



MVS Anti-Bullying Policy

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1. Introduction

The school aims to create a safe and secure environment in which students develop confidence and self-discipline and expects all members of the community to treat one another with kindness. We strive to ensure that all students' time at Maida Vale School is a happy one, encouraging kindness for one another and actively discouraging bullying.

Maida Vale School takes a child-centred approach; all systems, processes and policies operate with the best interests of the child at their heart.

This policy is the single source of the school's definition and typology of bullying. The Behaviour Policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Online Safety Policy cross-refer to this section rather than reproducing it, so that there is one authoritative definition in use across the school.

This policy is available on the school's website.

Definition

'Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, ... 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.' (Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, DfE, 2017)

Bullying can be:

- physical: hitting, kicking, taking or interfering with someone's property or belongings;
- verbal: teasing, name calling, insulting, offensive remarks, threats;
- emotional: spreading rumours, exclusion, ostracising;
- online bullying: using technology — mobile phone, social networks, email, gaming, etc. — deliberately to hurt or humiliate another;
- sexual: unwanted physical contact including 'upskirting', sexual violence or sexual harassment as detailed in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, and sexually abusive comments;
- initiation ceremonies that are intended to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation.

Banter is an ongoing concern for all schools; it is often referred to as the playful and friendly exchange of teasing remarks. However, at Maida Vale School it is made clear that the following distinctions are drawn:

- Friendly banter is where there is no intention to hurt, and everyone knows the limits.
- Ignorant banter 'crosses the line' with no intent to hurt.
- Malicious banter is done to humiliate a person — often publicly.

Bullying may be directed at an individual or affect a wider group. It is difficult for those who are bullied to defend themselves. Awareness should be given to the possibility of bullying

towards students or members of staff with protected characteristics, namely: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation; and towards those who are adopted, are carers or are in care.

Bullying is a matter of safeguarding as a form of child-on-child abuse, which may also manifest itself in any of the following: online bullying; emotional abuse; physical abuse; harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence and sexual harassment; the making or sharing of nudes and semi-nudes (including images that have been digitally altered or generated using artificial intelligence); and initiation or hazing type violence and rituals.

Maida Vale School recognises the seriousness of bullying in causing physical and/or emotional harm. We recognise that bullying may result in long-term psychological damage and even suicide.

The Board of Directors reserves the right, to such extent as is reasonable, to regulate the conduct of students when they are off-site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff. This includes the inappropriate use of technology. Students who are unkind, lack consideration or bully can therefore expect to be sanctioned, in line with the Behaviour Policy, including the possibility of exclusion for repeated or very serious cases.

1.1 Harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment and misogyny

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 substantially rewrote Part Five, which deals with child-on-child sexual harassment and sexual violence. The school's approach reflects that guidance.

- Harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), sexual harassment and sexual violence sit on a continuum. Behaviour that is dismissed as banter, "having a laugh", "just boys being boys" or "part of growing up" can be the earliest point on that continuum, and can escalate. Staff must not tolerate or dismiss such behaviour and must not assume that because it has not been reported it is not happening.
- The school recognises the escalatory nature of misogyny and its relationship with harmful sexual behaviour. Misogynistic language, attitudes, jokes, gestures and the sharing of misogynistic online content (including content produced by influencers and by 'incel' and similar subcultures) will be challenged by staff and recorded, whether a specific child has been named as the target. The same applies to misandry and to hostility directed at any protected characteristic.
- Online sexual harassment is a form of bullying and is treated as such. This includes non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes; the creation or circulation of sexualised images that have been digitally altered or generated using AI ('deepfakes' or 'deep nudes'); unwanted sexual comments, messages and reactions on social media and in group chats; sexualised online bullying; upskirting; and coercion or pressure to produce or share sexual images. It may take place wholly online or may accompany offline abuse.
- Where a report concerns sexual violence or sexual harassment, staff must refer immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead. The DSL will follow the procedures in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Part Five of Keeping Children Safe in Education, taking a case-by-case, evidence-informed decision on whether to manage internally, seek early help, refer to children's social care or report to the police. This policy does not displace that process.

1.2 Online / cyber bullying

Mobile, internet and wireless technologies have increased the pace of communication and brought benefits to users worldwide. But their popularity provides increasing opportunities for misuse through online bullying. It is crucial that young people, who are particularly skillful at using and adapting to new technology, use their phones and the internet safely and that they are aware of the consequences of misuse.

Online bullying adds new dimensions to the problem of bullying. Unlike other forms of bullying, it can follow children and young people into their private spaces and outside school hours; there is no haven for the person being bullied. Those who bully online can communicate their messages to a wide audience with remarkable speed and can often remain unseen and unidentifiable as they frequently act anonymously.

Online bullying can include:

- text message bullying: sending unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort;
- picture and video-clip bullying: using phone cameras to make the person being bullied feel threatened or embarrassed, with images usually sent on to other people;
- 'happy slapping': filming and sharing physical attacks;
- phone call bullying: silent calls or abusive messages. Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the phone owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, those responsible often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified;
- email bullying: sending bullying or threatening messages, often using a pseudonym for anonymity, or using someone else's name to pin the blame on them;
- chat room bullying: sending menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people in a web-based chat room;
- bullying through instant messaging: sending unpleasant messages during real-time conversations online;
- bullying via websites and social media: including the use of defamatory blogs, personal websites and online polling sites. Platforms include, but are not limited to, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and WhatsApp;
- bullying via AI tools and chatbots: using generative AI to create or circulate humiliating, sexualised or discriminatory content about another person;
- Bluetooth and AirDrop bullying: sending messages or images from one user to another to belittle, intimidate or upset that person, or to send them potentially harmful content.

Some features of online bullying differ from other forms of bullying. The key differences are:

- impact: the scale of online bullying can be greater than other forms of bullying;
- profile: the people involved may have a different profile to those involved in offline bullying;
- location: the 24/7 and anywhere nature of online bullying;

- anonymity: the person being bullied will not always know who is bullying them;
- motivation: some students may not be aware that what they are doing is bullying;
- evidence: unlike other forms of bullying, the person being bullied may have evidence of its occurrence.

Who is most vulnerable?

Because of the anonymity that communications technologies offer, anyone with a mobile phone or internet connection can be a target for online bullying. Those who bully can reach much larger numbers within a peer group than they can with conventional bullying. Vindictive comments posted on a website, for instance, can be seen by a large audience, as can video clips sent by mobile phone in a group chat.

What can be done about it?

While other forms of bullying remain prevalent, online bullying is already a significant issue for many young people. Staff, parents and young people need to work together to prevent it and to tackle it whenever it occurs. All students, staff and visitors sign the School's Online Safety Policy.

- Maida Vale School is a phone-free school. We have partnered with Yondr, who are experts at ensuring distraction-free study environments. This applies to students in Years 7-11. Sixth Form students are not required to use Yondr pouches. Our objective is to create an environment where our young people can focus on their academic studies without the distraction of their mobile phone, but also to create a safe atmosphere where they can develop healthy relationships with these devices. We believe that phones have great utility; however, we have also found that learning and social behaviour improve drastically when students are fully engaged with their teachers and classmates.
- As a school, we recommend that Year 7 students do not have a smartphone. Most Year 7 students do not need a phone, but where necessary we recommend a non-smartphone that can make and receive calls and texts. The Yondr pouches are used for any phone, whether smart or not; if a family decides their child does not need a phone, they do not need to purchase a pouch.
- Online bullying, ways to prevent it and what to do if you experience it are taught through the IS curriculum. Students are also taught about the risks of new communications technologies, the consequences of their misuse, and how to use them safely.
- In addition, students receive regular e-safety training through their computer science lessons.
- E-communications used on the school site or as part of school activities off-site are monitored as far as it is possible.
- Internet filtering and monitoring systems are continually updated and harmful sites blocked. The effectiveness of these systems is reviewed at least annually and the review is recorded. We work with students and parents to make sure new communications technologies are used safely, taking account of local and national guidance and good practice. We work with the police and other partners on managing online bullying, and parents are kept informed of school standards and policies so that they can be applied at home as well as at school.

- Any sanctions imposed will be in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy and are applied fairly and consistently.
- The NSPCC operates a helpline to support children and adults affected by sexual harassment and abuse in education settings, including advice on how to contact the police and report crimes if they wish. The helpline also provides support to parents and professionals. The number is 0800 136 663.

1.3 Bullying of staff

Bullying of staff, whether by students, by parents or carers, or by colleagues, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. It carries the same seriousness as the bullying of a student.

Bullying of staff may include:

- persistent rudeness, intimidation, aggression, humiliation or verbal abuse in person, by telephone, by email or in writing;
- the filming or photographing of staff without consent, and the sharing of such material;
- online abuse: posts, comments, reviews, group chat messages or fake or impersonating accounts targeting a member of staff, including material created or altered using AI;
- the making of malicious or knowingly false allegations;
- conduct motivated by hostility towards a member of staff's protected characteristics, including misogyny, racism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, hostility on grounds of religion or belief, and hostility towards disability.

Sexual harassment of staff: the school's preventative duty

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity, or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. It includes sexual comments, jokes and banter, unwanted touching, staring or leering, the display or circulation of sexual images, unwanted sexual advances, and sexual comments made online or in group chats. It also includes less favourable treatment of a member of staff because they have rejected, or submitted to, such conduct. Conduct can amount to sexual harassment whether or not it was intended that way, and a single incident is enough.

Under section 40A of the Equality Act 2010, the school has a positive legal duty to take reasonable steps to prevent the sexual harassment of its employees in the course of their employment. This is a preventative duty: it applies whether or not anything has happened, and it is not discharged by having a policy and waiting for complaints. It extends to harassment by students, by parents and carers, by contractors, visitors and other third parties, as well as by colleagues.

To meet this duty the school will:

- assess the risk of sexual harassment of staff at Maida Vale School, including the risk arising from contact with students, from contact with parents and visitors, from lone working, from residential visits and from work-related social events, and record that assessment;

- keep the assessment under review at least annually, and after any incident;
- make clear to students, through the Behaviour Policy and the pastoral and IS programmes, that sexual comments, gestures or conduct directed at a member of staff are treated as seriously as conduct directed at another student, and are dealt with under the Behaviour Policy;
- include contractors, hirers and external providers within the arrangements set out in the Supervision of Students Policy, and require them to report and act on any such conduct by their own staff;
- train staff and managers on what sexual harassment is, on the duty in this section, and on how to report and respond to it;
- encourage reporting and act on every report, including reports made by a witness rather than by the person affected, and including conduct that has not been directed at a named individual;
- record all reports centrally, including those resolved informally, so that patterns can be identified; and
- report annually to the Board of Directors on the operation of this section, including the number and nature of reports and the outcome of the risk assessment.

A member of staff who is subjected to sexual harassment is never expected to raise the matter directly with the person responsible and will not be asked to do so as a precondition of the school acting. Nobody who reports sexual harassment in good faith, or who supports a colleague in doing so, will be disadvantaged for having done so.

Members of staff who experience or witness the bullying of a colleague should report it in accordance with section 6.5. Staff who are the subject of an allegation are supported in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Staff Code of Conduct; the fact that an allegation is being investigated does not make abusive conduct towards that member of staff acceptable.

Parents and carers are expected to follow the School's Code of Conduct for Parents. Where a parent's conduct towards a member of staff falls below that standard, the school may restrict contact arrangements, require communication to be routed through a single named point of contact, restrict attendance at the school site or at School events, or, in serious or persistent cases, require the removal of the student. The school will report criminal conduct to the police.

2. Aims

At Maida Vale School, our aim is that staff, students and parents work together to create a safe, supportive, happy and caring learning environment in line with our school ethos and values.

Our aim is that bullying of any kind is not tolerated, and to have a whole-school approach to ensuring safety, security, openness and confidence.

We aim for values of respect for staff and other students, an understanding of the value of education, and a clear understanding of how our actions can affect others to permeate the whole school environment.

This is reinforced by staff and older students who set a good example to the rest. The school recognises that technology plays an important and positive role in children's lives, both educationally and socially. It is committed to helping all members of the school community to understand both the benefits and the risks, and to equip young people with the knowledge and skills to be able to use technology safely and responsibly.

- Maida Vale School aims to create a stable and secure environment in which students develop confidence and self-discipline.
- Routines, structures and rules are a necessary means to achieving these aims. In such an environment bullying has no place and staff take a firm line whenever an instance of bullying occurs. Whilst bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.
- Sanctions should be known, clear and as brief as possible in application. Incidents should be dealt with without undue delay and once dealt with should not be resurrected other than as part of a positive learning experience.
- Students and staff are strongly encouraged to speak to someone if they feel under pressure from others and are reminded of this regularly.
- To ensure that clear steps are taken to help and support the child who has been bullied.
- To ensure that appropriate disciplinary sanctions are applied, and that clear steps are taken to help and support the child who has bullied to change their behaviour.
- To ensure a satisfactory outcome by working with the parents of both parties and, when and where appropriate, outside agencies.
- To protect confidentiality as necessary.

3. Objectives

- To raise awareness of the school's expectations in terms of behaviour and to adhere to our Code of Conduct and School Values.
- To communicate effectively to all members of the school community the school's stance on bullying of any kind.
- To engage members of the school community in reaching a shared understanding of what bullying and online bullying is.
- To communicate effectively to all members of the school community the school's policy, and to have clear procedures so that it is easy to report bullying, including online bullying and bullying outside school.
- To promote an open atmosphere in which children who are bullied and those who witness bullying know that it is right "to tell" and feel safe to do so.
- To train staff to be alert to children who may be vulnerable and at risk from bullying.
- To train and work with staff so that they can identify different sorts of bullying and know how to deal with cases sensitively, supportively and effectively.
- To ensure all staff challenge any abusive behaviour between students that comes to their notice and report to the DSL any concerns of this nature. Refer to the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for further information.

- To identify low-level disruption and adopt early intervention measures to help set clear expectations and prevent behaviours escalating.
- To have a recognised procedure of sanctions for bullying that is clear and consistent.
- To take appropriate action in cases of bullying and keep a detailed record.
- To work with children in a range of ways to equip them with social and emotional skills to reduce bullying and to be able to counter and deal with bullying, including online bullying.
- To make clear that bullying of staff, by students or by parents and carers is equally unacceptable, and to provide a clear route by which it is reported and addressed.

4. Roles and Responsibilities

Staff are made aware of the seriousness and impact of child-on-child abuse, including the effects of bullying on students, through their induction and ongoing training. This includes encouraging them to take a proactive approach in monitoring unsupervised areas, situations and other times when potential bullying could occur.

Where appropriate, the school will source additional training to support understanding of the needs of our students, including those with special educational needs or disabilities and those who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. The specific needs of students with SEND must be considered when investigating bullying, in relation both to the child who has been bullied and to the child alleged to have bullied. When psychological damage results from such behaviour, appropriate medical advice and guidance will be sought using the expertise of the DSL, school nurse and counsellor.

The Headmaster and Senior Deputy Head are responsible for:

- reviewing and approving this Anti-Bullying Policy;
- ensuring the policy is implemented effectively, fairly and consistently;
- ensuring that the school environment encourages positive behaviour and that staff deal effectively with incidents of bullying quickly, fairly and consistently;
- monitoring how staff implement this policy to ensure expectations are maintained;
- ensuring that all staff are trained, vigilant and alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against incidents of suspected or reported bullying;
- ensuring that the Board of Directors receives the termly report set out in section 7.

The Board of Directors is responsible for:

- satisfying itself that the school has an effective Anti-Bullying strategy, and that it is implemented;
- receiving and scrutinising the termly report on bullying, including the analysis of prejudice-based incidents by protected characteristic, and challenging where patterns are not being addressed;
- ensuring that this policy is consistent with the Behaviour Policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Equality Policy.

All members of staff are responsible for:

- implementing this policy fairly and consistently;
- promoting good behaviour and the values of tolerance, compassion, respect and kindness throughout the school community;
- modelling expected behaviour and positive relationships around the school;
- ensuring the school values are upheld in their classrooms and around the school site, and that students behave in a responsible manner whilst under their supervision;
- challenging students to meet the school's expectations and maintaining boundaries of acceptable conduct;
- challenging sexist, misogynistic, racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disablist and other prejudice-based language and behaviour whenever it is encountered, and recording it, whether or not an individual target has been identified.

Students are expected to:

- live the values of the school by demonstrating respect, tolerance, compassion and kindness towards their peers;
- inform a member of staff if they know or think someone else is being bullied. Stamping out bullying is everybody's responsibility;
- play their part to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders.

Parents are expected to:

- support their child in adhering to procedures outlined in this policy;
- inform the school of any changes in circumstances that may affect their child;
- discuss any concerns with the Personal Tutor or other staff member promptly;
- support the school in any procedures which it believes are necessary to improve their child's behaviour;
- treat all members of staff with courtesy and respect, in accordance with the Code of Conduct for Parents.

5. Preventative Strategies

As well as reacting quickly to incidents of bullying when they occur, we work hard to try to prevent it happening in the first place, in the following ways.

- The issue of bullying forms part of the Personal Tutorial and assembly programme as well as all academic areas, especially the IS curriculum.
- Students are given the opportunity to discuss various aspects of how and why bullying occurs, with the aim of helping those who are bullied and of getting those who might bully to see things from another person's point of view, and to realise that adults do have the ability to stop bullying.
- This also includes discussion of the differences between people that could motivate bullying (such as religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability and different family situations) and the importance of avoiding prejudice-based language. Specifically, the

term "banter" is discussed to ensure that students are aware of the lines that we, as a school, draw.

- We have a clear culture and ethos about how members of the school community should be treated, in order to raise self-esteem and value the contribution of all young people, therefore making bullying less likely.
- Members of staff provide good role models.
- There are clear school rules known to all members of the school community, which are applied as fairly and consistently as possible.
- The Anti-Bullying Policy is re-introduced to all students at the beginning of each academic year.

Children learn through a combination of direct discussion about bullying and indirect strategies in teaching and other aspects of school life. These include:

- a clear Behaviour Policy;
- school values;
- assemblies;
- the IS curriculum;
- computer science lessons;
- School Council;
- displays;
- signing the Online Safety Policy before using the internet in school.

In addition:

- Through student surveys and the School Council, students' views are expressed and their ideas on improvement encouraged.
- Students are involved so they understand the school's approach and are clear about the part they can play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders.
- Students are regularly reminded that they can report bullying of any kind to any member of staff, and it is made easy for students to report bullying so that they are assured they will be listened to and that incidents will be acted on.
- In cases of online bullying, students are advised not to retaliate or reply but to keep any evidence and report the matter to their parent or a member of staff.
- All new members of staff are given guidance on the School's Anti-Bullying Policy and on how to react to allegations of bullying. They are required to read this policy as part of their induction.
- Effective ongoing staff training is provided for all staff, including non-teaching staff, to enable them to recognise all types of bullying including online bullying, to recognise the signs that a child may be being bullied, and to respond appropriately.

- Time is set aside in pastoral meetings and line management to discuss children who may be causing concern.
- Records of all incidents are kept in the bullying log so that patterns of behaviour can be identified and monitored, including in relation to any protected characteristics. These records also allow an evaluation of the effectiveness of this policy.
- Parents are involved and informed to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied.

5.1 Preventative education

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 strengthens the expectation that schools deliver a planned, sequenced preventative education programme rather than relying on reactive responses. At Maida Vale School this programme:

- is delivered through the IS curriculum, the Personal Tutorial programme, assemblies and the wider curriculum, and is planned and sequenced so that content is revisited and developed as students move through the school, rather than delivered as one-off events;
- meets the requirements of the statutory guidance 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' (DfE, July 2025), which is in force from 1 September 2026;
- addresses healthy and respectful relationships, consent, boundaries, the law, what constitutes sexual harassment and sexual violence, and what to do if a student experiences or witnesses them;
- addresses misogyny and misandry directly: how misogynistic content is produced and promoted online, the influence of 'incel' and similar subcultures, how such attitudes escalate, and how to challenge them. It also addresses the impact of pornography on expectations of relationships;
- addresses the making and sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, including images that have been digitally altered or generated using AI, and the law that applies to them;
- addresses stereotyping, prejudice and equality, and the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010;
- is informed by what the school's own records and student surveys show about the issues arising at Maida Vale School, so that content responds to actual need;
- proceeds on the basis that these issues are present even where they are not being reported, and does not rely on the absence of reports as evidence that a topic need not be taught;
- is supported by staff training, so that staff are confident in challenging behaviour, responding to disclosures and reinforcing the same messages consistently outside the classroom.

5.2 Preventative measures — online bullying

Maida Vale School also operates several specific preventative measures to deter online bullying. These include:

- making positive use of technology across the curriculum;
- ensuring all students know they are expected to adhere to the Online Safety Policy;
- blocking certain sites and monitoring student use, by the IT department, DSL and SLT;
- applying sanctions where appropriate for any breaches of the Online Safety Policy, or misuse or attempted misuse of the internet, and giving students specific guidance on the appropriate use of social networking and messaging sites and on what constitutes online bullying;
- supporting students in safe and responsible use of the internet, including understanding the importance of password security, the need to log out of accounts and keeping other personal details safe;
- educating students about the risks of making or sharing nudes and semi-nudes, including images that have been digitally altered or generated using AI, and about forwarding such material;
- involving students in developing a code of advice on protecting themselves from getting caught up in online bullying and on reporting cases they experience;
- regularly evaluating and updating approaches to take account of developments in technology, including generative AI, and updating the Online Safety Policy accordingly;
- using a filtering and monitoring system that alerts IT staff to specified vocabulary, with effectiveness reviewed at least annually and the review recorded;
- providing information on external reporting routes — see Appendix 1.

5.3 Parents

Information about the School's policies and procedures is published online and in the Parents' Handbook.

- Parents are expected to follow the School's Code of Conduct and support the school's stance on bullying.
- Parents are encouraged to tell the school of concerns, including those relating to incidents out of school, as soon as possible.
- Any concerns raised by parents will be sympathetically heard and investigated.
- The school aims to support parents of children who are either bullying or being bullied. We support parents by discussing the problems and offering help and advice as soon as the situation becomes apparent.
- Parents are provided with information on internet safety via literature, talks and similar means.

6. Procedures

We strive to ensure that all students' time at Maida Vale School is a happy one, encouraging kindness for one another and actively discouraging bullying.

Students who are unkind, lack consideration or bully can expect to be sanctioned, in line with the Behaviour Policy, including the possibility of exclusion for repeated or very serious cases.

The school will do its utmost to protect students from any action that may damage them in any way, physically or mentally, and staff will take appropriate and timely action when students are found to have bullied others.

However, the School is limited in its ability to intervene unless we are made aware of the incident or situation. Students must talk to someone. This can be any member of staff, from their Personal Tutor to the Headmaster — we all have a duty of care not only to protect children who may be bullied but also to help those who bully to change their behaviour. There is a reporting concern box in reception, which can be used anonymously, as well as an email address that students can use to report incidents or concerns (bullying@maidavaleschool.com). We also carry out an annual student survey to gather information and feedback from the student body so that we can improve and refine our procedures for dealing with instances of bullying.

Children who are bullied can be extremely scared that talking to an adult who then intervenes will make matters worse; giving the child reassurance is therefore a vital first step. A child's wish to speak in confidence should be respected, with the clear proviso that if the adult is told something which is cause for concern about the child's safety or wellbeing, the adult will have an obligation to discuss the matter with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and/or Headmaster.

All members of staff must be equipped to deal with instances of bullying. Incidents of suspected or reported bullying should be dealt with quickly and thoroughly. Depending on the nature or seriousness of the incident, the Senior Deputy Head and/or Headmaster will become involved.

- Incidents of suspected child-on-child abuse should be referred to the DSL, and then this policy applied.
- The staff member dealing with an incident should offer an immediate opportunity for the child who has been bullied to report and discuss the incident. The child's concern for confidentiality (and possibly for 'no action') should be noted, but the child should be reassured that their safety is paramount. The staff member should explain to the child what they intend to do about the incident.
- The member of staff dealing with the incident should log the details on MyConcern at the earliest opportunity, to ensure other relevant members of staff are notified.
- Where appropriate and having considered the wishes of the child who was bullied, the member of staff should give the child who is alleged to have bullied the opportunity to put across their side of the incident.
- The member of staff should hand any statement forms to a member of the Pastoral Leadership Team. For a more serious incident (child-on-child abuse), a safeguarding concern should be raised on MyConcern.
- The relevant member of the Pastoral Leadership Team will contact the parents of both parties and meetings may be arranged, if necessary.
- If necessary, support is offered to both parties, in-house, via the school counsellor or therapist, or with outside agencies.

- A conflict resolution or restorative justice meeting between parties may be arranged. This will only take place where it is safe and appropriate to do so, with the informed agreement of the child who was bullied, and never as a substitute for a sanction where one is warranted. Restorative approaches are not used where the incident involves sexual violence or sexual harassment, unless expressly advised by the DSL following specialist advice.
- Occasionally, parents will inform the school of a bullying incident on behalf of their child (often without the child's knowledge). On receiving this information, staff should consult a member of the Pastoral Leadership Team so that a specific procedure for that incident can be instigated. This may involve other staff in order to keep a watching brief for the child.
- Where there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm, the matter is treated as a child protection issue and will be reported, as appropriate, to external agencies including the police or children's social care by the Designated Safeguarding Lead. Staff should have no hesitation in consulting the DSL.
- To record incidents of bullying, the school uses MyConcern, which is maintained by the DSL. Where there is a child protection concern, the DSL will open a child protection file.

A discussion with a child who has been bullied should:

- encourage their sense of self-worth and reassure them that, as far as possible, confidentiality will be kept, keeping in mind the notes above about the obligation to inform the DSL;
- identify clearly what is upsetting them;
- remind them that no one deserves to be treated unkindly and that they have done the right thing by reporting the incident;
- reassure them that more help and support will be forthcoming once the incident has been further investigated;
- gather as much information as possible about the incident(s), including where and when the bullying is taking place, how long it has been going on and any other context that might be helpful (past incidents or interactions between those involved);
- record details of any witnesses to the bullying;
- secure any evidence, such as screenshots of messages, emails or photographs, saved securely on MyConcern.

A discussion with a child who has bullied should:

- clearly identify what is unacceptable in their behaviour;
- ask the child for their point of view;
- try to get them to see the other person's point of view;
- try to get them to appreciate the other person's feelings and look at other strategies to handle an irritation or dislike;
- make a clear statement that this behaviour must stop;

- explain the sanction that is being issued and what future consequences will be if the behaviour continues.

In all instances of bullying, the following steps must take place:

- the investigating member of staff will listen without prejudice and ask all involved parties (including witnesses) to write statements, which will be stored and saved on MyConcern;
- the member of staff must remember that there are always two sides to a story and must obtain as much evidence as possible before deciding on next steps. This does not mean treating a report as doubtful, nor delaying protective action while evidence is gathered;
- as much information as possible should be gathered about the incident(s), including where and when the bullying is taking place, how long it has been going on and any other context that might be helpful;
- details of any witnesses should be recorded;
- any evidence, such as screenshots of messages, emails or photographs, should be obtained and saved securely on MyConcern;
- the child who has bullied will be told clearly which aspects of their behaviour must change immediately, and that the consequences of continuing to act unkindly will be severe;
- it will usually be appropriate at this point to involve that child's parents;
- in some cases, the peer group should be made aware of their collective responsibility to support the child who has been bullied, and to help the child who has bullied to change by expressing their liking for them but their disapproval of their behaviour;
- throughout the various processes and procedures dealing with bullying incidents, any sanctions imposed will be in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy. If these steps are ineffective, the school reserves the right to express its strong opposition to bullying by suspension and, in extremis, expulsion.

6.1 Members of staff

In dealing with reported cases of bullying, members of staff undertake to:

- never ignore suspected bullying;
- not make premature assumptions;
- listen carefully to all accounts;
- protect and support children who have been bullied and those who have been accused of bullying;
- help the child who has bullied to recognise the effect of their behaviour and to take responsibility for it, apply appropriate sanctions, and support the child in changing their behaviour;
- recognise that a child who bullies may also have been bullied themselves, and/or may have other issues that need to be explored and resolved;
- inform and involve parents;

- involve outside agencies where necessary;
- keep detailed records of occurrences, with information from all involved;
- follow up repeatedly, checking that the bullying has not resumed.

Further detail on the sanctions available and how they are applied can be found in the Behaviour Policy.

6.2 Safeguarding

A bullying incident will be addressed as a child protection concern where 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's Designated Safeguarding Lead will follow the school's safeguarding procedures and will not investigate further before advice has been sought from children's services and/or the police.

- All staff will challenge any abusive behaviour between students that comes to their notice and will report to the DSL any concerns of this nature.
- The school understands that a child exhibiting bullying behaviour may be an indicator that they are experiencing abuse and/or being bullied.
- Any allegations of staff bullying children will be handled following the DfE statutory guidance 'Keeping children safe in education' and the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- The Headmaster reserves the right, to such extent as is reasonable, to regulate the conduct of students when they are off-site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff. This includes the inappropriate use of technology.

6.3 Sanctions

Sanctions for bullying will be in line with the MVS Behaviour Policy and, in cases of serious or persistent bullying, could result in a suspension or permanent exclusion. Refer to the Behaviour Policy for further details.

Sanctions will also take into consideration the age and level of understanding of the child, and any special educational needs or disability.

6.4 Next steps and ongoing support

- Support for the child who has been bullied will be agreed with them and reviewed. Where that child wishes to, they will be helped to respond assertively and non-violently; this is offered as one form of support and is never presented as an expectation, nor as a condition of the bullying stopping.
- Where a child who has been bullied would benefit from additional support — for example with confidence, friendships, social communication, or needs arising from SEND — this will be offered. Responsibility for bullying rests solely with the child who bullied, and support offered to the child who was bullied must never be framed as correcting something about them.
- The incident should be kept open. The support of other children in the class may be vital to ending the bullying behaviour.
- Bystanding will be discussed with the class so that all children understand that it is unacceptable to watch bullying taking place and do nothing about it.

- The reasons for the bullying behaviour will be explored with the child who bullied, and appropriate support strategies offered to prevent a repetition in the future.
- In the case of online bullying, the school will assist in removing any hurtful or embarrassing content from the web, either by contacting the person who posted it (if known) or by contacting the host provider and making a report to get the content taken down. Where content cannot be removed by these routes, a report may be made to Report Harmful Content — see Appendix 1.
- In some cases, the child who is being bullied may be able to block the person bullying them from their accounts and services. Appendix 1 contains information on reporting routes and how to contact service providers.
- Where the child agrees, and does not experience it as a punishment, it may be advisable to change their contact details, for example a mobile phone number.

The steps outlined above will need to be modified according to the needs, age and level of understanding of the child.

6.5 Reporting and responding to bullying of staff

- A member of staff who experiences or witnesses bullying of a colleague — by a student, a parent or carer, or another member of staff — should report it to their line manager, or to the Senior Deputy Head where the line manager is involved. Where the concern relates to the Senior Deputy Head, it should be reported to the Headmaster; where it relates to the Headmaster, to the Managing Director, Theo Brehony.
- Bullying of a member of staff by a student is recorded on MyConcern and dealt with under the Behaviour Policy. Where the conduct is motivated by hostility towards a protected characteristic, it is recorded as a prejudice-based incident under section 6.6.
- Bullying of a member of staff by a parent or carer is reported to the Senior Deputy Head, who will record it and determine the response, which may include the measures set out in section 1.3.
- Bullying of a member of staff by a colleague is dealt with under the School's Grievance Procedure and Dignity at Work arrangements; this policy does not replace those procedures.
- A report of sexual harassment of a member of staff is reported to the Headmaster (or, where it concerns the Headmaster, to the Managing Director) and recorded centrally, whatever the source of the conduct and however it is subsequently resolved. Where the person responsible is a colleague, the Grievance Procedure and Dignity at Work arrangements apply to the individual complaint; the recording and preventative obligations in section 1.3 apply in every case. Where the conduct may indicate that a member of staff poses a risk of harm to children, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy takes precedence and the Headmaster consults the LADO.
- Affected staff will be offered support, which may include the Employee Assistance Programme, occupational health referral, adjustments to duties or contact arrangements, and assistance in reporting matters to the police where a criminal offence may have been committed.

- Incidents of bullying of staff are included, in anonymised and aggregated form, in the termly report to the Senior Leadership Team and the Board of Directors under section 7.

6.6 Prejudice-based incidents and hate incidents

- Any bullying incident that appears to be motivated by hostility or prejudice towards a protected characteristic — including race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment — is recorded on MyConcern as a prejudice-based incident, with the relevant characteristic identified. This applies whether the child targeted actually has that characteristic or is perceived to.
- Prejudice-based language and behaviour is recorded even where no individual has been identified as a target, so that patterns in the school culture can be seen.
- In every prejudice-based case, the DSL, in consultation with the Senior Deputy Head, will consider whether the incident meets the threshold for referral to the police as a hate incident or hate crime. A hate incident is any incident which the victim, or anyone else, perceives to be motivated by hostility or prejudice based on a personal characteristic; a hate crime is such an incident that also constitutes a criminal offence. The five nationally monitored strands are race, religion, sexual orientation, disability and transgender identity. Hostility on grounds of sex, including misogyny, is recorded by the school as a prejudice-based incident and taken equally seriously, although it is not currently one of the nationally monitored strands.
- The decision on whether to refer, and the reasons for it, are recorded on MyConcern in every case, including where the decision is not to refer. The child who was targeted and their parents are informed of the decision and of their own right to report directly to the police, whether or not the school refers.
- Referral to the police does not remove the school's responsibility to apply sanctions, provide support and address the underlying attitudes.
- Reports may be made to the police via 101, or online to True Vision — see Appendix 1. In an emergency, or where there is an immediate risk, call 999.
- The number and nature of prejudice-based incidents, broken down by protected characteristics, is reported termly to the Senior Leadership Team and to the Board of Directors under section 7.

7. Monitoring and Evaluation

- The school will undertake an audit of 'hot spots' in the school, the grounds and in off-site facilities to identify areas and times where children feel vulnerable or at risk.
- The school will undertake regular audits of parents' and students' views of the effectiveness of this policy and its procedures.
- The school will regularly evaluate and update its approach to take account of developments in technology, including updating the Online Safety Policy.
- All reported cases of bullying, including online bullying and bullying of staff, will be recorded.

The Anti-Bullying Coordinator is Toby Fisher, Senior Deputy Head. The Anti-Bullying Coordinator will:

- keep records confidential and secure;
- allow access to the records only to the Senior Leadership Team and, where required, the Designated Safeguarding Lead;
- report each term to the Senior Leadership Team and to the Board of Directors.

The termly report will cover:

- the number and type of cases recorded in the term, and the trend over the previous three years;
- an analysis of prejudice-based incidents broken down by protected characteristic, and any patterns identified;
- the number of cases in which a referral to the police as a hate incident or hate crime was considered, and the number referred;
- incidents of bullying of staff, in anonymised and aggregated form;
- the outcomes of cases, including sanctions applied and support provided;
- any locations, year groups or times of day where incidents cluster, and the action taken in response;
- what the data implies for the preventative education programme set out in section 5.1, and any changes made to it.

The Board of Directors will scrutinise this report and record its consideration in the minutes.

This policy will be reviewed annually using monitoring information and feedback from staff, students and parents, and following any material change in statutory guidance, on any required changes to this policy, its procedures, or any related policy.

8. Legislation and Guidance

This policy has due regard to the following legislation, statutory guidance and other advice:

Legislation

- The Equality Act 2010, section 26 (harassment) and section 40A (duty to prevent sexual harassment of employees)
- Worker Protection (Amendment of Equality Act 2010) Act 2023
- Employment Rights Act 2025
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006, section 89
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Part 3

Statutory guidance

- DfE, 'Keeping children safe in education' 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026), in particular Part One and Part Five
- DfE, 'Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education' (July 2025), in force from 1 September 2026

Non-statutory guidance and advice

- DfE, 'Preventing and tackling bullying: advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies' (July 2017)
- DfE, 'Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff' (2024)
- UKCIS, 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- EHRC, *Sexual harassment and harassment at work: technical guidance*, and the EHRC eight-step guide for employers

Related School policies

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Equality Policy
- Complaints Policy

Appendix 1: Reporting routes and sources of support

Reporting within School

- Any member of staff, including the Personal Tutor, any member of the Pastoral Leadership Team, the Senior Deputy Head or the Headmaster.
- Email: bullying@maidavaleschool.com
- The reporting concern box in reception, which may be used anonymously.

Removing content and reporting to service providers

Every major social media platform, messaging service and gaming platform operates its own reporting route for bullying, harassment and impersonation, usually reached from the offending post or profile, or from the platform's Help or Safety Centre. Students and parents should be encouraged to report content to the platform in the first instance, and to keep evidence (screenshots including usernames, dates and times) before blocking or deleting.

Where content has been reported to a platform and not removed, or where the route is unclear:

- Report Harmful Content — reportharmfulcontent.com — a national reporting centre operated by SWGfL as part of the UK Safer Internet Centre, which advises on and escalates reports of harmful online content, including bullying and harassment, to platforms.
- Professionals Online Safety Helpline (UK Safer Internet Centre) — 0344 381 4772 — advice for school staff on online safety concerns, including harassment of staff.
- Internet Watch Foundation — iwf.org.uk — for the removal of child sexual abuse imagery.
- Childline Report Remove (NSPCC and IWF) — childline.org.uk — for under-18s seeking removal of a nude image of themselves.

Reporting to the police

- Emergency, or immediate risk: 999
- Non-emergency: 101
- True Vision — report-it.org.uk — online reporting of hate crime and hate incidents, including online hate material.

- CEOP Safety Centre — ceop.police.uk/safety-centre — for concerns about online grooming or child sexual abuse. Note that CEOP does not handle reports of bullying, fake accounts or account hacking; these should go to the platform or, if criminal, to the police.

Support and further information

- Anti-Bullying Alliance — anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- Kidscape — kidscape.org.uk — Parent Advice Line 020 7823 5430
- Childline — childline.org.uk — 0800 1111
- NSPCC — nspcc.org.uk — 0808 800 5000; helpline for those affected by sexual harassment and abuse in education settings, 0800 136 663
- Childnet — childnet.com
- Internet Matters — internetmatters.org
- UK Safer Internet Centre — saferinternet.org.uk
- YoungMinds — youngminds.org.uk
- Department for Education — gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education

Contact details in this appendix are checked at each annual review of this policy.