



SHERBORNE GIRLS

Anti-bullying Policy

Approving body: SLT

Owner: Senior Deputy Head

Author: Senior Deputy Head

Executive Summary

This policy is to be read by all staff. A condensed version of this policy is in the pupil planner and a verbal summary of this policy is given to the pupils by the Senior Deputy Head at the start of every academic year.

This document provides clear guidance on the School's approach to bullying. All reasonable measures should be taken to prevent bullying. All pupils and staff should be vigilant to signs of bullying and are duty-bound to report it as well as upholding the pupil code of conduct to prevent bullying from occurring. This document defines bullying as negative behaviour towards any individual with an intention to cause emotional, physical or sexual harm. In-depth definitions of types of bullying, including cyber bullying, homophobic bullying and sexual bullying are provided in this policy. Bullying is a safeguarding matter and is recorded on the School's safeguarding record, CPOMS.



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Introduction

The School aims to promote an atmosphere in which bullying will not take place, in which relationships are based on openness, mutual respect, trust, care and consideration for others. At Sherborne Girls (SG) we will not tolerate bullying.

The School recognises that bullying can occur from staff to staff, from staff to pupil, from pupil to staff, from parents to staff, from parent to pupil and from pupil to pupil. While all forms are considered unacceptable, this policy focuses on the last category.

Bullying is related to abuse and an awareness of this must be maintained. This school community does not tolerate any unkind actions or remarks, even if they are not intended to hurt others. All SG staff are aware that children can abuse other children. This can happen inside and outside of school as well as online.

Countering bullying is an integral part of the School’s safeguarding and discipline policies. Bullying conflicts sharply with the School’s policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

This policy has taken into account DfE guidance ‘[Preventing and Tackling Bullying](#)’ (July 2017) as well as ‘[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#)’ (September 2024).

Definition of “Bullying”

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually (but not necessarily) 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, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, or an individual, for example on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, culture and first language status, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences or perceived differences.

Perpetrators and victims can be any age or gender.

Bullying at its most serious may cause both physical and emotional (which may cause psychological damage) difficulties.

Bullying between children is a form of child-on-child abuse and is a safeguarding issue.

In all cases, the perception of the pupil targeted is a key factor in ascertaining whether the behaviour constitutes bullying.

All staff at SG are mindful that, ‘unlike at day schools, boarders who are being bullied (offline) cannot escape their bully/ies for long periods of time as they’¹ do not go home as often. This awareness increases staff and pupil vigilance of any signs of bullying.

Particular sensitivity must be applied to those for whom English is not their first language, who come from other cultures or from different educational backgrounds.

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 bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly going missing, or being damaged
- Changes to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the Health Centre with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide – serious bullying may cause psychological damage and in extreme cases even suicide
- Running away.

¹ NMS 2022

Measures to prevent bullying

All reasonable measures are taken to ensure that, as far as possible, every pupil feels safe and happy at School and feels supported and protected at all times. Preventative measures include:

- Provision of planned education, particularly through PSHEE, on countering bullying and what constitutes and causes bullying behaviour. Through this and through discussion in Houses, pupils are also given guidance on the use of their mobile phones and the Internet to prevent harassment (see section on Cyberbullying).
- Surveying pupils from time to time on the subject of bullying in order to raise awareness and prompt any concerns.
- Provision of pastoral training for a team of Sixth Form and U5 (Year 11) *Supporters and Listeners*, in addition to training given to Heads of School, Heads of Houses and Prefects, since many pupils have expressed the wish to talk to senior pupils on such matters.
- A strong and experienced pastoral team of Housemistresses/masters (HMs) and their Assistant Housemistresses/masters, Matrons, Tutors, and Heads of Year who support the Senior Deputy Head and are trained in handling any incidents of poor behaviour as an immediate priority and are alert to possible signs of bullying.
- Regular staff training, and the New Staff induction, includes training about how to recognise bullying, amongst other pastoral issues, how to act and to whom to report concerns.
- Our Prayers and assemblies cycle which includes themes that promote safe, kind and respectful living.
- Membership of the Anti-bullying alliance and observing the annual anti-bullying week.
- Periodic parents' pastoral seminars which may include advice on bullying behaviour and countering it.
- Hazing (once called initiation ceremonies) is banned and pupils are actively encouraged to report any behaviour designed to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation.
- Welcoming feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of the School's preventative measures. Information on the School's anti-bullying policy is provided to parents and guardians as part of the New Pupil's Pack, and this policy is available on the School's website.
- Reminding pupils regularly in both PSHEE lessons and in boarding houses that they are able to anonymously report bullying via the 'Tootoot' app or website, and that they should support each other by reporting any instances of bullying, or if they believe that another pupil is at risk.
- The school has a member of staff who is a trained Restorative Justice practitioner who can facilitate Restorative Justice sessions between the pupils.
- SG is a 'Girls on Board School' and all HMs are trained in delivery Girls on Board sessions. There is also a parents' handbook which is circulated to parents of new pupils before they arrive at SG.
- A pupil who deliberately causes unhappiness to others can expect to be dealt with firmly, in line with the Pupil Behaviour Rewards and Sanctions Policy. All incidents will be recorded and reported to the Senior Deputy Head who will inform the Head.

Staff or senior pupils may notice instances of bullying before even the victim is aware and be able to deal with the situation before it becomes a problem. The person who notices a problem, however trivial, should inform the HM, who will in turn inform the Senior Deputy Head.

All staff who have contact with a pupil who is identified as being at an increased risk of being bullied should be informed and should be vigilant to any negative behaviour towards that pupil.

Cyberbullying

Definition

Unicef defines cyberbullying as: 'bullying with the use of digital technologies. It can take place on social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile phones. It is aimed at scaring, angering or shaming those who are targeted.'

Examples include:

- spreading lies about or posting embarrassing photos or videos of someone on social media
- sending hurtful, abusive or threatening messages, images or videos via messaging platforms
- impersonating someone and sending mean messages to others on their behalf or through fake accounts.'

Cyberbullying can involve social media sites, like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, Twitter, etc. It can also involve use of emails and any internet-based electronic devices, including text messages, pictures and posts.

Cyberbullying can have a greater impact than non-digital based bullying due to the 24 hour a day access to digital resources. Negative behaviour disseminated via the internet can quickly be duplicated and spread further than the intended recipients ("going viral").

Preventative Measures

In addition to the preventative measures described previously, SG:

- Expects all pupils to adhere to the school's responsible IT user policy which they sign on entry to the School and can be found in the Online Safety Policy. A condensed version is also in the pupil planner.
- Uses an IT monitoring tool (SENSO) to check the content of Teams chats for all pupil accounts. The software is designed to be sensitive to bullying language, attitudes and responses. Any concerns are raised with the pupil's HM by the Assistant Head, Safeguarding.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying in PSHEE lessons, which covers blocking and removing contacts from "buddy lists".
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
- Does not permit the use of mobile phones in classrooms.
- Does not allow the use of cameras on mobile phones in washing and changing areas, or other such areas.
- May impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.

The Education Act 2011 allows the Head to authorise for a digital device to be confiscated and examined if it is thought to contain offensive material. The guidance on viewing Youth Produced Sexual images in the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy should be considered if needed. The Head may request that a senior member of staff examine data and/or files, and if necessary, delete them. There is no need to have parental consent to do this. More information can be found in the Online Safety policy.

If a digital device has or is suspected to have evidence relating to a criminal offence, then the device must be given to the police as soon as is reasonably practical. Material should not be deleted from the device before giving it to the police.

Homophobic, Biphobic & Transphobic (HBT) Bullying

Definition

HBT bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary or transgender people. The following may experience homophobic bullying:

- People who are homosexual, bisexual, non-binary or transgender.
- People who are thought to be homosexual, bisexual, non-binary or transgender.
- People who are different in some way – they may not act like the other girls or pupils at the school.
- People who have homosexual, bisexual, non-binary or transgender friends, or family, or their parents/carers are homosexual, bisexual, non-binary or transgender.

HBT bullying can have a negative impact on young people: Seven out of ten LGBTQIA young people say HBT bullying affects their work.

HBT bullying can be hard to identify because it may be going on in secret. Sometimes, pupils may not want to tell anyone about it in case teachers/staff or other adults assume they are homosexual, bisexual, non-binary or transgender. The fact that young people are particularly reluctant to tell is a distinctive aspect of HBT bullying.

Generally, HBT bullying looks like other sorts of bullying, but in particular it can include:

- **Verbal abuse** – including spreading rumours that someone is LGBTQIA, suggesting that something or someone is inferior and so they are “gay”.
- **Physical abuse** – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault and threatening behaviour.
- **Cyberbullying** – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. This can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging.

Prevention

Casual HBT language can be common in schools but, if it is not challenged, pupils may think that HBT bullying is acceptable. It is therefore important to challenge HBT language whenever it occurs:

- We at SG ensure that pupils know that HBT language will not be tolerated.
- When an incident occurs, pupils are informed that HBT language is offensive, and will not be tolerated.

- If a pupil makes HBT remarks, a member of staff talks to them in detail about why their comments are unacceptable.
- If the problem persists members of the Senior Leadership Team will be involved in dealing with the situation. The pupil will be made to understand the sanctions that will apply if they continue to use HBT language.
- Parents/carers are likely to be invited to School to discuss the attitudes of their child.

Sexual Bullying

Although there is no official definition, sexual bullying is a behaviour, physical or non-physical, where sexuality or gender is used as a weapon against another. Sexual bullying is any behaviour which degrades someone, singles someone out by the use of sexual language, gestures or violence, or victimises someone for their appearance. Sexual bullying can also include pressure to act promiscuously or to act in a way that makes others uncomfortable. For further information about Sexual bullying, please see the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy, which provides specific information on Sexual Harassment.

Responses to Bullying

Where it is felt that bullying has taken place, the action in the first instance might not be disciplinary. It may sometimes be the case that the 'bully' genuinely has not recognised the distress caused to the 'victim' by their behaviour. It may also be judged preferable to issue a warning before sanctions are applied. Pupils who bully others must be given suitable help and guidance. Parents are likely to be involved in conversations at an early stage.

The victim of bullying is encouraged to confide in any person they find most approachable.

The victim will be reassured that although confidentiality is important, it is vital that the bully is stopped. Such reassurance is part of the support provided to victims. Fear that things will get worse with intervention can only be allayed by positive and confident action to protect the victim and divert the bully.

Whenever possible the HM will be informed; their advice on who else needs to know will be sought.

Written statements may be taken from "victims", "bullies", or "witnesses". These may be used in discussions designed to elucidate incidents and prevent them from recurring and to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted or to enable patterns to be identified. Such notes would then be securely filed on CPOMS.

Non-urgent incidents witnessed by staff should be dealt with immediately and appropriately, often by a reprimand. These incidents should be reported to the HM and recorded on CPOMS. Should more than one incident occur involving the same pupil/s, the HM should discuss the matter with the Senior Deputy Head.

An example of a non-urgent issue is an unkind or thoughtless remark in a lesson which upsets another pupil.

Urgent incidents must be reported to the HM immediately. Confidentiality of a reporting pupil may need to be respected. The Senior Deputy Head or Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed, and action decided upon. A School Counsellor may become involved.

An example of an urgent issue is physical violence or aggression, or a threat, whether physical or verbal, of immediate or serious physical violence or aggression. It is an incident which cannot be contained within a lesson or activity and which needs immediate attention and action.

A report of the incident must be logged on CPOMS under the category 'Bullying'. Alternatively, it can be logged with the Designated Safeguarding Lead on the bullying incident form ([Appendix 2](#)).

All records will be kept throughout the time the pupils involved are enrolled at the school. It is the responsibility of the Senior Deputy Head to keep the Head informed.

Responses to bullying - Sanctions

Sanctions for bullying can be applied at any time.

If there are repeated episodes following a verbal warning, further sanctions are likely to be applied. These may include removal of privileges, letter to parents, a period of gating and/or behaviour report or contract. Serious incidences may incur a period of temporary exclusion and ultimately, a 'bully' who does not change their behaviour may have to leave the School.

References and suggested wider reading:

Legal Framework

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Human Rights Act 1998
- The Education (Independent School Standards)(England) Regulations 2003 as subsequently amended (SI2003/1910)
- Special Education Needs and Disability Act 2001
- The Equality Act 2010
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2023

General Guidance:

[Department of Education Preventing and Tackling Bullying - Advice for School Leaders, staff and Governing Bodies – July 2017](#)

[Keeping Children Safe in Education](#), September 2024

[Anti-bullying Alliance](#)

Technological:

Cyberbullying - A briefing note on the ISBA website by Farrer & Co

Cyberbullying website - <http://www.cyberbullying.org/>

Cyberbullying – supporting school staff

http://www.digizen.org/downloads/cyberbullying_teachers.pdf

Child Exploitation Online

<http://ceop.police.uk/>

Boarding Schools:

BSA Website - <http://www.boarding.org.uk/>

[National Minimum Standards for Boarding](#)

Supporting documents which inform this policy

This policy has been written with consideration of the following School documents:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Online Safety policy
- Pupil Behaviour Rewards and Sanctions policy

To request a copy of any of the documents listed above please contact the Policies, Inspection and Strategy Coordinator: g.shavesmythies@sherborne.com

Appendix 1: Summary of Changes

- Minor updates to the Executive Summary and Responses to Bullying section for clarity.

Appendix 2: Bullying Record Form (for those without access to CPOMS)

Name of person reporting:	Date of reporting:
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Pupils involved	
Name	House

Description of issue/s and action taken by staff (please attach other documents to this form if suitable)
