



## **DORSET HOUSE SCHOOL**

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

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Date of policy: March 2015

Last review: September 2025

Next review: September 2026

Prepared by: Laura Hutchings, Deputy Head

Approved by: Governing Body

## **1. POLICY STATEMENT**

At Dorset House School, our community is based upon respect, good manners and fair play. We are committed to providing a safe and caring environment that is free from disruption, violence and any form of harassment so that every one of our pupils can develop their full potential. We expect our pupils to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so that they can learn in a relaxed, but orderly, atmosphere. All pupils should care for and support each other. This policy applies to all areas of the school including Early Years Foundation Stage and those children who board and it follows the DfE's Guidance on the prevention of bullying: *Preventing and Tackling Bullying – advice for Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies* (July 2017) and *Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff* (2014).

Dorset House School prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the school in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions.

Bullying, harassment and victimisation and discrimination will not be tolerated. We treat all our pupils and their parents/guardians fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate in their dealings with each other, the staff and the school. Any kind of bullying is unacceptable.

We take pride in our pastoral care throughout the whole school and in the Boarding House where, in accordance with the National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools, we certainly ensure that there are no initiation ceremonies of any sort so as to ensure that new pupils do not suffer any pain, humiliation, or anxiety whatsoever.

Pupils at Dorset House School do not identify bullying as a problem in the school.

This policy is provided not only to parents of boarders but is available and known to staff and boarders, including junior and recently appointed staff.

## **2. DEFINITION OF BULLYING**

Bullying may be defined as the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical (including sexual), verbal (including via computer or mobile telephone), and emotional means (by excluding, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours). It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It can involve complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidatory.

Bullying may involve actions or comments that are racist, homophobic, which focus on disabilities, special educational needs or other physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). It may include references to religious beliefs and cultural differences. It may focus on the fact that a child is adopted or a young carer. It may be directed at those who are

undergoing, or contemplating undergoing, gender reassignment. Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time. The seriousness of bullying can cause psychological damage and even suicide. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour. If the school feels that an offence has been committed then it will seek assistance from the police. When bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it will be investigated and acted upon. We always treat bullying very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the school's policy on equal opportunities, as well as with its social and moral principles.

We recognise that bullying does not need to be repeated over time in order to be classified as bullying. We take bullying on the basis of protected characteristics (the Equality Act 2010) particularly seriously and any such incidents are recorded as such in our records.

### **3. SIGNS OF BULLYING**

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the surgery/Matron with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away.

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents/guardians and teachers.

#### **4. PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

In order to create a positive, inclusive culture in which every pupil can feel valued and flourish, we take the following measures to prevent bullying:

- We use appropriate Assemblies to explain the school policy on bullying. Our PSHEE/RSE 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. Pupils are taught that they have a responsibility to act if they find themselves a witness or bystander when bullying happens.
- Other lessons, particularly RS/TaP, English and Drama 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.
- All our pupils are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know that bullying is taking place.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once. We always monitor reported incidents. Any incidents of bullying based on protected characteristics are recorded as such in the school records.
- Our pastoral team: Head of Boarding and Form Teachers, support the Headmaster and all staff are trained in handling 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.
- Our trained School Independent Listener is an important part of our pastoral support service, providing specialist skills of assessment and counselling. She is available to give confidential advice and counselling support to pupils who can refer themselves to her when they have social, emotional or behavioural concerns. On occasion, a member of our pastoral team may refer a pupil to her.
- 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.
- In the boarding house, there is strong team of staff supporting the House Parents and the Matron, who act *in loco parentis*. The informal house environment is important in reinforcing a pupil's standards and values, providing the opportunity for friendly,

informal discussion of matters of concern to the individual pupil outside the formal classroom. We encourage close contact between the House Parents and parents/guardians, and would always make contact if we were worried about a pupil's well-being.

- There are displays of advice around the school on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline and the Children's Commissioner.
- All pupils have access to a telephone helpline, enabling them to call for support in private.
- We encourage older pupils to support younger pupils.
- We provide leadership training to our senior pupils that specifically covers the importance of offering support and assistance to younger and to vulnerable pupils.
- 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
- We welcome feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures.

## **5. CYBERBULLYING: DEFINITION**

Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others.

Cyberbullying can involve Social Networking Sites, like Facebook, Snapchat, Tik Tok, emails and mobile phones, used for SMS messages and as cameras.

## **6. CYBERBULLYING: PREVENTATIVE MEASURES**

In addition to the preventative measures described above, Dorset House School:

- Expects all pupils to adhere to its charter for the safe use of the internet. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors pupils' use.
- May impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet.
- Issues all pupils with their own personal school email address.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying in PSHEE lessons, which covers blocking and removing contacts from "buddy lists".
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.

- Pupils' mobile phones are not permitted on site, except in exceptional circumstances such as bringing them in to take on a trip. Phones should always be handed in to form teachers and locked away until required.
- The use of cameras, including those on mobile phones, is not allowed in washing and changing areas, or in the bedrooms of boarding house.

## **7. PROCEDURES FOR DEALING WITH REPORTED BULLYING**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the Dorset House Behaviour and Discipline Policy which lists the sanctions that may apply in cases of bullying. Sanctions imposed will depend on the seriousness of the incident and may include exclusion for the most severe or persistent cases. If an incident of bullying is reported, the following procedures are adopted:

- 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.
- They record details and inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible. The written report will be passed to the Deputy Head who will keep it on file for the duration of the pupils' time in school. This is important to enable patterns to be identified. Staff will be made aware of the issue either via the weekly staff meeting or by email.
- Where the bullying is based on protected characteristics, this will be noted and flagged in order to monitor how well the school is meeting its obligations to instil the values of tolerance and respect.
- The member of staff will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved.
- The victim will be interviewed on their own and asked to write an account of events.
- The bully, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to write an immediate account of events.
- The Form Teacher should be informed and for boarder, the Head of Boarding. In very serious incidents, the Headmaster 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 them why revenge is inappropriate. They will be offered support to develop a strategy to help.
- 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 their behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. They will be offered guidance on modifying their behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions.

- The parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions 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.

- 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.
- In very serious cases, and only after the Headmaster 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 Dorset House School 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. Clearly, if there are child protection issues, matters will go straight through to social services without investigation at school.