



TAUNTON  
— SCHOOL —  
SENIOR

# Anti-Bullying and Cyber Bullying Policy

Also contained within the Senior Behaviour Policy

<b>Policy Lead</b>	Deputy Head Pastoral
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## Bullying and child on child abuse

Bullying is known to have caused psychological damage and, in some cases, suicide, and we take our role in preventing bullying, and acting on it, very seriously. This policy should be read in conjunction with the School Ethos statement, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (specifically the sections on child-on-child abuse), and the School PSHEE policy. Many aspects around good practice such as working with all stakeholders to produce a culture of respect, are covered in these policies.

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. It can be defined by the victim and not by the perpetrator e.g. the perpetrator may argue that their actions were just 'banter' and that similar comments and actions were received and accepted by other students as such. However, if the victim has clearly pointed out that they do not like the behaviour of the perpetrator and ask them to stop but the comments and actions continue then the School may view the behaviour as bullying.

Please note, 'banter' can never be justified if it undermines the spirit of the Equality Act. 2010. As such, an act of bullying could take place as a 'one off' under these circumstances. It can take many forms including:

- A. Physical (e.g. hitting, abuse of property, initiation ceremonies)
- B. Emotional (e.g. wilful isolation or exclusion)
- C. Verbal or written abuse (e.g. name calling, prejudice-based language, text messages, emails, comments or photographs on social networking sites – see combating Cyber-bullying at Taunton School)
- D. Racist, Religious or Cultural (e.g. mocking cultures, customs, appearance)
- E. Sexual violence or sexual harassment. See Child Protection and Safeguarding policy.
- F. Sexual violence and sexual harassment can happen within a wider context of 'harmful sexual behaviour'.
- G. Coercion, control and consent issues can happen in relationships which seem to be long term, consensual and respectful
- H. Homophobic (e.g. name calling, abusive comments, prejudice towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender students).
- I. Disability related (e.g. name calling, abusive comments, mocking appearance)
- J. Health related issues e.g. name calling around mental health
- K. Special Educational Needs related
- L. Gender related
- M. Because a child is adopted or is a carer

Please note that many of the forms outlined above reflect the Equality Act. (2010). Bullying could also fall into the Prevent Duty (e.g. around religion) or terror related (the attacks in Plymouth, 2021, are believed to have been related to the influence of 'INCELS' and this may be considered a terror threat in the future).

It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a School's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and Schools must make their own judgements about each specific case.

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

It is important to recognise that clear boundaries between offline behaviour and online behaviour may not exist i.e. a victim may be suffering teenage relationship abuse and controlling behaviour online but offline their relationship seems balanced and respectful. See the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for more information.

Taunton School recognises that some of the most recent and well documented imbalances between peers happens between boys and girls, with the latter the most likely to be the victim. The other two groups most likely to be victims are students who identify as LGBTQ+ or students on the SEND register.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can also have a significant impact on its target or victim. If left unchallenged or dismissed as 'banter' or 'horseplay' it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention is crucial to ensure that boundaries are clearly set. If staff hear 'banter', they are duty bound to challenge it and report it immediately. The School has a zero-tolerance approach, and staff are trained in this area. Students in older year groups have been trained in safeguarding to help them be leaders in this field either formally, as trained peer mentors, or in their roles as leaders in the house or wider School community.

Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer 'significant harm' then a bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern.

Bullying is not itself a criminal offence in the UK but some types of harassment (which could be defined as a hate crime: a Hate crime is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, thinks is based on someone's prejudice towards them because of their race, religion, sexual orientation, disability or because they are transgender) or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence. If this is the case, then the School may contact the police for advice. E.g. under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, any person who sends 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, could be guilty of an offence if their purpose in sending it was to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient. In August 2017 the CPS was given direction to treat online hate as seriously as face-to-face hate crime. This covers all different strands: racist and religious; disability; and homophobic, biphobic and transphobic.

Bullying which occurs outside the School premises could still lead to discipline within the School: the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states that School disciplinary powers can be used to address student's conduct when they are not on School premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of School staff. Action by the School would need to be seen as reasonable in this circumstance but must always be investigated whether it is inside or outside the 'School gates'.

### **Cyber-bullying**

Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at any time of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click. The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.

There is no need for parental consent to search through a student's phone or similar device but the member of staff must await authorisation from the Headmaster. If the School believes the police need to be involved (for example, it is relevant to, contains a pornographic image of a child or extreme pornography) then images must not be deleted. The School may confiscate the device and will not return it until the police have advised the School or the School has finished its own investigation.

### **Anti-bullying strategy**

1. We seek to instil the following values in all members of the School which should preclude bullying:

- Student voice sits at the heart of the School's culture and students and staff know how to report a concern
  - These are reinforced by a PSHEE programme (a timetabled, separate lesson taught by trained teachers) which is also supported by tutors at all levels of the School: tutors are trained to understand this policy, to understand the content of the PSHEE programme and any other relevant policies so that they can spend time talking to their groups about bullying / cyber-bullying and its effects and consequences. In essence, we seek to inculcate respect for others, their property and their individuality. The above values should not only be addressed in PSHEE but should also underpin all curricular lessons, assemblies, talks, tutorials, debates, the co-curricular programme and chapel services. Staff and older students should set a good example and successes should be celebrated.
  - These values also pay heed to the fundamental British values of democracy, the rule of law, individual liberty and mutual respect and tolerance of those of different faiths and beliefs.
2. It is crucial to the School's success in dealing with bullying / cyber-bullying, that all members of the community are made aware that it is unacceptable and should not be tolerated. It is the responsibility of all members of the community to take action if they see it happening. To remain silent is to condone the action of the bully. Staff receive regular training and guidance to reduce the risk of bullying arising, particularly at times or in areas where it is most likely. If necessary, external agencies will be consulted if specialist skills may be required. Almost all of Year 12 are trained in Safeguarding, which includes spotting the signs of bullying, to prepare them to take on the role of a Peer Mentor.
  3. Staff (sometimes with the help of senior students) proactively gather intelligence about issues between students which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place.
  4. Staff and students need to be aware that the School has the power to address conduct and discipline students for misbehaving outside of the School premises, where it has a negative impact on a student at School. When bullying outside of School is reported, it should be investigated, and consideration given as to whether it is appropriate to notify the police.
  5. Information and any resulting action and communication is crucial to dealing with the problem. Those who feel that they are being bullied, or who are witnesses to what they believe is bullying / cyber-bullying, should always tell a member of staff. Students seen to be supporting bullying/cyber-bullying as an accessory can expect an appropriate sanction. We want students, and their parents, to feel comfortable, and confident, in raising their concerns and they should be encouraged to approach any member of staff. Our aim is to prevent bullying at the very earliest stages. Our complaints policy sets out who you can speak to and how they can help. The School aims to ensure that all students have someone they can trust to talk to.
  6. Advice, support and counselling will be offered to all parties involved, and, if necessary, their parents. While recognising that both victim and bully need help, the School takes a very serious view of bullying and does not subscribe to the "no blame" approach. That said, the victim's voice will be listened to, respected and they will have a degree of control over what happens next. (please note the section on confidentiality in the Child Protection and Safeguarding policy).

7. The School regularly shares lists of students who are more vulnerable and therefore could be more likely to struggle in relationships and could possibly be more susceptible to bullying. Vulnerability could come about due to protected characteristics, SEND, child protection or wider pastoral concerns.

## **Appendix A: Procedure for dealing with bullying and child on child abuse (incl. cyber-bullying)**

The School gives the utmost priority to investigating allegations of bullying / cyber-bullying. We deal with them as swiftly and as comprehensively as can reasonably be expected and at a speed determined by the voice of the victim who has to feel a sense of control following a disclosure (but please note confidentiality and the need to safeguard others: see the School's safeguarding and child protection policy).

These are the procedures which will generally be followed, though it is recognised that each case is different. Our aim is to protect those who may be the victims of bullying and, through effective sanctions, and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, to educate the bully about the consequences of their inappropriate behaviour. We do not subscribe to the "no blame" approach to bullying, though we recognise that cases are frequently complex, and that the victim will sometimes be guilty of inappropriate behaviour as well as the bully. Except for those extremely rare cases in which the bullying / violence is so severe that students are required to leave, it is hoped that all students involved in the matter will learn from the experience and that relationships will be rebuilt positively. When students are placed in detention or excluded temporarily, worthwhile tasks will be set, which may include a combination of letters of apology (to be placed on files) and academic work / counselling.

### **Procedure**

The School will use the balance of probability to determine the outcome of an investigation into bullying i.e. 'based on the balance of probability does the School believe that the alleged perpetrator has contravened the spirit of the School behaviour or bullying policy'.

1. Information about bullying comes from a variety of sources, including parents, students, staff and members of the public. In all cases we assure the person making the allegation that we shall be taking immediate action to stop the bullying / cyber-bullying and will pursue information to identify the bully. Parents are informed as soon as possible, though sometimes some leeway may be required for investigations to be completed.
2. The School will use impact statements to help establish the balance of probability. These can be used to support any concerns raised but are particularly important when supporting an investigation into online behaviour when 'evidence' is often hard to substantiate.
3. Depending on the nature of the allegation, the case will be taken up either by the tutor, house staff, a deputy head or a combination of these people. As a rough guide, the more serious the allegation, the more likely it is to involve senior staff. If there is a Child Protection implication, i.e. if there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer significant harm then the Designated Safeguarding Lead must be informed.
4. Initially, interviews will be conducted fairly within Houses, giving all sides the opportunity to state their case, to establish the truth in what seldom turn out to be straightforward issues. In all cases, students will be warned not to do or say anything that may prejudice their position vis-à-vis the student who has been bullied. (No revenge / stirring up support among friends, not taking the law into their own hands.)

Please note, a student will not be allowed to have their parent or guardian present until the matter has reached a resolution and the School has decided a way forward.

5. Except for the most straightforward cases, in which truth has been established and the matter has been resolved swiftly, an interview will be conducted with the young person's pastoral lead. This will enable a record to be kept of the interview and what is said to be corroborated. Notes, both rough copies and, where necessary, a brief summary and copies of any letters sent to parents will be put on files with cross referencing where appropriate. Notes will be retained by the Deputy Head Pastoral which will enable patterns to be

identified and kept to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted. The victims' voice will be heard throughout, and the resulting speed of the resolution will be driven by their voice.

6. Communication with parents will detail the nature of the offence and any sanctions imposed and will set out what improvements the School expects to be made in behaviour as well as the consequences of failure to improve. Recommendations may be made to support including restorative justice, visiting the Health Centre and counselling.
7. At the conclusion of the investigation, if appropriate, one of the members of staff involved (in almost all cases, the HM) will contact parents of all students directly involved and inform them of action taken. The identity of where the information has come from does not need to be disclosed.
8. In practice, the sanctions applied range from a verbal warning or a ban on use of the School's computer network, to temporary or permanent exclusion, depending on the gravity of the offence and the student's previous record with reference to bullying. Crucially, the perpetrator must understand that their behaviour is wrong, contravenes the School policy and School ethos.
9. As per the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures, if cyberbullying may have caused 'significant harm'; or the law may have been broken or there is concern for the perpetrator's behaviour, the DSL will follow the procedures laid down by Somerset Children Social Services.
10. Inevitably, the focus of care will fall to the victim. However, it is important for the School to consider why the perpetrator acted in such a manner and that they may need help themselves.

### **Restorative Justice**

The School aims to use Restorative Justice Practices to help if relationships break down. This is not just to support the victim but also the perpetrator. As the DFE Guidance (2014) states: 'It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the child engaging in bullying may need support themselves.' Furthermore (and as stated in the School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy) children who engage in bullying behaviour may need support of external agencies because they may be subject to difficult and exploitative relationships.

### **Record keeping and Review**

Any sanctions associated with bullying will be recorded.

The School will aim to use these records to discuss, review to evaluate whether behaviour has changed both with individuals and within the wider School culture.

The Deputy Head Pastoral will discuss the behaviour of the students involved after a time period (usually after two weeks) and a formal review takes place between the Housemaster / Housemistress and the students concerned. If good practice comes from this review, then it will occur on a 'no-names basis'.

## **Appendix B: Advice to students on cyber-bullying**

### **Anti-Cyber-bullying Code**

Being sent an abusive or threatening text message, or seeing nasty comments about yourself on a website, can be really upsetting. This code gives you seven important tips to protect yourself and your friends from getting caught up in cyber-bullying, and advice on how to report it when it does happen.

This code plus the broader educational structures in place (PSHEE, Horizons lectures, Assemblies and Chapel) help to bring an awareness of this issue, the School's robust approach and tries to build resilience for the individual.

#### **1. Always respect others**

Remember that when you send a message to someone, you cannot see the impact that your words or images may have on the other person. That is why it is important to always show respect to people and be careful what you say online or what images you send. What you think is a joke may really hurt someone else. Always ask permission before you take a photo of someone.

If you receive a rude or nasty message or picture about someone else, do not forward it. You could be assisting a bully and even be accused of cyber-bullying yourself. You could also be breaking the law.

#### **2. Think before you send**

It is important to think before you send any images or text about yourself or someone else by email or mobile phone, or before you post information on a website. Remember that what you send can be made public very quickly and could stay online forever. Do you really want your teacher, parents or future employer to see that photo?

#### **3. Treat your password like your toothbrush**

Don't let anyone know your passwords. It is a good idea to change them on a regular basis. Choosing hard-to-guess passwords with symbols or numbers will help stop people hacking into your account and pretending to be you. Remember to only give your mobile number or personal website address to trusted friends.

#### **4. Be safe**

In your PSHEE lessons there is plenty of advice around how to keep yourself safe online but also how to filter content and keep your account safe. Do not give out personal details and make sure your personal email and School email are separate and used for separate things. Finally, if you think it might be a scam then it probably is.

#### **5. Think about the future**

Your posts today can come back to haunt you tomorrow. Employers will search for you on-line.

#### **6. Block the Bully**

Most responsible websites and services allow you to block or report someone who is behaving badly. Make use of these features, they are there for a reason!

#### **7. Don't retaliate or reply**

Replying to bullying messages, particularly in anger, is just what the bully wants.

#### **8. Save the evidence**



Learn how to keep records of offending messages, pictures or online conversations. These will help you demonstrate to others what is happening and can be used by your School, internet service provider, mobile phone company, or even the police to investigate the cyber-bullying.

#### 9. Make sure you tell

You have a right not to be harassed and bullied online.

There are people that can help:

- Tell an adult you trust who can help you to report it to the right place or call a helpline like ChildLine on 0800 1111 in confidence.
- Tell the provider of the service you have been bullied on (e.g. your mobile-phone operator or social-network provider). Check their websites to see where to report.
- Tell your School. Your tutor, Housemaster / Housemistress or any member of staff will support you and can discipline the person bullying you.

Please remember, you do not need to 'prove' this has happened, the impact on you is enough for the School to enact its policies and sanctions. Secondly, the investigation will move forward at your pace as you are in control.

#### 10. Relationships

It is easier to tell people if you have open relationships at home and at School about your on-line life.

Finally, don't just stand there. If you see cyber-bullying (or any bullying) going on, support the victim.