

SAFEGUARDING 2: ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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Introduction

At Benenden, we aim to create an environment in which bullying is not tolerated, in which pupils can report bullying and staff and pupils can talk openly and regularly about the issues of bullying through our PPD/Wellbeing provision, Tutor Meetings, House Order, Prayers and through presentations, briefings and discussion in Staff Meetings. Staff, parents, and pupils are encouraged to support the ethos of kindness and respect for others and we ensure that all are aware of their responsibility to watch out for and respond appropriately to any bullying behaviour. All members of the community at Benenden are encouraged to call out any behaviour which might be deemed as bullying, and representatives from both the pupil and staff body (Hms, DHms, Matrons, Teachers, Tutors, Grey Jumpers, Prefects, Heads of Layer, Heads of Year, Safeguarding Team, Independent Listener) are given training in ways to support anyone who needs think that they, or someone they know, is being bullied.

All bullying is unacceptable. At Benenden, we wish to live in a caring and supportive school in which no one suffers any form of bullying or discrimination, a school in which kindness and respect for others is strongly encouraged and a school in which pupils, their parents and staff will report bullying, knowing that the issue will be dealt with sensitively but robustly.

This policy applies to all pupils and all member of the School community irrespective of their age or whether or not a pupil is in the care of the School when/if bullying behaviour occurs. While this policy focuses mainly on the bullying of pupils by other pupils, it is recognised that other forms of bullying may occur.

This policy is available on the school website and pupils are given a summary of this policy in the Students' Handbook.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and we expect all members of our community to support this policy.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, which *could happen once or is repeated over time and intentionally hurts another individual or group.*

Bullying can have a significant psychological, emotional, and/or physical effect on a victim causing damage to self-esteem and confidence. It often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways: it may be physical or psychological; it may derive from an intellectual imbalance or by having access to the support of a group; or it may derive from the capacity to socially isolate someone. It can result in the intimidation of a person through the threat of violence or by isolating them physically or online. The persistent use of unkind comments or actions which may seem trivial in isolation but which, taken together, create a climate where the victim feels unworthy, inferior, or excluded can also have a harmful effect.

Types of Bullying

Some examples of behaviour which could count as bullying at Benenden include:

- Name-calling and hurtful or discriminatory remarks
- Banter bullying, when 'joshing' or 'joking' are used to target, humiliate, or intimidate

- Spreading rumours or gossip about a person
- Exclusionary behaviour
- General unkindness
- Attempting to humiliate or isolate someone by exclusion from a group
- Cyberbullying, which involves e-technology. Bullying can happen through text messaging, blogs, social media platforms and websites etc. Please refer to Cyberbullying below:
- Physical violence such as kicking, hitting, pushing, or the threat of violence.

Bullying may also be:

- Racist – or related to someone’s religion, belief or culture
- Sexist – related to a person’s gender or gender assignment
- Sexual – how someone is spoken to or if someone is touched in a sexually inappropriate way
- Homophobic – relating to a person’s sexual orientation
- Related to/focused on someone’s disability, SEN, physical attributes (physical body shape or hair for example), health conditions or home circumstances.

Bullying can involve complicity (silently accepting) which falls short of direct participation. It can be hidden and subtle or overt and obvious. All of these forms of bullying are equally unacceptable.

Severe Bullying

Bullying that is so extreme that a pupil suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm is a Safeguarding and Child Protection concern and will be reported as such. In these cases, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy will be followed, and a referral will be made to external agencies, such as the police/children’s social care, as appropriate.

Vulnerability to Bullying

Examples of characteristics which might make a person feel vulnerable or become a target of bullying include:

- Age
- Physical appearance
- A disability
- A difficult situation at home
- Ethnic background
- Social background
- Nationality
- Religion
- Sexual or gender preference.

Symptoms of Bullying

Signs of bullying can be difficult to interpret as many of them are the same as signs of other stress-related difficulties. Nevertheless, these symptoms are signs that something is wrong, and they may be the symptoms of bullying:

- Significant changes in behaviour patterns e.g. becoming withdrawn, anxious, disruptive, or aggressive
- Beginning to self-harm which could include cutting or changes to eating habits
- Significant changes in sleep or work pattern

- Having unexplained injuries or giving an odd explanation about how injuries happened
- Having possessions go 'missing'
- Being often seen alone.

If a member of staff, a parent, or a pupil notices any of these signs, or others which cause concern, they should speak to a member of the pastoral staff, medical staff, or Safeguarding Team.

Reporting a Bullying incident

The best way to stop bullying is to get help, so we actively encourage pupils who feel they are being bullied, or who are worried another pupil is being bullied, to raise this without delay. This can be done in a number of ways:

- Speak to the House team, School Chaplains, Medical Centre, or any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable
- Tell their parents
- Speak with the School Counsellor
- Speak with the Head Girl or one of the Grey Jumper Team (Pupil Support)
- Contact the Independent Listener.

We recognise that staff may experience bullying in the workplace. They should raise concerns with their line manager, Head or HR or member of SMT. They can also refer to the staff handbook.

Procedures for Responding to Bullying

When a disclosure is made about a potential case of bullying, members of staff (or parents or pupils) should adopt the following procedure.

If a pupil is disabled or has special educational needs, account will be taken of those circumstances and consideration will always be given to modifying how a concern is managed and how any sanctions are applied.

- Listen.** The member of staff, parent or pupil should listen to the concern, avoid asking leading questions and record what is said straight after the disclosure, using the pupil's actual words where possible.
- Reassure.** The victim can be reassured that the situation will get better and that they were right to report the bullying. If a parent or pupil is told about bullying, we strongly encourage them to contact the Hm or another appropriate member of staff.
- Seek help.** The member of staff, parent or pupil must then seek help and advice in dealing with the matter from one of the following: The Headmistress, the Deputy Head of Boarding and Pastoral Care or a Housemistress or Housemaster. If bullying is reported to an older pupil, she should tell a member of staff right away, without trying to investigate it.
- Next steps.** What happens next will depend on the nature and persistence of the bullying. The bullied person will be included in discussions on the right course of action so that she feels comfortable with any action agreed. There is no set pattern. We will give help and support to any victims of bullying, and to anyone who brings such issues to our attention.

- e. **Monitor.** Once the situation has been addressed, monitoring will continue so that the situation does not recur.
- f. **Other routes.** If a pupil does not wish to report the concern to a member of staff, they may speak to the School Counsellors or the School's Independent Listener (Mrs Helen Commander) or organisations (e.g. Childline) outside the school community.
- g. **Outcomes.** Help will also be given to the alleged bully. The School will give support to enable a pupil to make a fresh start. However, repeated, or persistent bullying, however minor, will not be tolerated.

Please also refer to the Appendix for 'The Seven Steps Approach'.

Sanctions

We will do all that we can to resolve issues of bullying through mediation, discussion and making bullies aware of the effects of their actions, but we will also use sanctions against them when this is necessary. These sanctions will be in line with the Pupil Behaviour Policy. In lesser cases, pupils might be placed in detention, be gated, or be temporarily excluded. In clear cases of severe and persistent bullying, the sanction may result in exclusion and the reporting of allegedly criminal behaviour to the police.

If a parent or pupil is not satisfied that an issue of bullying has been addressed appropriately they should speak with the Deputy Head Boarding and Pastoral Care in the first instance and then, if still unhappy, refer to the School's Complaints Procedure, as set out in the Parents' Information Booklet and Student Handbook.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is the use of information and communications technology (ICT), particularly mobile devices and computers, deliberately to upset someone.

Examples of Cyberbullying - Additional Considerations

- Cyberbullying can have far greater impact on the victim because it is very intrusive. Cyberbullies are able to invade their victim's personal space - whether they are at home or at school - anonymously and continuously. They have the ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images rapidly to a potentially huge audience and to continue to do so repeatedly and over a long period of time.
- Cyberbullying can, therefore, be relentless and inescapable. It can take the form of peer to peer bullying or across generations, such as pupil to teacher or vice versa.

Cyberbullying and the law

The School has a duty to safeguard and protect its pupils and staff from cyberbullying. Misconduct which takes place out of school - in holiday time as well as term time - but affects pupils or staff, is now the responsibility of the School, as outlined in the *Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006)*. This legislation gives schools the power 'to such an extent as is reasonable' to regulate the conduct of pupils both in and out of school.

The law protects people against cyberbullying in many ways. The list below shows some criminal and civil offences for which bullies can be prosecuted.

- a. Using threatening, abusive, or insulting words, behaviour, or images with the intention of causing harassment, alarm, or distress
- b. Sending an indecent, grossly offensive, obscene, or threatening letter, electronic communication, or other article to another person with the intention that it should cause them stress or anxiety
- c. Harassment (behaviour which causes alarm or distress) is an offence if repeated more than twice
- d. Causing another person fear, on at least two occasions, that violence will be used against them
- e. Sending a message that is known to be false for the purposes of causing annoyance, inconvenience, or needless anxiety.

Procedures for Responding to Cyberbullying

It is important that a pupil who raises a bullying concern is reassured and feels safe to ask for help, the member of staff to whom bullying is reported or who first discovers this situation, must inform a member of the Safeguarding team as soon as possible. The DSL will always be informed of incidents of this type. It should also be logged on CPOMS.

A member of the safeguarding/pastoral team will normally see the pupil concerned and any witness without delay and make an assessment which will be passed on to the DSL who will take action.

The procedures for responding to cyberbullying are the same as those for other forms of bullying. In addition:

- a. **Evidence.** The pupil should pass on any evidence of cyberbullying such as saved web pages of chat rooms or social networking websites, texts, emails. A copy should be made of them in case the evidence is later deleted from the original source.
- b. **Response.** A member of staff should ascertain whether the victim has responded to the bullying and record evidence of any response, making sure the victim understands that there should be no retaliation.
- c. **Identification.** Steps will be taken to identify the bully, where possible. This may include examining school system logs, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary.
- d. **Liase.** The person dealing with the initial incident will liaise with the Online Safety Officer to decide whether any material found on an electronic device should be deleted, retained as evidence of a breach of the AUP, Anti-Bullying Policy or Pupil Behaviour Policy or whether it is of such seriousness that it requires the involvement of the police.

The [Online Abuse and Bullying Prevention Guide](#) has an excellent summary in Annex C about responding to a pupil disclosure of online abuse. It follows the same procedure outlined in the [Safeguarding 1: Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy](#)

Sanctions

In addition to the sanctions outlined in the Anti-Bullying Policy and the Acceptable Use of ICT Policy, those involved in cyberbullying may:

- a. Be asked to remove any material deemed to be inappropriate
- b. Have their mobile device confiscated so that inappropriate content can be deleted
- c. Have their internet access suspended and have their access to mobile devices restricted
- d. Be reported to the police if a criminal offence is suspected.

Monitoring and Reviewing the Anti-Bullying Strategy and Policy

All cases of bullying, including cyberbullying, are reported to the Deputy Head of Boarding and Pastoral Care who administers the Behaviour and Bullying log. The Behaviour and Bullying log is reviewed by the Senior Management Team twice a year and reviewed at a meeting of all the Hms twice a term. The Anti-Bullying Strategy and Policy are reviewed by the Safeguarding Committee, and the Policy is referred to Council annually.

Anti-Bullying Scrutiny

This Anti-Bullying Policy has been drafted taking account of guidelines as published in:

- *DfE's 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies' (July 2017)*
- *ISI's 'Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements' and 'Update to Schools' (Sept 2018)*
- *ISI's 'Commentary on the Regulatory Requirements' (Sept 2019)*
- *ISI's 'Teaching Online Safety in School' (June 2019).*

Additional Policies and Documentation to be Read in Conjunction with this Policy

- Peer-on-peer Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding Policy
- Anti-bullying Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Acceptable User Policy
- Anti-Radicalisation policy
- Children Missing in Education Policy
- Pupil Behaviour Policy



- Whistleblowing Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2020)
- Working Together to Safeguarding Children (2018)

Appendix 1
Benenden Safeguarding Team

Designated Safeguarding Lead	Anne Wakefield Deputy Head Boarding and Pastoral Care 01580 236793
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Steve Miller First Deputy 01580 236718
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Kate Dobson Assistant Director of Boarding and Hm of Limes 01580 236743
Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	Neal George Assistant Head - Head of Co-Curricular 01580 236961
Anti-Radicalisation Officer (not DSL trained)	Ali Harber Deputy Head Academic 01580 236902
School Medical Officer	Dr Sara Butler-Gallie
Headmistress	Sam Price 01580 236616
Chair of Council	Anna Birkett cmabirkett@benenden.school
Council Member with responsibility for Safeguarding	Fiona Cornish

Independent Listener - Helen Commander: helenjcommander@gmail.com

Appendix 2

Staff may find this helpful when investigating an alleged bullying incident.

The Seven Steps Approach

Benenden operates an approach that does not assign blame, understanding that there will usually (but not always) be a bully group, with probably one person leading it. The Hm (or other member of staff appointed to deal with the issue), will usually follow the 'seven steps' programme below.

1. Interview with the alleged victim

When a member of staff finds out that bullying has potentially happened, they start by talking to the alleged victim about their feelings. They do not question the alleged victim about the incidents, but they do need to know who was involved.

2. Convene a meeting with the people involved

The member of staff arranges to meet with the pupils who are alleged to have been involved. This may include some potential bystanders or colluders who may have joined in but did not initiate the alleged bullying.

3. Explain the problem

The member of staff tells them about the way the alleged victim is feeling and might use the alleged victim's words to emphasise their distress. At no time does the teacher discuss the details of the alleged incidents or allocate blame to the group.

4. Share responsibility

The member of staff does not attribute blame but states that they know that the group are potentially responsible and can do something about it.

5. Ask the group for solutions

Each member of the group is encouraged to suggest a way in which the alleged victim could be helped to feel happier. The member of staff gives some positive responses but will not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

6. Leave it to them

The member of staff ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. They arrange to meet with them again to see how things are going on.

7. Meet them again

About a week later the member of staff discusses with each pupil, including the alleged victim, how things have been going. This allows the member of staff to monitor the alleged bullying and keeps the pupils involved in the process.

Appendix 3

Anti-bullying Strategy Overview

- **Preventative measures.** Benenden's response to bullying does not start at the point at which a child has been bullied. We have developed a more sophisticated approach in which school staff proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and implement strategies which try to prevent bullying occurring in the first place.
- **Staff responsibility.** Staff are reminded in their new staff safeguarding induction meeting and at regular policy briefings that [The Staff Code of Conduct](#) makes clear that all members of staff have a statutory responsibility to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils (Children Act 2004). This duty should inform the way staff behave in the classroom and other workplaces in the School when they interact and communicate with the pupils. Staff must, therefore, treat pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and at all times observing proper boundaries appropriate to their professional position. Verbal abuse and intimidatory or aggressive behaviour in the classroom or wider workplace will not be tolerated and will become a disciplinary matter.
- **School Polices.** Our anti-bullying education includes making pupils aware that there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour. Every House has a copy of this policy on its noticeboard which Hms remind pupils to read, and there are copies on the Portal which all staff and pupils can refer to. The House noticeboard copies of the Anti-Bullying Policy and Online Safety Policy are deliberately written in a pupil friendly and accessible language, so that the pupils are in no doubt respecting their content. During an investigation, the more detailed staff policies would take precedence over these and would be made available to pupils if requested. Parental attention is drawn to the policy via the Parent Bulletin each year.
- **Sanctions.** We make known the sanctions for bullying and we make it clear that bullying outside of school will also be treated as a disciplinary issue, just as it would be within school. This could include liaising with the police if it appears a criminal offence might have taken place or with Children's Social Care if external help is needed to support a pupil.
- **Keeping it current.** Staff are briefed annually on the policy and it is included in the induction programme for all new teaching and pastoral staff as well as for all new pupils. Updates are circulated to all staff and explained in Staff Meetings. Pupil updates are mentioned in Prayers and/or House Order or Form Order. Anti-bullying is an integral part of safeguarding training.
- **Visibility.** In addition to our education and training programme for staff and pupils, sources of support are advertised to pupils via their House noticeboards and the Student Handbook – see 'Who Can YOU Talk To?'
- **Recording of allegations.** An allegation of poor behaviour is entered into CPOMS and each case will remain 'live' until all parties agree that the situation has improved and that the action taken to counter the unkind behaviour or bullying has had a positive impact. The log details the various types of bullying, including: external, physical, verbal abuse, exclusion, cyberbullying, unkindness and others. It also details in the 'action' box the range of anti-bullying strategies deployed to counter the bullying, including: communicating with parents, talking to the victim/s and perpetrator/s, talking to the House year group or whole year group; deploying the School Prefects and others.



- **Monitoring of behaviour.** The means of recording instances of bullying behaviour enables the Deputy Head of Boarding and Pastoral Care to identify developing trends and patterns with regards to types of bullying and the effectiveness of the range of measures we employ to combat the behaviour. The 'Behaviour and Bullying' log is administered by the Deputy Head of Boarding and Pastoral Care.
- **Pupil role in anti-bullying strategy.** The School appoints a Pupil Support Prefect who is trained by the Deputy Head of Boarding and Pastoral Care in peer-mentoring, conflict resolution and child protection strategies. She works closely with the other school prefects to promote good behaviour and to respond to problems. Each House has a team of House Prefects trained in child protection strategies, part of whose job it is to unobtrusively monitor behaviour, to guide younger pupils in their houses and to produce literature which helps in our anti-bullying strategy. This team liaises with and is led by the Pupil Support Prefect, who in turn reports to the Deputy Head of Boarding and Pastoral Care.

Appendix 4

Anti-Cyberbullying Strategy

- **Preventative measures.** The best way to deal with cyberbullying is to prevent it happening in the first place. We aim to do this by educating and training pupils and staff about the impact of cyberbullying and the ways in which it differs from other forms of bullying. They are made aware of their responsibilities in their use of ICT and we encourage all members of our community to treat one another with respect and sensitivity.
- **Ethos.** We encourage a culture of open communication between staff and pupils, so concerns can be reported with impunity and we promote the positive and safe use of technology.
- **Awareness.** Pupils are made aware that they will be held personally responsible for material they have placed on a website, that their internet activity is monitored and what the sanctions for misuse will be.
- **Misconduct.** It is made clear that misconduct outside school will be subject to school discipline if the welfare of other pupils or the culture or reputation of the School is placed at risk.
- **Induction.** [The Acceptable Use of Mobile Phones and Handheld Devices Policy \(AUP\)](#) is presented to all new pupils as part of their Induction Programme. The briefing is repeated several times in a pupil's school career in Fourth Form, Lower Fifth and Six One and at other times if significant amendments are made.
- **Digital Leaders.** Each Lower School House has a designated Digital Leader, drawn from the House Prefect body. Their primary role is to actively promote safe and responsible engagement with the internet and virtual world. In consultation with the Online Safety Officer and the Grey Jumper responsible for e-safety, they take Prayers every term and focus on a feature of e-safety.