



# Fettes College

## Counter-Bullying Policy 2023/24

Updated June 2023

Review Date June 2024

**Responsibility: Pastoral Leadership Team**

# FETTES COLLEGE

## Counter-Bullying Policy

### Statement of Intent

The School Aims state that our students should, “*feel valued and respected as individuals*” and “*feel safe, have a sense of personal worth, be thoughtful and considerate of the needs of others*”.

The provision of a counter-bullying policy alongside School behaviour policies and the pastoral care network in Houses is intended to translate this aim into practice and is based on the Equality Act 2010, which enshrines that there must not be discrimination against the nine protected characteristics. This policy has also been guided by the *Respect for All: National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People* (2017).

Fettes College is committed to providing a safe, caring environment free from disruption, violence and harassment so that every one of our students can develop their potential. We expect our students to treat members of staff with courtesy and co-operation so they can learn in a relaxed but orderly atmosphere. All students should care for and support each other.

Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination will not be accepted. Where necessary we will apply the sanctions described in our *Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy* for behaviour that constitutes bullying or harassment of any kind.

### Aims

The aims of the counter bullying policy are:

- maintain a happy, well-ordered and caring environment with strong community values that ensures all members of the school feel accepted, so that bullying will be less likely;
- create awareness of bullying through the curriculum and other activities;
- developing effective strategies for recognising and supporting victims of bullying and for recognising and dealing with bullies;
- ensure all students have knowledge of and access to a support structure within Houses and School so they can share worries and seek help;
- ensuring that all staff know what to do if they encounter bullying, that they treat incidents seriously and are consistent in how they deal with them;
- assure students and parents that all reports of bullying will be treated seriously;
- to reduce incidents of bullying through implementation of appropriate strategies (preventative and proactive as well as reactive).

### What is Bullying?

Bullying can mean different things to different people and take different forms, but two major elements are that:

1. bullying is characterised by repeated, persistent behaviour which intimidates individuals or groups through verbal, emotional or physical aggression;  
and/or
2. bullying is the deliberate, conscious desire to intentionally hurt another individual or group either physically or emotionally

This behaviour can take the form of ethnic, religious, cultural, sexual, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or special educational needs/disability related bullying. It might occur directly through verbal comments (hate speech), physical contact or intimidation and emotional means (by ignoring, leaving out or spreading rumours). It can also occur through the use of technology (social websites, email, photos & videos, text/messaging apps).

Bullying can therefore often be hidden. It can happen anywhere and at any time. It can cause serious and lasting psychological damage. Harassment and threatening behaviour are criminal offences. We always treat incidents of bullying seriously.

### **What is Cyber Bullying?**

Bullying can also involve the use of social media (cyber bullying) and includes areas such as email & internet chat room misuse; mobile threats by text messaging and calls and the misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities. Cyber bullying can be defined as the use of Information and Communications Technology, in any form, to deliberately upset someone else. However, it differs in several significant ways from face-to-face bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity; and even the profile of the person doing the bullying and their target. Both the school's Counter-Bullying Policy and the School's ICT Acceptable Use Policy, specifically bans any form of cyber bullying.

### **Signs of Bullying**

- not wishing to return to school
- displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- a significant change in work habits, classroom behaviour, quality of preps
- change to established habits (e.g. giving up something that they have previously really enjoyed doing)
- frequent visits to the Medical Centre with generalised symptoms of headaches or stomach pains
- unexplained cuts and bruises
- choosing the company of adults over their peers
- poor eye contact and displaying repressed body language

### **Those Who May Be Vulnerable to Bullying**

- new to a class or the school
- different in appearance, speech or background from other students
- students who suffer from low self-esteem
- those younger and weaker than the rest of their peer group
- those who may be isolated, lonely or loners
- evidently more or less academically able than others

### **What Action to Take**

We fervently believe that **all** of us within the Fettes community, staff and students alike, have an individual and collective responsibility to contribute positively to a tolerant, inclusive school society. It is not solely the responsibility of those affected to bring about social change but rather our shared responsibility to foster a culture of allyship.

The principle underlying this policy is that a student who is a victim of bullying or who witnesses bullying should feel free to approach any member of Staff for help. The member of Staff is expected to act in accordance with School policy. All Staff have a vital part to play in making it clear that:

- bullying behaviour is not acceptable
- being vigilant and proactive if they note what may be developing into a bullying relationship
- being approachable and willing to offer help and support-

### **The Victim**

Students who feel that they are being bullied should feel confident about reporting any incident and should have as many ways of reporting it as possible, for example:

- telling a friend who will pass the information on to an adult
- telling a Prefect who will pass the information on
- telling their Tutor
- telling their Houseparent
- making an online report as indicated in the ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- telling another member of Staff
- telling the Medical Centre Staff
- telling the Deputy Head or Chaplain

### **Parents of children who may be being bullied need to know:**

- the School procedures for dealing with bullying
- the signs to look out for
- that they should contact the Houseparent and know that the matter will be taken seriously and investigated

### **Students need to know:**

- the School procedures for dealing with bullying
- the signs to look out for in case one of their friends is being bullied
- that they will be taken seriously
- that any information they give will be dealt with as confidentially as possible

### **Staff**

**Members of Staff should follow School procedures when a bullying incident arises (see below).**

#### **Staff should also:**

- discuss issues of bullying if they arise in the classroom
- note and report any significant changes in a student's behaviour to House
- watch for interaction between students which may indicate bullying
- note and report to House Staff any students who are consistently left out by others
- be vigilant in informing House Staff of unexplained absences from classes or activities

## **Investigating and Managing Incidents of Bullying**

**Staff to whom the incident is reported or who first discover the incident need to:**

- make the situation safe, if necessary
- refer the incident to the Houseparent
- be prepared to give a full account of the incident reported to them. It is best to write, sign and date an account of any serious incident as soon as possible after reporting it. Give a copy to the Houseparent and keep a copy for themselves

### **Houseparent**

- Houseparent takes responsibility for investigating the incident
- bully and bullied may be brought together for a managed, supported restorative conversation
- clear guidelines for future behaviour are issued to both parties and a code of conduct agreed. both students should know that the situation will be monitored and know of consequences for bully if bullying continues
- parents of bully and bullied will be informed
- House Staff monitor the situation
- referral to Senior Deputy Head or Head if no improvement is seen. Possible suspension or permanent exclusion in the most serious cases

NB: not all incidents will require use of all these steps.

### **Prevention**

- wherever possible, the emphasis will be on preventative measures rather than simply reacting to incidents of bullying when they occur
- all students will take part in PSHE sessions on bullying in Prep School and Third Form; PSHE Sessions will also occur on cyber bullying
- members of staff are CEOP Ambassadors to help with the prevention of cyber bullying
- Houseparents will reinforce the content of PSHE sessions within Houses
- all Staff should be vigilant and willing to take appropriate action if they suspect a student is being bullied

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