

Godstowe

School Policy

Anti-bullying

Reviewed
September
2025

Aims and objectives

Our aim is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Bullying is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and is not tolerated at Godstowe. We believe that when all issues of bullying are addressed pupils are able to fully benefit from the opportunities available at Godstowe. ***Also see our Safeguarding Policy***
In some cases bullying may become a child protection concern. However, external support can be given to a pupil even if it is not deemed to be a child protection issue.

Definition

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. This normally takes the form of a sustained campaign. It must be remembered that bullying can be very serious indeed and can lead, in some cases, to physical, emotional or even psychological damage.

Bullying may involve an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating. .

The main types of bullying are ...

- physical (hitting, kicking, theft)
- verbal (name calling, racist remarks)
- indirect (spreading rumours, excluding someone from social groups)
- subtle (nasty looks, gestures)
- cyber bullying (use of ICT: the internet and mobile phones being used deliberately to upset someone else; it can take place at any time and intrude into places which have previously been regarded as safe or personal; the target group can be large and reached very rapidly; the person doing the cyber bullying may remain anonymous; it can occur between peer groups but also across generations)
- Racist (usually verbal: victims are singled out because of the colour of their skin; the way they talk; their ethnic grouping)
- Sexist bullying (abusive name-calling; gestures and comments about appearance)
- Religious, Cultural, SEN and Disability bullying

- Homophobic bullying (verbal: involving name-calling; public ridicule; text messaging and the regular use of offensive and discriminatory language that refers to someone's sexual orientation. It also often manifests itself indirectly through the spreading of rumours and/or the social isolation of the individual)
- Vulnerable pupils with special educational needs or disabilities, those who are adopted, those who are suffering from a health problem or those with caring responsibilities may be more likely to experience bullying because of difference. Children in care that are frequently on the move may also be vulnerable because they are always the newcomer. In addition children with special educational needs or disabilities can often lack the social or communication skills to report such incidents so staff must be alert to the potential bullying this group faces.

Broad Guidelines

Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in their work patterns, a lack of concentration or a reluctance to come to school. All pupils are encouraged to report bullying to a member of staff at the earliest opportunity.

At Godstowe all staff are encouraged to be alert for signs of bullying and to act promptly. Within the curriculum the staff at Godstowe will raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in PSHE, form tutorial time, assemblies and subject areas, as appropriate, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour. Pupils are made aware that they cannot beat bullying single handed.

All children are encouraged to talk to members of staff they feel comfortable with. Tutors, Head of Lower School or Upper School, Boarding House staff, the school nurses, parents, Deputy Heads and the Headmistress are all available to talk to girls who have concerns relating to bullying. In reality, all staff members are trusted adults and can be available to talk to pupils about any area of concern. Who can I talk to? posters are displayed in form rooms and around the school, reminding pupils of their trusted adults. In form rooms, pupils also have access to The Godstowe Anti-Bullying Leaflet, and in Lower School, pupils are given their own copy at the start of the year. (See appendix.)

Godstowe also has 'independent persons' who come into school on a regular basis to talk with boarders.

We believe we should:

- involve parents
- involve pupils
- regularly review and update our knowledge, understanding and procedures
- implement sanctions
- openly discuss differences between people
- contact specific organisations for help and advice
- provide staff training
- work with the wider community
- make it easy for pupils to report bullying
- create an inclusive environment

If a member of staff thinks a child is being bullied they should report this to the Head of EYFS/KS1 or any member of staff, who will keep the Deputy Head, Pastoral, and the headmistress fully

informed.

Procedures

The following procedures have regard for the DfE guidance, [Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017](#).

The following steps may be taken when dealing with incidents:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the member of staff should immediately speak to the Form Tutor and Head of EYFS/KS1/Lower/Upper School
- A course of action will be determined as appropriate (we recognise that sometimes the word 'bullying' is used inappropriately)
- Usually two members of the pastoral team will listen to both parties and through discussion will endeavour to help both the person(s) doing the bullying and the person being bullied. Other children involved will be brought into the discussions.
- The bully will be asked to offer an apology and, if possible, the bully and the victim will be reconciled
- Actions are agreed with all parties
- All meetings are minuted and added to the pastoral system
- If necessary, parents will be informed and may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the problem
- Over the coming week, the member of staff should informally check that things have improved for all concerned, daily,
- The Deputy Head Pupil Development, and the Headmistress should always be kept fully informed
- A record of the incident will be made in the appropriate pastoral files
- Form Tutors should always be kept informed
- Other staff should be informed on a need to know basis – it is important they are told that it may be a confidential issue
- If appropriate, the school will contact and seek advice from outside agencies for either those being bullied or those who are responsible for bullying others.

.Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by ...

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a form tutor or member of staff of their choice
- Reassuring them that they have done the right thing in telling an adult
- Fully informing the parents so they can add their support
- Reassuring the pupil
- Offering continuous support
- Reassuring them that bullying cannot be beaten single handed
- Restoring self-esteem and confidence
- Being given the chance to contribute to the solution
- Discussions as appropriate with parent

Pupils who have bullied will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the pupil became involved
- Establishing the wrongdoing and need to change

- Informing parents/guardians/house mistresses to help change the attitude of the pupil

The following disciplinary steps can be taken ...

- A meeting organised with the pupil and parents and an official warning given that the pupil may be suspended or excluded if bullying continues
- Suspension
- Permanent exclusion

Advice to pupils ...

- Follow the visual flow chart to understand the process of what to do next (See appendix)
- Tell someone - friend, trusted adult, teacher or parent
- Make sure they explain how the situation is affecting them and how they are feeling
- Make sure that they have a say in the solution
- They understand that you cannot beat bullying on your own
- "Bystander apathy" is not acceptable behaviour

Advice to staff ...

- When dealing with an accusation of bullying talk to all people concerned – listen to both parties and check that this isn't an isolated incident
- Any serious accusation of bullying must be passed on to the Head of EYFS/KS1 and the Deputy Head Pastoral
- Some forms of bullying are known to be unintentional, e.g. when a comment is forwarded from a second party without prior thought of the effect it may have
- PHSE and form tutor sessions can be used to reinforce and talk through issues with a group of children
- Any suspicions of a potential bullying problem identified can be raised and discussed at staff meetings or briefings
- Any adverse behaviour which may be precursor of bullying may be addressed by behaviour modification methods, such as anger management, accompanied by careful monitoring
- Staff need to be aware that the impact of bullying can be severe because of the nature and extent of the bullying and it could affect the social, mental and emotional health of the pupil. In such cases we will endeavour to find appropriate provision for a child's needs.

Advice for parents

Parental involvement

Whenever a serious case of bullying is uncovered the parents or guardian of both the victim and the bully would normally be informed either in writing or by personal contact.

If your child is being bullied

Parents along with peers will probably be the first to hear of a bullying incident. Parents should contact their child's Form Tutor, Head of EYFS/KS1 Deputy Heads or Headmistress if they are worried. See appendix.

It is essential to stay calm, supportive and find out the facts of the situation; a situation of alleged bullying can be complex to understand as it is possible that the parties involved with have varying perceptions of the events under investigation. Reassurance will be needed to persuade your child that they have done the right thing by telling you.

You may find it helpful to have the following checklist at your side to ensure that correct information is passed to the School:

- Who was involved?
- Where did it take place, when and how often?
- Why did it take place?
- What form did the bullying take?

When you inform the School of these details, you will be told how the School will proceed. The procedures set out in this policy will be followed and we will work with you as required, keeping you informed of action taken. Be reassured that this will be managed sensitively with the needs of all the students involved carefully considered.

If your child is involved in the bullying

It is important to work with the School to modify the patterns of behaviour which are causing your child to bully. Do not panic and blame yourself. Acknowledge that these things do happen, and the School has mechanisms in place to deal with this issue. It is helpful to recognise some of the reasons why students behave in this way from time to time.

Children sometimes bully others because:

- they are not aware of how hurtful it is.
- they are copying the behaviour of older siblings or people they admire.
- they have a temporary difficulty integrating with their peer group.
- they are bullying others because of encouragement from friends.
- they are going through a difficult time personally and need help.
- they have not yet learnt satisfactory ways to develop firm relationships.

To stop your child from bullying others:

- Talk with your child and help them to understand that what they are doing is unacceptable as it makes other students unhappy.
- Discourage other members of the family from using aggressive behaviour to get what they want.
- Suggest ways of joining in activities with other students without bullying.
- Liaise with the School: Form Teacher, Deputy Heads or Headmistress.
- Make time to have regular chats about how things are going at school.
- Check that your child has identified at least one adult at school to whom they can go if they have a problem or a worry of any kind.

Please note that the School will want and need to take action if bullying occurs. The matter will be sensitively handled but it needs to be effective. Action will be taken per this policy, together with the procedures in the School's Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding policy.

Cyber bullying

At Godstowe we are aware that heavy use of the internet both in work and social situations has led to an increase in 'cyber bullying'. We have taken a proactive approach to this and have decided to work with an organisation called 'National Online Safety'. This resource has been made available to staff, parents and pupils. All staff are required to complete the relevant online training in anti-bullying and online safety. In addition, to this we regularly invite external speakers into school to talk to the girls, staff and parents about internet safety.

At Godstowe it is important to us that all parts of the community, pupils, parents and staff are aware of 'cyber bullying' and that

- The school can support them with 'cyber bullying' which may occur outside the school premises
- The school has ways in which to monitor use of the internet within the community
- Positive use of the internet and mobile phones is encouraged by the pupils and they are made aware of the harm and pain they can bring to others by misuse

Advice and support for a victim of cyber bullying

- Ask the child not to retaliate or return messages
- Ask the child what information they have in the public domain and then make sure the child knows how to make sure all their information is private
- Ask the child for any evidence they have of the bullying: e-mail addresses; websites; photographs; text messages etc
- Check the child knows how to prevent the bullying continuing; such as changing their contact details; blocking contacts; leaving a chat room
- Ask the IT department to do a thorough check of the device if it is in school
- Speak to the parents and encourage them to check that all devices at home are safe and that everything is set to private rather than public settings

Advice and support for a 'cyber bully'

- Steps need to be taken to ensure the bully understands the effect their actions are having on the victim (procedures should be followed as with any other form of bullying)
- If the incident has occurred by mobile phone this may be confiscated
- Parents should be informed so they can play their part in monitoring the situation

Support for staff who are bullied

We believe it is equally important that we make it clear that bullying (including cyber bullying) of staff, whether by pupils, parents or colleagues, is unacceptable.

Monitoring of the policy

Through discussion with the pupils

- Regular meetings with the Prefects
- Regular meetings with Playwatch members
- Pupil council and boarding council meetings

- A box is provided on the main corridor where children can place notes about their worries

Through discussion between members of staff

- Meetings between members of staff
- Feedback from the Independent Person

Conclusion

We believe that early intervention is the best way of dealing with bullying. Every pupil in Godstowe School has the right to enjoy his or her learning free from intimidation, both in the school and within the boarding community. Bullying will not be tolerated in our school but we cannot pretend that it doesn't happen here. Please talk to us about your concerns - we are here to help.

Bullying is NOT an inevitable part of growing up; it DOESN'T usually sort itself out.

Our policy is to work together to help towards the goal of making school life happy and secure for all children. It is our responsibility as a school to protect this right.

Signposting

Other useful organisations providing support for parents dealing with specific bullying issues include:

www.kidscape.org.uk

www.nspcc.org.uk

www.youngminds.org.uk

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

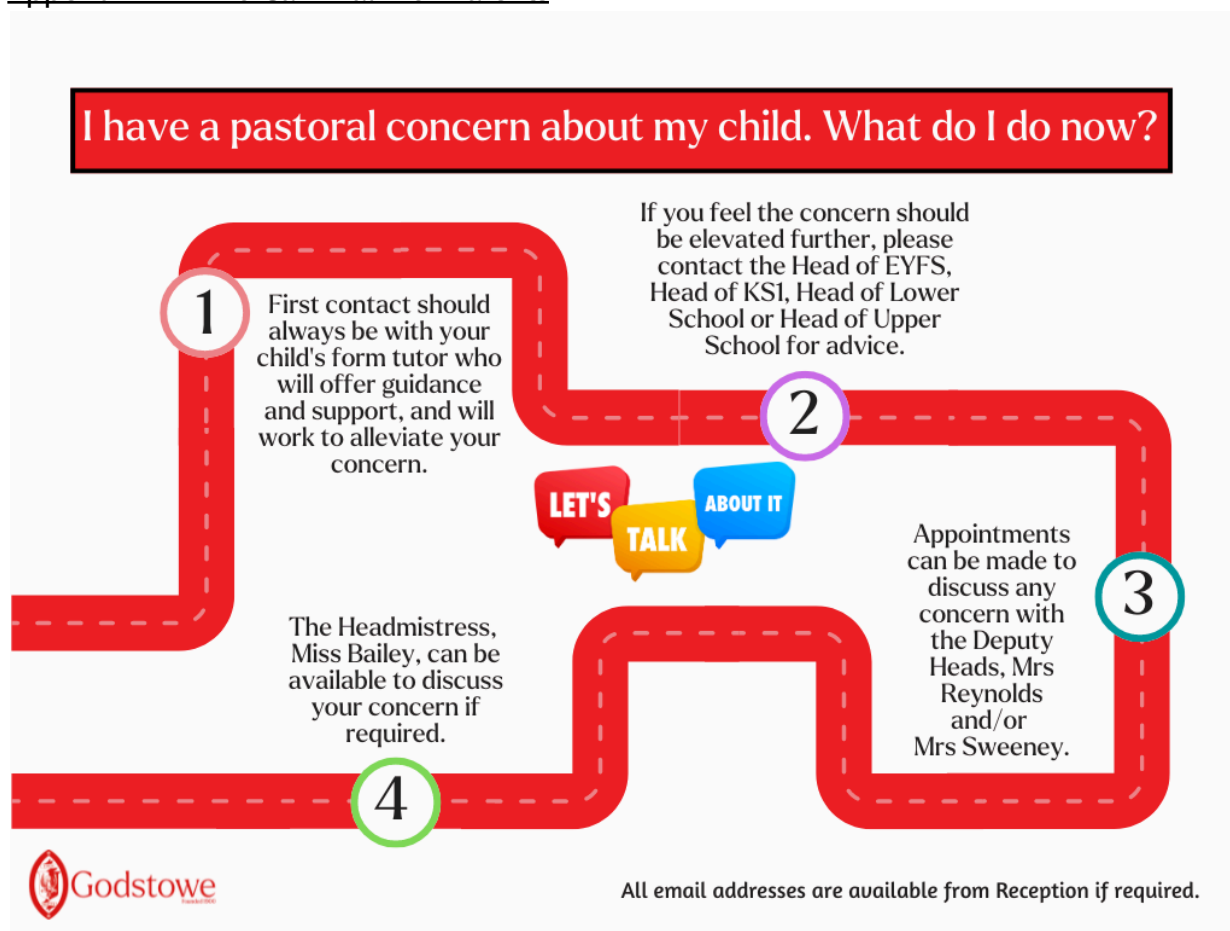
www.familylives.org.uk

www.childline.org.uk

Appendix 1 - Who Can I Talk To? Pupils



Appendix 2 - Who Can I Talk To? Parents



Appendix 3 - Godstowe Anti-Bullying Leaflet

WHAT IF I AM THE ONE BEING BULLIED?

Bullying will not be tolerated.

If bullying does occur, all pupils will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

We are a telling school.

Bullying is too important to not report.

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils.

The school will ALWAYS listen to your concerns about bullying.



WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT OUR

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

Being bullied should NOT be part of school life.

It is your right to be TREATED PROPERLY.

TREAT PEOPLE as you would like them to treat YOU.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying is words or actions repeatedly used, intending to hurt.

BULLYING CAN BE PHYSICAL...

... hitting, punching, pinching, biting, kicking or any action intended to cause hurt.

BULLIES CAN USE WORDS TO TEASE...

... about a person's shape, colour, looks, intelligence, skills, family or nationality.

BULLIES CAN USE WORDS TO SCARE...

... by threatening, shouting or whispering behind people's backs.

BULLIES CAN EXCLUDE PEOPLE...

... by encouraging others to do the same.

BULLIES LEAVE PEOPLE OUT OF GAMES...

... by refusing to cooperate or share.

HOW DO BULLIES ACT?

Sometimes alone, sometimes in groups. Bullies often get others to do their bullying for them. They have the ideas but don't want to get caught bullying.

WHAT DO BULLIES LOOK LIKE?

They come in all shapes, sizes and ages. Bullies are not always obvious. Sometimes they appear to be popular. Bullies like having power over people.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I SEE SOMEONE BEING BULLIED?

Don't just ignore bullying just because it doesn't involve you.

Don't enjoy watching someone being bullied as it is much the same as bullying someone yourself.

Support them. Don't only support your friends.

If you believe someone is being nasty, YOU MUST TELL SOMEONE.

HOW DO I SUPPORT SOMEONE?

Show the victim kindness. Listen to them. Seek the help of an adult. Point out to the bully the effect they are having on the victim.

WHAT IF I AM THE ONE BEING BULLIED?

Tell someone you trust: a friend, an older pupil, a playwatch monitor, any teacher at school, or your parents.

