



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Revised – September 2020

To be reviewed – July 2021

Agreed by SLT

INTRODUCTION

We believe that the British School of Geneva is a very pleasant, caring and well-disciplined school, where bullying is rare. The whole ethos of the school centres around the principle that all who work or study here respect and understand the needs of others.

In this context, bullying will not be tolerated and could result in a student being suspended or expelled from BSG, if deemed appropriate. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent it happening and with this in mind, this document lays down certain guidelines which all students, parents and staff should follow.

No-one should underestimate the potential psychological damage that bullying can cause – often far in excess of the intentions of the bully.

It is our fundamental belief that every student has the right to pursue their education free from adverse interference from others. We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our students in which each student can reach their potential in all areas, so gaining self-esteem and being uniquely valued by others. This means respecting each other's space, privacy and differences and treating everyone with kindness and sensitivity and offering support and encouragement to each other.

Aims

The aims of this policy are to:

- Promote the importance of mutual respect and the development of positive relationships;
- Create and encourage a learning environment in which every student feels welcomed, safe and able to learn;
- Ensure that bullying behaviour is not acceptable within our school;
- Have a shared and clearly understood definition of bullying behaviour;
- Create an environment where students, staff and parents are encouraged to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour;
- Ensure that mechanisms are in place to prevent and detect bullying;
- Outline roles and responsibilities of staff, students and parents in recognising, reporting, recording and dealing with incidents of bullying;
- Support students who are bullied and help to restore lost confidence and self-esteem;
- Sanction and educate the students who bully.

Definition of bullying

Bullying is not the occasional, falling out with friends, name calling, arguments or when the occasional trick or joke is played on someone. It is bullying if it is done several times on purpose. Pupils sometimes fall out or say things because they are upset. When occasional problems of this kind arise it is not classed as bullying. It is an important part of pupils' development to learn how to deal with friendship breakdowns, the occasional name calling or childish prank. We all have to learn how to deal with these situations and develop social skills to repair relationships.

Bullying is defined as a behaviour that is:

- **Repeated,**
- **Intended to hurt a certain individual or group either physically or emotionally,**
- **Often aimed at certain groups, for example because of their race, disability, religion, culture, gender or sexual orientation,**
- **Or aimed at an individual because of some difficulty they might have or because their circumstances appear to be 'unusual'.**

Examples of bullying behaviour can be found in Appendix 1.

It is not an acceptable defence to justify bullying behaviour that causes harm and distress as actions intended as a joke or 'banter'. We work very hard establishing with students, parents and staff the difference between bullying behaviour and 'harmless banter'. We acknowledge that people react differently to situations and it is not always possible to tell if someone is upset or hurt. However, when the student targeted is in distress or is hurt and the person responsible knows this and carries on, then the line between harmless teasing and bullying has been crossed.

Where does bullying occur?

Although bullying may occur almost anywhere and at any time, some situations are more common such as:

- on the way to or from school or college, including buses;
- in corridors, classrooms, changing rooms, toilets;
- in the playground, particularly in isolated areas;
- in the dinner queue and dining hall.

Bullying frequently involves the use of mobile phones, computers and social media. This might involve an individual sending malicious or hurtful texts, emails or photos or using insulting or other hurtful descriptions on sites such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram. More on cyberbullying can be found in the school policy on e-safety and in Appendix 6.

Minimising the risk of bullying behaviour

- a) Emphasis is placed on the quality of relationships between all members, staff and between staff, students and parents to encourage an openness designed to allow students to speak out where potential problems are perceived. The PSHCE programme provides opportunities for students to explore the issues surrounding bullying and also encourages the underpinning values of fairness, compassion, tolerance and forgiveness.
- b) At a practical level, classroom teachers strive to create a positive, well-ordered environment where each student feels valued and respected. It is important to create an atmosphere where students who are being bullied, or others who know about it, feel that they will be listened to and believed, and that action will be swift but sensitive to their concerns. It is also important to involve all members of the school community in the identification and condemnation of bullying.

- c) All teachers are responsible for ensuring that students learn to listen to one another, to respect opinions they do not themselves hold, and for fostering an appropriate degree of assertiveness that permits students to express their own opinions.
- d) The school will identify the 'hot spots' where bullying is likely to occur and will ensure that supervision levels are adequate. Staff will supervise the main areas of the school before class, at break time and at lunch time and will be particularly vigilant during these times since some students are more vulnerable and bullying is less easily seen.
- e) As part of their leadership training, members of the students' council and peer mentors learn to appreciate they have a vital role in looking after the younger students. They are spoken to about their role and influence in the school by the Head of Pastoral Care and the Deputy Principal and they receive training in Safeguarding and Child Protection by the Designated Safeguarding Lead.
- f) The Principal speaks regularly in assembly about kindness to others as do tutors in form time.
- g) Students fill in a pastoral questionnaire (which focusses on anti-bullying) every two years in November. This highlights any specific issues.

Roles and responsibilities

Students

We expect our students to:

- refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity;
- intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so;
- report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances;
- not to suffer in silence but to speak out to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.

We endeavour encourage discussion to open up at all levels and hence to break the silence and the culture of secrecy in which aggressive behaviours thrive. (Appendix 2)

Parents

We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

- watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying (Appendix 3);
- advising their children to report any bullying to a member of staff and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils;
- advising their children not to retaliate violently to any form of bullying;
- being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken;
- keeping a written record of any reported instances of bullying including text messages and online communications;
- inform the school promptly of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved;

- co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying, trying to ascertain the truth, and point out the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves.

Parents are encouraged to reassure their child that we will deal with all forms of bullying sensitively but firmly. If a child tells us, or we discover that they are being bullied, or they are bullying others, we will deal with the matter appropriately. All such disclosures will be acknowledged quickly and dealt with firmly but sensitively.

Parents can contact the Form Tutor/Head of Section/ Head of Pastoral Care to report incidents of bullying which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents/guardians.

Staff

Suspicion of bullying

- a) Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour (Appendix 3). All staff should be aware of the possible implication of such behaviour change, report promptly any suspicions of bullying to the student's Tutor and fill in a Bullying Incident or Concern Form (Appendix 4).
- b) The Tutor should make appropriate enquiries about the concern raised, speaking to relevant parties (the student's teachers, the student themselves and possibly their friends) and alert the Head of Section and the Head of Pastoral Care. The tutor should keep a written record of all discussions.
- c) If the student acknowledges that they are being bullied, the Tutor must report what has happened to the Head of Section and / or the Head of Pastoral Care directly, so that appropriate action may be taken and that there is parity in any decision made.
- d) If the student denies that they are being bullied and their denials are unconvincing, a particularly close watch should be kept on the student and the concerns should be shared with the student's parents.

Disclosure of bullying

Should a disclosure of bullying be made to a member of staff, the person hearing the disclosure must:

- Always take what is said seriously;
- Not promise confidentiality;
- Reassure the student;
- Determine what action the student would like to see taken;
- Explain what will happen next (the Head of Section and the Head of Pastoral Care must be informed as quickly as possible);
- Ensure that the student feels safe;
- Once the initial disclosure is concluded, make a record of key points disclosed. (Please see section on recording on page 5);
- Passed the record of the disclosure to the Head of Section (signed and dated).

Witnessing bullying

A member of staff who witnesses bullying must **deal with the incident immediately and directly**.

- a) Non-teaching staff should ask the students to accompany them to the office where the Head of Section / Deputy Principal / Head of Pastoral Care will take over the investigation.
- b) Teaching staff can follow the following guidance if they are not in a lesson or about to start a lesson. Otherwise they should follow the same procedure as non-teaching staff.

Our response to a bullying incident

Our initial concern is to prevent bullying rather than punish the bullies. However, bullying is a major offence and will be dealt with firmly.

- a) In any bullying incident, teachers should speak separately to the students involved. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and students should be reassured that their concerns will be listened to.
- b) Bullying incidents are best investigated in a quiet place to avoid the public humiliation of the person subjected to bullying or the student engaged in bullying behaviour.
- c) When investigating incidents of bullying, teachers should seek answers to the following: Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?
- d) Teachers should keep a written record of their discussions. It may also be appropriate/helpful to ask any others involved to write down their account of the incident. All records should then be passed on to the Head of Section.
- e) If it is concluded that a student has been engaged in bullying as defined in our policy, it should be made clear to them that they are in breach of the Code of Conduct. Appropriate sanctions, in accordance with the school's Discipline Policy, should then be taken. This is likely to involve contact/meeting with parents. A follow-up meeting with the two parties involved should be arranged either separately or together soon after the incident to see if progress has been made.
- f) If the bullying that has taken place involves any illegal activity, then the police or other relevant agencies may be contacted for support and guidance.
- g) Serious incidents will be investigated by the Heads of Section and / or Head of Pastoral Care and /or Deputy Principal. The Principal will be notified.
- h) Extreme or persistent bullying will be dealt with by the Deputy Principal and then the Principal, who, if necessary, may suspend or expel the offender.
- i) A bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause that a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm. Further information can be found in the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.
- j) Students involved in bullying will talk to the Head of Pastoral Care. They may require additional support in order to prevent any future incidents. This includes the students who have been bullied and those who displayed bullying behaviour. Examples of support include: Friendship skills / Buddy support / assertiveness training / conflict management / counselling / anti-bullying personal journal / bullying workshops / assemblies / external agency support.
- k) If a bullying incident is reported that has occurred outside school hours and premises, parents/guardians may be advised to seek assistance from relevant agencies.

(<https://www.ge.ch/qui-m-adresser-si-quelqu-me-traite-mal-si-je-me-sens-danger>)

Recording

- a) Most bullying concerns or incidents reported will be recorded on Engage (Appendix 4);
- b) Should a bullying incident will be treated as a child protection concern, all staff records must be passed to the DSL for action and storage. Records will be kept securely in the DSL's office. In cases of alleged child abuse which come to court, child protection records may be required by the court.

Examples of bullying behaviour

Physical Bullying may involve:

- Hitting or kicking someone;
- Jostling, shoving, pushing someone;
- Spitting at someone;
- Invading someone's personal space;
- Physically humiliating someone (e.g by 'de-bagging' them);
- Taking, damaging or hiding someone's property.

Verbal Bullying may involve:

- Spoken comments;
- Written notes;
- Emails or text / WhatsApp messages;
- Improper use of Facebook, Instagram and similar social media;
- Phone calls;
- The defacing of notices;
- Name-calling, spreading rumours, publicly blaming someone for something they have not done;
- Circulating unflattering drawings or photographic images of someone.

Indirect or Manipulative Bullying may involve:

- Ostracising a fellow student by refusing to sit alongside them in class, in the canteen etc (or by moving away when they come and sit down);
- The manipulation of social networks to ostracise, marginalise or intimidate individuals;
- Publishing photographs or images of someone that are intended to occasion mockery or gossip;
- Encouraging others to become the agents of physical or verbal bullying against one's intended victim.

Bullying characterised by racism, sexism, homophobia and the exploitation of disability may involve:

- Spoken comments about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some groups of students;
- Written notes about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some groups of students;
- Emails, web postings or text messages about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some groups of students;
- Phone calls about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some groups of students;

- The defacing of notices with snide remarks about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some groups of students.

Sexual bullying may involve:

- Bullying that seeks to hurt people by drawing attention to their body shape, hair colour, manner of dress, alleged sexual attractiveness (or lack of it), close friendships (or the absence of intimate relationships in an individual's life);
- Physical action of a sexually intimidating nature (by the invasion of personal space, inappropriate touching);
- Spreading rumours about an individual's lifestyle (or the lifestyle of a close friend or relative);
- Spoken comments, written notes, emails, web postings, text messages, phone calls about someone (their friends or a member of their family), or about some groups of students.

Bullying focused on religion, culture or family background may involve:

- Spoken comments, written notes, emails, web postings etc that highlight an individual's religion or culture with the purpose of mocking them, for cultural or religious difference;
- Comments, web postings etc that mock a particular religious or cultural tradition for the purpose of discomforting an individual or group at school;
- Pejorative religious or cultural descriptors (eg 'Muslim terrorist', 'Pakki shopkeepers');
- Gossip about an individual's family circumstances, spreading stories about, for example, their being adopted, a parent in same-sex relationship.

Electronic or Cyber-bullying may involve:

- Sending abusive, insulting or malicious text messages / emails;
- Posting abusive or malicious messages on websites, using blogs, personal websites, on-line personal polling sites etc;
- Posting on a social network site facts or photographs of someone with the intention to embarrass or belittle them in the eyes of others;
- Indulging in malicious or spiteful conversations in chat-rooms;
- Spreading abuse, malice or scurrilous gossip by other electronic means;
- Hacking into social networking sites and removing personal materials;
- Filming fights or assaults (eg 'happy slapping' clips) using mobile phone cameras and circulating these using cell phone networks or email;
- Making repeated silent calls to a mobile phone or leaving abusive messages on voice mail;
- 'Fraping' (using a pseudonym or someone else's telephone or email account) for anonymity when indulging in bullying.

Sexting is the term given to the practice of sharing sexually explicit images or texts. Circumstances in which students might 'sext' one another vary. In Switzerland, where school students under 16 years of age are involved, this practice is always illegal.

Students must also understand that:

- Sending someone your sexualised image, when you are under 18 is bullying – it is an action with threatening character because the recipient could face severe legal consequences and it causes anxiety.
- Passing on a sexualised image of any person under 18 is bullying – it is an action that threatens the recipient and one that demeans the person pictured. It causes anxiety.
- Sending a sexualised image to try and initiate a romantic relationship is bullying – it is a threatening and offensive action. It causes anxiety.

The consequences of sexting can be serious for the perpetrator. It is illegal to publish or download a sexual image of someone under 18 even when it is the child themselves who created and posted the material online.

Students may attempt to justify the behaviours mentioned above as a 'practical joke' or banter rather than as bullying. This misconception must not be accepted.

Bullying that is so extreme that a student suffers or is likely to suffer significant harm is a Child Protection concern and will be reported to the relevant authorities in accordance with the school Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

Guidelines to Students

What can you do if you are being bullied?

Wherever you are in school, you have the right to feel safe. Nobody has the right to make you feel unhappy. If someone is bullying you, it is important to remember that it is not your fault and there are people who can help you.

- Try not to let the bully know that he/she is making you feel upset. Consider responding by saying something like "... yeah, whatever, ..." each time, so you show them it isn't having the effect of upsetting you in the way they think.
- Try to ignore them.
- Be assertive - stand up to them, look at them directly in the eye, tell them to stop and mean it. You can say clearly "I don't have to accept that and if you say it again I will tell someone."
- Stay in a group; bullies usually pick on individuals.
- Get away as quickly as you can.
- Tell someone you can trust – it can be a teacher, a teaching assistant, a parent, a friend, another pupil, a brother, a sister or a relative.
- Ask a friend to go with you when you tell someone.
- Keep a record of what's been happening and refer to it when you tell someone.
- Save as evidence copies of electronic forms of bullying eg text messages/Facebook conversations.
- Keep on speaking out until someone listens and helps you.
- Don't suffer in silence. Remember your silence is the bully's greatest weapon.
- Do not be intimidated by a bully saying it will be worse for you if you report bullying.
- Write down the information, put it in an envelope, address it to Stop Bullying, and post it in the letter box when intimidated.
- Send an email to stopbullying@britishschoolgeneva.ch
- Don't blame yourself for what is happening.
- You could look at the BSG Tool Kit for advice.

What can you do if you see someone else being bullied?

When someone is being bullied or in distress, take action. Watching and doing nothing suggests support for the bully. Ignoring bullying is cowardly and unfair to the person being bullied. Staying silent means the bully has won and gives them more power. It also makes you complicit in that bully's actions. There are ways you can help without putting yourself in danger.

- Don't smile or laugh at the situation.
- Don't rush over and take the bully on yourself.
- Don't be made to join in.
- If safe to do so, encourage the bully to stop bullying.
- If you can, let the bully know you do not like their behaviour.

- Shout for help.
- Let the person being bullied know that you are going to get help.
- Tell a member of staff as soon as you can.
- Try and befriend the person being bullied.
- Encourage the person to talk to someone and get help.
- Ask someone you trust about what to do.
- If you don't feel you can talk to someone about it, write it down and pass it on.
- Do not contribute to on-line communications where cyber bullying is occurring. For example, quit a WhatsApp group.
- Do not tolerate a bully in your circle of friends.
- Remember that calling someone names, incessant teasing or gossiping is bullying. Do not become a bully yourself

Understanding bullies

If people are making nasty remarks about you, it may be because they are jealous or insecure. The bullies work out which buttons to push to make you upset. They may make remarks about:

- Your weight;
- Your looks;
- The clothes you wear;
- The colour of your hair;
- The sound of your voice;
- Your family;
- Your school work;
- Your ethnic background;
- If you have a disability;
- If you are a different colour;
- Or simply if you are 'different' in some way.

If there is a ringleader, it is possible that other people who used to be your friends will avoid being seen with you. They could be worried that if they go around with you, they will get bullied in the same way. Try talking to them individually and understand what is going on.

Body Language

Think about the last time you walked around school. How did you feel? Confident and powerful? Or timid and worried? And how did you look to other people? Were you striding out purposefully with your head up, looking forward, or were you trying to make yourself look insignificant in the hope that you would not be noticed?

Body language tells us a lot about other people. If you are trying not to be noticed and looking at the ground, it can make you more noticeable. You look defensive and vulnerable. If you step out boldly you may not be very confident but you'll certainly look it.

Possible signs and symptoms of bullying

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that they are being bullied. Everyone should be aware of these possible signs.

- Unwillingness to attend School/truancy or becoming anxious as holidays or weekends draw to a close.
- Anxiety about travelling to and from School/avoiding regular travelling times.
- Changing established habits which may indicate that they are trying to avoid doing something or going somewhere.
- Underachievement or a sudden drop in academic performance.
- Loss of concentration/enthusiasm/interest in School/changed behaviour.
- Repeated non-specific reasons for medical room visits – headache/stomach ache.
- A change in behaviour such as becoming anxious or withdrawn.
- A drop in self-confidence.
- Expression of anxiety about their appearance, their clothing, hair, body shape etc.
- A reduced interest in personal hygiene or grooming.
- Physical signs of anxiety – stammering/nightmares/sleep difficulty/loss of appetite / nausea/ withdrawal.
- Physical bruising/torn clothes.
- Books torn or destroyed/missing possessions.
- Asking for significant increases in pocket money.
- Loss of self-esteem/confidence/mood swings.
- Becoming aggressive or unreasonable, or becoming excessively eager to please.
- Starting to bully siblings or other children.
- Choosing the company of adults in preference to their peers.
- Running away.
- Suicidal ideation.
- Reluctance to say what is wrong.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Recording a bullying incident / concern

Bullying Incident or Concern Form

REPORTS TO THE HEAD OF SECTIONS, HEAD OF PASTORAL CARE AND THE PRINCIPAL

Name of Student (s) involved:
Year Group (s):
Date, time and place of incident:
Details of the incident (What? Why? How?):
Action (s) taken:
Parties involved, including any witnesses (students or staff):
Referred to:

Strategies for the prevention and reduction of bullying

Whole school initiatives and proactive teaching strategies can be used throughout the school to develop a positive learning environment with the aim of reducing the opportunities for bullying to occur. These can include:

- Making national anti-bullying week a high profile event each year
- Awareness raising through anti-bullying assemblies
- Prominently displaying anti-bullying posters around the school
- Peer mentoring to help and support an individual experiencing difficulties
- Using drama activities and role-plays to help pupils be more assertive and teach them strategies to help them deal with bullying situations
- Using praise and rewards to reinforce good behaviour
- Using teaching methods, which encourage co-operative work and a variety of groupings, so that pupils extend their relationships beyond a small group of friends.
- Development of a Buddy scheme
- Dealing with the topic of bullying, in a way which explores why it happens and gives alternative ways of behaving, and dealing with difficulties.
- Open door policy of the Head of Pastoral care
- Opportunity to see the school psychologist
- A commitment to consult with and to inform pupils and parents fully about the policy and procedures in place to combat bullying.
- Undertaking regular questionnaires and surveys to monitor the extent of bullying in the school and the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Cyber-bullying

What is cyber-bullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, Text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behaviour.

(<https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/what-is-it>)

Please see pages 8 and 9 for examples of cyber-bullying.

Significance for Victims

Cyber-bullying can have a greater impact than many other forms of bullying because:

- The bully is potentially anonymous;
- Upsetting messages / images can be broadcast to a huge audience (increasing the impact of the bullying);
- Upsetting messages / images can be widely disseminated at speed, repeatedly and by different people;
- The bullying cannot be escaped: cyber-space is open 24/7; so it can be difficult for children experiencing cyberbullying to find relief.
- Students who would not normally take part in bullying may be enticed into bullying in this way, initially by being drawn in as accessories of others' activities (eg by passing on an image received on a mobile phone from the primary bully).

On the positive side, cyber-bullies leave a trail and it is possible in many cases to gather evidence of the bullying activity a victim has experienced.

In very serious incidents, a single action can constitute bullying behaviour. When the harmful activity is on-line (eg on social media), a single action can have a repeated impact and can be viewed by a number of different people, so harmful and/or offensive behaviour on-line does not need to be repeated over time to constitute bullying.

Significance for the Bullies

Cyber-bullies can easily break the Law by a number of offences that can be committed in the course of cyber-bullying such as harassment, defamation, distribution of pornographic material etc.

In such instances, the school will seek advice from a variety of organisations, as well as from the school's solicitor to establish whether the matter needs to be referred to the police.

Expectations of the students

Students must not send messages or post comments or imagery with the intent of scaring, hurting, or intimidating someone else.

It is expected that students will report instances of cyber-bullying. Failure to do so may be construed by the school as evidence of complicity in the behaviour. Students should report their suspicions as well as confirmed facts.

Reports can be made to:

- Any member of staff;
- Other students such as peer-mentors, school council representatives, the Head Students;

The school response

- The misuse of ICT technology is subject to the school's disciplinary policy;
- The school reserves the right to monitor students' use of the Internet on a routine basis and to examine mobile phone and computer memory where there is reason to suspect abuse;
- Students will be held responsible for all material they have placed on a web site and for all material that appears on a website of which they are the account holder;
- Sanctions may include confiscation of mobile phones or laptop computers, or restrictions on the use of the school network or the Internet, but may also involve detention, suspension or expulsion.

The school is mindful of its duty to combat cyber-bullying activity by students even when they are not present on the school campus thus:

- The misuse of the ICT technology outside the school will be subject to school disciplinary procedure if the welfare of other students or the culture or reputation of the school are placed at risk;
- Students will be held personally responsible for material they have placed on a web site even if that material was added when the student was not on the school premises;
- Students will be held personally responsible for abuse of the internet or mobile phone technology with any deleterious effect on other members of the school community (whether students or members of staff) even if the messages or images were composed or transmitted from outside the school premises.

The school will support students, teachers and parents in dealing with cyberbullying. BSG is committed to Safeguarding and Child Protection Procedures and will act in accordance with our child Safeguarding and Protection Policy.