

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Reviewed Sept. 2024

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

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Maya Angelou

Our Anti-Bullying Policy is designed with one clear objective: to create and maintain a safe, respectful, and inclusive environment for every student, from their first day in Primary School through to their final year. We are committed to ensuring that every student, regardless of their race, religion, nationality, personal choices, or educational needs, feels secure and supported in our school community.

We take a firm stance against all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, and we are deeply committed to promoting positive interactions among our students. This policy outlines the different strategies we employ to prevent and address bullying behaviour, including education, awareness-raising, and support mechanisms for both victims and those responsible for bullying.

Our school operates under a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying. Every reported case will be treated with the utmost seriousness, thoroughly investigated, and addressed with appropriate sanctions. No student should ever feel unsafe or marginalised in our school, and we are dedicated to fostering an environment where every individual can thrive.

Bullying is a criminal offense in France, as stated in the law n°2022-299 "De la prévention des faits de harcèlement scolaire et de la prise en charge des victimes" and will be treated as such when necessary.

1. DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Our community agree on the following definition of bullying:

- The behaviour must be **repeated**. A single occurrence does not constitute bullying.
- The behaviour must be **unwanted** and may be offensive, threatening, insulting, or humiliating. It can also cause the target to feel so stressed, harmed, or intimidated that it interferes with their educational performance.
- There must be an **imbalance of power** between the target and the perpetrator. This imbalance can arise from differences in physical strength, age, popularity, group influence, or neurotypicality, among other factors. However, this is not an exhaustive list.

Bullying involves repeated, harmful actions that exploit this imbalance of power to target an individual.

Cyberbullying is a form of bullying that takes place through digital devices such as computers, smartphones, or other connected devices. It involves repeated harmful behaviour carried out via electronic means, including social media, text messages, or online platforms, where the perpetrator can target the victim anonymously or with little accountability. Just like traditional bullying, cyberbullying is characterised by unwanted and harmful actions that can significantly affect the victim's emotional well-being and educational performance.

In our approach to addressing bullying, we intentionally use the terms "perpetrator" and "target" instead of labels that can be more permanent or stigmatising. By doing so, we aim to emphasise the behaviour rather than define individuals by their actions. This distinction helps create a more supportive environment where students are encouraged to understand that behaviours can change and that everyone has the potential for growth and rehabilitation. Our focus is on resolving conflicts and promoting positive relationships, rather than assigning fixed identities based on past actions.

2. PREVENTING CASES OF BULLYING

2.a Staff training

Our staff undergoes regular training to equip them with the necessary skills and knowledge to combat bullying effectively. All new teachers participate in initial safeguarding training that includes the attainment of a TES/Educare certificate specifically focused on anti-bullying. Additionally, we frequently invite anti-bullying speakers, such as Noémya Grohan, to conduct workshops and lectures for our staff, enhancing their understanding of the issue.

Our team of teachers is trained to recognise and respond to the early signs of potential bullying or cyberbullying. They are committed to reporting any incidents if they have any doubts, ensuring a proactive approach to maintaining a safe and supportive environment for all students.

2.b Student awareness

Students cannot effectively report cases of bullying if they are not educated about what bullying really entails. Similarly, perpetrators may not realise they are engaging in harmful behaviour if they lack awareness.

To address this, we use our Essentials and homeroom sessions as key opportunities to raise awareness about bullying and cyberbullying. These sessions can take place in classrooms or during assemblies and typically begin with collaboratively establishing a definition of bullying. Students are encouraged to actively participate, for example by creating and role-playing scenarios involving perpetrators, bystanders, supporters, and targets, as well as various types of bullying. Most importantly, these sessions teach students how to respond effectively to bullying situations. As students progress through the years, the sessions will become more specific, focusing on particular aspects of bullying to deepen their understanding and enhance their ability to address it.

This initiative is further complemented by exceptional events, such as welcoming well-being speakers, organising in-class workshops, and celebrating important observances like Anti-Bullying Week, Odd Socks Day, and the International Day Against Discrimination. These activities provide additional opportunities for students to engage with the topics of bullying and discrimination, fostering a culture of understanding, empathy, and support within our school community. By participating in these events, students can reinforce their learning, promote kindness, and take an active stance against bullying and discrimination.

2.c Parental awareness

Parents are kept informed about anti-bullying events and initiatives, ensuring they are aware of the resources available to support their children. Our online workshop TeenTalk! happening in November during anti-bullying week is designed to educate parents on how to respond if their child is either a target of bullying or a perpetrator. These workshops provide valuable information and practical strategies, empowering parents to effectively address bullying situations and foster a supportive environment at home. By involving parents in this important conversation, we strengthen our collective efforts to create a safe and inclusive school community for all students.

Parents will systematically be alerted if their child is involved in a case of bullying, either as a perpetrator, a supporter or a target.

3. DETECTING CASES OF BULLYING

Detecting cases of bullying is a crucial aspect of maintaining a safe school environment, and teachers play a key role in this process. They are specifically trained to recognize signs of bullying, which can include changes in behaviour, declining academic performance, physical signs, social withdrawal, emotional changes, fear of school, changes in sleep patterns, behavioural issues among other indicators.

Teachers, both in the classroom and on duty during break times, are encouraged to be proactive in their observations and reporting of any concerning behaviours.

We also encourage students to actively participate in the detection of bullying by reporting any cases they are aware of or if they themselves are being targeted. They can talk to an adult they trust, which may include their homeroom teacher, counsellor, Director of Pastoral Care, head of section, or a favourite teacher. Additionally, students have the option to report incidents anonymously using our anonymous reporting channel, accessible via a QR code provided in each classroom and on our Safeguarding display.

The school counsellor plays a particularly important role in this process, as she is informed about incidents occurring within the school community and will take action if something is shared during their sessions at L'Écouterie that warrants further investigation. By fostering open communication and vigilance, we aim to create a supportive environment where bullying can be effectively detected and addressed.

4. RESOLVING CASES OF BULLYING

Any case of bullying, or potential case of bullying reported, will be thoroughly investigated to ensure the safety and well-being of all students involved. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and / or a safeguarding team member will collect statements and evidence from teachers and students who are witnesses, targets, or perpetrators. In case of cyberbullying, students can be asked to share screenshots of the conversations.

Once a clear understanding of the events is established, the DSL and the head of section will determine an appropriate sanction for the perpetrator, which typically includes educational measures and may involve suspension. In the most severe cases, the school may decide to convene a council of discipline, leading to potential expulsion from ISN - please refer to our behaviour policy for further details. In accordance with French law, families have the option to initiate a parallel legal procedure against the perpetrator of bullying.

ISN believes strongly in the power of education to foster positive behaviour. When applicable, sessions with the counsellor will be organised to rehabilitate the perpetrator and establish restorative measures. Social behaviour of the perpetrator will be closely monitored, and there will be no third chances after these educational measures are implemented if the student decides to engage in bullying activities again.

Additionally, the target of bullying and anyone else affected by the situation will receive follow-up support from the school counsellor to ensure their emotional well-being and facilitate healing.

5. TRACKING DATA

We track data related to bullying and cyberbullying incidents or potential incidents through our online safeguarding platform, MYCONCERN. This system allows for immediate communication between the staff members and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and initiates the investigation process. By using MyConcern, we can identify potential trends in bullying within our school, enabling us to take informed action and reinforce prevention strategies as necessary.

Moreover, the data collected through MyConcern plays a vital role in shaping our Essentials and homeroom sessions. By analysing patterns over time, we can tailor our awareness campaigns and training sessions to address specific issues that may arise, ensuring that our interventions are proactive rather than reactive. This data-driven approach fosters a safer, more supportive environment for all students, as we continuously strive to improve our policies and practices surrounding bullying and cyberbullying.

6. CONFLICT RESOLUTION BETWEEN STUDENTS

In addition to the current policy, ISN also refers to the Globeducate “Conflict Resolution between students policy”, as found on the following website : <https://www.globeducate.com/footers/globeducate-policies>