

Anti- Bullying Policy

2024-2025

Reviewed by Dee Robins: 7 June 2024

Approval by the Board: 17 September 2024

Next review: June 2025

1 Aims and objectives

At MPW, all members of the school community should be free from all forms of bullying, harassment and discrimination. To achieve this, we aim to:

- ensure that staff and students are aware of what constitutes bullying and the consequences for those involved;
- use opportunities in lessons, particularly those for PSHE and General Studies, to explore bullying-related issues;
- create an atmosphere in which staff, students and parents (including guardians and carers) are encouraged to report any incident of bullying, knowing that measures to deal with it will be employed in a supportive and sensitive way;
- ensure it is widely known that any kind of harassment will not be tolerated by the college and that all cases of alleged bullying will be fully investigated;
- create a culture where the reporting of, and procedures for dealing with, bullying behaviour are as effective as possible in establishing what has actually taken place whilst at the same time protecting the victim from reprisals;
- set out clearly the disciplinary sanctions likely to be employed to punish the perpetrator(s), to deter such incidents in the future; and
- comply with the college's duties under the Equality Act 2010.

This policy is informed by the DfE's non-statutory guidance [Preventing and Tackling Bullying \(July 2017\)](#) and has been approved by the Board of MPW. It is available to parents on request from Christine Gavin, the Director of Operations (christine.gavin@mpw.ac.uk) and can be made available in large print or another more accessible format, if required. If assistance is needed with making a complaint, for example because of a disability, a parent should contact the Director of Operations, who will be happy to make appropriate arrangements.

2 Definition of bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, often (though not always) repeated over time, that intentionally hurts or upsets another individual or group either physically or emotionally and is often prejudice-based because of a protected characteristic. Sometimes the perpetrator is just being thoughtless. 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, sex, 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.

This definition of bullying is informed by the recognition of certain protected characteristics identified in the Equality Act (2010). Bullying may of course be constituted by behaviours that target attributes of an individual other than those listed above.

Bullying often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This imbalance of power is commonly associated with age difference but can derive from intellectual imbalance, physical attributes, access to economic and other resources, or by having the access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate.

Bullying can happen in the classroom, in common areas within the college, in the common spaces for boarders and their boarding accommodation and off-site, and can be carried out by an individual or a group. It is

important to recognise that bullying may be an appropriate description of actions at all levels: student/student; student/staff member; staff member/student; staff/staff.

Broadly speaking, bullying can be categorised into five types: verbal, physical, sexual, psychological and cyber-bullying. The focus of bullying can be anything that distinguishes and represents a deviation from a presumed 'norm' – for example:

- size, body shape, hair colour, skin, eye-sight, dress, language or mannerisms
- gender or gender reassignment
- physical or mental disability or special educational needs or learning difficulty
- perceived prowess, or lack of it, in learning, sport or other activity
- personal backgrounds, including parents, adoption or foster status, jobs, houses and lifestyles
- perceived sexual attractiveness, or lack of it, health or appearance
- sexuality, based on homophobia or misogyny
- race, nationality, culture or religion or a mixture of these
- pregnancy, maternity or role as a carer.

Verbal bullying may involve:

- name-calling, repeated criticism, spreading rumours, sarcasm, ridiculing, swearing at somebody
- the use of hurtful remarks, including those based on race, sexual orientation and disability
- the use of racist or sexual language or any other attempt to harass or intimidate by making unkind references to differences in personal background, culture, religion, race, nationality, physical prowess or disability
- threats of physical violence.

Physical bullying may involve:

- deliberate jostling, spitting, bumping, kicking, punching, throwing things at somebody, pushing or shoving, initiation/hazing rituals

Note: the person responsible may easily maintain it was accidental when detected for the first time

- theft or damage to property (accompanied by threats of violence). This constitutes bullying when the intention is to intimidate and dominate the owner.

Sexual bullying may involve:

- sexual harassment (unwanted conduct of a sexual nature) such as lewd comments or sexual remarks about a person's appearance or clothes
- sexual jokes or taunting
- physical behaviour such as deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with clothing (flicking bra straps, lifting up skirts etc), displaying pictures, drawings or photos of a sexual nature
- sexual violence such as sexual assault or rape
- upskirting - taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks for sexual gratification, or to cause humiliation or distress

Psychological bullying may involve:

- manipulating social networks with the intention of excluding or marginalising individuals from their friends and normal relationships

- spreading rumours or malicious accusations
- being deliberately unfriendly
- using a position of authority to obtain something. This could involve extortion of money or other property.

Cyber-bullying may involve:

- the use of digital media, particularly mobile phones and the internet, to upset someone else. Examples of such inappropriate use include prank telephone calls, offensive mobile text messages, comments made on social networking sites such as Instagram and Snapchat, photographs (for example, those placed on a social networking site with offensive comments) and via email.

Because cyber-bullying differs from traditional bullying, the college publishes a separate policy which deals with this area in more depth, looking, for example, at the fact that this type of bullying is more likely to take place off college premises.

3 Relational aggression

Relational aggression is defined as behaviour that harms others through damage to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship or group inclusion. Such behaviours reflect the deliberate intention to damage a student's peer relationships or social standing, and ultimately cause social exclusion. It can therefore be covert or overt.

Examples include:

- Teasing or embarrassing someone
- Imitating an individual behind their back
- Breaking secrets
- Spreading rumours, gossiping
- Sending abusive notes
- Maliciously excluding someone
- Coercive behaviour
- Not allowing someone to sit with or near you

4 The effects of bullying

It is important to realise that the consequences of bullying can be extremely serious and can continue into adulthood. As well as physical harm, bullying can cause psychological damage, self-harming and may even lead to suicide in those bullied. It may also affect other students who witness it and it can damage the atmosphere in a class or even in the entire college.

Staff should be aware that additional barriers can exist when recognising the effects of bullying as it affects students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEN/D). Staff should:

- not assume that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate only to the child's disability without further exploration;
- recognise the potential for children with SEN/D being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- recognise that there may be communication barriers and difficulties in talking about what may have happened to them.

5 Possible evidence of bullying

- a previously extrovert student becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence

- a student becomes isolated and disengaged from the class, or is unwilling, for example, to participate in group work
- a student frequently complains of headaches or nausea
- a student displays unusual patterns of non-attendance
- a reluctance to remain in college outside lesson times
- a student bears cuts, bruises and torn or dishevelled clothing at the beginning or in the middle of the day
- noticeable damage to books or other property
- an unaccountable and possibly repeated loss of bags, books, equipment or money
- a deterioration in academic performance
- disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- acts of theft (to pay the bully)
- self-harm or suicide attempts.
- (for boarders) disengaging with life in the boarding house

These signs and behaviours could indicate problems other than bullying but, where they are observed, bullying should be considered as a possible cause.

6 Bullying in the context of boarding

Boarding brings with it an additional number of risk factors that arise from the fact that students are living together. Although students are in single-occupancy rooms, they cannot remove themselves from offline bullying situations to the same degree as non-boarding students, who can go home. Staff need to be aware that boarding accommodation creates an environment where bullying is not only an increased risk but also hard to detect. Boarding staff need therefore to be especially vigilant for signs of bullying, such as changes in appearance and behaviour.

It is especially important that boarders are encouraged to seek support promptly. Boarding students will have both a Director of Studies and a Houseparent to whom they can talk. These members of staff will meet (both individually and in small groups) with their students regularly and encourage them to talk openly about their boarding experience. Boarders can also talk to one of the college counsellors or one of the college's Independent Listeners.

Our boarding staff meet regularly to ensure that all instances of bullying in boarding are dealt with swiftly, decisively and with effective pastoral support from the Directors of Studies team and a Vice Principal. In serious cases or where a student persists in low-level bullying behaviour despite staff interventions the college reserves the right to remove a student's boarding status. Records of bullying incidents are kept centrally to ensure the college has an overview of such behaviour irrespective of where it takes place so that preventative action can be taken.

7 What MPW does to prevent bullying

We will do all we can to create a climate in which bullying is not tolerated and in which students can easily report bullying incidents without feeling that they are telling tales. Staff, students and parents (including when they find themselves as bystanders to a bullying incident) will all be involved in this process.

To promote a culture which rejects bullying, we take the following steps:

- The college rules and behaviour policy are designed to create an environment of good behaviour and respect. Specifically, students are encouraged to always show respect to peers and staff and to always treat others as they themselves would wish to be treated. These documents are also very explicit that bullying is a serious offence and that those involved in bullying behaviour can expect to face severe sanctions including permanent exclusion.
- It is made very clear to students during induction at the beginning of each academic year that they have a responsibility to ensure bullying does not occur and to talk to a member of staff if they witness or suspect bullying.
- We monitor and filter any device connected to the college network or to the wireless network. We cannot monitor personal devices connected to other networks or using 4G/5G, but through the Student Acceptable Use Policy, students are educated as to good and safe use of digital technologies (see the Student Acceptable Use Policy).
- Notices in common areas highlight the importance of an anti-bullying culture and explain the different ways in which students can raise concerns.
- We ensure that the college curriculum addresses issues of prejudice and bullying and encourages students and staff to share ideas on preventing them. Tutors are strongly encouraged, where appropriate, to use lessons to explore the nature of bullying and its consequences.
- Tutors are expected to show zero tolerance of prejudice-based language whenever they encounter it and deal with it in a robust manner in line with college's behaviour policy.
- Sessions on "beating bullying" are held as part of our PSHE and General Studies programmes. The college also participates in National Anti-Bullying Week each year.
- Talks to students, staff and parents by external speakers to help raise awareness of the issues surrounding bullying, including cyber-bullying.
- Students are taught that being a bystander who does not act is to be complicit in the act of bullying, and all students are made aware of a range of ways in which they can act if they witness bullying behaviour.
- We have in place arrangements for the supervision of students as far as it is possible within the confines of the daily timetable. The college's two libraries are supervised between 8.40am and 6pm. The common room areas are regularly checked throughout the school day by members of staff.
- All staff must follow up on any rumours they may hear regarding electronic sites which may contain reference to a particular student in an unkind way.
- Staff meetings are used to feedback information about any incidents of bullying, any student who seems to be isolated or any conflict between students, so that prevention strategies can be developed.
- We are committed to doing all that we can to resolve issues of bullying through mediation, discussion and making bullies aware of the effects of their actions.
- We are committed to providing protection and support to any victims of bullying, and to anyone who brings incidents to our attention.
- We ensure that details of in-house and external counselling services are publicised.
- The DSL maintains records of bullying behaviour to identify possible patterns and to determine if additional actions are required to prevent further instances.
- The implementation of this anti-bullying policy is monitored by the Senior Leadership Team and reviewed and evaluated annually by the college's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), Dee Robins, and the Deputy Designated Safeguarding Leads (DDSLs) Seán Buckley, Jordan Gomez, Susannah Gordon, Sabina Jardin, Nikki Morris, Egle Pliplyte and Rachel Sherman, the Head of GCSE, Unice Walraven, and the SENCo, Amy Sivadasan.

8 Staff training

Central to the college's anti-bullying strategy is ensuring that all staff have a good understanding of the college's legal responsibilities in relation to bullying, how to prevent and resolve problems, and of the support mechanisms available to them both within the college and externally. To this end, this Anti-Bullying Policy is covered in detail as part of the new staff induction procedure and ongoing training is provided in response to new best practice guidance that becomes available or a specific incident within the college.

Another important contribution staff can make to promoting anti-bullying culture within the college is to be positive role models. Specifically, staff must refrain from any words or actions in the classroom which might be seen to encourage or constitute bullying behaviour (see the college's Code of Conduct for staff). When bullying behaviour is observed it must be challenged immediately and directly and never be tolerated or passed off as banter or part of growing up.

9 Procedures for students and others to report bullying

Students can raise concerns about bullying in the following ways:

- contact their Director of Studies.
- contact DSL/DDSL or the college counsellor
- speak to a tutor
- submit a concern using the online reporting tool (Whisper)
- speak to a member of the student council
- speak to a classmate or peer who can refer the concern to a member of staff
- (for boarding students) speak to their Houseparent.

10 Procedures to be followed if bullying occurs

Firstly, the matter and all the circumstances must be brought to the attention of a member of staff. This may be done by the victim or by another student or a parent.

The next stage is that alleged incidents are communicated to the student's DOS and the (D)DSL, so that a proper investigation can be carried out. This notification may be done by the victim, the person the victim has told or by a witness to the alleged incident. The (D)DSL will then take overall responsibility for the investigation and the required record keeping.

All the individuals involved in the alleged bullying and any potential witnesses will be interviewed individually and a written record made of what was done, seen or heard. In some cases, though certainly not all, the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) may be brought together to ascertain what has happened and explore ways of resolving the situation.

The parents of the victim and the alleged perpetrator(s) will be kept informed at relevant points during the investigation either by the relevant DOS or the investigating (D)DSL.

Once the investigation is complete, steps will be taken to ensure that the victim is provided with appropriate support, including support to prevent attacks recurring if the perpetrator(s) are permitted to return to college and support from external services where appropriate. This will include a follow-up meeting with the victim within a fortnight, and another one within the following half-term. Other possible support measures include:

- close monitoring by subject tutors
- counselling for the victim and perpetrator(s)

- finding a 'buddy' for the victim

If a bullying incident gives reasonable cause to believe that a student is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, it may be categorised as child-on-child abuse and the college's safeguarding and child protection procedures will be followed, including reporting it to external agencies such as the police or children's social care services. It is the responsibility of the DSL to determine if a bullying incident meets the threshold criteria for a safeguarding referral to an external agency. Further details about child-on-child abuse and how suspected cases will be managed are contained in the college's safeguarding policy

Where it has been established that a student has been involved in bullying, a meeting with the DSL and/or Principal will be arranged. In most cases, the parents of the perpetrator or perpetrators will be required to attend this meeting, the purpose of which will be to ensure that the perpetrator or perpetrators see the consequences of their actions and to determine the appropriate disciplinary sanction. Minutes taken during the meeting and copies of any subsequent correspondence with those concerned will be kept securely by the DSL who logs each individual incident of bullying. This record allows the incidence, nature and location of bullying to be monitored and any patterns identified, which can help us to deter or prevent future incidents and evaluate the effectiveness of the college's anti-bullying strategy.

11 Sanctions

The nature of the sanction imposed will depend on a number of factors, including the nature and seriousness of the incident and the perpetrator's or perpetrators' previous record(s) of behaviour. Our behaviour policy considers bullying a very serious offence, irrespective of whether it is an isolated event or a pattern of repeated behaviour, that is likely to result in the temporary or permanent exclusion of the perpetrator(s). If bullying relates to a protected characteristic, this will be seen as an aggravating factor and the sanction imposed will reflect this. Disciplinary action will be taken fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account any special educational needs or disabilities of the offender.

The motivation behind the bullying will be considered, together with whether internal or external services should be used to tackle any underlying factors in the background(s) of the perpetrator(s) that contributed to that behaviour. If this leads to concerns that the bully may be at risk of harm, the college's safeguarding procedures will be followed.

If it is considered that the perpetrator(s) should remain at MPW, the situation must then be followed up regularly. Advice and support will be given to the perpetrator(s) in trying to change their behaviour. If there is any evidence that the bullying is continuing, the perpetrator(s) will be permanently excluded.

If a parent is not satisfied that an issue of bullying has been addressed appropriately, they should speak with the college's DSL and then, if still unhappy, refer to the college's Complaints procedure.

It is important for staff to be aware that the perpetrator(s) may also require support whether or not they remain at the college. Those who bully can sometimes be unhappy themselves and their behaviour a manifestation of that unhappiness and frustration. They may also, in their turn, have been bullied. In such cases, it is important to discuss the options available to help the bully, such as counselling.

12 Criminal law

Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, some activities associated with it may represent breaches of the law and result in criminal prosecution of those responsible under laws relating to harassment, threatening behaviour or assault. Also, the sending of communications (written or electronic) which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, of information which is false or known or believed to be false by the sender is a criminal offence if the purpose of sending it is to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient.

13 Bullying off the college's premises

Bullying may occur off the college's premises. If the bully is a student at the college, the procedures outlined above apply. The situation is more difficult if the perpetrator(s) are not students, but the following steps include those that can be taken to prevent recurrence:

- liaison with local police
- discussion with the head of another school, if its pupils are involved in bullying MPW students
- discussion with students on how to avoid or handle bullying outside the precincts of the college

14 Record keeping

Records of all investigatory meetings, meetings with parents and telephone conversations must be kept and placed on the students' files and recorded on MyConcern. As stated previously, the DSL will also separately log details of all bullying incidents.

15 Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the college's DSL, Dee Robins, and other members of the safeguarding team, to assess the strategies used to foster an anti-bullying culture (including staff training), to analyse the incidence and location of suspected or confirmed bullying on or off the college premises, to identify any patterns and to evaluate how effectively we have dealt with any incidents. We include students in the review process through consultation with the Student Council and by including questions on bullying in annual student surveys. An interim review will be conducted after any confirmed incident to identify any implications for policy in the future.

16 Other relevant documentation

- Cyber-bullying and E-safety policies
- Equal opportunities policy
- Remote teaching and learning policy
- PSHE policy and associated schemes of work
- RSHE policy
- Safeguarding policy
- Student rules and guidelines and Behaviour policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing policy