

NOTRE DAME SENIOR SCHOOL ANTI- BULLYING POLICY

NOTRE
DAME
SCHOOL



In line with our Mission Statement, we believe that all pupils have the right to be safe and happy in school and protected when they are feeling vulnerable.

Aim:

It is the aim of the school to eradicate distress suffered by any pupil as a result of bullying from any source. Bullying (physical or emotional) is always a serious issue and if not dealt with can cause psychological damage. **This policy therefore aims to help all staff to deal with bullying when it occurs, and more importantly to prevent bullying. Bullying will not be dismissed as banter or teasing.**

This policy applies to all Senior School pupils.

Due regard has been paid to 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017' and 'Cyberbullying: advice for head teachers and school staff 2014'

In line with the Equality Duty, Notre Dame has due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act
- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

Definition of bullying:

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, which is usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video), and is often but not always motivated by prejudice against particular groups or those with protected characteristics, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. For the purposes of this policy protected characteristics as listed in section 4 of the Equality Act 2010 are as follows:

- a. Age
- b. Disability
- c. Gender reassignment
- d. Marriage and civil partnership
- e. Pregnancy and maternity
- f. Race
- g. Religion or belief
- h. Sex
- i. Sexual orientation.

It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously Notre Dame's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers have to make their own judgements about each specific case.

Although the above definition of 'bullying' references behaviour that may be 'repeated over time', this does not mean the School will not take action in response to a single incident. An appropriate response and record will be actioned. This will assist the School with spotting patterns and to ensure the single incident does not become the first of a series.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Students with SEND may be more vulnerable to bullying.

Low level disruption and the use of offensive language can itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged, or dismissed as banter or horseplay, it can also lead to reluctance to support other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is or isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Bullying can take many forms, these include:

- Racial
- Religious
- Cultural
- Sexual / sexist
- Homophobic
- Disability
- Special or differing educational needs.

Someone who witnesses bullying, either in person or online, is a bystander. Friends, students, peers, teachers, school staff, parents, coaches, and other youth-serving adults can be bystanders. With cyberbullying, even strangers can be bystanders. Whether a bystander is complicit or should have intervened will be taken into consideration on a case-by-case basis. If it is concluded that a pupil should have acted, their actions will be considered under this policy and the Behaviour policy.

Cyber-bullying

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click.

The school will adopt a **zero tolerance** approach to any cyber bullying issues, that all staff will challenge any abusive behaviour between pupils that comes to their notice and will report on to the DSL and/or Assistant Head Pastoral immediately any issues of this nature.

Please see the School's Safeguarding & Child Protection policy for further details about dealing with child-on-child abuse. The Schools' ICT and PHSEE curriculum covers e-safety and includes age-appropriate guidance and teaching on cyber-bullying, including (where appropriate) sexting and takes into consideration the guidance in *Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying (2014)*.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones. There is no need to obtain parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone.

If an electronic device, that is prohibited by the school rules, has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must

give the device to the DSL (Assistant Head: Safeguarding) who will inform the police as soon as is reasonably practicable and will ask their advice on whether the school should view the material.

Material on the device that is suspected to be evidence relevant to an offence, must not be deleted prior to giving the device to the police. If the police advise that the school can view the material on the device and a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, but is still concerning they should decide, along with Assistant Head: Safeguarding and Headteacher, whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of school discipline.

Students below Year 12 are not allowed to bring in their own computers. Mobile phone use by students below Year 12 is not allowed during the school day. Staff are required to be vigilant when students are using computers in a learning context.

The E-safety policy (which covers the acceptable use of IT) give more details of processes and procedures.

For more information on this please consult the Department for Education's 2014 document: 'Cyberbullying: Advice for head teachers and school staff'

Procedure

When a bullying incident is reported it should be taken seriously and dealt with according to the **Senior School Response Process:**

1. Report is made – staff will act quickly
2. Pastoral team will investigate to determine what is likely to have happened. The victim is reassured. Parents of the alleged perpetrator(s) and the victim will be contacted to say an investigation is taking place
3. If the investigation shows that bullying has occurred the incident will be recorded as such, and appropriate sanctions will be determined.
4. Parents of the perpetrator(s) will be informed of the sanction.
5. The victim is supported and their parents are informed that the investigation has concluded.

Records of the complaint, interviews and any follow up actions of sanctions should be kept in the profile folders of pupils involved, and a copy should be given to the DSL / Assistant Head Pastoral so that patterns or further incidents can be identified and dealt with immediately. A referral may also be made to the Head of Learning Support (SENCO).

Details remain confidential, but it is essential that any staff dealing with children involved should have a clear picture of events so that they can be aware of how best to support the victim, and indeed the bully.

In the event of severe and / or persistent bullying it may be necessary to consider exclusion from the school. A severe bullying incident may be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the school staff should report their concerns to the Assistant Head Pastoral or the Assistant Head Pastoral who will contact the local authority children's social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, schools may need to draw on a range of external services to support the pupil who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

Regular training of staff in anti-bullying, including where necessary in understanding the needs of pupils with SEN is undertaken and details of the policy discussed regularly. Staff arriving during the school year will also have to read the policy and acknowledge this.

Action is taken to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely by assigning staff to duties at break and lunchtimes.

Pastoral care is a priority provided by the Pastoral Team of Heads of Year and Form Tutors/Class Teachers led by the Assistant Head Pastoral. Pupils, staff or parents may contact them to discuss any pastoral issue. This team is also supported by the School Chaplain, Peer Mentors and School Nurse.

The Executive team and SLT are immediately responsible for setting the code of expected behaviour (see Staff Handbook)

Pupils and staff are made aware that there is no place for bullying behaviour in the school and that it will not be tolerated.

In Assemblies and PSHEE students are encouraged to develop respect for other people. All staff have a role to play in ensuring that anti bullying is constantly on the agenda for RE/PSHEE/Form discussion. All staff will ensure that the immediate response chart is followed in the event of an incident.

Staff (especially Year Heads and SLT) must ensure that the behaviour policy is followed with regard to implementing sanctions reflecting the seriousness of an incident.

Values of respect and kindness towards both staff and other students and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate our whole school community. These are of course reinforced by our commitment to living by Gospel Values as a 'Company of Our Lady Mary' School.

Pupils must be made to feel that their complaints will be listened to and acted upon quickly. Pupils should understand how to ask for help by talking to a big sister, peer mentor, wellbeing mentor, Form Tutor/Class Teacher, Head of Year or other trusted member of staff.

Parents should be encouraged to report incidents directly to the school rather than to other parents. Parents should be involved in discussions about sanctions where their own children are shown to be bullying. The School will only discuss individual sanctions with the relevant students' parents and no other third parties.

The Anti-bullying Policy and Behaviour Policy are communicated to pupils and staff and is provided on the website for parents.

Logging all reports of bullying is carried out centrally by the Assistant Head (Pastoral) and the Assistant Head (Safeguarding) in the Senior school and the records are reviewed to monitor the effectiveness of the policy.

Bullying outside school premises

Teachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside the school premises "to such an extent as is reasonable". This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it should be investigated and acted on. The Head should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or anti-social behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed. In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying the teacher can only discipline the pupil on school premises or elsewhere when the pupil is under the lawful control of the staff member.

The Head will deal with complaints against staff. A copy of the **disciplinary procedure** is available in the office.

Further sources of information/ guidance/ advice see **D for E Preventing and Tackling Bullying July 2017**

Reviewed: May 2026

Linked policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour policy
- PSHEE policy
- E-Safety policy
- Teaching handbook (duties)