical knowledge in order to pre-empt any potentially hazardous developments in technology.

7.9 Any incident of cyber bullying should be handled in accordance with the Summer Fields Countering Bullying Policy. A distinctive feature of dealing with incidents of cyber bullying is the need to inform the IT Manager and/or Head of ICT immediately in order to remove the perpetrator's access to the technology being used. Cyber bullying, like any other form of bullying, is a very serious offence and may lead to temporary or permanent exclusion.