



POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION OF BULLYING

A legal requirement and an ISI Reporting Standard

This document is available to parents and prospective parents on the School's website or on request from the School Office and should be read together with the Complaints Policy (for Pupils). The policy is reviewed on an annual basis.

References:

- A. ISI Handbook for the Inspection of Schools, Commentary on The Regulatory Requirements, March 2023.
- B. [National Minimum Standards for Boarding Schools](#) dated September 2022.
- C. ['Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies'](#) DfE 2017
- D. Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage, DfE September 2021
- E. "Bullying": An ISC Child Health and Wellbeing Working Party Guidance Update Five
- F. "Child Protection and New Technologies" by Childnet International – <http://www.childnet-int.org/>
- G. ISBA Model Policy dated March 2015.
- H. Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 and The DfE Prevent Duty June 2015, revised 3/16
- I. 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' – DfE September 2023
- J. Working Together – DfE Sept 2018
- K. [Cyber bullying: advice for headteachers and school staff \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#) (2014)
- L. ['Teaching online safety in school'](#) DfE January 2023

Aims and Objectives

Vinehall School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the School.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and is prevented as far as reasonably practical. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *telling* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

Vinehall prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions and the policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on our website or on request from the School office. It is also available and known to staff and boarders, including junior and recently appointed staff.

This policy applies to all day and boarding pupils in the School, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Definition

We define Bullying as: *'Behaviour by an individual or group, either a significant single incident or behaviour repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally'* (see Reference C). It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, homophobia, special educational needs and disability, or because a child is adopted, or is a carer. It may occur directly, or through cyber-technology (i.e. social websites, mobile phones, text messages, photographs and email).

Bullying can be **physical** (including sexual), e.g. hitting, kicking, pushing, stealing; **verbal**, e.g. name-calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive or discriminatory comments (including email, chat rooms and SMS messaging); **emotional**, e.g. being unfriendly or excluding someone from social or racial groups; or **indirect** e.g. spreading rumours, gossiping. It can involve complicity that falls short of direct participation. Bullying is often hidden and subtle but can also be overt and intimidatory and it may be based on actual or perceived differences.

Teasing is not bullying: it is what friends do, but it can lead to just as much distress and unhappiness if it is persistent. Although bullying normally involves contemporaries it can also be inflicted by adults. Bullying may also include racist, sexual/sexist and homophobic bullying; and focus on religion, cultural background, special educational needs, disabilities or other physical attributes (e.g. hair colour or body shape).

We are very much aware that mobile, internet and wireless technologies can be misused through '**cyberbullying**'. This form of bullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated and hostile behaviour by individuals or groups that is intended to harm. It may happen in or outside school and at all times of the day or night. Cyberbullying includes and involves social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram), emails, mobile phones, text messages and photographs. It is therefore important that children and young people, who are particularly skilful at adapting to new technology, use their mobiles and the Internet safely and positively, and that they are aware of the consequences of misuse. School staff, parents and young people have to be constantly vigilant and work together to prevent this form of bullying and tackle it wherever it appears. The School will work with outside agencies, such as the police, to tackle the threat. ***For more information please see Vinehall's Online Safety policy which gives details about how Vinehall oversees the use of mobile technologies, our Acceptable Use Policies and how we respond to online incidents.***

What does or does not amount to bullying in any given circumstance should not be solely the subjective perception of the victim him/herself, but involve an objective assessment of the observed behaviour, taken in conjunction with any apparent vulnerabilities in the victim.

Bullying can cause considerable distress and psychological damage, including self-doubt, lack of confidence, low self-esteem, depression, anxiety and self-harm. It can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve everyone – pupils, other young people, staff and parents. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour, for example, the Malicious Communications Act 1988.

At Vinehall, we always treat bullying, including allegations of bullying, very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the School's policy on equal opportunities, as well as its social and moral principles. Any bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously and such incidents will be distinguished in the school's bullying records.

Signs of Bullying

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

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the matron or School Nurse with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers.

Prevention

At Vinehall we aim proactively to prevent bullying from starting in the first place. This can be done by:

- Teaching the children to respect other people who are different from themselves.
- Paying care and attention to school rules which are designed to encourage mutual respect.
- Using the PSHEE (Life Skills) programme, which includes tackling risks of 'cyber-bullying' and using lessons such as RS, English and Drama to reinforce messages against bullying. Life Skills lessons can also be used to teach children techniques to defuse difficult situations. Vinehall ensures that pupils are taught how to use the internet safely through these lessons. Every year pupils are given age related lessons which encourage pupils to consider the 'Content' of the material they are looking at on the internet, the 'Contact they have with others (whether this is harmful) and their own 'Conduct' on their internet. Lessons like this are part of the statutory Relationships Education for Primary age children and Relationships and Sex Education for Secondary age children. **(Please see our Safeguarding policy (A6) and Life Skills handbook for further information).**
- Actively promoting National Anti-bullying weeks.
- Working on Themes of the Week with specific focus on online use and bullying.
- Working together in teams/forms/houses.

- Listening in chapel and in morning assemblies.
- Using links between staff, pupils and parents to gather intelligence about issues which could develop into bullying.
- All staff being watchful and alert, particularly when on duty.
- Prefects, Dorm Leaders and House/Form Captains being vigilant and reporting any concerns to staff.
- Ensuring that all new pupils (including boarders and our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the School's expected standards of behaviour.
- Not allowing any form of 'initiation' ceremony designed to cause pain or humiliation.
- Celebrating success through assemblies and weekly award presentations, such as merit badges and Pastoral 'Praise' awards which create a positive school ethos and support our School motto.
- Informing parents of developments in technology which could encourage cyberbullying through regular online advice workshops, talks and newsletters.

Preventative Measures

We take the following preventative measures to ensure that bullying does not become a problem:

Pupils

- All new pupils (including boarders and our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the School's expected standards of behaviour, including what to do if they encounter bullying.
- All children who feel that they are being bullied (or teased) must tell a member of staff (Form Teacher, class/subject teacher, Houseparent, matron, teaching assistant or any other) in confidence, or their parents.
- All Children are briefed at the start of every term on the school 'Worries Box', the Independent Listener as ways to speak to adults.
- If children see anyone being bullied (or teased) they must inform a member of staff immediately. 'Whistle blowers' who act in good faith will be supported and not penalised.
- Children must never support a bully.
- Children must never accept a bully as a friend.
- Children must remember that they can hurt others by saying unpleasant things as well as being a physical bully.
- Children have access to a telephone helpline so they can have support in private (Independent Listener and ChildLine).

Staff will

- Always be alert to potential bullying or teasing in all its forms, including 'cyber-bullying'.
- Raise any concerns with senior/relevant staff and in staff meetings.
- Be trained so that they are aware of all types of bullying. New staff, including boarding staff and Gap Students, are given guidance on the School's policy for the prevention of bullying and how to react to allegations of bullying when they first arrive at Vinehall.
- Keep a particularly careful eye on behaviour in the corridors, in the changing rooms, outside, in between lessons and in free time. All incidents are to be investigated at once.
- Discuss any incidents or any signs of trouble with the Form Teacher, class/subject teacher concerned, Houseparent, Deputy Head.

- Always try to deal calmly with an incident of bullying or teasing, reassuring and comforting the victim. Never act aggressively towards the culprit(s); never punish them immediately.
- Immediately record all incidents of serious bullying and teasing in a Bullying File. The incident should also be recorded on Engage, the school's recording system and copied to the Assistant Head, Pastoral and Deputy Head who are responsible for overseeing records of bullying and other serious disciplinary offences. The recording of incidents is especially important to enable patterns to be identified.
- Monitor emails and use blocks to prevent access to harmful sites.
- Monitor use of mobile phones either off or on-site.
- Ensure that security systems are in place to prevent images and information about pupils or staff being accessed improperly from outside school.

Further measures include:

- [If a punishment was given] After punishment has been completed, pastoral work by relevant members of staff will always be essential (e.g. form teachers and Deputy Head).
- INSET sessions are used to brief and train staff. Outside experts may be used.
- In the boarding house, there is a strong team of matrons and gappers supporting the Houseparent, who act *in loco parentis*. The informal house environment is important in reinforcing a pupil's standards and values, providing the opportunity for friendly, informal discussion of matters of concern to the individual pupil outside the formal classroom. A member of the boarding house staff is always on duty to supervise the pupils.
- We encourage close contact between the Houseparent and parents/guardians and would always make contact if we were worried about a pupil's well-being.
- All boarders and their parents are made aware of the contents of the School's policy for the prevention of bullying and are aware that they can download copies from the School's web site. All boarders know how to report anxieties to the Houseparent or to another member of the pastoral team (e.g. their personal tutor).
- Our dispensary displays advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline.
- Our School Independent Person (Mrs Margie Redstone) is an important part of our pastoral support service, providing specialist skills of assessment and counselling. She is available to give confidential advice and counselling support to pupils who can refer themselves to her when they have social, emotional or behavioural concerns. On occasion, a member of our pastoral team may refer a pupil to her.
- Our school nurse also provides support in this way and is a member of our Welfare Team.
- With particular reference to The Prevent Duty, the School has an additional duty to prevent Extremism and Radicalisation that may manifest itself through bullying or cyber-bullying.

Parents

We welcome feedback from parents/guardians on the effectiveness of our anti-bullying measures.

Remember that pupils do occasionally exaggerate problems and that there is a difference between occasional teasing and bullying, **but look out for:**

- Unwillingness to go to school.
- Signs of distress, bruising, unexplained sleepiness, headaches, etc.
- Personal belongings continually going missing.

If you are concerned:

- Encourage your child to:
 - Talk to a member of staff if they feel they are being teased or bullied
 - Ensure that they do nothing to provoke others
 - Never retaliate.
- If you are still concerned, contact the Form Teacher, class/subject teacher, Houseparent, Assistant Head (Pastoral), Deputy Head or the Head/Head of Pre-Prep. Ask for a meeting and present a detailed record of any incidents.
- If bullying continues and you are not satisfied with the School's response then contact the Chairman of Governors.
- Parents of boarders and EYFS children under 3 years old have the right to refer a complaint directly to Ofsted if they are unhappy about the way their complaint has been handled. Complaints will be investigated in conjunction with ISI. (See Complaints Policy).

The School's Response

The Head and the staff take a very serious view of bullying and will investigate all cases with great vigour and urgency. The School reserves the right to investigate incidents that take place outside school hours; on school visits and trips; and that occur in the vicinity of the School involving Vinehall pupils. The Head will inform the relevant parents when appropriate. The action or combination of actions shown below may be taken against those children found to have committed bullying.

Procedures for Dealing with Reported Bullying

If an incident of bullying is reported, the following procedures are adopted:

- In all except the most serious cases, a variety of methods can be used to defuse and repair situations.
- The member of staff to whom it was reported or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved.
- He/she will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible, usually the Assistant Head, Pastoral.
- The member of staff will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved.
- The victim will be interviewed on his/her own and asked to write an account of events.
- The bully, together with all others who were involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to write an immediate account of events.
- The incident will be recorded on Engage and copied to the Assistant Head, Pastoral, who is responsible for monitoring bullying.
- The Assistant Head, Pastoral will inform the relevant staff, including the Houseparent (if boarders) of both the bully/bullies and the victim[s] as soon as possible. In all cases, the Welfare Team will be informed and the problem discussed.
- The victim will be interviewed at a later stage by a suitable member of staff, separately from the alleged perpetrator. He/she will be offered support to develop a strategy to help him or herself.

- The alleged bully will be interviewed at a later stage by a suitable member of staff, separately from the victim, and it will be made clear why his/her behaviour was inappropriate and caused distress. He/she will be offered guidance on modifying his or her behaviour, together with any appropriate disciplinary sanctions as set out in the School's Behaviour Management Policy or the Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy; for example, detention, withdrawal of privileges or suspension. In particularly serious and/or persistent cases, the bully should expect permanent exclusion. It will be made clear to him/her why revenge is inappropriate.
- The parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions and possible counselling, should be agreed. This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management Policy or the Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy.
- A meeting involving all the parties, with close staff supervision, could be helpful in developing a strategy for all concerned to close the episode. This may involve the 'No Blame' technique to allow friends who have fallen out to restore good relations.
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place.
- In very serious cases, and only after the Headmaster has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or to Children's Services. However, it is Vinehall's policy to attempt to resolve such issues internally under the School's own disciplinary procedures, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely. The School may exclude a pupil, either temporarily or permanently, in cases of severe and persistent bullying and in the event that the support put in place for the bully does not result in the modification of behaviour to an acceptable level.
- A bullying incident should be treated as a safeguarding & child protection issue when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.' In such cases the School should report its concerns to the local authority Children's Services.

For procedures on how to deal with **child on child abuse** please see our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy which gives further information about this and also covers protocol for Managing Child on Child harmful sexual abuse and harassment.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Children

See Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children at Vinehall refer to children from 2 to 5 years of age, in our Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception classes. Requirements for EYFS children comply with the EYFS statutory framework and sit alongside other legal obligations, legislation and Vinehall School policies which cover the children of statutory school age. The child's behaviour is managed effectively, consistently and in conjunction with the Pre-Prep Policy for Behaviour Management and has regard for the children's stage of development and individual needs.

Physical intervention is only used for the purposes of averting immediate danger of personal injury to any person (including the child) or to manage a child's behaviour if absolutely necessary. Should an occasion arise where physical intervention is used to manage a child's behaviour, the incident would be recorded and parents would be informed about it on the same day according to EYFS requirements. Corporal punishment is not given, or threatened, in any circumstances; to do so is an offence.

Behaviour Management in the EYFS is evaluated and any outcome informs the departmental SEF and development planning.

Early Years children are supported in their Personal, Social and Emotional Development and of particular relevance are the development matters for 'Making Relationships', 'Managing Feelings and Behaviour'. They are encouraged to behave towards each other with kindness and consideration as advocated in the 'Golden Rules' which underpin the behaviour management in Pre-Prep. The Head of Pre-Prep is responsible for the behaviour management in the Pre-Prep which includes the Early Years Foundation Stage; however initially situations are dealt with by the key persons involved with the children. On occasion the Pre-Prep SENCO becomes involved in giving advice as necessary. Procedures for managing behaviour are more fully explained in the Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy.

A copy of the Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy is available on the School website or on request from the School Office.

Concluding Comment

We aim to prevent and expose bullying behaviour but not to label individuals as 'bad'. It is a fact of life that people can be unpleasant towards each other. Part of a child's education is to learn to deal with other people and a school's duty is to coach, counsel and guide children through social difficulties. We aim to work with all involved parties and seek the support of parents in this, bearing in mind that children mature at different stages.

Complaints Procedure

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use our complaints procedure (which is published on our website or available from the School Office on request) if they feel that their concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly.

Related Documents:

1. Parental Complaints Procedure.
2. Behaviour Management Policy.
3. Complaints Policy for Pupils.
4. Online Safety Policy
5. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
6. Parents' Handbook