

# The Ridgeway School and 6<sup>th</sup> Form College

## Anti-Bullying Policy

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# I Introduction

## I.1 Statement

There is a statutory duty to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among students and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and students. These duties are extended to include preventing/responding to bullying that happens outside of school, where it is reasonable to do so. Schools also have a duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of students' (Education Act 2002) and to ensure that children and young people are safe from bullying and discrimination (Children Act 2004). Government guidance advises that the policy should also address the bullying of staff by students (Safe to Learn DCSF 2007).

## I.2 Objective

The purpose of the Anti-Bullying Policy is to ensure that students are able to learn in a safe, supportive and caring environment without fear of being bullied. The policy gives clear guidance to students, staff, governors and parents on the school's view of bullying and our commitment to supporting victims of bullying, sanctioning perpetrators and reducing incidents of bullying in the school. This policy applies to all members of the school community including students, parents, visitors and staff.

This policy sets out a range of proactive strategies, reactive strategies and intervention systems which are in place to:

- Prevent, de-escalate and/or stop any continuation of harmful behaviour.
- React to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way.
- Safeguard the student who has experienced bullying and to trigger sources of support for them.
- Apply appropriate consequences to the student/s causing the bullying and ensure they learn from the experience, in some cases through multi-agency support, and using restorative justice techniques where applicable.

## I.3 Relationship to other policies

The Anti-Bullying Policy relates to other policies, including:

- The Behaviour For Learning Policy
- The Child Protection Policy
- The Equality Policy
- The Mobile Phone Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

# 2 Policy

## 2.1 Defining and understanding bullying

There are many variations on the precise definition of bullying, but the various literatures agree on its key features.

### The five essential components of bullying:

1. **Intention to harm:** bullying is deliberate, with the intention to cause harm. For example, friends teasing each other in a 'good-natured' way is not bullying, but a person teasing another with the intention to deliberately upset them is bullying.
2. **Harmful outcome:** one or more persons are hurt physically or emotionally.
3. **Direct or indirect acts:** bullying can involve direct aggression, such as hitting someone, as well as indirect acts, such as spreading rumours.



4. **Repetition and persistent:** bullying involves repeated acts of aggression. An isolated aggressive act, like a fight, is not bullying.  
**Unequal power:** bullying involves the abuse of power by one or several persons who are (perceived as) more powerful, often due to their age, physical strength, or psychological resilience.

## 2.2 Methods and types of bullying

Although bullying sometimes occurs between two individuals in isolation, it quite often takes place in the presence of others.

Bullying may be defined as being either one or more of these:

- **Physical** – including kicking, hitting, pushing, taking and damaging belongings.
- **Emotional** – including excluding or isolating others, gossiping, spreading hurtful or untruthful rumours, tormenting.
- **Racist** – including racial taunts, graffiti, gestures identified by the fact that victims are singled out because of colour, the way they talk, ethnic grouping or religious or cultural practices.
- **Sexual** – including unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments. Identified by the fact that victims are singled out because of their gender or sexuality including transgender.
- **Homophobic** - identified by the fact that victims are singled out because of their sexuality including transgender.
- **Verbal** – including name calling, sarcasm, tormenting and spreading hurtful or untruthful rumours.
- **Cyberbullying** – misuse of the internet and electronic devices to be hurtful to others.
- **Disablist bullying** - Identified by the fact that victims are singled out because of their physical condition.
- **Faith-based** - identified by the fact that victims are singled out because of their religious or cultural beliefs.

## 2.3 Cyberbullying – a new method of bullying

This differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity and the profile of the person doing the bullying. New technologies have meant that students are likely at some point to be a target of cyberbullying. This technology includes mobile phones, instant messenger, chatrooms and message boards, email, webcams and social network sites. This can result in:

- Threats and intimidation.
- Harassment or “cyber-stalking”.
- Vilification/defamation.
- Exclusion or peer rejection.
- Unauthorised publication of private images or information manipulation.

It is important to recognise that cyberbullying can constitute a criminal offence in the UK, if it is considered to be a form of harassment. The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a medium for “virtual” bullying, which can occur in or outside school.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 have given schools 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 (see Mobile Phone Policy). The school may wish to hand the phone or contents found over to the police if deemed appropriate.

## 2.4 Sexting and the sharing of inappropriate pictures

Sexting is the sharing of very personal images to another person and is a growing means of communication and relationship building by young people. When young people take and share images of themselves this could also be an indicator of other underlying vulnerabilities which may place them at risk. At the very least is the fact they have made themselves vulnerable to potential future sharing of these images which often leads to issues in school and potentially by adults who may acquire these images on-line. As such, we take the sharing



of images without consent very seriously as cyberbullying behaviours often follow. The emotional damage that young people who find themselves in this situation suffer is a cause for concern for parents and the school and as such we will investigate any such matter brought to our attention.

The sharing of images is illegal and we will always work in partnership with our Community Police Team; however, safeguarding is at the heart of any intervention. This approach is informed by Section 1 (1) of the Children's Act 1989 and reinforced by Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 which places a duty on key persons to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children.

Where we are aware that personal images are on a student's device and have been, or have been alleged to have been shared, designated school staff will use their powers to delete these images for the purpose of safeguarding the victim and liaise with local police if deemed necessary. We have developed a broader range of sanctions that specifically deal with cyberbullying and the sharing of inappropriate images and this includes an Acceptable User Policy for internet and mobile device use within school.

## 2.5 Proactive strategies

The culture and ethos of our school supports students and staff in dealing with bullying. A positive culture which encourages students to "tell" whether they are the target of bullying or the bystanders will help us to achieve our overall objective of reducing incidents of bullying within school and for students to feel safe to be in school and learn. The following proactive strategies are designed to gather intelligence about issues which may lead to bullying and to stop bullying from happening in the first place.

### **Whole school strategies:**

At the start of each year, all mentors remind their groups about the school's policy regarding anti-bullying and ensure that students understand who to talk to and how to report any concerns.

- Cyberbullying prevention work is written into Schemes of Learning in ICT/computing lessons (Years 7,8,9).
- Advice and guidance is made available to students on the dangers of sharing personal and inappropriate pictures through social media and mobile phones (sexting).
- Safe use of the internet through delivering THINKUKNOW presentations to all students in ICT lessons and assemblies.
- Sharing of information with students and parents on how to prevent and respond to cyberbullying.
- Developing an organisational culture of confident ICT users which supports innovation, e-safety and digital literacy skills, and will help to combat misuse and high-risk activities.
- Anti-bullying weeks (ABW) events in November of each year.
- Trained Year 10 Peer Mentors (who have specific training on bullying) to support students across Year 7 as part of their transition process.
- Continuing professional development for all staff.
- Systems that support parents and carers involvement such as parent focus groups and an "open door" policy.
- National Healthy Schools Programme development.
- Adult modelling of positive relationships.
- A restorative culture and ethos that supports the development of social and emotional skills.
- PSHE curriculum and immersion days to allow students to engage with and understand the issues associated with bullying and to give feedback on its effectiveness.
- Assemblies which are used to raise awareness of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy and to develop students' emotional literacy and underpin a clear, anti-bullying message.
- Student council involvement to promote, discuss and reflect on the Anti-Bullying Policy and associated issues.
- Use of events which can prompt further understanding of bullying, such as theatre groups, exhibitions, student voice events and current news stories.
- Parent information evenings to promote the Anti-Bullying Policy.
- School environment reviews to ensure that areas where students feel unsafe are well monitored.
- The early identification of students vulnerable on transition.
- Targeted small group or individual learning will be used for those who display bullying behaviour as well as those who experience bullying.



- Daily duty across the school (dining hall, corridors and playground) provided by teams of staff who monitor student behaviour and interaction.
- Opportunities to gather student voice will be used regularly, including for students from vulnerable groups such as SEN, Young Carers, LGBT, ethnic minority groups, travellers and those who are looked after or in foster care. Students from vulnerable groups will be closely monitored through their additional support in school to ensure that they are not the targets of bullying.
- The use of opportunities in school to discuss the differences between people which could motivate bullying, such as religion, race, gender, disability or sexuality (prejudice- based bullying).
- Work in close partnership and learn from a range of external experts. Workshops delivered by Youth Engagement Officers from the police.

## 2.6 Reporting and recording incidents of bullying

### 2.6.1 Confidential reporting systems for students

We are aware that many students worry about telling an adult as they fear that the issue will get worse. They can report bullying to us confidentially. However, if we feel that the student is at risk then we cannot keep the information confidential.

Our aim is to ensure that students have confidence that their concerns will be treated promptly and seriously, and that action will be taken which will not make their situation worse.

Students are able to use the following methods to report bullying to us:

- Year 10 Peer mentors who are specifically trained in bullying and have regular contact with Year 7 students.
- Through the use of the “Whisper Report” tab on website which is anonymous and can be used by students and parents which is sent to identified staff in school.
- Email systems- students can email any staff but may wish to email mentors, mentor co-ordinators, the designated school Safeguard Lead and the Behaviour and Standards Team.
- Face to face with any member of staff.

### 2.6.2 Parents/Carers wishing to report bullying

Parent/Carers are encouraged to talk to any member of staff if they have concerns regarding their child. Parents can ask for a meeting in school with the child’s mentor or a member of the Behaviour and Standards Team.

All reported incidents will be fully investigated within a reasonable period of time. It is important to understand that good practice in investigating incidents recognises that time needs to be set aside to ensure that students involved do not have time to collaborate their stories. Any investigation needs to be done in a manner which ensures the target of the bullying feels safe about the process and the outcomes which may result from it.

Ultimately we wish to ensure that parents/carers are confident that staff will act promptly, take the concern seriously and not take action which makes the situation worse.

### 2.6.3 Record keeping

Incidents will be recorded onto our SIMS system and tracked by the designated Safeguarding Lead. This includes details of the perpetrator(s), victim(s) and witness(es), the types of bullying, the length of time it has been happening, the sanctions applied for the behaviour, the agreed way of monitoring the outcomes and the involvement and notice to the bullying students’ parents/carers will all be recorded in student files. This information will be entered onto the student’s behaviour record.

Keeping records of bullying incidents will enable us to:

- Manage individual cases effectively for the perpetrator and /or victim.
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies.
- Celebrate the anti-bullying work of the school.
- Demonstrate defensible decision-making in the event of complaints being made for the perpetrator and /or victim.



- Engage and inform multi-agency teams as necessary.

#### **2.6.4 Bullying data will be used to:**

- Provide monitoring reports to Senior Leadership Team, students (e.g. through the school council) and staff.
- Inform Governors in order for them to monitor the anti-bullying work of the school.
- Inform the LA if required.

## 2.7 School sanctions

### **2.7.1 Use of sanctions and learning programmes**

We have a responsibility to ensure that sanctions are applied fairly, proportionately, consistently and reasonably, taking into account any SEN or disabilities that students may have, and taking into consideration the needs of vulnerable students. Bullying by children with disabilities or SEN is no more acceptable than bullying by other students and it should be made clear that their actions are wrong and appropriate sanctions imposed. However, for a sanction to be reasonable and lawful, we must take account of the nature of the student's disability or SEN, and the extent to which the student understands and is in control of what he/she is doing.

Disciplinary penalties have three main purposes:

- To impress on the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable.
- To deter him/her from repeating that behaviour.
- To signal to other students that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

The consequences for bullying should reflect the seriousness of the incident. We wish to ensure that our sanctions address bullying behaviours in a way which does not lead to escalation but resolution, and which gives the best chance that bullying behaviour will not be repeated. The school uses a staged approach to deal with bullying, however, decisions on the sanction to be applied will always reflect the seriousness of the incident. Therefore we have a range of sanctions and strategies that we may apply having investigated an incident which may include:

- Initial verbal warning which is logged.
- Detention.
- Afterschool detention.
- Isolation.
- Saturday morning detention.
- Fixed Term Exclusion.
- Severe repeated incidents may lead to a Permanent Exclusion.

Completion of the 'bullying behaviour intervention', which is completed with staff in school and parents at home is an important stage in the restorative justice approach to bullying.

We will, where necessary, notify the police or anti-social behaviour team. Where we have significant concerns about a student's behaviour choices, we will seek to work in partnership with external support agencies to ensure that a student's holistic needs are fully considered.

### **2.7.2 Bullying outside of the school premises**

We have a statutory power to discipline students for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. This can relate to bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as outside the local shops or an incident of cyberbullying which has taken place in a home. Where such bullying is reported to staff, it will be investigated and acted on where possible.



### 2.7.3 Sanctions for cyberbullying may also include:

- *Confiscation of the mobile phone or device* if it is used in such a way as to cause a disturbance in school or contravene the School Behaviour and Anti-Bullying Policies (Education and Inspections Act 2006). This may include the deletion of images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones. The school will use its power to search students' belongings if it has cause to believe that cyberbullying has taken place. Mobile telephone use is only permitted during social times in school, however, the disruption and emotional impact that cyberbullying has on students in school following cyberbullying out of school will be dealt with in partnership with parents and carers, and where necessary, the community police team.
- *Parents will always be notified of any need to delete images*, although their permission to do so is not required. The school may need to safely store the device or mobile phone if the police request that the phone is required for evidence.
- *A disciplinary sanction will be applied* if a student fails to respond to a request from a member of staff to reveal a message or show them the content on their phone (for the purpose of establishing if bullying has occurred).
- *Withdrawal of the use of the school's email and ICT facilities* for a specified period of time: Internet abuse, email abuse or network abuse will lead to 2-4weeks limited access, withdrawal of email privileges or total network withdrawal depending on the severity.

## 2.8 Monitoring and review

### 2.8.1 Consultation

The following groups were consulted during the development of this policy:

- Senior Leadership Team.
- Pastoral Leadership Team.
- Governors.

### 2.8.2 Review

The school will review this policy in a yearly cycle and assess its implementation and effectiveness. This monitoring will take place through:

- Student questionnaires and surveys
- Parent surveys
- Student focus groups
- Analysis of recorded bullying incidents
- Governors oversight for the internal audit arrangements, providing the appropriate level of support and challenge to ensure that the agreed practice and procedure has been implemented

## 2.9 Bullying of staff

It is equally important that we protect our staff from bullying from parents, carers, colleagues or students. Everyone has rights and responsibilities in relation to cyberbullying and where comments and posts made on social network sites about staff members are known about, which are of a derogatory nature, decisive action will be taken by the Principal and the Community Police Team may be informed. All staff at The Ridgeway School are in a position of trust, and there are expectations that they will act in a professional manner at all times. Advice to staff on protecting their online reputation forms part of the schools on-going CPD programme.

## 3 Roles and Responsibilities

We consider that everyone within our school community has a part to play in ensuring that our school is a "telling and talking" school. In order to tackle the issue of bullying we recognise that we need a range of strategies to deal with it. A whole school approach to educate students and staff to ensure that it is not tolerated, and that it is dealt with sensitively and consistently.



### 3.1 Students

All of our students have an important role in ensuring that our policy is effective by reporting bullying incidents to members of staff. Students should support the Anti-Bullying Policy by not being bystanders when they see and hear incidents of bullying within the school environment.

All students must consider the wishes and feelings of other members of the school community in regard to their own behaviour with specific awareness of how bullying behaviour may adversely affect the emotional well-being of others.

Members of the student council have, and will continue to play, an active part in the schools anti-bullying work.

All students will have an active part to play to ensuring that our school is a safe place to learn. This will involve them in actively learning about all types of bullying, considering the impact of this behaviour on their peers and vulnerable members of their school community, and through participation in surveys and student voice opportunities where their views will be sought on the policy and its implementation.

### 3.2 Staff

Staff have a crucial part to play in ensuring that students at feel safe to learn. Staff will play an active role by addressing any incidents of bullying which are reported to them, following the agreed process for investigating incidents as laid out in the 'reporting' section. Incidents will be recorded and plans for supporting students and monitoring behaviour implemented, working in partnership with parents and carers at all times. Staff will be involved through the school's national anti-bullying week, in delivering lessons which seek to educate and inform students, develop greater awareness and ensure students are equipped with the skills to deal with bullying if they are a target of it or see it within school.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that this policy and the procedures within it are fully implemented.

Staff training and induction provide opportunities to reflect on the issues surrounding bullying and have an understanding of how the school policy is reflected in its practice.

Bullying of all forms will be regularly discussed during assemblies throughout each school year.

All staff have a responsibility to be alert for the signs and symptoms that a student may be being bullied; this may be either in their classroom environment or in the wider school. Staff receive training on signs of bullying and tackling "bullying or banter" and they are expected to be alert to language use between students, to respond swiftly and decisively to ensure that our classrooms are places of emotional safety and to follow-up any issues individually with students who have been a target of such incidents.

### 3.3 Parents/Carers

Parents/carers have a responsibility to report any incident of bullying behaviour to a member of the school staff and allow the person investigating the incident the time to ensure it is a full and accurate investigation which ensures student safety remains uncompromised.

The role of parents/carers in supporting their child to develop the range of social and emotional skills which minimise the chances of their child bullying cannot be underestimated and will significantly support the school in seeking to reducing incidents of bullying or preventing incidents of bullying.

