



# **Anti-bullying Policy**

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## Aim

The ultimate aim of Oxford Sixth Form College's anti-bullying policy is to:

- prevent bullying of any sort
- make it clear to all students and staff that bullying is always unacceptable
- ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied
- ensure that any instances of bullying are dealt with effectively
- and, that processes are in place to give all students the opportunity for disclosure.

The seriousness of bullying cannot be emphasised enough; it is among the top concerns that parents have about their children's safety and well-being at, and on the way to and from, the College. Bullying is also a top concern for students themselves, as it makes the lives of its victims a misery; it undermines their confidence and self-esteem and destroys their sense of security. Bullying can have a life-long negative impact on some young people's lives. At worst, it has been a factor in student suicide. Bullying is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated.

The College acknowledges that bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. However, the College also recognises that the consequences of being allowed to 'get away with it' can be detrimental to them as well as to their victim. All students deserve the opportunity to be helped to understand what acceptable behaviour is. Students who are being bullied will be supported, and students who may bully others will also be given suitable help and guidance.

All members of the community, including the Senior Team, teaching and non-teaching staff, volunteers, students, parents, guardians and careers should have an understanding of what bullying is and be familiar with the College policy on bullying; and all have a responsibility to help create an atmosphere in which students can report any incident of bullying knowing that these reports will always be taken seriously. This policy is applicable to all students at the College and is available to all students and their parents via the college website or a hard copy can be requested.

This policy is guided by the principles laid out in:

- *the 2010 Equality Act,*
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE September 2022),*
- *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2018)*
- *Behaviour and discipline in Colleges: A guide for head teachers and College staff (DfE January 2016),*
- *Preventing and tackling bullying – advice for head teachers, staff and governing bodies (DfE July 2017),*
- *NatCen, Tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying among school-age children and young people,*

- *Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff* (DfE November 2014), and
- the advice in the withdrawn *Safe to learn – Embedding anti-bullying work in Colleges* (2007)
- *National Minimum Boarding Standards 2022*.

Where there ‘is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm’ the College will treat any case of bullying as a child protection concern and refer the case to the local authority. Even when safeguarding is not felt to be an issue, the College may need to draw on a range of services for support or to tackle underlying problems. This policy should be read in conjunction with the College’s policies for Safeguarding, Child Protection, Promoting Good Behaviour, e-safety policy and Health & Safety. All policies are available on the College website; hard copies may be obtained upon request.

### **Definition**

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, that may be repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, the internet or face to face), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, gender, sexual orientation, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, special educational needs or disabilities, appearance or health conditions, home conditions, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a College’s first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgments about each specific case.

Bullying can take place between students, between students and staff, or between staff; by individuals or groups; face-to-face, indirectly or using a range of cyber-bullying methods.

Examples of unacceptable behaviour include:

- Physical (including sexual) assault, for example, hitting, kicking, spitting, removing belongings, damaging property
- Verbal abuse, by name-calling, teasing, ‘banter’, insulting, writing notes or making offensive remarks
- Cyber-bullying, which is defined as the use of ICT by an individual or group to support deliberate, may be repeated and hostile behaviour intended to harm others. Examples include using social websites (such as Facebook or Twitter), mobile phones, text messaging, photographs, video and e-mail
- Indirect emotional tormenting, for example by excluding from social groups, spreading malicious rumors, threatening gestures, intimidation
- Sexual, which could include unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, or sexist language – which is not acceptable and must be challenged – and behaviour which would focus on the issue of sexuality. Examples include verbal abuse (e.g. ‘freaky tranny’), sexist remarks (e.g. ‘you’re such a girl’), or physical attacks on the basis of sexual and/or gender orientation
- Racist which could include racial taunts, gestures, graffiti
- Initiation ceremonies intended to cause pain, anxiety or humiliation

Bullying may involve complicity that falls short of direct participation by, for instance, manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone. It may be overt and intimidatory but is often hidden and subtle.

It is important to recognise that boarders are at particular risk; unlike day students, they are unable to escape their bully and do not have the direct support of their families. Boarding staff must remain vigilant in recognising the signs of bullying.

### **What to look for**

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming withdrawn, shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences, or clinging to adults. They may lose their appetite, experience disrupted sleep or change their normal routines. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, or the quality or quantity of work produced, lacking concentration or truanting from College. They may be nervous when using their phone or the internet or be anxious about their possessions. Students may become defensive, unreasonable or aggressive. When questioned, a student may be frightened to say what's wrong or may give improbable excuses for the behaviour. There may be physical signs of abuse such as cuts or bruises.

All members of the community must be trained to recognise bullying and be alert to the signs of bullying, acting promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with College policy. Surveys have shown that in the vast majority of bullying incidents, most people knew that what was going on was wrong. Sometimes people, either through lethargy, peer group pressure, or tacit support for what is going on, fail to take action.

### **What to do**

The best way to stamp out bullying is for people to be aware of the issues involved, to be involved in prevention and to be clear in their own minds what action to take should cases arise. If you are concerned about a student, or you are a victim of bullying please speak to a member of staff. In the procedures that follow, the word 'bullying' is used to cover all forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying.

### **Prevention**

The most effective way to combat bullying is by creating a community based on respect, with an ethos celebrating success and promoting good behaviour. Awareness and discussion of questions to do with bullying are also vital to prevention. The College will take the following approaches:

- Staff and student awareness will be raised through training, taking action to reduce the risk of bullying at the times and places where it is most likely to occur
- The key points from this policy will be prominently displayed on College notice boards
- Anti-bullying will feature as a discussion point for the College Student Council and Senior Management Team
- Anti-bullying will be discussed with students during Induction, Senior Tutor sessions and as the opportunities present themselves
- Opportunities will also be sought to allow parents to contribute to the College's actions to prevent bullying
- Student surveys will be used to facilitate an understanding of the level and type of bullying

that students might have experienced

- The Vice Principal and DSS will regularly review the record of any bullying offences to identify patterns and check that the policy is effective.

### **Prevention of cyber-bullying**

In addition to the preventative measures described above, the College:

- Expects all students to adhere to the principles of the Learning Agreement which they sign on joining the College
- May impose sanctions for the misuse or attempted misuse of the internet or email
- Ensure that cyber-safety is covered in PSHE sessions
- The use of cameras (including those on mobile phones) is not allowed in the College or at any event associated with the College unless with the permission of staff and is being used for an appropriate purpose for example as a study tool, attending a lesson or in the recording of student fundraising events.

### **If a student is the victim**

If they feel able to, the bullied student should confront the bully by verbally making them aware that the bullied student thinks that what the bully is doing is wrong. The bullied student should share their feelings with someone else. If possible they should talk to any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. Posters detailing those to whom students might speak are displayed throughout the College. If the bullied student would rather not go straight to a member of staff, they should talk to the Independent Listener, Linda Bakkum, or friends, older students or any trusted adult; they may well be able to advise on an appropriate course of action or will be able to involve other people who can. Any student has the right to inform an outside agency of their concerns. Contact details for these are given at the end of this document.

### **If a student witnesses bullying behaviour**

They should support the victim by offering friendship and making it clear that in their opinion what is happening to them is wrong. They should encourage them to speak out on their own behalf by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully themselves. They should accompany the victim to a trusted adult, or suggest that they see their Senior Tutor, their Head of House, the Director of Student Services, Vice Principal, the Assistant Principal (Academic Administration), their host or one of the Houseparents. If the victim does not wish to come forward and they have serious concerns about their safety or wellbeing they should speak to a member of staff on their behalf.

### **If a member of Staff witnesses an incident of bullying or it is reported to them**

They must reassure and support the students involved; advise them that they are required to pass details on to the relevant member of the pastoral team; and ask them to write down their allegation. The same procedures must be followed as for a Child Protection case; the member of staff must:

- Choose a place to talk where the talk will not be interrupted but also where the member of staff is safe from allegation.
- Listen carefully and patiently to the student, no matter how difficult the member of staff

finds what they are saying.

- Show the student they believe in them and take their disclosure seriously.
- Stay calm and reassuring and maintain neutral body language.
- Not promise to keep the conversation secret, no matter how insistent the student may be. The staff member must explain that they are ready to listen but that when they have heard the account there may be parts that they have to tell somebody else in order to get the help required.
- Not press for information, cross-examine, or lead the student, as well-intentioned questions could prejudice further investigations. It is particularly important not to use leading questions or to put words into the student's mouth. If the member of staff needs to respond verbally, they should feed back to the student what they have said.
- Ensure the student's immediate safety.
- Make careful notes, either during or immediately after the conversation, giving an accurate and full account of what was said. These notes should include all relevant information regarding the setting and circumstances of the communication, including the time and the persons present.
- Inform the DSS immediately of the disclosure, allegations, or suspicion, give them a copy of the written notes and ensure that they are aware of any immediate medical needs. They will co-ordinate an immediate investigation into the circumstances of the complaint.
- Take no further action, including discussing their suspicions with the parent or anyone else involved in the care of the young person, until the decision has been taken on how to proceed.

In all students cases the Senior Tutor and safeguarding team will be informed. The Senior Tutor will be asked to accompany the student whilst they are questioned. Where this is not possible, another member of staff, acceptable to the student, will be asked to stand in for the Senior Tutor.

The victim will have the process for dealing with bullying clearly explained to them. The victim will also be given the opportunity to discuss their own reactions and behaviour towards the bully. The victim is given support and advice, and counselling is suggested if deemed appropriate.

Once the DSS and VP are clear that a bullying offence has been committed, the bully and any others involved will be interviewed individually and written notes will be kept of the accounts of events. The process for dealing with bullying will be explained clearly to them. If the complaint regards a group, every effort will be made to prevent collusion during the investigation.

The Senior Tutor will write to the parents/guardian in the next stages.

It is the College's intention to try, in the first case, to resolve such issues by getting all the parties together, to discuss the events and their causes and to seek reconciliation. If the events are such that this is not considered appropriate, or where bullying has been repeated after previous attempts at reconciliation, sanctions may be considered appropriate, as outlined in the Promoting Good Behaviour Policy.

Details of any sanctions applied will be sent to parents/guardian in a letter informing them of the circumstances of the bullying incident and warning them of the consequences which might follow any further similar incidents. Details of the incident will be recorded centrally and a note of reference will be placed on all the students' file. Should the sanctions involve exclusion they will

be dealt with in accordance with the College's published Policy on Behaviour. It is the policy of the College to attempt to resolve such issues internally using our own disciplinary sanctions, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely. The Principal and SMT will be informed of any major bullying issues. If the bullying amounts to abuse, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will contact Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS) or the Police within 24 hours, as for all Child Protection cases.

### **Criminal Law**

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour or communications could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 2014, the Malicious Communications Act 2003, the Communications Act 2016, and the Public Order Act 2005. If College staff feel that an offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 2003, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety or to send an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.

### **Bullying Outside College Premises**

The Principal has a specific statutory power to discipline students for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 states the measures which the head teacher may take, to such extent as is reasonable, with a view to regulating the conduct of pupils at a time when they are not on the premises of the school and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of the staff of the school. In the case of Oxford Sixth Form College, this can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the College premises, such as on College or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town center.

Where bullying outside College is reported to College staff, it should be reported to the Vice Principal who will investigate and act on the report. They will consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or the Anti-social behaviour coordinator in their local authority of the actions taken against a student. If the misbehavior could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.

### **Further Sources of Information**

The DfE guidance and advice can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

### **Advice**

If a student, parent or member of staff is unsure about a situation or events, several organisations will speak in confidence to advise what would be the best thing to do:

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Childline: 0800 1111

### **HELP ORGANISATIONS:**

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)	020 7704 3370
Children's Law Centre	028 902 45704
Kidscape Parents Advice Helpline (Mon-Fri, 10-5)	020 7823 5430
Parentline Plus	020 7553 3080
Youth Access	01865 792 422
Bullying Online	<a href="http://www.bullying.co.uk">www.bullying.co.uk</a>
<u>National Bullying Helpline</u>	<u>0845 22 55 787 or 07734 701221</u>

Switchboard is a helpline providing a one-stop listening service for LGBT+ people on the phone, by email and through Instant Messaging.

<https://switchboard.lgbt/>

0300 330 0630

**The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA):** The ABA brings together over 100 organisations into one network to develop and share good practice across the whole range of bullying issues.

**Kidscape:** A charity established to prevent bullying and promote child protection. They offer advice for young people, professionals and parents about different types of bullying and how to tackle it. They also offer specialist training and support for College staff, and assertiveness training for young people.

**Restorative Justice Council:** Includes best practice guidance for practitioners.

**ChildNet International:** Offers specialist resources for young people to raise awareness of online safety and how to protect themselves.

**CEOP:** Gives advice on how to operate safely on the web, in particular the **thinkuknow** pages: <http://ceop.police.uk/>

## Contact details of agencies outside the College

### Emergency

If someone is in immediate danger always phone **999** or **if the person is not in immediate danger call 101** and report the matter to the Police. The local Police have specialist teams who deal with protecting vulnerable people.

### Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is the front door to Children's Social Care for all child protection and **immediate safeguarding** concerns. A MASH Enquiry online referral form may be used by **professionals only** to refer children to social services.

Or you can email a report to MASH on the secure email on:

[mash-childrens@oxfordshire.gcsx.gov.uk](mailto:mash-childrens@oxfordshire.gcsx.gov.uk)

Or call: 0345 050 7666 **after** you have completed the online form

## **Locality and Community Support Service (LCSS)**

The LCSS is for non-emergency contact and support, i.e. the child or young person is **NOT** in immediate danger. Normally the expectation would be contact is by a professional but anyone can contact them. The contact details are:

Oxford Central: 0345 2412705

LCSS North: 0345 2412703

LCSS South: 0345 2412608

The Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO) is: Jo Lloyd **01865 323457**

Oxfordshire Local Safeguarding Children Board is at:

Oxfordshire Safeguarding Children Board  
Oxfordshire County Council  
County Hall - 3rd floor  
New Road  
Oxford  
OX1 1ND

Tel: 01865 815843

Fax: 0845 605 4165

email: [oscb@oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:oscb@oxfordshire.gov.uk) for any general safeguarding issues.

To speak to a local social worker:

- Emergency Duty Team **0800 833 408**
- Oxford (City) **0345 050 7666**

## **National bodies**

### **The Children's Commissioner**

The role of the Children's Commissioner was created by the Children Act 2004 and has been strengthened by the Children and Families Act 2014. Anne Longfield OBE has been the Children's Commissioner for England since the 1 March 2015. She has a legal duty to promote and protect the rights of all children in England with a particular focus on children and young people with difficulties or challenges in their lives, and in particular those living away from home, in or leaving care, or receiving social care services. Her work focuses on making sure that adults in charge, or making decisions, listen to what children and young people say about things that affect them. The phone number is **020 7783 8330**; email [advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:advice.team@childrenscommissioner.gsi.gov.uk). The line is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.