



Downe House

## PREVENTION OF BULLYING POLICY

### 1.0 School Code of Conduct

Treat everyone, whether younger or older, with the same kindness and respect, with which you yourself would wish to be treated.

Any breach of the law of the land is a breach of school rules.

No girl may put the welfare or safety of another in jeopardy through her words or deeds.

### 2.0 Aims and Objectives

The whole ethos of Downe House aims to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding of the needs of others, thus developing a sense of self-esteem and fulfilling an awareness of the importance of tolerance. This is intrinsic in the aims and objectives of the school.

As a community Downe House recognises that the threshold of tolerance is different for everyone. This policy recognises the need to respect and support the needs of the individual in this domain. The aim of this document is to state clearly that, without exception, bullying is always unacceptable at Downe House. Every girl has the right to be happy and secure at School and to be supported and protected when she feels vulnerable.

Physical, verbal or emotional abuse of any member of the community is not acceptable at Downe House. Incidents are taken extremely seriously, recorded on the School's MIS system, Merlin, and appropriate action taken. Any repeated incidents of bullying or serious bullying is likely to lead to exclusion, either temporary or permanent.

Staff must always be vigilant, with tutor and Housemistresses/Housemasters in particular paying close attention to the group dynamics, rivalries, or any bad feeling in their House. Any member of staff who suspects bullying must refer the matter to the relevant Head of Section (or in her absence, to the Headmistress, Deputy Headmistress or Boarding Deputy) within 24 hours. If a girl reports bullying of any kind to any member of staff, it must be reported the Head of Section (or in her absence, to the Headmistress, Deputy Headmistress or Boarding Deputy) within 24 hours. For more serious matters, a formal procedure may be adopted, as detailed below.

Allegations of bullying may, in the most serious cases raise a safeguarding and child protection concern, in which case the reporting procedure under the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy should be followed.

### 3.0 A Definition of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as: "Behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally"

(the Non-Statutory DFE advice *Preventing and Tackling Bullying October 2014*)

Bullying is the intentional hurting, harming or humiliating of another person by physical means including any threat of or use of violence of any kind, sexual or verbal means including via email, social media, text or other instant messaging, and emotional means including by excluding, being sarcastic, name-calling, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours) means.

Bullying may involve actions or comments that are racist, sexual, focussed on sexuality, religion, cultural, family background, **is adopted or has caring responsibilities**, has special educational needs disabilities or physical attributes (such as hair colour or body shape). It may also be unpleasant in other ways not listed.

Bullying reflects an imbalance and abuse of power. Bullying behaviours are aggressive although they may not seem so. These patterns of behaviour damage self-esteem both in the aggressor and the victim.

Bullying is unacceptable. There are no circumstances in which it can be condoned. Bullying can interfere with social development, it can hinder a girl's ability to perform at school; and at worse it can be a major contributory factor to serious problems be these physical, emotional or psychological. It does not build character, nor should it be an inevitable part of growing up. It is an unpleasant and, at times, a devastating experience.

Bullying can be carried out by an individual or within the context of a group of people, where individuals have different status, with one being the leader. It is likely that the leader will be quite able and articulate. Repeated teasing should be viewed as bullying. It is, however, not bullying when two young people of about the same size and strength have the occasional quarrel. Although this kind of behaviour is not bullying, it will still be taken seriously by the school.

The School pays due regard to advice published by the Department for Education [Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2014](#).

The School believes that the aims of this policy should be fully embedded into all areas of school life.

#### **4.0 Methods of Bullying (this list is non-exhaustive)**

Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour. It can be:

**Physical.** A girl can be threatened, punched, pushed, kicked, hit, spat at, tripped up or attacked in some other way.

**Verbal.** Verbal abuse can take the form of name –calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours or persistent teasing. It may be directed towards gender, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, physical appearance, social disability, or any individual characteristic.

**Exclusion.** A girl can be bullied simply by being excluded from discussion, conversations or activities, by those they believe to be their friends.

**Damage to property or theft.** Girls may have their property damaged or stolen. Threats may be used to force a girl to hand over property or money to the bully.

Bullying can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone, or actions that fall short of direct participation, where someone encourages others to bully, or joins in with laughing at a victim. Bullying is often hidden and subtle. It can also be overt and intimidating.

#### **4.1 Cyberbullying - definition**

"Cyberbullying involves the use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others." (Belsey, [www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org)). It is an aggressive, intentional act carried out repeatedly over time, often against a victim who cannot easily defend himself/ herself.

Cyber-bullying could involve communications by various electronic media, including for example:

- Texts, instant messages or calls on mobile phones;
- The use of mobile phone camera images to cause distress, fear or humiliation;

- Posting threatening, abusive, offensive or humiliating material or comments on websites (including blogs, personal websites and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter or YouTube);
- Using e-mail to message others in a threatening or abusive manner; or
- Hijacking/ cloning e-mail or social media accounts.

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone - girls, other young people, staff and parents.

## 5.0 Signs of bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a girl is being bullied include but are not limited to:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self-confidence
- Frequent visits to the medical room with symptoms which may relate to stress or anxiety, such as stomach pains or headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiencing nightmares etc.
- Talking of suicide or running away

It is acknowledged that this list is not exhaustive and that these behaviours may have a different underlying cause. All accounts of any of these behaviours or a combination of these behaviours should be investigated and reported as appropriate.

## 6.0 Bullying – Preventative Measures

The School takes the following measures in order to prevent bullying:

### Girls

- All girls are briefed thoroughly on the expected standards of behaviour and the school Code of Conduct.
- Girls are told what to do if they encounter bullying.
- Information for girls on facing and countering bullying is included the School calendar.
- Girls have access to the 'where to go for help and advice' poster and information in their calendar, in house and in their classrooms.
- The list also contains names of outside agencies to which girls might go if they prefer.
- The PSHE programme is structured to give girls an awareness of their social and moral responsibilities as they progress through the school. The programme is structured to enforce the message about community involvement and taking care of each other.
- All girls are encouraged to tell a member of staff at once if they know or suspect that bullying is taking place.
- Girls have access to the Chaplin, the school councillor and to an independent listener
- In the Sixth Form, the School operates a peer mentoring scheme, whereby girls are trained to offer advice and support to other girls.

### 6.1 Cyberbullying – preventative measures

For the prevention of cyber-bullying, in addition to the preventative measures described above, the School:

- Expects all girls to adhere to the IS Acceptable Use Policy, Internet Social Networking Policy for Girls and E-safety Policy regarding the safe use of the internet. Certain sites are blocked by our filtering system and our IT Department monitors Internet and email traffic.
- May impose sanctions for the misuse, or attempted misuse of the internet and email
- Issues all girls with their own personal school email address.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying in PSHE lessons
- E-safety and cyber bullying are covered as part of the ICT Scheme of work
- All girls receive training in e-safety, which includes cyber bullying by external specialists.

### Staff

- Upon induction, all new members of staff are given guidance on this policy and on how to react to and record allegations of bullying and online safety.
- Prevention of bullying training for staff is an integral part of the Induction Programme for new staff, forms part of the annual safeguarding and child protection training and is also part of the rolling programme of INSET
- Staff receive annual e-safety training which includes training on cyberbullying. Training is given by an external consultant and reinforced by training given by the Director of Information Systems and the Deputy Headmistress.
- Staff receive training on discrimination, equality and diversity which includes reference to those with special educational needs or disabilities and LGBT pupils
- Staff are required to read this policy as part of their induction. All staff understand the principles of this policy, their legal responsibilities, actions to be taken to resolve and prevent problems and sources of further support.
- All reported incidents are recorded and investigated at once.
- Incidents of concern are always monitored.
- Records of any incidents are kept in a protected part of the MIS system, Merlin.
- The School has a strong and experienced team of staff who are trained in handling any incidents as an immediate priority, and are alert to possible signs of bullying. This is led by the Boarding Deputy who is also the DSL and is supported by the Heads of Section and House Staff,
- It is accepted that the prevention of bullying is the responsibility of all members of the community.
- The Chaplain will also give support and guidance to girls of all faiths who are able to refer themselves to him whenever they wish (for example at a time of family break-up, sickness or bereavement). The Chaplain will provide confidential advice and seek to encourage the development of tolerance, understanding and respect for others in a multi-faith community;
- The School has the right, and duty, to investigate incidents of bullying involving our pupils which take place outside school hours, on school visits and trips or that otherwise occur outside of school. The School has the right to take disciplinary measures in respect of such acts.

### Parents

- The School encourages close contact between home and School, and will always make contact if we are worried about a girl's well-being;
- The School encourages parents to contact the school with any concerns that they may have
- The School welcomes feedback from parents and guardians on the effectiveness of our preventative measures and all other aspects and results of this policy.
- The School provides information evenings on a range of topics, including e-safety, mental health and wellbeing. In particular, there is an annual session for parents, Parenting for Prevention, which covers bullying and managing adolescents effectively.

## 7.0 Guidelines

### 7.1 Staff

The following points must be reinforced frequently by all staff:

- To witness bullying and do nothing is to imply that you agree with what is going on
- The School must not tolerate bullies and must make it clear that it disapproves of them
- There is no place for bullying in the School community, and the victim will always receive a sympathetic hearing and be supported.
- Staff must be vigilant in managing girls' behaviour in whatever circumstance they find themselves in, be it in the classroom, on a trip, in the houses, on the sports field, in the dining room etc.
- Wherever there are signs of bullying, as listed above, or where a girl speaks to a member of staff with concerns about themselves or about another girl, the member of staff must act quickly:
  - a) To make sure the girl is safe.
  - b) To communicate the information to Head of Section (or in her absence, to the Headmistress, Deputy Headmistress or Boarding Deputy) within 24 hours.
  - c) To take any steps outlined below, as directed by the Head of Section, Pastoral Deputy, Deputy Headmistress or Headmistress.

See "What happens next" paragraph below for further details on sanctions etc.

### 7.2 Girls

Downe House provides a number of people with whom a girl can share a problem. Each House displays a chart listing all those who are ready to listen and who are familiar to the girls. The list also contains names of outside agencies to which girls might go if they prefer. In many cases a victim of bullying does not want anyone else to know what is happening.

- She may not want to 'tell tales on others'
- She may not want the bully to be punished
- She may be afraid of what the bully might do.

However, if a girl is being bullied, it is always better to tell someone;

- Sharing what is happening will help her deal with her feelings
- Bullying thrives on secrecy – it can only be dealt with by being brought out into the open
- It may save other people from becoming victims of bullying

Girls are encouraged to:

- Be confident that action will be taken to stop the bullying
- Be confident in their own self-worth and value to the School community
- Be a good friend, above all when it is known that someone is unhappy or lonely and remember to include everyone in class and in the House, especially where sharing activities or group work are concerned.

**All girls are encouraged to follow these guidelines.**

- Explain to the bully that her words/actions are upsetting; she may not be aware of this. However, if the bullying continues try not to show your feelings. Stay calm.
- Walk away quickly and confidently, even if you don't feel that way inside.

- If you are different in any way, be proud of it – it's good to be an individual.
- The bully will not stop if she thinks she can get away with such behaviour.
- Discuss the problem with someone you trust and tell a member of staff. If you feel uncertain about taking this step, you may want to talk first informally to:
  - Your parents
  - Your Tutor
  - Your Housemistress/Housemaster
  - Your Head of Section
  - The Boarding Deputy
  - The Deputy Headmistress
  - Any other teacher
  - School Counsellor
  - Independent Listener
  - Peer mentors
  - Anyone listed on the 'Where to go for help and advice poster'

### **You can help to stop bullying**

- If the girl being bullied is in any danger, fetch help. If she isn't, remain with her; your presence may ease the situation.
- Show that you and your friends disapprove.
- Give sympathy and support to any girl who may be bullied.
- Be careful about teasing or making personal remarks. If you think girls might not find your comments funny don't say them.
- If you know someone is being bullied, you should report what is happening to someone in authority. The victim may be too scared or lonely to report it herself. If you feel uncertain about taking this step you may want to talk first informally to anyone listed on the 'Where to go for help and advice poster'.

### 5. When you are talking to an adult about bullying, be clear about:

- What has happened to you
- How often it has happened
- Who was involved
- Who saw what was happening
- Where it happened
- What you have done about it already

### **What happens next?**

Any of the people listed above will be able to advise and support girls and to take the matter further. The level of response to incidents will obviously vary according to their seriousness. In all cases, the Head of Section must be informed.

- In the first instance, the Head of Section will attempt to resolve the concern informally (this may be via the House staff or directly)
- A girl who has been accused of bullying may be asked to talk about her behaviour and encouraged to change/improve it.
- It may sometimes be the case that the girls in question genuinely have not realised that their actions can cause distress.
- The situation will be logged on the MIS system, Merlin and then closely monitored by staff.

A more formal procedure may be adopted for serious cases, or in any case where informal discussions have not resulted in a change/improvement in a girl's behaviour, with the effect of conveying to all parties how seriously bullying behaviour is taken, as follows:

- The victim and the accused should be asked to record the events in writing as soon as possible
- The victim and the accused will then be spoken to individually about the complaint, and each will have an opportunity to give their version of events
- The girls' record of events, a note of the discussions held and outcome of the discussions should be logged on the confidential area of the MIS system, Merlin.
- It is important to have a clear record of events, for a girl may become a habitual offender, a fact which will not be clear unless there is consistent reporting
- Any girls involved in a serious fight may well be sent to the Deputy Headmistress or the Headmistress, but usually after discussion with the Head of Section and Housemistress.
- In addition, parents may be informed and invited to discuss the problem with the, Head of Section, Boarding Deputy, Deputy Headmistress or the Headmistress.

### **8.0 Parental Involvement**

Problem solving approaches to bullying which are school based alone may not always work without the support of the parents. The involvement of parents has been found to be effective in deterring persistent bullying. Parents need to show their daughters ways of dealing with difficult situations without using violence or aggression. Downe House believes that making parents aware that their daughter has been involved in bullying demonstrates the fact that the School takes seriously this matter, seeks to change such patterns of behaviour and welcomes parental support in that process.

#### **8.1 If Your Daughter Is Being Bullied**

Parents along with peers will probably be the first to hear of a bullying incident. They should not dismiss it. Parents should contact their daughter's Housemistress/Housemaster, Tutor, Head of Section, Boarding Deputy, Deputy Headmistress or Headmistress if they are worried. It is essential to stay calm, supportive and find out the facts of the situation. Reassurance will be needed in order to persuade your daughter that she has 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 school.

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- Who saw it?
- Where did it take place?
- How often has it happened?
- Why did it take place?
- What form did the bullying take?

When you inform the School of these details you will want to ask what you can do to support the School in the action taken to support your daughter. You will also want to make a note of the suggested strategy the School intends to take. Stay in touch with the School so that they can be kept informed of how things are improving and to establish further contact if necessary.

#### **8.2 If Your Daughter Is Involved in Bullying**

It is important to work with the school to modify the patterns of behaviour which are causing your daughter to bully. It is important to 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 girls behave in this way from time to time.

Girls sometimes bully others because:

- They are not aware of how hurtful it is.
- They are copying the behaviour of another child, older siblings or people they admire.

- They have a temporary difficulty integrating in 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 for making firm friendships.

### **8.3 To Stop Your Daughter from Bullying Others**

- Talk with your daughter and help her to understand that what she is doing is unacceptable as it makes other girls unhappy.
- Discourage aggressive and violent behaviour at all times.
- Suggest ways of joining in activities with other girls without bullying.
- Liaise with the School: Housemistress/Housemaster, Tutor, Head of Section, Boarding Deputy, Deputy Headmistress or Headmistress.
- Make time to have regular chats about how things are going at school.
- Check that your daughter has identified an adult at school to whom she can go if she has a problem or a worry of any kind.

N.B. the School will want to and need to take action if bullying occurs. The matter will be sensitively handled but it needs to be effective.

### **8.4 If Your Daughter Is Being Bullied by A Member of Staff**

Families who feel that their daughter is bullied by a member of staff may, in the first instance, like to consider making an appointment to discuss the matter with the Headmistress. If parents remain dissatisfied, they are encouraged to pursue the matter under the Complaints Procedure as published on our website.

### **9.0 Sanctions**

Sanctions will be imposed on girls who are found, following an investigation, to have bullied. These will vary according to their severity. Sanctions may include but are not limited to:

- The bully will usually have to apologise to the victim
- Parents will be informed
- An official warning may be given
- Girls may be internally excluded

Ultimately a girl who is found to have committed a serious offence of bullying, who shows little or no understanding of the impact of their behaviour or who will not change/improve her behaviour, may be excluded either permanently or temporarily.

The sanction imposed will be recorded centrally in Merlin.

The School pays due regard to the DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying guidance 2014 which notes that a bullying incident should be addressed as a safeguarding and child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a girl is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'.

Where this is the case, the school staff should follow the procedures as set out in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Even where safeguarding and child protection is not considered to be an issue, the School may need to draw on a range of external services to support the girl who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a girl doing the bullying.

When bullying has been reported and action to prevent it has been taken, the situation will be monitored closely by relevant staff to prevent it occurring again. Everyone involved has the



responsibility for helping the bully to change her behaviour. In addition, the victim may need help to deal with her feelings and to understand and overcome her vulnerability.

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 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.

If it is felt that an offence may have been committed, the School will seek assistance from the police or relevant authority. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, 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.

### **10.0 Staff**

Bullying may occur between professional teaching staff, support staff and other adult staff within the school community. Staff may feel threatened by an individual or group of individuals. The School recognises that such incidents may occur and all such incidents will be taken very seriously and will not be tolerated. In the first instance, staff should report their concerns to a member of the Leadership team. In the event of the issue remaining unresolved or persistent bullying, staff may refer to the grievance procedure as set out in the staff contract.

### **11.0 Complaints procedure**

Parents and girls are encouraged to use the complaints procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that their concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed.

### **12.0 Review**

All incidents and sanctions relating to bullying will be logged on the school's MIS system, Merlin. These records are monitored by the Boarding Deputy, who is also the DSL. Each half term, the Boarding Deputy will liaise with the Heads of Sections, review the log to identify any trends or concerns and will report these to the Deputy Headmistress and the Headmistress.

### **13.0 Resources**

#### **Advice for parents and families about bullying**

- 'Bullying and how to fight it' A. Mellor (1993) SCRE, 15 St John Street, Edinburgh EH8 8JR (Available from good bookshops)
- Fighting, teasing and bullying: simple and effective ways to help your girl. J Pearce (1989) Thorsons, Wellingborough. (Available from good bookshops)
- [Preventing-and-tackling-bullying](#)
- [Advice for parents and carers on cyber bullying](#)

### **14.0 Organisations Who Can Help**

- Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/)
- ChildLine 0800 1111
- NSPCC Child Protection Helpline 0808 800 5000
- Bullying UK [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)

This policy makes reference to the following School policies, copies of which can be located on Merlin in the 'My Policies' section:

E-Safety (Reviewer: DIS)

Internet Social Networking for Girls (Reviewer: DIS)

IS Acceptable Use (Reviewer: DIS)

Safeguarding and Child Protection (Reviewer: BD)

**Revision History:**

<b>Revision</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Description of changes</b>	<b>Requested By</b>
	May 2016	Reviewed	Areti Bizior
	September 2016	Updated – changes highlighted in green	Areti Bizior
	February 2017	Amendment highlighted in red	Areti Bizior

**Review Leader: Deputy Headmistress**

**Reviewed: September 2016**

**Next Review: September 2017**

# WHERE CAN I GO FOR HELP AND ADVICE?

Mrs Gilpin Jones  
Mrs Dourountakis  
Ms Stimson

Palmer Centre  
Nurses  
204657

BEAT:  
Eating Disorder Association  
Youth Help-line  
0345 634 7650

My Parents  
My Family

School Counsellor  
Madeleine Loughlin  
07968 848079  
madeleine\_loughlin@msn.com

My Head of House  
House Prefects  
Peer Support Group  
Senior Girls

Childline  
0800 1111

The  
Chaplain

Children's  
Commissioner  
0800 528 0731

Mrs Bizior  
Mrs Ford  
Mr Hill

Alateen  
For family and friends  
of problem drinkers  
020 7593 2070

The Higher  
Education  
Department

Independent Listener  
Dr Clare Alsop  
01491 681554

My Housemistress  
My Assistant HsM  
My Matron

Mrs McKendrick

My Tutor  
My Teachers  
Any Adult

