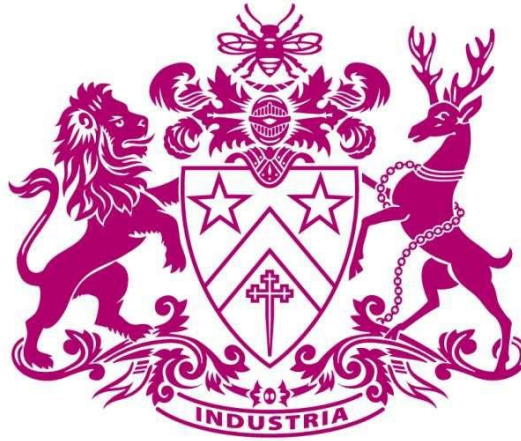




Fettes College

Counter-Bullying Policy 2025-2026

Updated June 2025
Review Date June 2026

Responsibility:
CMH, Deputy Head (Pastoral)
CMD, Child Protection Coordinator
ERD, Head of Pastoral Care (Prep)

FETTES COLLEGE

Counter-Bullying Policy¹

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.*”

This policy is underpinned by the values of *fairness, respect, equality* and *inclusion*.

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. This policy has been guided by several legislation documents and legal frameworks and including *Respect for All: National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People* (2017), and the *Equality Act 2010* (See appendix A).

Fettes College is committed to providing a safe, caring environment free from disruption, violence and harassment so that every student 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. We promote positive relationships and relationships amongst all children, young people and adults around them.

Bullying, harassment, victimisation and discrimination of any kind 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.

In relation to the rights of children, the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) states: “*You have the right to be protected from harm,*” and “*You have the right to an education,*” therefore bullying is a breach of these rights.

Aims

The aims of the counter bullying policy are:

- to develop a culture of mutual respect and responsibility in the Fettes community.
- create awareness of bullying through the curriculum and other activities;
- developing effective strategies for recognising and supporting victims of bullying
- to recognise and deal with individuals who display bullying behaviours within a framework of respect, responsibility, resolution and support.
- 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 parent/guardian 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).

¹ The following legislation and legal frameworks have been used to inform this Counter-Bullying Policy:

[Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People \(2017\)](#); [United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child](#); [Equality Act 2010](#); [Better Relationships, Better Learning, Better Behaviour \(2013\)](#); [Developing a Positive Whole School Ethos and Culture – Relationships, Learning and Behaviour \(2018\)](#)

What is Bullying?

Bullying can mean different things to different people and take different forms. The definition we use is:

“Bullying is both behaviour and impact; the impact is on a person’s capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what we term as their sense of ‘agency’. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online.” (*Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People, 2017*).

This behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally and, although the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions, looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these.

This behaviour can include, but not exclusively:

- being called names, teased, put down or threatened face to face/online
- being hit, tripped, pushed, or kicked
- having belongings taken or damaged
- being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face-to-face and/or online)
- sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or phone
- behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face-to-face and/or online)
- being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online).

Prejudice-based Bullying

Bullying behaviour which may be as a result of prejudice related to perceived or actual differences, leading to behaviour manifesting into racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia or prejudice and discrimination towards disability or faith (See Appendix B).

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.

Impact and Outcomes of Bullying

Long and short term effects on physical, mental health and wellbeing of individuals. It impacts a person’s capacity for self-management, internal feelings of control, and ability to take action because of someone else’s behaviour. Bullying directly or indirectly affects childhood development and future potential.

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, primary language, or cultural or social background from other students
- students who suffer from low self-esteem
- those younger or weaker than the rest of their peer group
- those who may be isolated, lonely or loners
- evidently more or less academically able than others
- an individual with a protected characteristic

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 our shared responsibility to foster a culture of allyship.

A student who is the victim of bullying, or someone who witnesses bullying should feel free to approach any member of Staff for help. The member of Staff will act in accordance with School policy.

Individual being bullied

Students who feel that they are being bullied should feel confident about reporting any incident and can report it in the following ways:

- tell a friend who will pass the information on to a staff member
- tell a Prefect who will pass the information on to a staff member
- tell their Tutor
- tell their Houseparent, Assistant Houseparent or Matron
- make an online report as indicated in the ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- tell the Medical Centre Staff
- tell any other member of Staff
- by using the Tootoot app

They can also report it directly to any of the following people:

- Deputy Head School Life (Mr Appleson)
- Deputy Head Pastoral (Mrs C Harrison)
- Head of Wellbeing (Mrs Bruce)
- Child Protection Team (Miss McDonnell, Mr Dundas, Mr Archibald)

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

Parent/Guardian of children who may be subject to bullying behaviour need to know:

- the school procedures for dealing with bullying
- the signs to look out for
- that they should contact the Houseparent and have confidence that the matter will be taken seriously and investigated.

Restorative approach

Fettes College takes a restorative approach towards any student who exhibits bullying behaviour.

They will be provided with support to:

- identify the feelings that cause them to act in that way
- develop alternative ways to respond to their feelings
- understand the impact of their behaviour on other people
- if possible, repair relationships.

Preventing, Investigating and Managing Incidents of Bullying

Bullying takes place in the context of relationships. Promoting respectful relationships, repairing relationships where appropriate and ensuring we respond to all forms of prejudice in order to create an environment where bullying cannot thrive.

School Preventative Measures

- school stance on bullying behaviour made clear through Counter-Bullying Policy
- wherever possible, the emphasis will be on preventative measures rather than simply reacting to incidents of bullying when they occur
- all students participate in PSHE sessions on Anti-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

Collective responsibility of Staff

- being vigilant and proactive if they note what may be developing into a bullying relationship or possible occurrences of bullying
- being approachable and willing to offer help and support.
- be mindful of their own language and behaviours in front of students to ensure they are modelling good behaviour at all times.

Members of staff should follow school procedures when a bullying incident arises by:

- discussing 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

When a staff member is alerted to a bullying situation or occurrence

- make the situation safe, if necessary
- note the type of bullying experienced e.g. name calling, rumours, threats, etc.
- note any underlying prejudice including details of any protected characteristics
- avoid labelling children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims' as this can be disempowering and unhelpful in changing their behaviour or supporting recovery from being bullied.
- Support the person reporting the bullying by asking helpful questions such as: What was the behaviour? What impact did it have? What does the student want to happen? What do i need to do about it?
- refer the incident to the Houseparent
- record the incident as fully as possible on iSAMS Pastoral Manager².

Houseparent

- Houseparent takes responsibility for investigating the incident
- should record the incident as fully as possible on iSAMS Pastoral Manager
- the individual experiencing bullying and individual displaying the bullying behaviour may be brought together for a managed, supported restorative conversation
- clear guidelines for future behaviour are issued and a code of conduct agreed. Both students should know that the situation will be monitored and know of consequences if bullying behaviour continues
- parent/guardian of individual experiencing bullying and individual displaying the bullying behaviour will be informed
- House Staff monitor the situation
- referral to Deputy Head or Head if no improvement is seen. Possible suspension or permanent exclusion in the most serious cases (See Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy).

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

² It is important that bullying incidents are recorded correctly on iSAMS Pastoral Manager, this includes ensuring that prejudice-based bullying is recorded accurately. This allows for the incident to be addressed appropriately, and for the number of particular types of incidents to be tracked. Guidance for staff on how to create a pastoral concern can be found on Firefly: <https://fettes.fireflycloud.net/student-information/isams---pastoral-concern>.

Counter-Bullying Policy

Appendix A: Prejudice-based bullying

This section outlines the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 as well as other characteristics which may lead to bullying that are not covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Additional Support Needs: These can arise for any reason and be of short or long-term duration. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances or social and emotional factors, and therefore may relate to a protected characteristic. A child or young person may be bullied because they have an additional support need and crucially being bullied can also lead to an additional support need.

Age: Age is a protected characteristic although prejudice and discrimination based on age is not applicable in school settings, it can affect children and young people in a variety of other settings. For example, in workplaces, further and higher education and in wider society.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees: Children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees may be at greater risk of bullying directly and indirectly. Some bullying behaviour against these groups may be of a racist nature which, given that race is a protected characteristic, can contravene equality legislation and have hate crime implications. Stigma, due to lack of knowledge and, given that race is a protected characteristic, understanding of asylum seekers and refugees, and reluctance to burden parent/guardian with extra worries can allow bullying to go undetected and continue.

Disability: Disability is a Protected Characteristic. People who bully others may see disabled children and young people as being less able to defend themselves and less able to tell an adult about the bullying. The language and behaviour used may be a result of a lack of understanding about the nature of a person's disability. Increased knowledge and understanding about disability and the impact it can have can help reduce bullying.

Gender Identity and Transphobic Bullying: The term 'transgender' is an umbrella term for those whose gender identity or expression differs in some way from the sex that was assigned to them at birth. Gender identity reflects an individual's internal sense of self as being male, female, neither or aspects of both. Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic. Transgender people face significant societal prejudice largely because they are perceived as not conforming to gender stereotypes, expectations and norms. As a result, transgender children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying. This can manifest in many ways including transphobic name calling or deliberately misgendering them. An individual may also experience transphobic bullying if someone is perceived to be transgender or someone they are associate with, is transgender, i.e a parent, relative or other significant figure. The term 'gender reassignment' is a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010 and refers to those who propose to go through, are going through, or have gone through a process of gender re-assignment.

Sexual Orientation, Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying: Sexual orientation is a protected characteristic within the Equality Act 2010. Bullying based on sexual orientation is largely motivated by prejudice towards lesbian, gay or bisexual people. Homophobic bullying is when a young person's actual or perceived sexual orientation is used to exclude, threaten, hurt, or humiliate them. Any young person can be homophobically bullied, whether they are LGBT or not. Sometimes young people can be homophobically bullied because others think that they are LGBT, because they have LGBT family or friends or often because they are seen as different or not conforming to traditional gender stereotypes. Transgender children and young people can therefore also experience homophobic bullying. Homophobic language and jokes around the

school can create a climate of homophobia; for example, the use of the word 'gay' to mean sub-standard or uncool. This type of language should therefore be addressed.

Intersectionality: Understanding the different and unequal social and economic outcomes for particular groups, based on intersections between race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and age. In the context of anti-bullying, it is important to understand the connection between the experience of belonging to one or more of these groups and a resultant inequality in attainment and wellbeing.

Looked After Children and Young People: Looked after children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying. Children can face bullying behaviour simply because they are looked after and seen in some way as 'different'. Children who are looked after away from home can also experience bullying behaviour in their residential care home, at school and in their community. Looked after children and young people may not always have a stable support network to turn to when experiencing bullying. For some children forming positive relationships with peers and adults can be more difficult due to their early childhood adversity. Developing trusting and supportive relationships between children and practitioners is required to address bullying of all forms and in all settings.

Racism and Race: Race is a protected characteristic. Children and young people from minority ethnic groups often experience bullying based on perceived differences in dress, communication, appearance, beliefs and/or culture as well as their skin colour and accent. The status of the ethnic group a child belongs to (or people assume they belong to) in a school, community or organisation can often lead to a child or young person experiencing bullying behaviour. This can arise from a misguided and/or learned belief that they are less valued and 'deserve' to be treated differently, or with less respect.

Religion or Belief: Religion or belief is a protected characteristic. Lack of knowledge and understanding about the traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths can lead to religious intolerance. Lack of awareness about the differences in practices of religions such as prayer times, dietary requirements, fasting and the wearing of religious clothing or articles of faith can result in misunderstandings and stereotyping, which may lead to bullying. People who have a religion or belief as well as those who do not, are protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Sexism and Gender: Sex, sexual orientation and gender reassignment are all protected characteristics. Bullying in the form of derogatory language and the spreading of malicious rumours can be used to regulate both girls' and boys' behaviour – suggesting that they are not being a real man or a real woman. These terms can be of an explicit sexual nature and it is worth noting that many can involve using terms for people who are gay and lesbian as a negative towards a person's masculinity or femininity. Sexism and gender stereotypes feed into homophobia, biphobia and transphobia. Gender stereotyping, based on the notion of acceptable and unacceptable male and female behaviour, can leave children and young people who are perceived not to conform to these notions vulnerable to indirect and direct bullying. Personality traits that do not fit into the unwritten rules of 'appropriate' male and female behaviour can lead to bullying because of the prejudice towards their perceived difference.

Socio-economic Prejudice: Bullying due to socio-economic status can take place in any community. Small differences in perceived family income/family living arrangements/ social circumstances or values can be used as a basis for bullying behaviours. These behaviours, such as mocking speech patterns, accents, belongings, clothing, etc can become widespread through those considering themselves to be in the dominant socioeconomic group. Bullying of children who endure parental substance misuse can also be prevalent.

Young Carers: The lives of young carers can be significantly affected by their responsibility to care for a family member who has a physical illness or disability, mental health problem, sensory or learning disability or issues with the misuse of drugs or alcohol. Young carers are at risk of bullying for a variety of reasons. Depending on responsibilities at home, they may find themselves being unable to fully participate in school or after-school activities or 'fun stuff'. This can make it difficult for them to form relationships; it can hinder successful transitions or lead to educational difficulties.

Pastoral Leadership Team

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