

Stowe School does not tolerate bullying, and this policy is a central part of the School's pastoral provision. All members of the School community are expected to base their behaviour on respect for others, regardless of differences of age, status, physical ability, belief, race, gender or sexual orientation. Bullying is always an abuse of power and cannot be allowed to continue. In extreme cases, it may be punished by suspension, or ultimately, expulsion.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's Behavioural Policy.

AIMS

1. To prevent bullying at Stowe.
2. To raise awareness of bullying and of what can be done about it, amongst pupils, parents, and staff.
3. To ensure that all pupils have knowledge of and access to a support structure within the School.
4. To provide guidelines for dealing with instances of bullying.
5. To ensure that the School's approach to bullying is a consistent one.
6. This Policy should be read in conjunction with the Safeguarding, Online-Safety, Pupil Code of Conduct and the Equality Policies.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

BULLYING AT SCHOOL: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

There are short and long-term consequences for both bullies and victims of bullying. Adults who were chronically victimised in their youth are at an increased risk of clinical depression, low self-esteem and other mental health problems. Children bullied over long periods may develop symptoms similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including hyper-alertness and being easily startled or emotionally distant.

Short-term effects of bullying at school include aggression with siblings, anxiety, stress and insomnia. Other characteristics may include self-isolation, mood swings and physical manifestations such as cuts or bruises. Childhood bullying and abuse may cause problems later in life that are difficult to overcome without the help of intensive therapy and treatment, leading clinicians and professionals to try and understand the root causes of bullying.

Mental healthcare professionals have sought to find out why young people become bullies to begin with. Young people with low self-esteem may intimidate others to gain a sense of power or control. Girls with self-confidence or other personality issues may bully their peers out of jealousy, resentment or because other girls are doing it.

Bullies may be experiencing emotional or physical abuse by a family member or other adults. Parents who discipline children with violence or intimidation can lead children to believe that the way to deal with conflicts is with anger or aggression. Thus, bullies may intimidate others, believing that it is acceptable behaviour. Additionally, parents who provide little guidance for or monitoring of their children may contribute to the continuation of bullying behaviour at school.

The Stowe bullying policy aims to empower victims to stand up to bullies, encourages parents, teachers, bystanders and Stoics themselves to report bullying incidents, and works to create a school environment that prevents and censures bullying. In addition, the L6 mentors, House Prefects and staff and the Peer Support Group and PSHE curriculum seek to instil resilience in Stoics and teach them techniques that will help them withstand other types of stress as they grow older.

Bullying can be a single incident or may be repeated over a period of time.

Emotional	being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
Physical	pushing, kicking, biting, hitting, punching or any use of violence
Racial & Religious	Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures (Racist and Religious bullying includes making any demeaning or insulting reference to a person's race, religion, nationality or ethnicity. Any reference designed to highlight the difference between one people's set of beliefs and cultural practices and those of a larger group could be interpreted as racist bullying).
Sexual unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments	Unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive comments, upskirting, sharing of sexual images. Sexting is the sharing nudes/semi nude images and/or videos.
Homophobic	<p>Homophobic bullying includes making any insulting or demeaning reference or innuendo to a person's sexuality which is designed to isolate, harass or exclude that person. Sexual bullying includes using offensive, hurtful or derogatory terms to describe another person, with reference to a judgement that someone has made about their sexuality or sexual activity. All offensive terms when aimed at another person constitute sexual bullying. Displaying sexual or pornographic images, on mobile phones, computers or any other electronic device, with intent to insult, demean or harass someone else, would constitute sexual bullying and could be a criminal offence. Sexual bullying also includes any unwanted physical contact, or any coercion in a sexual act.</p> <p>Children who are lesbian, gay, bi, or trans (LGBT)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The fact that a child or a young person may be LGBT is not in itself an inherent risk factor for harm. However, children who are LGBT can be targeted by other children. In some cases, a child who is perceived by other children to be LGBT (whether they are or not) can be just as vulnerable as children who identify as LGBT.
Direct or indirect Verbal	name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Cyber bullying	This includes the use of mobile phones for 'sexting', where sexually inappropriate mobile phone images of one person are used by another person to upset, demean, harass or isolate the person in the image. Cyberbullying also includes posting abusive or demeaning comments on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (this list is not exhaustive) to cause offence or to isolate or exclude someone. If there is evidence that any Stoic is not following the strict rules on ICT use, as expressed in the school's 'Acceptable Use Policy', the pupil will be liable to expulsion and any mobile phones or other hardware may be confiscated and examined. Pupils should be aware that for their protection and that of others, their use of email and of the internet will be monitored by the School. The punishments for anyone involved in cyber-bullying are the same as for any other serious offence, namely sanctions, suspension, or

	ultimately expulsion, as determined by the Head. It is also acknowledged that cyber-bullying/online bullying will likely run concurrently with face to face bullying.
Abuse of power	The size of the individual, age of the individual, strength of the individual, the numbers or group size involved, abuse of status and position of a person. CCE and CSE will involve an abuse of power. Child on Child can also occur within intimate relationships and within initiations/hazing such as harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element.
Disability	Offensive comments, or physical interference, aimed at another person who has a physical or mental disability, or who has a learning difficulty that is seized upon and exploited by others and used as a means to demean or humiliate that person.

Vulnerable groups

Any pupil could be subject to bullying at any time in their life.

Pupils who are at most increased risk of being the victims or perpetrators of bullying are those who:

- have specific special educational needs
- have a disability or impairment
- are from minority ethnic backgrounds
- start a school mid term
- are, or are perceived to be, gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or questioning of their sexuality or gender
- speak a first language other than English
- have suffered bereavement
- have suffered domestic violence
- have experienced physical or emotional trauma
- have a parent that was a victim of bullying.

Possible indicators of bullying include:

- disturbed sleep
- bed-wetting
- head and stomach aches
- problems with concentration
- changes in behaviour and attitude
- bullying other children
- damaged or missing clothes / money / property
- asking for more money than usual or stealing money
- withdrawn or changes in their usual behaviour patterns or attitude
- distressed or emotional and finds it hard to articulate their feelings
- changes in their eating patterns
- changes in their online activity
- shows evidence of self-harming or even for extreme cases potential suicide
- is unusually tired without a reasonable explanation
- has unexplained bruises or marks on their body, (some may refuse to change for PE & games)
- seems afraid to be alone and requires more adult interaction.

We recognise that the above behaviours may suggest someone is being bullied. However, we also recognise that the list is not exhaustive.

Bullying from outside school

Stowe cannot be directly responsible for bullying that occurs off site but we know that bullying can occur outside school and on journeys to and from school. The bullying may be done by pupils from our own school, by pupils from other schools or by people who are not at school at all.

Where a pupil or parent informs us of bullying off the school premises we will:

- Talk to pupils about how to avoid or handle bullying outside of school.
- Talk to the Head of any other school whose pupils are bullying.
- Talk to the police where this is deemed necessary.

The DfE says that, “exceptionally failure to take disciplinary steps to combat harmful behaviour outside the school might breach the school’s common duty of care.” Legal Services advise that schools can take disciplinary action against pupils for incidents that occur outside of school.

WHO CAN YOU TURN TO?

Bullying behaviour can only be stopped if information is shared.

A pupil who is being bullied or who sees another pupil being bullied is urged to approach any member of staff or other responsible person. Those who can help might include:

- Deputy Heads/ HouseParents /Head of PSHE
- A friend
- A responsible older boy or girl (school prefects or house prefects)
- A member of L6 Mentors / Welfare Prefects
- Parents
- HouseParents, Matron or other member of the House staff
- Tutor
- Any member of staff or trusted adult
- The Chaplaincy team
- Independent Listener
- The School Counsellors
- The School Doctor or Medical Centre staff
- Childline
- Children’s Commissioner

In all cases pupils, parents and staff can expect that they will be taken seriously and that the information they give will be dealt with as confidentially as possible. Punishment will depend upon the severity of the incident. Very severe or persistent cases of bullying may be punished by Head’s Sanctions, suspension, or ultimately expulsion, as determined by the Head.

Role of Parents that suspect their child is being bullied:

1. Parents with concerns about bullying should contact the Houseparent, Senior Deputy Head or Senior Houseparent, Head of PSHE or Tutor as soon as they feel they need to.
2. In cases of serious bullying, the incidents will be recorded by staff and the Headmaster notified.
3. If necessary, parents will be asked to come in to a meeting to discuss the bullying.
4. The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be investigated and every attempt will be made to ensure

that the bullying stops immediately.

5. In addition to any necessary disciplinary measures, the School will implement pastorally supportive measures to endeavour to help the pupil carrying out the bullying, to change their behaviour.

Parents should not:

1. Attempt to resolve the issue by speaking to the child whom they think may be acting as a bully, or by speaking to their parents.
2. Encourage their child to be 'a bully' back. Both of these will only make the problem much harder to resolve.

HOW TO TACKLE BULLYING

1. Prevention

- Through the promulgation of this policy.
- Through the PSHE programme and through chapel services, assemblies, tutor group discussions and by engaging with outside agencies and groups (e.g. *Kidscape*) aimed at raising awareness of bullying at schools.
- Through the promotion of L6 Mentors, Welfare Prefects and the Peer Mentoring System.
- By ensuring that all new staff are made aware of the School's anti-bullying policy through the new staff induction programme.
- By raising awareness amongst staff through frequent training opportunities and ensuring they are active in supervising situations/areas in which bullying can take place.
- By raising awareness amongst pupils, encouraging solidarity amongst them and making them realise that adults do have the ability to stop bullying.
- LGBT inclusion is part of the statutory Relationships Education, Relationship and Sex Education and Health Education curriculum and there is a range of support available to help schools counter homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying and abuse.

2. Action to stop bullying which is happening

(a) The immediate aims of this action must be:

- To prevent further bullying.
- To encourage the pupil involved to take control over what happens next.

(b) The eventual aims of this action must be:

- To increase the empathy, self-esteem and assertiveness of the pupils involved
- To make the bully acknowledge and accept responsibility for his/her actions.

Therefore:

- A bullying incident must be communicated to those who can deal with it effectively.
- the HouseParent(s) must be informed, and he/she has the responsibility for ensuring that an investigation takes place, or in very serious cases, for passing on that responsibility to the Head, Senior Deputy Head, Deputy Head or the Senior Houseparent. The Houseparent should also consider at what stage to consult with parents.
- The Houseparent may share information about the incident at the next Houseparent's meeting, or at the

next staff meeting as advised by the Senior Deputy Head or Senior Houseparent.

- At all stages of an investigation into an incident accurate written notes and relevant correspondence between parties must be kept by staff. The member of staff investigating the incident must work with the victim and if possible obtain his/her consent for any further action; a written record of the details of the incident(s) must be kept.
- Stowe also needs to take into if the alleged incident of Child on Child abuse has occurred between pupils within the same boarding house. A risk assessment will need to be made immediately after the incident to ensure the safety for all those involved. This needs to take into account the physical geography of the house if restrictions on movement is needed to further safeguard pupils. The school will always reserve the right to remove pupils if we feel they are genuine danger to themselves or others.
- Risks can be compounded where children who are LGBT lack a trusted adult with whom they can be open. It is therefore vital that staff endeavour to reduce the additional barriers faced, and provide a safe space for them to speak out or share their concerns with members of staff.

(c) Possible courses of action

Every incident of bullying is different and will need sensitive handling by the member of staff dealing with it. An investigation must take account of the fact that the victim's point of view is inevitably subjective. In all cases, the pupils involved might feel immediately supported by any or all of the following:

- Encouraging the pupils involved to talk about the incident and, in particular, their feelings and taking them seriously.
- Suggesting that a friend or group of friends is brought in to talk about the incident.
- Identifying the times/places/situations where the bullying happens and thinking of ways of avoiding these.
- Suggesting ways in which the bully can be confronted/dealt with, including
 - asking friends and other pupils to stand by the victim and to report incidents of bullying to staff
 - 'discovery' of the bullying in progress by a member of staff
 - staff-led group discussion in which the bully is involved but not identified
- Using the services of the School Counsellors or another member of staff to help the pupils involved to be more assertive or socially skilled.
- Using the services of the School Counsellors or another member of staff to help bullies to control their aggression and to be more empathetic.
- Using the services of L6 Mentors / School Welfare Prefects / House Prefects.

We support the victims in the following ways:

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their HouseParent(s), tutor, or another teacher/adult if they choose.
- Counselling service*.
- By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- Informing the bullies' parents/guardians.

- L6 Mentors/House Prefects & School Welfare Prefects.
- Informing the victims' parents/guardians.
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- By offering restorative justice as a mediation service.
- By taking the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying
- *CBT is available through private arrangement between parents and CBT therapist.

Supporting the Perpetrator:

The following principles are based on effective safeguarding practice and should help shape any decisions regarding safeguarding and supporting the alleged perpetrator(s):

- The school or college will have a difficult balancing act to consider. On one hand, they need to safeguard the victim (and the wider pupil/student body) and on the other hand provide the alleged perpetrator(s) with an education, safeguarding support as appropriate and implement any disciplinary sanctions.
- Consider the age and the developmental stage of the alleged perpetrator(s) and nature of the allegations. Any child will likely experience stress as a result of being the subject of allegations and/or negative reactions by their peers to the allegations against them.
 - Consider the proportionality of the response. Support (and sanctions) should be considered on a case-by-case basis. The alleged perpetrator(s) may potentially have unmet needs (in some cases these may be considerable) as well as potentially posing a risk of harm to other children. Harmful sexual behaviours in young children may be (and often are⁹⁶) a symptom of either their own abuse or exposure to abusive practices and or materials. More information on harmful sexual behaviours can be found at paras 16-20 of the detailed advice, [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children at schools and colleges](#). Advice should be taken, as appropriate, from children's social care, specialist sexual violence services and the police.
 - It is important that if an alleged perpetrator does move to another educational institution (for any reason), that the new educational institution is made aware of any ongoing support needs and where appropriate, potential risks to other children and staff. The designated safeguarding lead should take responsibility to ensure this happens as well as transferring the child protection file. Information sharing advice referenced at paragraphs 92-100 will help support this process.
- [The National Organisation for the Treatment of Abusers \(NOTA\)](#) provides support for professionals involved in work with, or related to, sexual offending.

DISCIPLINARY STEPS

As well as taking steps to change the bully's pattern of behaviour through discussion and counselling* if necessary, the following disciplinary measures will be used as appropriate:

- Officially warning the bully that their behaviour must stop.
- Informing the bully's parents/guardians.
- Sanctions.
- In more serious cases or where the bullying persists following other disciplinary measures,:
 - Suspension for a fixed period of time
 - Permanent exclusion.
- * CBT is available through private arrangement between parents and the CBT therapist.

Unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious reports

As set out in paragraph 68 of Part one of KCSIE 2023, **all** concerns, discussions and decisions made, and the reasons for those decisions, should be recorded in writing.

Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified, and addressed.

If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, the designated safeguarding lead should consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to children's social care may be appropriate.

If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, Stowe, should consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per their own behaviour policy.

Further Information

- [Preventing and Tackling Bullying](#) - DfE advice
 - [Cyber bullying: advice for headteachers and school staff](#) - DfE advice
 - [Sexting: responding to incidents and safeguarding children](#) - UK Council for Internet Safety
 - [Upskirting know your rights](#) – UK Government
 - [Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges \(now combined into KCSIE 2023\).](#)
 - https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1101597/Behaviour_in_schools_guidance_sept_22.pdf
- DfE advice