



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This policy applies to all pupils in the school,
including in the EYFS setting at school.

Further guidance for nursery parents is available
in the Nursery Parents' Handbook.

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HOLMWOOD HOUSE SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy has regard to the updated DfE guidance '*Preventing and Tackling Bullying*' (2013 updated 2026). It also draws on *Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children (updated 2026)* as well as considering the [DfE guidance on using AI in education settings](#)). The policy also considers the way in which the school can ensure that the aims of the Equal Opportunities Policy are fulfilled in ensuring the rights of those with protected characteristics are upheld.

In relation to online safety, reference should also be made to the school's policy on the appropriate and safe use of technology.

In relation to cyberbullying, the policy takes note of the DfE guidance: '*Cyberbullying: advice for headteachers and school staff (2014)*' and '*Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying (2014)*'. as well as considering the [DfE guidance on using AI in education settings](#) specifically the steps the school can take with regard to protecting children from the misuse of AI.

In relation to online safety, reference should also be made to the school's e-safety policy, to be found as part of the safeguarding policy.

"It is a basic entitlement of all children that they receive their education free from humiliation, oppression and abuse. Education is compulsory in our society and therefore it is the responsibility of all adults to ensure that it takes place in an atmosphere which is caring and protective."

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1. Aims

The overall aims of this policy are the prevention of bullying and, should instances of bullying occur, to help staff and pupils to deal with it effectively.

In this respect, the school seeks:

- To ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment, without fear of being bullied
- To ensure that everyone connected with the school is aware of the nature and types of bullying that may occur, both in and out of school, and their causes and effects
- To ensure high expectations of pupils' behaviour, as detailed in the school's behaviour policy
- To use all pupils, staff and parents as a positive resource in the elimination of any form of bullying, drawing on peer pressure as a means of preventing bullying

- To ensure that everyone connected with the school is aware that bullying is totally unacceptable
- To ensure that everyone is aware of their responsibilities in addressing bullying issues
- To provide regular staff training in relation to the prevention of and response to bullying
- To develop effective strategies to prevent bullying
- To provide a consistent school response to any bullying and have clear procedures for dealing with incidents
- To provide support for both victim and bully

2. Definition

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, by an individual or a group, which intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally and possibly causing psychological damage. It is usually repeated over a period of time, where it is often difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

It can happen anywhere, both in and out of school. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory.

Bullying can have a negative lifelong impact. It can make it difficult for children to learn and can have a lasting detrimental effect on their lives. Young people who have been bullied can become anxious and withdrawn, depressed or aggressive. Some turn to substance misuse as a way of dealing with it emotionally and, at worst, bullying has been a factor in suicide. (Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour).

Bullying can take various different forms, including:

- Racial/Religious/Cultural - where someone is made to feel inferior because of their background, culture or religion.
- Sexual/sexist - behaviour, physical or non-physical, where sexuality or gender is used as a weapon against another. It is any behaviour which degrades someone, singles someone out using sexual language, gestures or violence, and victimising someone for their appearance. Sexual bullying is also pressured to act promiscuously and to act in a way that makes others uncomfortable.
- Homophobic or transphobic - bullying based on sexual orientation or those questioning their gender
- Special Needs or Disability - any exploitation of a particular aspect of a child's disability and/or special educational needs
- Because a child is adopted or a carer
- Cyber-bullying via technology. For example, internet/mobile phones, email, social networks, text messages, online sexual harassment, sending of unwanted photographs or asking for/pressurising others to do so. (Please refer to the separate section, below.)
- The creation and sharing of digitally altered or wholly AI-generated "nudes and semi-nudes" (deepfakes/deep nudes) as a severe form of digital bullying, harassment, and coercion

Bullying can include name-calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, pushing, taking belongings, inappropriate touching, producing offensive graffiti, spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours or regularly excluding someone from groups or games. It is also bullying when a young person is pressured to act against their will by others or is harassed by unwanted conduct, which violates a person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading or humiliating environment.

Non-intended hurt

Not all hurtful behaviour is deliberate or intended to harm or hurt; there are instances of behaviour that are a consequence of thoughtlessness, unkindness or meanness. Any behaviour which a reasonable bystander would say was calculated or intended to hurt or upset the victim is wrong and may well constitute bullying behaviour. It is possible that in some instances bullying behaviour is not malicious and can be corrected with advice without the need for disciplinary sanctions. It must be made clear that these forms of bullying behaviour are equally unacceptable. It is not a justification for a bully to say they did not believe, or were not aware, the victim was upset or hurt by their actions; a repetition of such behaviours over time should lead to other actions in line with this policy and the behaviour policy.

3. Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and should investigate if a child:

- Is unwilling to go to school
- Is frequently absent from school
- Regularly has homework which is not done or lost
- Changes his or her usual routine
- Becomes anxious, withdrawn or is lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Cries him- or herself to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to achieve less well in school work
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay the bully)
- Has tuck money or other money continually "lost"
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Stops eating
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous or jumpy when a cyber message is received
- Is evasive or gives improbable excuses in relation to any of the above

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems or circumstances, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated by parents and teachers.

Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it will be investigated and acted upon. The school will also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour coordinator in our local authority of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police will be informed.

4. Action against Bullying

We take the following preventative measures:

- We raise awareness of staff through training, taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely. Staff training ensures that principles are understood and legal responsibilities known by all staff. It also ensures that action is defined to resolve and prevent problems, and sources of support are available for staff should they need it.
- We use appropriate Assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. Our PSHCE programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. The programme is structured to enforce the message about community involvement and taking care of each other. In addition, regular year group forums give pupils opportunities to air concerns.
- Other lessons, particularly IT highlight the issue of bullying and reinforce this message by teaching moral and spiritual values that show bullying to be unacceptable and by developing social skills.
- Development of the RSE curriculum in order to address appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in relationships and in regard to sexual and homophobic bullying and harassment, and how to deal with these if they encounter them
- All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place. This is then passed to the relevant tutor/class teacher for investigation.
- We ensure all pupils are clear about the role they can play in bullying or preventing it, including when they find themselves as bystanders.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents.
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Tutors/Class Teachers, complemented by the wellbeing team and overnight stay staff for the boarders. They are expected to handle any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying.
- Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with both victims and bullies.

- Where necessary, and if requested by the parents, the school can provide details of external support services.
- Where appropriate, we would invest in further specialist skills to understand the needs of our pupils including those with special educational needs or disabilities and gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) pupils.
- Staff are always on duty at times when pupils are not in class and patrol the school site, particularly areas where bullying might occur. They are trained to be alert to inappropriate language or behaviour.
- We reserve the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips and that occur in the vicinity of the school, involving our pupils. This includes cyber-bullying which, whilst taking place out of school and out of school time, creates repercussions in school.
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

Where there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm' reference to the Safeguarding policy must be made.

It is essential that all adults in the school community know what to do when they suspect that a child is being bullied and which member of staff to contact. Whether bullying occurs in school, out of school or on-line, staff will have a range of appropriate strategies on which to call:

- Skilled observation to recognise and respond to the symptoms noted above.
- The member of staff to whom it was reported or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved.
- He/she will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible.
- The nature and level of support will depend on the individual circumstances and the level of need. These can include a quiet word from a teacher that knows the pupil well, asking the pastoral team to provide support, providing formal counselling, engaging with parents, referring to local authority children's services or referring to the Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health Service (EWMHS, formerly CAMHS) both for the victim and perpetrator.
- We will do all we can to ensure bullied children continue to attend school. In addition to the examples of support listed above, this could include using separate on-site provision that provides respite for bullied pupils, whilst maintaining their educational progression. It is important that this support goes hand-in-hand with measures to tackle the bullying so that bullied children feel safe at school, and on their way to and from school.
- The victim may be interviewed on his/her own, if appropriate, and asked to give an account of events.
- The bully, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to give an immediate account of events.

- The incident should be recorded on the school's MIS (iSAMS) and MyConcern
- All appropriate staff should be informed. In very serious incidents, the Headteacher should be informed.
- The victim will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the alleged perpetrator. It will be made clear to him/her why revenge is inappropriate. He/she will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him or herself.
- The alleged bully will be interviewed at a later stage by a member of the pastoral team, separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why his/her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. He/she will be offered guidance on modifying his or her behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions, as stated in the school's behaviour policy.
- When necessary, the parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- A member of staff will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved.
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions, restorative justice and counselling, should be agreed.
- This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures or appropriate support.
- A meeting involving all the parties, with close staff supervision, could be helpful in developing a strategy for all concerned to close the episode.
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place.
- Strong sanctions such as exclusion may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying.
- In very serious cases, and only after the Headteacher has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or to the Social Services. However, it is the policy of Holmwood House to attempt to resolve such issues internally under the school's own disciplinary procedures, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely.
- Instances of bullying will be recorded in the school's Register of Bullying.
- Availability of this policy on the school's website to enable parents to understand the school's approach and work together with staff.
- Use of the school curriculum, for example in subjects such as PSHE, Circle time, story time, drama, English and history, to embrace the topic of bullying, including its dangers, how to prevent it and the steps to take when it occurs.
- Development of the RSHE curriculum in order to address appropriate and inappropriate behaviours in relationships and in regard to sexual and homophobic bullying and harassment, and how to deal with these if they encounter them
- Use, as above, of other elements of school life, including assemblies, form periods, house meetings, school council and visiting speakers.
- Use, as above, of focussed projects, such as an annual Anti-Bullying Week, and focussed training, for example in safe use of the internet.

- Close parent/teacher liaison to ensure that both home and school work together to help and support the victim and moderate the behaviour of the bully.
- Ensuring that staff are fully aware of times and places when bullying is most likely to occur; organisation of the school day and supervision arrangements reduce the likely incidence of bullying. This includes supervision of changing and showering areas, monitoring the use of washrooms and cloakrooms at break times and the regular coverage of secluded areas at break times by duty staff.
- A good proportion of PE and games lessons and other physical activity to enable pupils to burn off energy and aggression.
- Use of the Element system and buddy groups as part of the school's pastoral care to encourage vertical bonding between age groups, giving older pupils a sense of responsibility and younger children a chance to externalise feelings and anxieties that they may not share with an adult member of staff or even their own family.
- All children are given the opportunity to speak to their class teacher or tutor. This person is someone they feel comfortable with, who knows the child well and understands that the child may turn to him or her. Where it is recognised that a child may not be comfortable turning to his teacher or tutor, alternative arrangements will be put in place.
- Familiarity of all staff with this policy; staff will sign to say that they have read and understood this policy.
- Through staff training and by regular discussion at staff meetings, raising the awareness of all staff to the dangers of bullying, how to prevent it, what action to take to resolve problems, and developing an understanding of the legal responsibilities and the sources of support available.
- Dovetailing this policy with the school behaviour policy so that all concerned are aware of the appropriate procedures and sanctions.
- Where appropriate, training in, or drawing on, external expertise in specialist skills to understand pupils' specific needs, for example to assist staff in being vigilant and in taking appropriate action in relation to the vulnerability to bullying of pupils with SEND.
- Minor behaviors (such as misogynistic remarks, casual harassment, or low-level peer conflict) exist on an escalatory continuum. Staff must challenge these behaviors instantly and report them to prevent escalation into severe sexual harassment or violence

* Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning and Social and Emotional Aspects of Development (EYFS)

5. Cyberbullying

The school is conscious of the dangers of cyber-bullying, in relation to both safeguarding and anti-bullying strategies. A range of measures is set in place to guard against it. The school's firewall and filtering systems are organised and monitored to ensure, so far as is possible, that pupils are protected from inappropriate content, including extremist materials and those designed to radicalise. The school recognises that no filtering system is perfect and, in their

ICT and PSHE lessons, pupils learn the steps they should take, should they encounter inappropriate content.

We understand the increasing nature of child on child abuse can now involve generated imagery or content utilising AI including digitally altered imagery such as "deep fakes" or "deep nudes" and creation, manipulation, or distribution of digitally altered images, visual content, or wholly AI-generated imagery as a severe form of sexual harassment, cyberbullying, and child protection violation.

All incidents involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images (whether self-generated, peer-taken, or AI-generated) mandate an immediate safeguarding response, regardless of whether the imagery is claimed to be "consensual" or "non-consensual".

The school also recognises that systems can only protect the pupils whilst using school equipment in school. The UK Safer Internet Centre has published guidance as to what "appropriate" filtering and monitoring might look like. South West Grid for Learning (swgfl.org.uk) have created a tool to check whether a school or college's filtering provider is signed up to relevant lists.

In line with the guidance in KCSIE 2026 the school recognises that children and young people have other ways of accessing the internet through the mobile network; and that this may be used to harass and bully others. The school has appropriate policies to address this through its policies on mobile use, as outlined in the safe and appropriate use of technology policy.

In their IT and PSHE lessons they, therefore, learn about appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and how to keep themselves safe whilst online away from the school premises. This includes the development of their resilience to resist radicalisation and how to protect themselves and take action if they encounter other forms of online bullying and harassment, including sexual bullying. Similarly, the school provides information for parents and periodically runs workshops to enable them to gain a greater understanding of how they can help to keep their children safe online at home.

In their IT and PSHE lessons, through assemblies and focussed workshops, pupils also learn at an age-appropriate stage about the dangers of cyber-bullying via technology, for example through mobile phones, email, social networks, text messaging and photography. They are given guidance on how to resist and report such approaches, including exercising prudence in the use of personal information on social networking sites.

Further information can be found in the school's e-safety policy, which can be found as a section of the safeguarding policy.

The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the Headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is

good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone.

If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable ground to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, we will give the device to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable. Material on the device that is suspected to be evidence relevant to an offence, or that is a pornographic image of a child or an extreme pornographic image, will not be deleted prior to giving the device to the police. If a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, they can decide whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of school discipline.

6. Procedures to Follow

This policy only works if it ensures that the whole school community understands that bullying is not to be tolerated and understands the steps that will be taken both to prevent and to respond to bullying.

The Role of the Headteacher

The Headteacher will be informed of any incidents of bullying and will ensure that all incidents are thoroughly investigated and properly logged centrally on the School MIS. The Headteacher will be responsible for ensuring the maintenance of a school bullying log and reporting on a termly basis via the Head's Report to governance. In serious cases this may involve liaison with the central team. The Headteacher will then collaborate with the Head of Juniors and Head of Senior School in ensuring that an investigation takes place in every case and each situation is treated seriously. If bullying is found to have definitely occurred, the parents of any children involved will be contacted and informed of what action the school is to take by the Headteacher or member of the leadership team.

The Headteacher will ensure that the leadership team and all staff undertake appropriate training in taking action against bullying.

The Role of the Leadership Team (Pastoral)

The main roles of the Leadership Team (Pastoral) in respect of bullying are:

- Managing and monitoring practices to ensure alignment with the school anti-bullying policy and procedures.
- Maintaining a clear overview of the incidence of bullying and the school's anti-bullying prevention and response strategies.
- Liaison with the Headteacher and between all parties involved, including parents.
- Ensuring that incident slips (or electronic entries) are completed by staff in all cases and that a copy is stored in the incident file.

- On a regular basis, analysis of the incident file so that patterns and trends can be identified and the analysis used to improve policy and practice.
- Promotion and co-ordination of anti-bullying initiatives and projects both within the curriculum and in the wider aspects of school life (as highlighted in 4, above).
- Deployment of appropriate strategies to ensure that bullies change their behaviour and support them in doing so.
- Endeavour to create a culture where pupils feel confident in coming forward to report incidences of bullying including those of a sexual nature

The Leadership Team (Pastoral) will be fully briefed by the Headteacher, who will ensure that they receive appropriate training, guidance and information.

The Role of the Staff

It is essential that all members of staff contribute to creating a school ethos which does not tolerate bullying and minimises the likelihood of incidents ever occurring.

- Staff must ensure that they have read and understand this policy. They must sign to confirm this.
- Staff must ensure that their training in taking action against bullying remains up to date.
- Staff will be aware of and exploit aspects of the curriculum and wider aspects of school life where they can embrace the topic of bullying, including its dangers, how to prevent it and the steps to take when it occurs.
- All staff should be aware that mental health problems can, in some cases, be an indicator that a child has suffered from bullying.
- All staff should be vigilant and open to the possibility of bullying occurring in the school and should avoid an attitude that is dismissive or suggests that "it doesn't happen here".

In any case where bullying is reported or suspected, staff must follow this procedure:

1. In most cases the incident should be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who is approached.
2. Listen carefully and intently.
3. Reassure the child that you are sympathetic and that the problem will be resolved.
4. Do not ask any leading questions.
5. Do not promise to keep the issue confidential – it is important to maintain the pupils' trust by remaining honest.
6. Make a clear account of the conversation on the school's MIS and/or MyConcern as soon as it has ended, but try to avoid taking notes during discussion.

7. Report the matter as soon as is practical to the Leadership Team (Pastoral). In their absence, report the matter to the Headteacher.
8. Discuss with the relevant member of the Leadership Team (Pastoral) how to proceed with, for example, further interviews, liaison with parents and what action is to be taken, in accordance with the school's behaviour policy.
9. Continue to address the incident as agreed with the LT (Pastoral)
10. Ensure that the incident continues to be fully recorded on the school's MIS and/or MyConcern, together with details of what action has been taken.
11. Liaise with the LT (Pastoral) to ensure that all staff are kept informed of the incident and action taken, as appropriate
12. Remember that staff must only ever use physical intervention as a last resort, and at all times it must be the minimal force necessary to prevent injury to another person. Staff should refer to the section in the Safeguarding Policy on physical restraint
13. Ensure that appropriate support is provided for all parties concerned.
14. A bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm; the matter should be reported to the DSL and procedures should be followed, as detailed in the safeguarding policy. This is likely to involve reporting the incident to Social Care, and also to the police if it is believed that the safeguarding situation constitutes a criminal concern.
15. If staff have a mental health concern about a child that is also a safeguarding concern, immediate action should be taken, following the child protection policy and speaking to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

7. Information and Guidance for Pupils

- As a member of the school, we expect you not to have to put up with any form of bullying behaviour. We can and will help to put a stop to it.
- You should feel free to speak out to your mum or dad or any teacher if you are being bullied. We can help you to cope with it straight away.
- When someone else is being bullied or is in distress, inform a member of staff immediately.
- Do not be afraid to report any incidents. Watching and doing nothing can suggest support for the bully. Even if you are just a bystander, you have a role to play in reporting any incidence of bullying.
- If you wish to inform the school of an incident involving bullying or perceived bullying but want to remain anonymous, you can write a note and put it in the various "worry boxes" around the school or in the boarding house.
- Do not put up with bullies in your group of friends. Bullies will soon stop if they are left out or are by themselves.
- Take care how you speak and act towards other pupils. Always aim to be considerate and helpful.

8. Information and Guidance for Parents

- You may not recognise that your child is being bullied. However, changes in their manner, behaviour and general state of health can sometimes be explained by bullying.
- Encourage your child to talk about it, but be patient. It is quite natural for him or her not to want to discuss the matter and not to want you to do anything about it.
- Listen and try not to interrupt.
- Reassure them that you are sympathetic and that it is a problem that can be solved. It happens to most people at some time.
- Ask him or her if there are ways of changing things and help them to try to develop strategies to cope, strategies which should then be practised.
- Try to keep the situation in proportion and so remain good-humoured.
- Encourage your child to talk to their form teacher or tutor about the matter.
- You should feel free to contact your child's teacher to discuss the matter if you are concerned.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use our Complaints Procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that any concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly. Parents of boarders and of EYES children should be aware that they have the right to refer a complaint directly to Ofsted, if they are unhappy with the way in which their complaint has been handled (The Complaints Procedure explains how to complain to Ofsted).

The Board of Governors understand it is their responsibility to oversee, monitor and review this policy and to ensure its implementation.

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