



Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy applies to:

Prep School (Including the EYFS) children

Person responsible for the policy:

Deputy Head, Prep School

Policy reviewed by Board of Governors – July 2026

Review Dates:

Last review date: June 2026

Next review date: June 2027

Aims:

The Prep School takes any bullying extremely seriously. It aims to treat each case individually and consider any exceptional circumstances when making decisions. We know that pupils will learn best in a safe and supportive environment that is free from disruption and in which education and pastoral care is the primary focus.

We recognise that bullying can occur from staff to staff, from staff to pupil, from pupil to staff, and from pupil to pupil (child-on-child). While the School considers all forms of bullying unacceptable, this document focuses only on the last category. For the previous categories, other policies can assist such as the *Low-Level Concerns* policy, *Professional Code of Conduct* and *Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Staff*.

Terms:

In this document the terms “bully” or “perpetrator” and “victim” are used. “Bully” is used of someone who has manifested bullying behaviour; “victim” is used of someone who has received bullying behaviour. The terms are used for ease of reference. There is no suggestion that these are discrete categories of people, or that their involvement in bullying behaviour is necessarily either pervasive or persistent.

Definition of bullying behaviour:

Bullying is repeated and targeted behaviour which hurts or causes distress by taking advantage of another pupil in some way, making another pupil feel uncomfortable or threatened. Repeated instances, or where there is a trend in a certain type of behaviour is often defined as bullying but the school may still take action in response to a single incident deemed to be bullying behaviour, to record and sanction as needs be.

Why bullying is serious:

Bullying is problem among children and can have devastating and long-term effects. Bullying is a serious health issue, not just a harmless part of growing up. Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. As a Prep School, we will intervene if actions or remarks are intended or unintended to hurt a fellow pupil as only then can unacceptable behaviours be realised.

Examples of bullying behaviour are:**Physical bullying:**

Physical bullies tend to dominate through force. Examples of bullying behaviour include, but are not limited to, hitting, kicking, pushing people around, and spitting but might also include intimidating someone and isolating or excluding them from the group. Taking, damaging or hiding possessions and demanding money is also considered to be physical bullying.

Taunting, teasing and non-verbal aggressions:

This is a common type of bullying but no less hurtful and unpleasant. Such behaviour includes, but is not limited to: name calling, insulting, spreading rumours or writing unkind notes, negative facial expressions and body language that conveys dismissiveness or disapproval. Bullies often claim that they did not realise their actions and comments were causing offence, but victims never find such assaults acceptable. It's important to remember that even if not intended to be harmful, non-verbal aggressions, such as subtle slights, invalidations that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages can have a significant negative impact on the recipient's mental health and wellbeing.

Sexual bullying:

Sexual bullying involves unwanted and unwelcome attention of a sexual nature. This may be physical or verbal or involve the denigration of an individual on sexual grounds or by sexual means. Any unwelcome behaviour of a sexual nature which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment for the recipient may be regarded as sexual bullying. It affects all pupils.

Racial bullying:

Racial bullying is offensive action and behaviour, deliberate or otherwise, relating to race, colour, ethnic or national origin directed at an individual or group, which is objectionable to the recipient, and which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment.

Emotional bullying:

Persistent emotional mistreatment towards another pupil such as to cause adverse effects on the pupil's well-being and mental health. It may involve conveying to another pupil that they are worthless or unloved, inadequate, or valued only as far as they meet the needs of another person. It may include not giving the pupil opportunities to express their views, not allowing them to join in with games, deliberately silencing them or 'making fun' of what they say or how they communicate.

Disability bullying:

Bullying in respect of a person's special educational needs and disability or impairment. This could include teasing and taunting, physical bullying and emotional bullying as described above.

Religious or cultural bullying:

Bullying because of a person's religion, belief or culture. This includes a broad definition of belief and cultures and includes minority religions, humanists, atheists and people of different nationalities.

Homophobic or sexual orientation bullying:

This is bullying directed at persons or groups on the grounds of a perceived or actual sexual orientation (applying equally to LGBT+ pupils). In terms of sexual orientation, discrimination can occur because of an association with a member of the LGBT+ community (friend or relative etc.)

Cyberbullying:

Cyberbullying can include threats and intimidation, harassment or 'cyber-stalking', vilification/defamation, humiliation, manipulation (whether open or anonymous), exclusion or peer rejection, impersonation, unauthorised use of private information or images, posting without consent.

Please refer to the College's **Cyberbullying Policy** for further information.

Why bullying is serious:

All aspects of bullying behaviour affect the victim. A victim may be bullied because of their age, an educational need, neurodiverse traits, physical appearances, nationality, colour, sexuality, gender identity, religion, out of jealousy or because a pupil is new in the Prep School, appears to be uncertain or has no friends. Pupils may also become a target because of an irrational decision by the bully.

Bullying can seriously damage a young person's confidence and sense of self-worth, and they will often feel that they are at fault in some way. It can lead to serious and prolonged emotional damage for an individual and even suicide. Those who conduct the bullying or witness the bullying can also experience emotional harm, and the impact on parents and school staff can be significant.

Prep School code on bullying:

All reasonable steps should be taken to ensure that, as far as it is possible, every pupil feels safe and happy at School and feels supported and always protected.

This **Anti-Bullying Policy** aims to outline measures to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based bullying and discriminatory bullying.

We expect all members of the School Community to uphold the Prep School Code on Bullying:

1. Every pupil at Ardingly Prep School has the right to enjoy their learning and leisure time free from intimidation.
2. Our school community will not tolerate unkind actions or remarks, even when these were not intended to hurt.
3. To stand by, when someone else is being bullied, is to support bullying.
4. If you are being bullied, or you know of someone who is being bullied you should report this to a member of staff or a trusted adult.
5. Bullying will always be taken seriously.

What is done to prevent or reduce incidents of bullying?

The ethos of the Prep School

An open, positive, caring and trusting atmosphere is promoted throughout the Prep School. Staff are expected to educate without prejudice or discrimination. They understand the school's principles, policies and responsibilities. They are urged, as far as possible, to anticipate problems before they escalate. Staff discipline sensibly and fairly. The school provides many opportunities to listen to pupils, informally in forms and in more formal contexts such as the Pupil Council. The school's rewards and sanctions system promote and encourages good behaviour. Equal opportunities practices are observed across the school: discriminatory words and behaviour are treated as unacceptable; positive attitudes are fostered towards people who are disabled and towards ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups within and outside the wider College (our diverse community, in which many nationalities are represented and celebrated, helps to increase acceptance of different cultures); positive attitudes are fostered towards all pupils throughout the curriculum. Systems are in place to minimise bullying through our PSHE (Personal, Social and Health Education), Form Periods, Circle Times, Assemblies and through multi-disciplinary curriculum planning. Regular opportunities are offered to listen to pupils. Staff are trained to act as advocates for the pupils, holding restorative conversations when problems arise, allowing children to talk through their worries, giving them an opportunity to hear an honest apology and to understand any necessary consequences.

The Prep School encourages pupils to be completely open regarding bullying. Pupils are not made to feel guilty about or intimidated by airing complaints. Moreover, pupils are encouraged to realise that it is always better to share their concerns. Sharing what is happening will help the victim to deal with their feelings. Bullying thrives on secrecy, so it is best dealt with by being brought into the open. An ethos of open discussion may save other people from becoming victims of the same bully. Finally, the Prep School reminds pupils that bullying can never be passed off as "just banter".

Education of our staff:

Appropriate training in all aspects of care is arranged, to ensure that all staff have the necessary professional skills, especially pertaining to the risk and indications of child abuse and bullying and who to deal with in such instances. Staff training takes place in various forms – from the earliest stages of staff induction (where school policies are shared, read and understood), staff INSET sessions (including specialist speakers on LGBTQIA+ matters, and ED&I College leads taking INSET) as well as working and training

within pastoral teams during staff meetings and weekly pastoral meetings. E.g. Humiliating students is an example of a reportable Low-Level Concern (see relevant LLC policy) that must be reported to the most relevant member of leadership. Staff need to know how to identify bullying (including cyberbullying), challenge it and know how to report this in order to hold bullies accountable and to support the victim(s).

Education of our pupils:

Pupils are encouraged to feel able to share problems with staff and to turn to any adult they trust if they have a problem, feeling confident to air their complaint.

Pupils are informed that bullying will not be tolerated in the Prep School and that it is a disciplinary offence. All Prep School sanctions may apply, and a pupil may be excluded. Form times, school assemblies and PSHE programmes effectively educate pupils about the dangers of bullying and that it will not be accepted. Throughout the PSHE programme and in other workshops, projects, use of literature, visiting speakers are also invited to educate pupils about bullying.

Monitoring pupils' behaviour, including bullying

Members of staff are always vigilant, but particularly outside rooms before and between lessons, inside changing rooms, during break times, in the dining hall and in any areas of lesson transition.

Form Teachers regularly discuss relationships, including bullying, with their classes.

There is close co-operation between staff and the Form Teachers to ensure that they are informed of issues and incidents as soon as possible. Form Teachers report to other staff in the Prep School issues and incidents involving individual pupils through weekly pastoral meetings. There is effective and close liaison between medical and teaching staff including Matron and through College Pastoral and Safeguarding meetings.

Record-keeping on the welfare and development of individual pupils is efficient and well-maintained through CPOMS, is sensitive to individual changes and includes all relevant information to provide staff with up-to-date information. This enables staff to spot changes in the wellbeing of individuals in time to take appropriate action.

Involving our parents:

Parents have an important part to play in preventing bullying. Staff will involve parents if there are any conversations with their child regarding bullying. Parents are also encouraged to notify the school if they feel their child is unhappy, whether it is because of bullying or for some other reason, so that the school can resolve the situation as soon as possible. Termly Parent Forums are available for questions to be raised more generally.

The school will make every effort to engage with parents and involve them to ensure that pupils know how to deal with bullying if it occurs and are clear about the part that they can play to prevent bullying. This includes when they find themselves as bystanders or in sharing of information which may help the school to address any forms of bullying.

The Anti-Bullying Policy is available for all parents on the College's website. The Parents' Handbook makes it very clear that the school's ethos is based on tolerance, respect and care. Whenever a bullying incident occurs, the parents of both parties will be contacted at the appropriate time within the process and once the school has had sufficient time to understand the involvement of respective parties. Often parents will be invited for a face-to-face meeting with either the relevant Form Teacher, Phase Leader or Deputy Head to discuss the incident, next steps and any required follow up. The school endeavours to update parents about the various social media developments that might facilitate bullying online. Parent forums can be used for this purpose and relevant workshops for parents are made available.

Procedures to deal with alleged incidents of bullying:

Any pupil being bullied or knowing that someone is being bullied should report what is happening to their parents, carers, guardians or to someone in authority within the College, in accordance with the Prep School code on bullying. The following people are available:

- Form Teacher or any other trusted adult,
- Phase Leader
- The Head and Deputy Head
- Matron
- The Chaplain
- A school doctor or a nurse in the Health Centre
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead
- Any of the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads
- Any member of the Senior Management Team
- A counsellor (contactable through the Health & Wellbeing Centre)

While a member of College staff may be better placed to support, they may also wish to contact:

- Social Services Childcare Helpdesk: 01293 572444
- Office of the Children's Commissioner: 02077838330
- ChildLine: 0800 1111.

Any person in authority who learns of alleged bullying behaviour should offer support to the alleged victim and then report the allegation to the Phase Leader of the pupils

involved (i.e. both victim and bully) as soon as possible. If the alleged incident involves a Phase Leader, staff should report it to the Head of Prep School or Deputy Head, following guidance set out in **Low Level Concerns policy, Professional Code of Conduct and Dealing with Allegations of Abuse Against Staff**.

The welfare of the victim should be considered of paramount importance. The pupil should be informed of any actions taken. They might need help to deal with their feelings and to understand and overcome their vulnerability.

The Phase Leader will record this and, if they consider it appropriate, hold conversations with both the alleged victim and bully and any witnesses from their form or friendship groups. These conversations will be recorded, together with action taken in the case. Records will be entered onto CPOMS along with other actions taken. Phase Leaders must notify the Deputy Head and Head of Prep School of all alleged bullying incidents and provide records of how the incident has been dealt with.

The Head of Prep School becomes involved in the more serious of these incidents and keeps a record of the event and the resulting sanctions. This record is used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Prep School's policy and to identify any patterns or trends. Records will distinguish if any of the incidents of bullying are based on protected characteristics. This will also enable the Prep School to monitor the success in meeting other standards such as instilling values of tolerance and respect and actively promoting the wellbeing of pupils.

If a bullying incident is serious enough to justify a referral, it will be reported to the appropriate external agency (e.g. the police or children's social services).

The Phase Leader will be in contact with parents of both the victim and the bully about the case and any action taken. The Phase Leader will share information with some or all colleagues, especially the Form Teachers of the pupils concerned.

The bully should be given help and support in trying to change their behaviour as well as in understanding their own feelings and motivations. It is essential that the Phase Leader and Deputy Head continue to monitor the situation regularly.

The Deputy Head will ensure that the alleged victim and the alleged bully will have the opportunity of an interview with them or an experienced member of staff when a reasonable length of time has elapsed after the incident. They may also decide that a specific group of pupils need further follow-up to address their behaviour patterns.

If the victim does not feel that the procedure set out above has resolved the issue, they should inform either their Form Teacher or any trusted adult in school.

Sanctions

Any sanction should be effective in stopping the bullying behaviour.

Pupils are informed that bullying will not be tolerated in the school and that it is a disciplinary offence. Any of the appropriate school sanctions may apply. It is likely that a serious bullying incident or an incident which is itself minor but forms part of a cycle of such incidents will, as a first step, result in external suspension.

Ultimately, a bully who does not change his or her behaviour may have to leave the school.

A bullying incident might be treated as a Child Protection concern when there is evidence to suggest that a child is suffering significant harm.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following additional College policies, Government guidance and further information:

- Behaviour and Conduct Policy
- Safeguarding Policy – joint Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Cyberbullying Policy
- DfE guidance on Bullying:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>
- Childnet guidance on Cyberbullying:
<https://www.childnet.com/resources/cyberbullying-guidance-for-schools>
- www.bullying.co.uk (available 24/7) throws a lifeline to despairing parents whose children are being bullied and who don't know what to do. Contains advice for both children being bullied and their parents.
- www.kidscape.org.uk has lots of leaflets, booklets and help for parents of children suffering bullying. They can also train teachers, children and parents' groups in dealing with or preventing bullying.
- www.childline.org.uk is the UK's free national helpline for children and young people in trouble or danger who can call free 24 hours a day on 0800 1111.
- <http://www.ceop.police.uk/> - Child Exploitation and Online Protection advice regarding sex and relationships with particular attention to social media and on-line issues.