



Abbey Gate College

POLICY: Anti-Bullying

Scope	Whole College
Responsibility	Deputy Head (Pastoral), Head I&JS
Reviewed & Updated	September 2026
Governor Approval	Vanessa Brodie
Board Level Approval	Gareth Lee

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Policy Statement (1)

All pupils at Abbey Gate College have a right to spend their school days in a safe, friendly, and inclusive environment, free from bullying or fear of bullying. However, it is an unwelcome reality of human existence that individuals of any age may choose bullying behaviours, for a variety of reasons. Abbey Gate College does not tolerate bullying and, when incidents of bullying are disclosed, they are taken seriously and are dealt with; aiming to restore the intended ethos of safety and kindness for all.

At Abbey Gate College, we believe it is everyone's responsibility to ensure our school is a welcoming 'second home' in which to learn. We aim that everyone – pupils, staff, parents, Governors - work together to combat and to eradicate bullying.

- 1) In order to help members of the College community deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly, prevent it, the College:
 - a. encourages recognition that bullying in a variety of forms exists in most communities and needs to be constantly addressed;
 - b. makes pupils, parents, staff, and prospective parents aware of the College's anti-bullying strategy by making it available on the website;
 - c. raises awareness of staff through training and briefings, so that the principles, responsibilities and procedures of the College policy are known and understood;
 - d. regularly makes clear to pupils the proper expectations of their behaviour towards each other to create an environment of respect;
 - e. encourages activities which involve co-operation, group work and team work, both at year group level and also vertically through the College's House system;
 - f. uses PSHE/RSE lessons to explore the nature of bullying and the reasons it occurs, and to suggest strategies for dealing with it;
 - g. is committed to using educational elements such as PSHE, RSE, assemblies, projects, drama, stories, literature, historical events and current affairs to raise awareness, with discussion of differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice (and prejudiced-based language);
 - h. encourages pupils to bring incidents of bullying to the College's attention, either directly in person or anonymously online; stressing that tacit condoning of it amounts to approval - this includes cyberbullying and any bullying that takes place outside of school;
 - i. recognises that pupils who indulge in bullying need themselves to be made aware of the effects of their behaviour and what is and is not acceptable treatment of others;
 - j. recognises that the bully's behaviour may be due to pressures and difficulties in their life and that help and counselling for the bully may be an appropriate response;
 - k. reassures parents that their concerns about bullying will always be taken seriously and investigated - the College will involve them in discussions at an early stage if their child is involved in such incidents;
 - l. will involve the police if it is considered that an offence has been committed.
- 2) This policy also has regard to relevant legislation and governmental guidance.

Policy Statement (2)

- 1) This policy applies to all members of the Abbey Gate College community, including those in our EYFS setting.
- 2) Abbey Gate College implements this policy through adherence to the procedures set out in the rest of this document.
- 3) This policy is made available to all interested parties on the College website at www.abbeygatecollege.co.uk. It should be read in conjunction with the College's *Behaviour, Discipline & Exclusions*, *PSHE*, *RSE*, *Safeguarding (including Child on Child Abuse)*, and *Supervision* policies.
- 4) Abbey Gate College is fully committed to ensuring that the application of this policy is non-discriminatory in line with the UK Equality Act (2010). Further details are available in the College's *Equal Opportunity* policy document.
- 5) This policy is reviewed at least annually, or as events or legislation changes require, by the College Leadership Team and the Governing Body. The deadline for the next review is no later than 12 months after the most recent review date indicated above.
- 6) The most recent updates were made on account of an annual review.

Key Personnel

- 1) Craig Jenkinson: Head
- 2) Carole Houghton: Deputy Head (Pastoral)
- 3) Corinna Travis: Head of Infant & Junior School
- 4) Vanessa Brodie: Chair of Wellbeing Committee

Definition of Bullying

"The habitual, wilful, and conscious desire by a person or group to harm, intimidate, or frighten another individual or group; who is or are perceived as vulnerable."

Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying) is a form of child-on-child abuse; however, not all child-on-child abuse is bullying. Bullying occurs when the *repeated* behaviour of an individual or group causes hurt or distress physically or emotionally to another member of the College community, either on or off the College premises.

It is important to note that:

- 1) Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups.
- 2) Bullying need not be perpetrated by a larger/older pupil against a smaller/younger one, but there is usually some imbalance of power present.
- 3) Bullying may be perpetrated by a single pupil or a group of pupils.
- 4) Actions/words which have no effect on one pupil could make the life of another miserable, possibly resulting in serious psychological harm for the pupil being bullied.
- 5) Bullying is never the fault of the bullied: a pupil may be sensitive or unassertive but this does not excuse bullying.
- 6) All members of the College community must understand that bullying can cause psychological damage and even suicide.
- 7) Bullying is not a specific criminal offence, but all members of the College community should realise that there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening

behaviour, and if staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should contact the police.

- 8) The College acknowledges that, although bullying is by no means endemic or widespread in the school, it does exist and it is not to be tolerated, ignored or excused.

Bullying can take a variety of different forms. These include:

- 1) Cyber – inappropriate use of the Internet, email, AI, social networking sites and chat rooms. Cyberbullying also includes the inappropriate use of mobile telephones, texting, and the misuse of associated technology, e.g. camera & video facilities, including sharing of nude and semi-nude images, whether real or AI generated. *(ref. Appendix 1)*
- 2) Emotional - inappropriate comments or behaviour intended to cause emotional upset, e.g. being unfriendly, excluding others, tormenting, hiding books, threatening gestures, mocking a person's appearance.
- 3) Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any similar or inappropriate use of force.
- 4) Verbal - inappropriate comments intended to humiliate and upset, e.g. name-calling, spreading rumours.
- 5) Prejudice-based and discriminatory – words or behaviours aimed at an individual or group, who have, or are perceived or thought to have, a protected characteristic:
 - a. Disability - inappropriate comments or behaviour focussing on an individual's disability.
 - b. Homophobic or biphobic - inappropriate comments or behaviour focussing on an individual's perceived or stated sexual orientation.
 - c. Racist or cultural - inappropriate comments or behaviour focussing on an individual's racial, ethnic or cultural background.
 - d. Religious - inappropriate comments or behaviour focussing on an individual's religious beliefs.
 - e. Sexist/Misogynistic/Misandrist – inappropriate comments or behaviour focussing on an individual's gender.
 - f. Sexual - inappropriate physical contact or comments.
 - g. Special Educational Needs – inappropriate comments or behaviour regarding an individual's SEN, including More Able Gifted & Talented, provision.
 - h. Transphobic – inappropriate comments or behaviour, specifically related to trans-gender and non-binary issues.
 - i. Adopted/Looked-after child – inappropriate comments or behaviour focussing on an individual's home circumstances.
 - j. Child as a carer – inappropriate comments or behaviour focussing on an individual's home circumstances.

Possible Signs of Bullying

A pupil may indicate by signs or behaviour that they are being bullied. Through policy and advice, the College aims to make parents and staff aware of these possible signs and urges action if a child:

- 1) is frightened of travelling to or from College;
- 2) doesn't want to go on the College / public bus;
- 3) begs to be driven to school;
- 4) changes their usual routine;

- 5) is unwilling to go to school (school phobic);
- 6) begins to truant;
- 7) becomes withdrawn, anxious, or lacking in confidence;
- 8) develops communication-related issues, e.g. stammering;
- 9) attempts or threatens suicide or runs away;
- 10) cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares;
- 11) feels ill in the morning;
- 12) begins to do poorly in school work;
- 13) comes home with clothes torn or books damaged;
- 14) has possessions which are damaged or "go missing";
- 15) asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully);
- 16) has unexplained cuts or bruises;
- 17) comes home unusually hungry (money / snack has been stolen);
- 18) becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- 19) is bullying other children or siblings;
- 20) stops eating;
- 21) is frightened to say what's wrong;
- 22) gives improbable excuses for any of the above;
- 23) is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone;
- 24) is nervous & jumpy when a cyber-message is received.

These signs and behaviours are not exhaustive and could indicate other problems; however, bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated. Parents are asked to support their children and the College by advising their children to report bullying and informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved. Parents are further asked to co-operate with the College, if their children are accused of bullying and to point out the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves.

Measures to Prevent Bullying

- 1) The College's *Code of Conduct and Behaviour Policy* highlight the need for mutual respect and care at all levels within the College.
- 2) The PSHE and RSE programmes and the curriculum in general provide a range of opportunities for all Year Groups to discuss issues relating to bullying, relationships, caring for each other, working together (see relevant PSHE and RSE policies).
- 3) Assemblies frequently focus on specific issues – 'Anti Bullying Week', respect, friendship, and bullying, which all contribute to the College's ethos of respect and caring for each other. A record of such events is held centrally to help with planning and provision across the respective school.
- 4) There is a staff duty rota at morning break and at lunch-time, so there is always an appropriate person for pupils to go to, in addition to the ready availability of most staff. A full and rich co-curricular programme is also available, to encourage pupils to be positively occupied at lunchtime.
- 5) Our *Behaviour Policy* outlines the need for staff to treat all pupils with respect, fairness and justice, which should minimise the extent to which staff may unknowingly contribute to increasing an individual's perceived vulnerability.

- 6) Anti-Bullying posters, including Childline, are displayed around College and in toilets.
- 7) The College endeavours to ensure all staff are kept up to date in strategies to prevent and deal with bullying.
- 8) All staff have a pastoral role to play in the College, and guidance is given in the way both bullies and those being bullied can/should be dealt with through talks at full Staff Meetings, making sure all staff understand the principle of the school policy and briefings on both sites. There are regular pastoral items on the agenda and any issues are shared and the relevant staff informed.
- 9) The College makes clear the penalties for, and possible consequences of, internet misuse – offensive and bullying behaviour towards pupils or staff.
- 10) A Peer mentoring system is in place in the Senior School; Friendship Monitors and Play Leaders are in our Infant & Junior School.
- 11) Pastoral meetings enable an overview of any issues between students of different year groups and help with transition between Key Stages.

Procedures for Dealing with Bullying

All reports of bullying should be, and are, taken seriously.

- 1) It is important that pupils know they have someone to turn to if they feel they are the subject of bullying. Teachers are advised to listen carefully to all accounts, and try not to make quick assumptions. All relevant information must be written down for future reference. Most reports of bullying will be dealt with at once by the Form Tutor/Class Teacher/Head of Year with support from Leadership Team where necessary.
- 2) All information is usually recorded on iSAMS. The Deputy Head (Pastoral)/Head of Infant & Junior is responsible for monitoring records of bullying to identify any patterns or trends which should be brought to the attention of relevant staff.
- 3) When dealing with bullying incidents, the priority is to stop the bullying, support the pupil being bullied, and then work with the bully.
- 4) The school may set up a support group of pupils within the Year Group to help the pupil being bullied in whatever way they or the pupil being bullied feels is most appropriate. It is up to the pupil being bullied if they wish to attend these meetings. Monitoring/review meetings will be held to make sure improvement is occurring and is maintained. Parents will be informed that this is taking place and of the outcome.
- 5) The bully and pupil being bullied are normally interviewed separately, but depending on the incident pupils may be interviewed together – this can help re-educate some bullies when they can see how it has affected the pupil they have bullied. Pupils hopefully learn from the way they have behaved. The meeting should end on a positive note, possibly concerning the pupil's honest response/mature reflection etc. A follow-up meeting within one week is arranged.
- 6) If a pupil has been isolated from their peer group the school will set up a circle of friends to allow integration back into the group. A Peer Mentor/Buddy may be allocated as a point of contact during the day, someone they feel comfortable talking to about the problem.
- 7) Inappropriate behaviour will always be discussed directly with the child concerned, to agree changes which will be monitored to change their behaviour. Expectations concerning future behaviour between parties should be clearly and concisely outlined. Checks will also be made to make sure there is no repetition of the unacceptable

behaviour. Whilst parents are always contacted and informed, they do not always attend meetings with Pastoral Staff in person. This is decided on the severity of the incident (ref. *Discipline & Exclusions Policy*).

- 8) The pupil being bullied will always be informed of what is happening to make sure they feel happy and confident, and parents of both the perpetrator and the pupil being bullied will be kept informed about what is being done to deal with the incident. The parents should also be reminded about the *Behaviour Policy*.
- 9) If pupils do not respond positively to attempts to stop bullying, or if it is of a serious nature or repetitive, they will be dealt with according to the College's relevant behaviour policies, where sanctions will be applied which could result in suspension or exclusion.
- 10) It should be noted that certain types of bullying may need to be dealt with in line with the College's *Safeguarding Policy*, which includes specific reference to child-on-child abuse. A bullying incident is treated as a child protection concern where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.
- 11) Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously and this is recorded and distinguished in the bullying logs.

Responsibilities of Staff

- 1) To provide a caring environment in which pupils treat each other with respect and sensitivity and have an understanding of our inherent differences and tolerance.
- 2) To encourage all pupils to be kind, fair and honest and, therefore, develop a total rejection of any form of bullying.
- 3) To make sure that all members of the College are aware that bullying will not be tolerated.
- 4) To make sure that all members of the College are aware of the seriousness of bullying, both physical and emotional (which may cause psychological damage).
- 5) To encourage pupils to realise that it is correct and acceptable to report incidents of bullying.
- 6) To make sure both pupils and parents know what the College policy on bullying is and what they should do if bullying arises.
- 7) To foster in our pupils: self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others through PSHE lessons, the curriculum in general, and everyday routines and activities.
- 8) To demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.
- 9) To discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens.
- 10) To be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
- 11) To listen to children who have been bullied, take what they say seriously, and act to support and protect them.
- 12) To report suspected cases of bullying to the appropriate staff, who will refer to the Designated Safeguarding Lead if appropriate.
- 13) To follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken.
- 14) To deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

- 15) To make sure all College staff know what the *Anti-Bullying Policy* is and what they should do if bullying is reported to them, and to realise that when bullying occurs at this College it must be dealt with in a way that looks at both the needs of the pupil being bullied and the perpetrator.

Responsibilities of Pupils

We expect our pupils to:

- 1) Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity;
- 2) Intervene, by reporting an incident or concern to a member of staff, or anonymously through the College's online platform;
- 3) Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.

Responsibilities of Parents

We ask our parents to support their children and the College by:

- 1) Working with the College to promote good behaviour and encourage involvement in promoting the College ethos;
- 2) Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children;
- 3) Advising their children to report any bullying to their class teacher or any member of staff and explain the implications allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils;
- 4) Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying;
- 5) Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken;
- 6) Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;
- 7) Co-operating with the College, if their children are accused of bullying, and help the College to try to ascertain the truth; raising awareness of the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves.

Further Provision – As Applicable

Peer Support

This covers a range of planned and structured approaches to bullying that aim to make use of the knowledge, skills and experience of pupils to understand, support, inform and help develop the skills, self-esteem and confidence of their peers. These sessions may take place in the form of role play, whole class discussion, paired discussions and team activities. This strategy allows pupils to reject bullying behaviour, to take responsibility for themselves and others within the school community, to develop their capacity to empathise and connect with others and to contribute to the safety and well-being of their peers. Peer support should not be seen as a replacement for adult involvement in anti-bullying strategies and should be used as one approach among others. These sessions may take place in lesson time (PSHE) or assemblies. They could also occur as an impromptu session following an issue.

Buddy System

This involves pupils building on the helping skills they have already acquired through everyday interaction with friends and family. This is used when the bullied pupil is befriended by another pupil of the same age, with the aim of increasing their sense of belonging and of ending their feelings of isolation and loneliness.

Peer Mediation

Under the supervision of a member of staff, groups of pupils work to solve problems between pupils by encouraging them to: define the problem; identify and agree key issues; discuss and arrive at a solution. This restorative approach is usually used with older pupils (from Year 5), adopts a 'no blame' view of the situation, and emphasises the importance of recognising bullying behaviour, apologising for it, putting it in the past and agreeing a way forward. Everyone involved should come away feeling that the outcome is fair to all sides.

Circle Time

Circle time is used with different age groups (Infant & Junior School) to address positive topics and issues of concern. Over 20-30 minutes, the teacher facilitates a safe and positive environment for pupils to take turns (if they want to) to talk about a specific topic or issue, such as bullying. Participants are encouraged to listen to each other carefully and to discuss issues in a problem-solving way. Circle time can be used to raise pupil awareness and understanding of bullying and to discuss ways of dealing with it.

APPENDIX 1 – Cyberbullying

The DfE offers the following definition of cyberbullying: *"The use of Information & Communications Technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the Internet, deliberately to upset someone else"*.

Examples reported by schools include:

- 1) pupils who set up website pages and invite others to post derogatory comments about a pupil;
- 2) pupils who film fights or assaults (so-called "happy slapping") and circulate them via mobile 'phones;
- 3) pupils sending insulting and vicious text or e-mail messages;
- 4) pupils posting fake and/or obscene photographs of another pupil on a social networking site;
- 5) pupils using social networking sites and removing and circulating material such as photographs which may be embarrassing or personal.

Cyberbullying can have far greater impact than other forms of bullying because:

- 1) it involves the invasion of personal space;
- 2) it gives anonymity (at least initially) to the bully;
- 3) it gives the bully the ability to broadcast upsetting messages and images rapidly to a potentially huge audience and to continue to do so repeatedly over a long period of time.

Another unusual factor is the way that other pupils who would not normally take part in bullying behaviour may be drawn in as accessories. This can happen, for example, when an image is circulated on a mobile phone by a bully and recipients extend the circulation further by passing it on to a wider circle.

Prevention of Cyberbullying

Abbey Gate College has developed proactive strategies to prevent cyberbullying, including the sending of nude or semi-nude images, whether real or AI generated, and will fully investigate incidents when they happen. The College aims to create a culture where cyberbullying is widely regarded as unacceptable.

All pupils are made aware that:

- 1) the College reserves the right to monitor pupils' use of the internet on a routine basis and to examine mobile phones where there is reason to suspect abuse;
- 2) misuse of technology is subject to the College's disciplinary regime;
- 3) pupils will be held personally responsible for all material they have placed on a website and for all material that appears on a website of which they are the account holder;
- 4) misconduct of this kind outside of College will be amenable to school discipline if the welfare of other pupils or the culture or reputation of the College are placed at risk;

The College's position on cyberbullying, including the sending of nude or semi-nude images, whether real or AI generated, is reinforced within assemblies, ICT and PHSE lessons, and forms an integral part of the College's anti-bullying policy.

Responding to Incidents of Cyberbullying

The College will investigate all allegations of cyberbullying, including the sending of nude or semi-nude images, whether real or AI generated, as in the College's main anti-bullying strategy.

Pupils affected by cyberbullying would:

- 1) receive reassurance (with cyberbullying, this can include advice on self-protection measures such as blocking messages from a particular source or cleaning up "buddy lists");
- 2) be encouraged to preserve evidence in the form of text messages, images and other material.

It is important to note, however, that responding to incidents of cyberbullying creates some unique challenges. These include the potential difficulty of identifying a perpetrator who may be using an internet pseudonym or has appropriated another person's mobile phone for the purposes of sending abusive messages. In many cases, conventional methods of investigation by the College, such as observation by staff or statements from witnesses, may be successful in identifying perpetrators. However, serious cases may need to be referred to the police for investigation.

Pupils are made aware that a number of criminal offences can be committed in the course of cyberbullying, including:

- 1) harassment
- 2) publishing obscene material
- 3) taking, storing and circulating indecent images of children
- 4) using threatening, abusive or insulting behaviour
- 5) aiding and abetting crimes of violence
- 6) sending nude or semi-nude images, whether real or AI generated

The decision to refer an issue to the Police is a matter of judgement for the College. Schools are strongly advised to make a referral if any of the following factors are present:

- 1) there is evidence that a serious criminal offence has been, or is about to be, committed;
- 2) the victim has suffered significant harm or is at risk of significant harm (including self-harm);
- 3) there is evidence or suspicion of adult involvement - schools need to be aware of the possibility that abuse and manipulation of children via the internet may involve adults posing as children, even as other pupils;
- 4) there is evidence or suspicion of concerted action by a group of pupils, particularly if more than one school is involved;
- 5) any of the children involved are on the Child Protection Register.

The Police will have more resources at their disposal for investigation, but only the most serious cases are likely to be given priority.