

# GDST ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

September 2024 – September 2026

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## Statement of Philosophy

- Our school community is based on an ethos of mutual respect and consideration. The school and the GDST are committed to providing a safe and happy learning environment for all
- We do not tolerate bullying, harassment, victimisation or discrimination of any kind and work hard to prevent these or to tackle them if they occur
- Bullying is a whole school issue and we take a whole school approach in response. Any member of the community may bully or be a victim of bullying: we regard all incidences of bullying equally seriously and in turn expect all staff, pupils, and parents to play their part in preventing and tackling bullying.

## Aims of Policy

This policy aims to:

- Try and prevent bullying, as far as possible, and
- Help staff, pupils and parents deal with bullying when it occurs.

## What do we mean by bullying?

The Department for Education defines bullying as 'behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'.

This definition highlights the fact that bullying can be by an individual **or a group** against another individual **or group**. It is commonly accepted that bullying is deliberately hurtful (including aggression), causes feelings of distress/fear/loneliness in the victim, is difficult for victims to defend themselves against (as there is an imbalance or perceived imbalance of power between the perpetrator and victim) and repeated over a period of time. However, it is important to remember that, depending on its nature, a one-off incident may be considered to constitute bullying (although this is not recognised in the DfE definition) and can have precisely the same impact as persistent behaviour. 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.

Forms of bullying can include:

- Physically hurting or attempting to hurt, harm or humiliate another person or damaging their property
- Verbal abuse such as name-calling, taunting, mocking or writing unkind notes
- Emotional manipulation such as excluding someone or spreading malicious rumours about them, building negative alliances based on gossip, or deliberately betraying former confidences to humiliate or isolate another pupil
- Cyberbullying, i.e. via social networking websites, phone calls, text messages, photographs or emails
- Unpleasant remarks or actions motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of:
  - Race, religion or culture
  - Sex



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- Gender, gender identity or perceived gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability or Special Educational Needs
- Intellectual or other abilities
- Appearance or health conditions
- Being adopted or a carer

Any behaviour that a reasonable bystander would say was intended to hurt or upset the victim is wrong and could constitute bullying, including complicity that may fall short of participating directly in the bullying. It is no justification that the perpetrator says or believes that the victim is not upset or hurt by his or her actions or words.

Much bullying is performed in subtle ways, which are not easy to detect; the perpetrator can use a simple look, word or gesture to signal an intended threat or insult. Some pupils are adept at changing a bullying situation into an apparently harmless one when an adult approaches. This makes it all the more important for pupils to be able to come forward to report bullying they have experienced or witnessed, and for staff and parents to be alert to symptoms of bullying.

Bullying is always hurtful to the individual(s) being bullied and damaging to the whole school community. Anyone and everyone who is involved in or witnesses bullying is affected by it. It can cause great distress, unhappiness and psychological damage and at its worst lead to suicide. It can also be a criminal offence, for example if the behaviour amounts to harassment or threatening behaviour.

## **How does bullying differ from teasing or friendship difficulties?**

Sometimes pupils can feel hurt or upset because they have been teased or have fallen out with a friend. This is not the same as bullying. Bullying:

- *Is deliberately intended to hurt or humiliate.*
- *Involves a power imbalance that makes it hard for the victim to defend themselves.*
- *Is usually persistent.*
- *Often involves no remorse or acknowledgement of the victim's feelings.*

School staff are ready to help and support pupils who have fallen out with friends, but such situations will not be treated in the same way as a case of bullying. However, the strategies we use may be similar because we acknowledge that over a period of time the impact on the pupil may be the same, and the situation could become bullying if it escalates. Girls on Board will be one way to review friendship issues between students.



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## Preventing Bullying

We aim to prevent bullying by:

- Fostering a whole school ethos of good behaviour, mutual respect, and consideration. We aim to create a safe, happy, and inclusive environment for learning
- Developing a culture in which diversity is championed and celebrated and in which the school takes a proactive role in educating pupils and other members of the school community in issues around equality
- Developing a culture in which the vulnerable are protected and incidents which might demonstrate prejudice or intolerance are tackled and addressed, for example by challenging inappropriate or prejudicial language
- Encouraging all members of the school community to have high expectations and model how to behave towards each other
- Raising awareness about bullying through opportunities in the curriculum, the PSHE programme and Period X, assemblies, CLIMB and national events such as Anti Bullying Week, amongst others
- Developing pupils' social skills, confidence, resilience, and self-esteem; and defining the value of assertiveness in relationships as opposed to aggression, whether direct or indirect
- Educating pupils and other members of the school community about how to keep themselves safe when online or using social media or other electronic means of communication, so they take maximum precautions to help prevent themselves being victims of cyberbullying
- Ensuring that all pupils sign up to the school's Acceptable Use Agreements, which make it clear that cyberbullying is unacceptable. This message is regularly reinforced in lessons and pastoral sessions. Shrewsbury High School also makes more detailed information on how to deal with cyberbullying available to pupils and parents. Parent Forums are held throughout the school academic year.
- Making it clear to all that there are effective procedures for reporting, investigating and tackling bullying, and encouraging pupils to report instances of anything they perceive to be bullying
- Making it clear to all that incidents of cyberbullying or bullying of any kind that occur off the school premises but have an impact on the classroom environment or relationships between pupils will be pursued with the same seriousness as bullying occurring within school
- Making it as easy as possible for pupils who are being bullied to talk to someone they trust and get help confidentially
- Having a strong pastoral team dedicated to pupil welfare and experienced in dealing with bullying issues. All our staff are trained in recognising and responding to bullying and staff awareness is raised through regular discussion of pupil issues in pastoral meetings. Action is taken to reduce the risk of bullying where and when it is known to be most likely to occur. The members of staff with overall responsibility for anti-bullying work is the Whole School Deputy Head and the Junior School Deputy Head. Contact details are at the end of this policy.
- Taking pupils' views into account through the school council, and developing the roles that pupils can play in anti-bullying work - for example the Sixth form peer mentoring sessions and the school council meetings.



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- Ensuring that the IT filtering and monitoring systems are effective in protecting members of the school community
- Working in line with national guidance, and the requirements of our regulatory bodies.

## Being aware – possible signs of bullying

All staff have access to free online training through the Anti-Bullying Alliance -

<https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/free-cpd-online-training>

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

- Unwillingness to go to school or return after a break
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, work that appears to have been copied, or interfered with or spoilt by others
- Belongings suddenly going missing or being damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, sitting in the library instead of going out at playtime)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Inability to concentrate
- Anxiety, depression, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Reluctance to leave the classroom at the end of lessons or school day
- Choosing the company of adults
- Frequent visits to the medical centre with symptoms such as stomach pains or headaches, especially at particular times or during particular lessons
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Difficulty in sleeping, nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for these symptoms, teachers, parents and fellow pupils should be alert for these possible signs of bullying and contact a member of the pastoral team if they are concerned.

Sadly, some individuals are more vulnerable to bullying, and less likely to speak out – including LGBTQIA+ pupils and those with SEND. Again, staff, parents and peers should bear this in mind in cases of possible or suspected bullying. Further guidance for staff on preventing, identifying and dealing with such types of bullying can be found in the Anti-Bullying Guidance on the staff intranet.

Separate procedures will outline the sanctions/actions which the school will take, and will sit alongside this policy in the Behaviour and Good Conduct Policy.

## Dealing with Bullying

If you are being bullied -

- Stay calm and try to appear confident. Tell the bully to stop and get away from the situation as quickly as you can
- **Do not suffer in silence: talk to a member of staff.**
  - This could be your class teacher, tutor or year group head, the school nurse or counsellor, or any other member of staff you trust.



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- If you are unhappy about talking to a member of staff directly, you could talk to someone in your family, a friend, a peer mentor or email the address [Ihaveaconcern@shr.gdst.net](mailto:Ihaveaconcern@shr.gdst.net)
- Telling does not make you a 'grass' or 'snitch': not telling means that the bullying is likely to continue.
- Remember you may not be the only victim
- Be assured that we take every report of bullying seriously and will act upon it, even if it occurred outside the school. We will keep records of what has happened, and consult you and support you in whatever action we take
- Remember being bullied is not your fault – nobody ever deserves to be bullied
- If you feel you are being bullied by a member of staff you should take the same action as if it were another pupil, that is, report the matter to someone you trust. All forms of bullying are unacceptable and all reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with, irrespective of who the person responsible for the bullying incident might be.

## If you know that someone else is being bullied

- Talk to a member of staff, or help the person being bullied to talk to a member of staff, so that the school can take steps to help
- Defend the individual and question the bullying behaviour – studies show that one of the most effective ways of stopping bullying is for fellow pupils to show their support for the person being bullied
- Try to defuse the situation: intervene as a group; walk away taking person being bullied with you; take away the audience; distract the perpetrator or use humour to lighten up a serious situation
- Leave the chat if online
- Be sceptical about rumours concerning other pupils. Don't add to them. Put yourself in their position
- Spend time with the person being bullied and be kind to them
- Don't be a bystander. Many perpetrators will not persist in bullying unless they have an audience to play to, and by not taking action it could be argued you are condoning what is happening

## **What the school will do**

The exact course of action will vary with each situation. The immediate objective should be that bullying incidents are brought into the open and strategies agreed to help resolve the problem, encouraging all involved to return to responsible, caring behaviour.

- All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated immediately
- Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously
- It is not possible for any person who receives a report of a bullying incident to promise that it will be kept confidential. However, the action to be taken will be discussed with the victim at every stage
- Everything that happens will be carefully recorded
- The most important thing is to stop the bullying and ensure the person being bullied is safe
- We aim for a peaceful resolution: revenge is not helpful or appropriate
- The victim will be supported throughout the process



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- Sanctions may be imposed (see below) but guidance and help will also be available for the perpetrator(s) to help change their behaviour
- Staff will monitor the situation to ensure that the bullying does not continue. If bullying recurs, further action will be taken
- The school will record all bullying incidents, so that we can monitor the effectiveness of our anti-bullying measures and identify any patterns in order to inform preventative work and the future development of policies and procedures.

Further guidance for staff on responding to bullying can be found in the Anti-Bullying Guidance.

## Sanctions

It is important that those found responsible for bullying are held to account and accept responsibility for the harm caused. Action taken in response to bullying will be intended to communicate unambiguous disapproval of the perpetrator's activities, and this will usually include sanctions. Sanctions help reassure the person being bullied that the bullying will stop; they help those responsible recognise the harm caused by their behaviour and deter them from repeating it; they demonstrate to the school community that bullying is unacceptable and that the school has effective ways of dealing with it, so deterring others from behaving in a similar way.

If sanctions are warranted, the person(s) responsible will receive a sanction in accordance with the school's behaviour policy. Any sanctions imposed will be fair, proportionate and reasonable, take account of any special educational needs or disabilities that pupils may have, and consider the needs of vulnerable pupils.

In any serious case of bullying the Head will be informed and the school will work with the parents of both the victim and the perpetrator. The school will remain in regular contact with parents until the situation is resolved.

In the most serious cases, the sanction may be fixed term or permanent exclusion.

A bullying incident will be regarded as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' (Children Act 1989). Where this is the case, after the Head has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Social Services and in certain cases the police.

## Partnership with Parents

We believe that working with parents/guardians is essential to establishing the school's anti-bullying ethos and resolving any issues that arise

- Parents are encouraged to reinforce the principles of the Anti-Bullying Policy at home
- Parents are asked to let the Head of Stage at seniors or Deputy Head at juniors know directly if they have cause for concern, either on behalf of their own children or because of rumours about others.
- In any serious case of bullying parents will be informed by the school and may be invited in to discuss the matter. We will keep in regular contact with parents until the issue is resolved



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## Links to other policies and documents

This policy operates in conjunction with:

- SHS Behaviour and Good Conduct Policies
- Cyber Bullying Annex
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Mental Health Positive Policy
- GDST Acceptable Use Agreements
- SEND Policy
- SHS and GDST Exclusions Policy
- GDST Equal Opportunities (Education) Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- PSHE schemes of learning through Period X and Climb-time

## Monitoring and evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy and the school's anti bullying strategies will be evaluated annually through a review of the bullying log and consultation with the School Council. This policy will be reviewed by the Director of Innovation and Learning, in consultation with schools, in Summer 2026.

## Further information and guidance

A list of useful websites, contacts and resources can be found in the Anti-Bullying Guidance for GDST staff on the staff intranet.

| Role  | Colleague                                    | Contact email  |
|---|--|--|
| SLT member with lead responsibility for anti-bullying   | Whole School Deputy Head – Mrs K. Millichamp | <a href="mailto:k.millichamp@shr.gdst.net">k.millichamp@shr.gdst.net</a>     |
| JLT member with lead responsibility for anti-bullying   | Deputy Head teacher – Mr. S. Blenkinsop      | <a href="mailto:s.j.blenkinsop@shr.gdst.net">s.j.blenkinsop@shr.gdst.net</a> |
| EYFS staff member with responsibility for anti-bullying | Head of Early Years - Mr. R. King            | <a href="mailto:r.king@shr.gdst.net">r.king@shr.gdst.net</a>                 |
| <b>Pastoral Team:</b>                                   |  |  |
| Head of Stage – Lower School                            | Ms. J. Shenton, for Years 7, 8 and 9         | <a href="mailto:j.shenton@shr.gdst.net">j.shenton@shr.gdst.net</a>           |
| Head of Stage – Year 9                                  | Mr. R. Allen, for Years 10 and 11            | <a href="mailto:r.allen@shr.gdst.net">r.allen@shr.gdst.net</a>               |
| Deputy Head of Sixth form                               | Mrs. R. Sadd                                 | <a href="mailto:r.sadd@shr.gdst.net">r.sadd@shr.gdst.net</a>                 |
| Director of Sixth form                                  | Mr. J. Allan                                 | <a href="mailto:j.allan@shr.gdst.net">j.allan@shr.gdst.net</a>               |
| School Nurse  | Mrs. S. Livesey (whole school)               | <a href="mailto:s.livesey@shr.gdst.net">s.livesey@shr.gdst.net</a>           |

| Local and National support            |  |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| NSPCC                                 | <a href="https://www.nspcc.org.uk/">https://www.nspcc.org.uk/</a> Information, links and advice service  |
| Childline                             | <a href="https://www.childline.org.uk/">https://www.childline.org.uk/</a> Information and advice, and free call service: 0800 1111   |
| Beam – Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin | <a href="https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/beam/shropshire">https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/beam/shropshire</a><br>This is an emotional health and well-being service for children and young people across the Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin areas. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Usually this is a drop in service, but due to social distancing, this has moved to phone.</li></ul> |



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|             | <p>To speak to someone, please send an email to <a href="mailto:askbeam@childrenssociety.org.uk">askbeam@childrenssociety.org.uk</a> and one of the Wellbeing Practitioners will contact you to discuss what help is needed and look at the best time to call.</p>   |
| Young Minds | <p>A mental health support charity, with support for parents too. Please see the link here - <a href="https://youngminds.org.uk/">https://youngminds.org.uk/</a></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are online resources and also help line / advice for parents and students</li><li>• Parents Helpline: 0808 802 5544 (Monday to Friday 9.30am – 4pm, free for mobiles and landlines)</li></ul> |
| Kooth       | <p>The link is : <a href="https://www.kooth.com/">https://www.kooth.com/</a><br/>Free, safe and anonymous online support for young people. Online Monday – Friday 12pm – 10pm; Saturday – Sunday 6pm – 10pm</p>  |



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