



WESTMINSTER  
SCHOOL

# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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## WESTMINSTER SCHOOL

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#### **Introduction**

Bullying is unacceptable anti-social behaviour which affects everyone in the community. At Westminster, we try to promote respect and care for one another; but there is always a risk that bullying will occur in any institution. The aim of the School's Anti-Bullying Policy is therefore to foster a supportive, caring and safe environment in which pupils and indeed staff can live and learn without fear of being bullied, and thus be able fully to benefit from the opportunities available at the School. To this end, it will be made quite clear to the whole community of pupils, staff and parents that bullying is unacceptable at Westminster and that any instance of it will be treated as a serious disciplinary matter, investigated and punished appropriately.

Head Teachers have a legal duty under the Education and Inspections Act (2006) to draw up procedures to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and pupils. This policy has regard to this legislation, and to the DfE Guidance *Preventing and tackling bullying* (July 2017).

#### **What is bullying behaviour?**

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, 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 motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.

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.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also

lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

**Examples of bullying may include:**

- i. Whispering, name-calling, teasing, making anonymous calls, spreading malicious rumours. It can also involve deliberately isolating someone – whether in social groups in and around school or on social media.
- ii. Using a mobile phone, email or the internet to cause distress/insult to another person. This applies during weekends and the school holidays as much as during the school day or week. The effects of cyber-bullying are brought into school and are therefore a matter for the school. See the Appendix for the Anti Cyber-bullying Code that appears in the Pink Almanack.
- iii. Making racist, sexist or homophobic comments to other pupils, even if claiming that the subject of these remarks regards them as 'a joke'.
- iv. Making inappropriate sexual advances, or sexual harassment. Even if this happens out of school – e.g. at a party on the weekend – the effects would be felt in school and such incidents would therefore be a matter to be dealt with by the school.
- v. Punching, hitting, pushing, spitting, throwing things. This can be considered as "assault" and obviously more serious physical attacks could be seen as a criminal offence. Physically intimidating someone or using threatening language or gestures would also constitute bullying, as would damaging or throwing property around; invading rooms, bags, boxes or lockers.

From consulting senior pupils, it is clear that physical bullying has been a rarity. Where bullying does occur at Westminster, social exclusion – or remarks which single out an individual (or make them feel excluded from group interactions) – are more common than other forms of bullying.

Bullying impacts on the attendance and attainment at school of those who suffer from it and can have a life-long negative impact on some young people's lives. Bullying can cause psychological damage and at worst has been a factor in pupil suicide. In this light, although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to assault, harassment and threatening behaviour – including over the internet.

**How is it made clear that bullying is unacceptable?**

The School makes clear its zero-tolerance of bullying in a number of ways. It is embedded in the School's Code of Conduct, which is discussed – along with a raft of other anti-bullying material – with all new pupils as part of the Wellbeing curriculum. In addition, the Under Master outlines the Anti-Bullying Policy to all new pupils; and regularly briefs senior pupils (e.g. Monitors) and all staff (e.g. via regular Safeguarding INSET) to remain vigilant inside and outside the classroom. The national 'Anti-Bullying Week' is a useful opportunity to reinforce this message. Heads of Year will also reinforce the message in year group assemblies; and Tutors during tutorial meetings, where these issues can be discussed in smaller groups.

The School Counsellor similarly briefs the School's 'Peer Supporters', senior pupils in every House whose role is to support pupils who might feel unhappy or in distress. The intention is that a culture is fostered amongst pupils which deters silence or by-standing in the face of bullying. On the contrary, we seek to promote a culture in which both the target and anyone else who hears of an incident are prepared to "tell". We will embed that culture by constantly reiterating that helping one's peers and friends is a positive action.

Peer Supporters, Heads of House and School Monitors get to know younger pupils through visiting dayrooms and joining Fifth Form and Lower Shell at lunch. As such they are able to check on behaviour of younger pupils and to act as a conduit of information to staff where bullying is occurring.

Teachers must always be prepared to check bad behaviour, as this can lead to bullying, and report patterns of behaviour, as this may indicate bullying. Teachers are expected to arrive in good time for class; to be a vigilant presence around School; and to report anything they feel concerned about to the Under Master. Tutors, Housemasters and Matrons are also expected to be around the House both in the daytime and, in the case of boarders, when the pupils are going to bed. The School additionally operates a system of supervisory 'Duty Masters' to ensure that key areas of the campus are properly supervised by teachers at key times.

### **The role of the community in addressing bullying**

Staff, pupils and parents all have a role to play in addressing instances of bullying.

Abbey and Year Group Assemblies focus on core values, especially the following: kindness, respect, generosity, tolerance, sensitivity towards others, citizenship and social responsibility. They stress the importance of inter-personal relationships and the value of respect for all. These are picked up on in tutorials and parents are encouraged to discuss key themes at home with their children.

The issue of bullying plays a prominent part in the School's PSHE programme; the programme is structured to give pupils an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the School. It focuses on the issues of tolerance and kindness in relation to individual differences and parents are again encouraged to discuss key themes at home with their children.

All adults (parents and staff) are expected to act as positive role models, as are all senior pupils.

All staff, pupils, and their parents, are given a copy of the General Regulations and Westminster Values each year.

Advice on bullying, cyber-safety and cyber issues is given to parents at certain Westminster School Parents' Committee events (organised in conjunction with the Head of Wellbeing) and also at the various Pastoral Forums hosted by housemasters.

All staff and parents have a responsibility to encourage pupils to reflect on pupils' conduct, analysing and reflecting on motives and behaviour.

### **How does a child (or parent) find help?**

Pupils who feel worried are encouraged to talk to someone, whether it be a friend, a Peer Supporter, the Head of House or a School Monitor; a matron, a teacher, a house tutor, a parent, a housemaster, the School Counsellor, the Chaplain or the Under Master. This message is reiterated in the 'If You Have A Concern' notice, which is on House notice boards and appears in the Almanack.

Parents who have concerns about their children should always contact the housemaster, or the Under Master, at the earliest opportunity, so the matter can be promptly investigated.

The School always treats bullying, including allegations of bullying, very seriously. Pupils and parents should feel confident that the School will listen to any complaint about bullying and respond to it promptly and robustly.

### **How should the receiver of the information react?**

They should offer an immediate opportunity to the pupil to discuss things in a calm, supportive atmosphere in which their concerns will be taken seriously.

They should listen carefully to the pupil's account, and if possible take a written note of the conversation. Copies of these should be given to the Under Master who will maintain records of all bullying incidents in order that he can look for patterns.

They should encourage the pupil to talk to (or consent to them talking to on their behalf) the relevant Housemaster, or perhaps the School Counsellor, Chaplain or Under Master.

(Initially, the pupil might wish to keep the matter confidential, but it is important at some stage for them to realise that nothing can be done if the matter is kept secret. The Under Master must be informed immediately in cases of suspected abuse.)

Where a particular incident is dealt with initially by a School Monitor or Heads of House, they must tell the relevant housemaster(s) what has happened and the action they have taken. The housemaster should then decide whether further action needs to follow.

### **What is the procedure for tackling bullying where it is discovered?**

The Housemaster should discuss the matter with the Under Master in the first instance. There is then no fixed or absolute course of action; it will depend on the circumstances, but will always be fair and proportionate. Parents of both the and bully will usually be informed and involved via the Housemaster(s) (though the target's views must be taken into account).

Some actions might be:

- a) To monitor the situation closely (by Housemaster and Tutor in consultation with the Under Master) and see if anything further occurs. (This response is usually only if the incident appears to be one-off, or a genuine mistake.)
- b) To get both parties together to talk. The guilty party may be totally unaware that he is bullying. The subject of the bullying may be anxious about such a meeting and safeguards would need to be put in place to ensure that both parties are willing to talk

and the meeting is chaired sensitively. In cases of group bullying the group needs to understand the point of view of the pupil on the receiving end. The School Counsellor may need to talk to the group. Those mainly responsible need to be addressed individually to make them understand their responsibility in the affair.

- c) To punish the bully, both making it clear that this must never happen again, and encouraging the bully to see the target's point of view. Punishment will be judged on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with all parties concerned. It may range from a warning, through to a period of gating to temporary or permanent exclusion, depending on the specific circumstances.

It is important to note that, where a case of bullying comes to light, attention will also be given to the pupil who has demonstrated the bullying behaviour, with whom the incident must be discussed, and (where possible) parents also informed, in order to find out the cause of the behaviour and to seek to change it. Indeed, both the parties (and the wider peer group) may need follow-up support for some time. Where a punishment (other than permanent exclusion) has been decided to be the appropriate course of action, rehabilitation of the pupil who was bullying will be an important part of the process, and discussions with the Under Master and Head Master will form part of the week's gating. The School Counsellor and Chaplain are both able to help in this respect.

The anti-bullying culture which is fostered at Westminster School, the Code of Conduct, and the sanctions available for dealing with breaches of this code, are all detailed in the Policy on Behaviour, Rewards and Sanctions, developed in consultation with both staff and pupils.

### **Record-keeping and reporting**

The Under Master will usually coordinate all actions in cases of bullying, and keep a written record of each incident and how it is resolved; this record should be used to monitor any possible patterns. After any bullying incident the Housemasters and Under Master will review the case in detail to look for ways to avoid similar cases arising in the future and to enable an adjustment in supervision if needed. All incidents of bullying which come to light are reported to the Head Master, usually by the Under Master in his role as the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The Head Master may not be involved in the detailed resolution of the situation, but he will always be aware of the action taken and its efficacy. Bullying by/of a member of staff, or by/of a parent (whether face-to-face or via email), will be regarded as a very serious matter and dealt with by the Head Master (usually with the assistance of the Under Master).

### **Monitoring, evaluation and review**

The School will review this policy annually – with the assistance of pupils - and evaluate its effectiveness; one meeting of the Housemasters' Committee (or a working group drawn from that body) and one meeting of the School Monitors will be dedicated to a discussion of anti-bullying each year. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the School, to pupils through assemblies, tutorials and Wellbeing; and to the staff through induction and INSET.

## **Appendix: Anti Cyber-bullying Code**

*The advice below appears in the Almanack:*

Being sent an abusive or threatening text message, or seeing comments about yourself on a website can be really upsetting. This code gives you important tips to protect yourself and your friends from getting caught up in cyberbullying and advice on to how to report it when it does happen.

### **Key things to remember:**

- Think before you send – images and messages once posted can stay online forever, and anyone might see them
- Never reply when you are angry
- Never share your password

### **Keeping yourself safe online:**

- You are responsible for logging off your own account: problems often occur when pupils leave themselves logged on
- Make sure your password is secure (not just a word but a mix of letters and numbers or symbols). It should also be memorable for you, e.g. Hamlet might have “2brnot2b”
- Set up your privacy settings on social networks
- Always set a password on your phone or tablet

### **Getting help if there is a problem:**

- Remember you don't have to suffer in silence
- Block the bullies and report
- Tell your housemaster or tutor, or a peer supporter or even just a friend: they can all help
- Save any postings or emails as evidence

### **Don't become a Cyberbully yourself:**

- Don't send threatening or abusive messages: and don't forward or share any that others have written
- Don't post images which will humiliate others
- No sexting or pressuring others into sending sexual images
- Don't set up hate sites or groups; don't “troll”
- Don't use anyone else's account or password; don't create fake accounts, or hijack others' identities
- Never send anything from someone else's account
- Remember the school rules on cyberbullying apply at all times, including the school holidays

### **And finally:**

- If you see cyberbullying going on, support the target and report the bullying. How would you feel if no-one stood up for you?

For further information visit [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)