

Anti-bullying Policy

“Bullying behaviour abuses an imbalance of power to repeatedly and intentionally cause emotional or physical harm to another person or group of people. Isolated instances of hurtful behaviour, teasing or arguments between individuals would not be seen as bullying” (Torfaen definition 2008).”

Bullying generally takes one of four forms:

- **Indirect** being unfriendly, spreading rumours, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding bags or books).
- **Physical** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, slapping or any form of violence.
- **Verbal** name-calling, teasing, threats, sarcasm.
- **Cyber**; all areas of internet misuse, such as nasty and/or threatening emails, misuse of blogs, gaming websites, internet chat rooms and instant messaging. Mobile threats by text messaging & calls. Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.

Although not an exhaustive list, common examples of bullying include:

- Racial bullying
- Homophobic bullying
- Bullying based on disability, ability, gender, appearance or circumstance

All staff, guardian homestays, students, parents and school staff need to understand what bullying is and what the policy details as well as the procedure to report such incidents. Students should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported and bullying will not be tolerated at SE. The purpose of the Anti-bullying policy is to highlight SE aims to adopt the highest possible standards and to take all reasonable steps in relation to the safety and welfare of all students.

Signs and Symptoms

Many minors do not speak out when being bullied and may be indicated by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Staff/guardian homestays should be aware of these possible signs and should investigate if a child:

- doesn't want to go on excursions
- doesn't want to participate in any social activity
- is unwilling to go to lessons (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares

- uses excuses to miss school (headache, stomach ache etc)
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has unexplained cuts or bruises or shows signs of being in a fight
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other minors or students
- changes their eating habits (stops eating or over eats)
- goes to bed earlier than usual
- is unable to sleep
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives unlikely excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous and jumpy when a text message or email is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should always be investigated.

What to look for:

Students 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 study patterns, lacking concentration. Members of staff and homestays must be alert to the signs of bullying; legal responsibilities are known and should act promptly and firmly against it, in accordance with this 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.

If you are the victim of bullying you should do the following:

- ✓ If you feel able to, confront the bully by verbally making him/her aware that you think that what he/she is doing is wrong.
- ✓ Share your feelings with someone else.
- ✓ If possible, talk to a member of SE staff or your guardian homestay about the incident.

If a student witnesses bullying behaviour the following should be done:

- ✓ Support the victim by offering your friendship and make it clear that in your opinion what is happening to them is wrong.
- ✓ Encourage them to speak out by confronting the bully, or with their permission, confront the bully yourself.
- ✓ Accompany the victim to a trusted adult

If a staff member witnesses bullying or an incident is reported the following steps should be taken when dealing with incidents:

- Reassure and support the minor(s) involved
- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached
- A clear and precise account of the incident will be recorded in writing and given to the DSL or SE Principal

Bullying Online or Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is an increasingly common form of bullying behaviour which happens on social networks, games and mobile phones. Cyberbullying can include spreading rumours about someone, or posting nasty or embarrassing messages, images or videos.

Children may know who's bullying them online – it may be an extension of offline peer bullying - or they may be targeted by someone using a fake or anonymous account. It's easy to be anonymous online and this may increase the likelihood of engaging in bullying behaviour.

Cyberbullying includes:

- ✓ sending threatening or abusive text messages
- ✓ creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- ✓ 'trolling' - the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- ✓ excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- ✓ setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- ✓ encouraging young people to self-harm
- ✓ voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- ✓ creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- ✓ sending explicit messages, also known as sexting
- ✓ pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations

Online Grooming

Grooming is when someone builds an emotional connection with a child to gain their trust for the purposes of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation or trafficking.

Children and young people can be groomed online or face-to-face, by a stranger or by someone they know - for example a family member, friend or professional.

Groomers may be male or female. They could be any age.

Many children and young people don't understand that they have been groomed or that what has happened is abuse.

Groomers can use social media sites, instant messaging apps including teen dating apps, or online gaming platforms to connect with a young person or child.

They can spend time learning about a young person's interests from their online profiles and then use this knowledge to help them build up a relationship.

It's easy for groomers to hide their identity online - they may pretend to be a child and then chat and become 'friends' with children they are targeting.

Groomers may look for:

usernames or comments that are flirtatious or have a sexual meaning

public comments that suggest a child has low self-esteem or is vulnerable.

Groomers don't always target a particular child. Sometimes they will send messages to hundreds of young people and wait to see who responds.

Groomers no longer need to meet children in real life to abuse them. Increasingly, groomers are sexually exploiting their victims by persuading them to take part in online sexual activity.

Sexual Abuse Online

When sexual exploitation happens online, young people may be persuaded, or forced, to:

- send or post sexually explicit images of themselves
- take part in sexual activities via a webcam or smartphone
- have sexual conversations by text or online.

Abusers may threaten to send images, video or copies of conversations to the young person's friends and family unless they take part in other sexual activity.

Images or videos may continue to be shared long after the sexual abuse has stopped.

How to spot Abuse, signs and symptoms

The signs of child abuse aren't always obvious, and a child might not tell anyone what's happening to them.

Children might be scared that the abuser will find out, and worried that the abuse will get worse. Or they might think that there's no-one they can tell or that they won't be believed.

Sometimes, children don't even realise that what's happening is abuse. Below is list of things to look out for:

- Becomes secretive and reluctant to share information.
- Reluctant to go to school/home to parents/home to homestay guardian host
- Unwilling to bring friends home or reluctant for professionals to visit the family home/homestay home or school
- Poor school attendance and punctuality
- Parents show little interest in child's performance and behaviour at school.
- Parents are dismissive and non-responsive to professional concerns.
- Is reluctant to get changed for sports etc.
- Wets or soils the bed.
- Drinks alcohol regularly from an early age, experiments with drugs such as marijuana
- Is concerned for younger siblings without explaining why.
- Becomes secretive and reluctant to share information.
- Talks of running away.
- Shows challenging/disruptive behaviour at school or in the homestay
- Is reluctant to get changed for sports etc.

Lines of communication

Allegations of abuse made by a child should be reported as follows:

- A child should speak to a member of the SE personnel
- If the alleged abuser is the SE staff the child should initially report it to another member of SE's personnel. This individual should then report the matter to a senior member of staff, or to the Social Services Department, whichever is appropriate.
- A child should speak to one of the adults of the homestay about any abuse that is taking place if appropriate

Any person responsible for the welfare of a child has a duty under English law to report any suspicions of abuse to the relevant authority.

Reporting and recording action

Sutherland Education is extremely diligent in keeping detailed and accurate records (mostly electronically) of communications and situations regarding each student, and of actions taken. Please use the opportunity freely

to email us about your student, in all aspects of his or her life in your home. We are particularly interested in the level of commitment to study and personal development.

How SE personnel should respond to any suspicion of abuse

Any member of SE personnel who is told of any incident or has strong suspicions of physical or sexual child abuse must report the information to the CPC.

If a child or group of children disclose the fact that they are upset or worried, or if a child or group of children give the appearance of being upset, every effort should be made to keep the individual or group of individuals calm and to alleviate, as far as possible, any distress. It is not appropriate to try to force conversation whilst there is an emotive atmosphere. The individual(s) concerned should be taken to a private place where, if you feel the situation warrants it, a second responsible adult should be asked to be present. The following guidelines should be observed:

- Confidentiality should never be guaranteed.
- Questioning should be limited, and 'leading' questions should be avoided.
- The matter should be referred immediately to SE.
- A written record of alleged abuse should be made as soon as possible.
- An allegation of abuse should never be discounted simply on the grounds of the child's location or because the alleged abuser is someone well known to and trusted by the individual to whom the disclosure has been made.

Support and Appropriate Action

Any concerns raised by a student, parent, homestay, member of staff or other source will be reported within 24 hours to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

The DSL will assess the alleged threat and risk to the student (including any relevant facts about the child which may affect their vulnerability including age and ability), implement an action plan and continue to review the situation until a resolution has been achieved

Any concerns that bullying (including cyber-bullying) has taken place at a student's school will be referred to the DSL of the school concerned

If the alleged bullying incident involves a member of the homestay, or another student staying at the homestay, SE will investigate fully as outlined above and if necessary, find alternative accommodation for the student

In most cases parents will be kept informed about the situation and the actions that SE has taken

Where there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm' due to bullying, we will refer the matter to local authorities

If appropriate we can recommend an Education Psychologist to be consulted with the study school and homestay.

Full records will be kept of any bullying concerns and of any actions taken. These will be held confidentially by the SE Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Minors who have been bullied must be supported by the school, homestay and SE staff will be expected

to offer the following:

- An immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with an adult of their choice
- Reassurance to the minor
- Continuous support
- Restoring self-esteem and confidence

Minors who have bullied will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the student became involved
- Establishing the wrong-doing and the need to change
- Informing parents or guardians to help change the attitude and behaviour of the child

For parents, guardian homestays and students to report any bullying issues, some professional help and support could be provided by accredited organisations:

NSPCC tel. 0808 800 5002.

ChildLine tel. 0800 1111

National Crime Agency (NCA) tel.0370 496 7622

Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP) tel. 0870 000 3344

Children's Services on your the Local Authority

The police by dialling 101

Policy date: **23rd July 2025**

Responsibility for Policy Review: **Andrew Sutherland**