



Dunottar School

Anti-Bullying Policy

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ANTI-BULLYING

Policy Statement

The aim of this policy is to help members of the school community deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly, to prevent it. Furthermore, we aim to provide a practical and coherent framework to establish an environment where bullying is discouraged and deal sensitively and effectively with any incidents of bullying which may occur, ensuring all pupils feel safe to learn.

Dunottar School aims to work in partnership with parents, to encourage every pupil to act with integrity, responsibility and concern for others. We also seek to promote mutual understanding and respect for others whilst giving each pupil the confidence and independence of mind to enjoy a fulfilling and successful life. The Policy is clear in that we create an environment of good behaviour and respect with helpful examples set by staff and older pupils and celebrate success.

Dunottar School is a community which does not tolerate bullying and which will take positive action against bullying. We understand that bullying is a serious issue and can cause lasting psychological damage and drive young people to desperate measures.

This policy has regard to relevant legislation and government guidance.

This policy applies to all members of our school community.

Dunottar School is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the school's Equal Opportunity policy document.

Dunottar School ensures that arrangements are made to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils at the school and that such arrangements have regard to any guidance issued by the Secretary of State.

Dunottar School seeks to implement this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.

In line with our Provision of Information policy, this document is available to all interested parties on our website and on request from the main school office and should be read in conjunction with other school policies including; the Acceptable use of technology policy, the Behaviour and Discipline policy, The Attendance policy, the Admissions policy, the Child Protection (Safeguarding) Policy and the Exclusions, Expulsion and Removal policy.

This document is annually reviewed by the Deputy Head (Pastoral) or as events or legislation change and government advice requires.

The next scheduled date for review is October 2026.

Defining bullying and anti-social behaviour

What is bullying?

Bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt or threaten someone. It is a serious offence, which can cause psychological damage to the victim. It happens when an individual (or group of individuals) goes out of its way **deliberately** to threaten, frighten, abuse or hurt someone else physically or emotionally. Sometimes it occurs between two individuals in isolation, but it can also take place in the presence of others. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, culture, gender, disability, special educational needs, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between pupils and victims find it difficult to defend themselves. The action is usually **repeated over time**, although the school will also act for single incidents of bullying. Bullying can take many different forms, which include:

- **Physical bullying** should not be seen merely in terms of a pupil being physically threatened or assaulted. It can include damage done to the victim's property, clothing or school work.
- **Verbal bullying** includes name calling, sarcasm and persistent teasing.
- **Emotional (or mental) bullying** is when someone is tormented, ridiculed or humiliated. Often the person who engages in this form of bullying does not consider it to be bullying but refers to it as a "joke". If this victim does not find teasing or taunting funny, then it is not a joke.
- **Indirect bullying** involves spreading unpleasant stories about someone, excluding them from a social group or spreading nasty, malicious stories about them.
- **Racist, Religious, Cultural, Sexist, Homophobic or Transphobic bullying** is when a pupil is targeted for representing a group; it is likely to hurt not only the victim but also other people in the same group; similarly, pupils who are targeted because they have a disability or a Special Educational Need.
- **Sexual bullying** is characterised by unwelcome remarks about appearance, inappropriate (and uninvited) touching and sexual innuendos and propositions. It can also be related to sexual orientation.
- **Cyber bullying** is when one person or a group of people aim to threaten, tease or embarrass someone else by using a mobile phone, the internet or other technologies, such as social websites, text messages, photographs or email.
- **Prejudice-based bullying** because of a protected characteristic (As outlined in the Equality Act 2010).

Who are bullies and why do they bully?

Pupils who bully others come from all social classes and cultural backgrounds. They may believe that bullying will make others respect them. They may feel inadequate, unhappy and insecure and may be in need of help. It is important to help the bully both to understand that they are responsible for hurting someone and that such behaviour will not be tolerated. If a bully is allowed to get away with such behaviour, it will continue; a systematic approach to deal with the bully is necessary. All pupils deserve the opportunity to be helped and supported and also to understand what acceptable behaviour is. Pupils are educated through PSHE, RSE, assemblies, and form meetings to raise awareness, with discussions of differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice (and prejudice based-language). There are criminal laws that apply to harassment, assault and threatening behaviour. If staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police.

Who gets bullied?

Research suggests that some individuals are more likely to be bullied than others, e.g. being different in some obvious respect, lacking social skills, having an over-protective family. Anyone can be the victim of bullying, but no one deserves to be bullied.

Where bullying may take place

Vigilance should be paid to areas of the school where bullying is likely to take place and where has been highlighted pupils feel least safe. Those out of the way places where pupils may go if they want to do something they should not.

Procedures - Strategies and actions to combat bullying

This policy gives clear guidance to staff on identifying and dealing with bullying in school and it is reviewed regularly. The school gives clear guidance to parents and pupils of how to deal with bullying. This guidance is given in parent and pupil handbooks.

Guidance for Teachers should you witness bullying or it is reported to you.

1. Reassure and support the pupils involved.
2. Advise them that you are required to pass details on to the relevant member of the pastoral team. (Form Tutor, Head of Year, Director of Sixth Form or Deputy Head (Pastoral)).
3. Inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible. Incidents of reported bullying should be recorded and staff must ensure that the Relevant Head of Year is informed. The Heads of Year and Director of Sixth Form meet regularly with the Deputy Head (Pastoral), who will keep a central log of all complaints or incidences of bullying and record the way in which they were dealt.

Bullying occurs in every school. We are fortunate in working in an environment where incidents of bullying are unusual. This should not make us complacent; on the contrary, it should make us more determined to preserve what is clearly a valuable part of the School's culture. As a teacher or other adult within the school, any suspected cases of bullying should be investigated immediately, following the procedures as outlined in this policy. Dunottar
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School is committed to raising the awareness of staff through training, including understanding the needs of our pupils (including those with SEN, disabilities, and LGBTQ+ pupils) so that the principles of the school policy are understood, legal responsibilities are known, action is taken to resolve and prevent problems and sources of support are readily available.

How do I know if bullying is happening?

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school.

Members of staff and all members of the community must be alert to the signs of bullying; legal responsibilities are known and community members should act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with School policy. Surveys have shown that in the vast majority of bullying incidents, MOST people knew that what was going on was wrong. Sometimes people, either through lethargy, peer group pressure, or tacit support for what is going on, fail to take action.

There are a number of characteristics which make some pupils more vulnerable to being bullied than others are. If you think about your own knowledge of incidents where you have become aware of bullying, you will be able to add to this list:

- Lacking close friends, awkwardness, few social skills
- Behaving inappropriately with peers, being a nuisance in some way, latching onto a group where they are not welcome
- Being shy
- Being different in some obvious way e.g. appearance, being excessively clumsy, inept at games
- Coming from an over-protective environment
- Having a family which promotes a child's special qualities in some way
- Being from a minority or racial group

Inevitably, personal judgement is essential in dealing with and investigating cases of bullying; knowledge of individual pupils is critical and this is why the effective use of the pastoral system is essential. If you have any doubts at all, talk to another member of the staff to find out whether anyone else has noticed a change in behaviour. The following may indicate that bullying is taking place:

- Increased absenteeism
- Withdrawn, remote, absent minded behaviour
- Physical symptoms such as stomach aches, vomiting, limb pains, sleeplessness

What should I do when I feel reasonably sure that bullying is taking place (including cyberbullying)?

Contact the Form Teacher or Head of Year who will then liaise with Deputy Head (Pastoral). The case will be investigated thoroughly by:

- Interviewing the bully and victim separately
- Encouraging the pupils concerned to write down what they believed happened
- Keep a written record of:
 - What was said
 - Whether there was a satisfactory solution which left the victim feeling supported and the bully aware that the behaviour was unacceptable
 - Whether further action was necessary
 - Whether the parents were informed
 - What sanctions were imposed

An overview of written records enables the Deputy Head (Pastoral) to evaluate the effectiveness of the approaches adopted and enables patterns to be identified. If it is appropriate, or it is a pupil's second offence, the Deputy Head (Pastoral) will inform the parents of the perpetrator/s by letter, telephone or email. The following sanctions may be applied in accordance with the School Behaviour and Discipline policy.

- **Formal School Warning from the Deputy Head.** The Deputy Head (Pastoral) will speak to the pupils involved and will contact the parents or guardians giving details of the offence and inviting them into School to discuss the matter and to be present when their child is given a Formal School Warning. This will be in the form of a letter which will sit on the pupil's file. Their support for the School's actions should be enlisted if possible.
- **Suspension** at the Head's discretion (see the School's Behaviour Policy and Exclusion, Expulsions and Removal Policy).
- **Exclusion** (may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying) at the Head's discretion (see the School's Behaviour Policy and Exclusion, Expulsions and Removals Policy).

In very serious cases it may also be necessary to make a report to the Police or Social Services. In these serious incidents a bullying incident may be treated as a child protection concern if there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer, significant harm. Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously.

However, it is the policy of the School to attempt to resolve such issues internally using our own disciplinary sanctions, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely.

The keeping of written records is essential. The School has a legal obligation to provide an environment where a pupil can learn free from harassment and there are laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour. If staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the Police. It may become necessary to provide evidence in a court of law: with this in mind, individual cases of bullying should be monitored at regular intervals, particularly to identify any patterns or trends emerging. Where

intervention has not been successful the Head should be informed. It is often useful to appoint a case officer in extreme (or complicated) cases. In this way, an appointed individual is able to provide an overview of the situation and act as the focus for collecting information.

E-Bullying

Mobile digital devices, computers and tablets are a source of fun, entertainment, communication and education. However, we know that pupils can use these media to tease, threaten or bully and some men, women and young people will use these technologies to harm pupils. The harm might range from sending hurtful or abusive texts and emails, to enticing pupils to engage in sexually harmful conversations, webcam photography or face-to-face meetings. The school's IT policy explains how we try to keep pupils safe in school. Cyber-bullying by pupils, via texts, social websites, mobile phones, photographs and emails, is treated as seriously as any other type of bullying. Dunottar school's IT policies aim to reduce the risk of opportunities within the school day for this type of bullying.

Social media platforms are the more obvious sources of inappropriate and harmful behaviour and pupils are not allowed to access these sites in school. Some pupils will undoubtedly be 'chatting' on mobiles or social networking sites at home and we have produced a short leaflet entitled 'Virtually Safe@ Dunottar School' including information on age-appropriate information, grooming, adult sites and sharing personal information/photographs to help parents and pupils understand the possible risks. We have also asked all parents of Year 7 pupils, if they so wish, to take part in some additional online through our safeguard training provider Educare.

What does the School do to combat bullying?

The School takes a number of practical measures in order to discourage bullying and to promote an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. These include:

- Discussing the problems of bullying in the context of the PSHEE programme.
- Holding staff meetings regularly in which the academic and social progress of individual pupils can be highlighted and discussed
- Encouraging staff to be alert to changes in behaviour, friendship groups, punctuality and attendance
- Making sure that the situation is monitored effectively during breaks and lunch hours and in places where bullying is most likely
- Speaking out about bullying in assemblies led by the Head, key pastoral staff and pupils
- Using current affairs, historical events, drama, literature etc to raise awareness of bullying and the importance of avoiding prejudice (and prejudice-based language)

Staff are given 'pastoral care' induction sessions and updated on the latest trends in bullying through Inset. External specialist skills are brought in to help understand the needs of our pupils where necessary.

In addition, the School has established pastoral procedures that encourage pupils to speak out when they either find themselves a victim of bullying or see others being bullied and the part they can play to prevent bullying. These procedures aid pupils to understand the part they can play in preventing bullying, including when they find themselves bystanders. Pupil surveys are carried out by the school annually. These surveys can be used to identify the places and times bullying is most likely and reduce risk.

An anti-bullying policy is of little use, however, if the School's culture does not promote an atmosphere of tolerance, respect and inclusion. Within the supportive atmosphere that such an ethos provides, bullying is considered to be extraordinary behaviour, behaviour moreover which is out of place in the School environment.

We recognise that sanctioning pupils who bully may not always be appropriate. Consideration is given to the context of the incident when deciding on action towards pupils who bully. In the first instance, pupils who bully will be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and move forward with their peers. Involvement of parents and the use of other support networks may be appropriate at this stage. When sanctions are necessary to deal with bullying, they are intended to hold pupils who bully to account for their behaviour and to ensure that they face up to the harm they have caused and to learn from it. The sanctions will provide an opportunity for the pupil to right the harm they have caused. Strong sanctions may be used ultimately including exclusion, that may be necessary in cases of severe and persistent bullying.

The school will inform and work with parents in all incidents of bullying, advising them on the strategies to adopt, whether their child is being bullied or the one doing the bullying.

Incidents of bullying are recorded on individual pupil records kept by the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

We are absolutely confident that the vast majority of pupils will agree with our sentiments on bullying. It is our intention to identify and take action against those who do not.

References

DCSF Safe to Learn, Embedding anti-bullying work in schools.

National Minimum Standards for Boarding School (2013)

DfE Guidance – Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies (updated July 2017)

Education and Inspections Act 2006

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE, 2024)
- ISSR Part 3, para 7 and 10

www.cyberbullying.org

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