



HOULTON

SCHOOL

Anti-bullying Policy

June 2026



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EDUCATIONAL TRUST

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1. The Policy

Houlton School is a caring community where every individual is held in high esteem and diversity is celebrated. Sensitivity, acceptance, self-discipline, respect and kindness are nurtured and encouraged in all and are typified in the day-to-day life and core values of the school. Everyone in the Houlton School community is of equal value and has the right to equal opportunities. No-one should be discriminated against or bullied in any way. All individuals are expected to treat others as they themselves wish to be treated. No-one should be treated with disrespect or discriminated against because (to include, but not limited to):

- they are disabled or have an illness;
- they are richer or poorer than others;
- of their academic ability or needs;
- of the friendship groups with which they socialise;
- of their nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, gender or sexual orientation;
- of their appearance;
- of any mental health issues they may encounter.

Name calling and inappropriate banter will not be tolerated at Houlton School and, where relating to any of the above, may be classed as bullying if it is repeated and sustained.

Everyone has the right to practice their religion and no individual will at any time be made to feel uncomfortable for doing this. All reasonable adjustments will be made to allow individuals to practise their religion.

Teachers and pupils should respect each other, and seek to establish and build upon positive relationships. A culture of Restorative Practice will be embedded across the school to support this.

Any policy regarding bullying must include these aims, and intend to ensure their implementation. It is recognised that the issue of bullying will also be tackled, in part, in many other areas of school life and in other policy documents, such as PSHRE, RSE, ICT, Equality, Safeguarding and Child Protection.

2. Bullying: Definition

Research shows that there is no particular age group or type of school which is free from the risk of bullying. Being bullied can have a devastating effect on the victim, resulting in a loss of self-esteem, underachievement, absenteeism, depression, self-harm or sometimes even suicide. Young people in Warwickshire defined bullying as:

“When a person’s or group of people’s behaviour, over a period of time, leaves someone feeling one or more of the following:

- *Physically and/or mentally hurt or worried;*
- *Unsafe and/or frightened;*
- *Unable to do well and achieve;*
- *‘Badly different’, alone, unimportant and/or unvalued;*
- *Unable to see a happy and exciting future for yourself.*

When a person, or group of people, has been made aware of the effects of their behaviour on another person, and they continue to behave in the same manner, this is bullying. If someone feels like this, or if they think someone they know feels like this, it should be investigated. This should happen straight away as it can take a long time to build up the courage to tell.”

Warwickshire Safeguarding Children

<https://www.safeguardingwarwickshire.co.uk/safeguarding-children/i-am-a-child-youngperson/bullying>

Bullying [is]...usually defined as behaviour that is: repeated; intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally; often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation.

It takes many forms and can include: physical assault; teasing; making threats; namecalling; and cyberbullying - bullying via mobile phone or online (for example email, social networks and instant messenger). [1]

Three factors are implicit in bullying activities:

- It is repetitive, over a period of time;
- It involves an imbalance of power;
- It can be verbal, physical and/or psychological.

How bullies exercise their illegitimate power depends on who they are, who the victim is, and the context. While all bullying is aggressive, it is a complex issue, ranging from physical violence to bullying in the form of emotional or psychological aggression.

The school will also seek to reduce and constantly challenge the following types of connected behaviours:

- verbal e.g. telling tales; name calling racist/sexist comments remarks about disabilities;
- ‘looks’ revealing lack of respect and non-co-operation with others;
- cold shoulder type behaviours;
- any threatening behaviour either verbal or non-verbal;
- any physical assault, e.g. kicking, scratching, biting, pushing, tripping, punching;
- interfering with a pupil’s schoolwork or possessions;
- either carrying or claiming to carry weapons into school

3. Recognising Bullying

“To be seen to act is as important as taking action – silence and secrecy nurture bullying.”

(Action Against Bullying, Scottish Council)

Bullies depend on a code of silence for their success. Breaking that code can be the first step in prevention.

All bullies have certain characteristics in common:

- bullies tend to have assertive and/or aggressive attitudes over which they exercise little control;
- bullies tend to lack empathy;
- bullies tend to lack guilt, often they rationalise that the victim somehow 'deserves' the bullying treatment;
- bullies can come in 'gangs' or groups. This is more visible, but all bully 'gangs' are made up of individuals needing individual responses;
- bullies pick on vulnerable people, but the victim's vulnerability is not always visible to adults.

There is no stereotype, but victims may be pupils who:

- are new to the class or school;
- are different in appearance, speech or background from other pupils;
- suffer from low self-esteem;
- demonstrate 'entertaining' reactions when bullied, e.g. tantrums, loss of control;
- are nervous or anxious;
- have belonged to former friendship groups who have moved on / split up;
- have learning difficulties;
- are struggling with gender identity or sexuality.

Staff need also to recognise that the victims of bullying may not always fit into these categories. Pupils who are withdrawn or exhibit behaviours such as reluctance to work in groups, lateness, get quickly upset or whose behaviour is suddenly changeable all may be potential victims. If staff have any suspicions then they are to use their judgment and either tackle the issue themselves or report to those staff with designated responsibilities in these areas.

With the increased use of social media and technologies it is likely that bullying will increasingly move towards 'cyber bullying'; all staff need to acknowledge the challenges this causes and that there is an increased potential for images and words to be sent / received / spread to a wider circle of pupils. Issues relating to cyber bullying and / or malicious communications will be dealt with in accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy where these issues transgress into school.

While this document concentrates on approaches taken regarding pupils in our care, it is recognised that bullying can involve adults too. This could involve staff, associate staff, parent/carer(s) or members of the local community.

Bullying in adults could potentially have the same causes and range of expression as pupils; any examples of this should be dealt with in a confidential and documented manner by the appropriate line manager of the complainant in the first instance and then, if judged necessary, be quickly referred to the Head of School/Vice Principal/DSL for guidance or action, or in the case of a concern regarding a staff member's conduct, directly to the head of School. If there are any safeguarding concerns, staff should follow the correct protocol in the school Safeguarding Policy.

4. Online Safety

It is recognised that a large proportion of bullying occurrences may take place through social media. 'Cyberbullying' can affect pupils both inside and outside school. How this is dealt with is the same as in any other kind of bullying where it transgresses into school, as detailed below.

Online safety is an increasingly important facet of education and as such:

- Online Safety will be part of Anti – Bullying PSHRE lessons and will be given specific whole school time and assemblies during each school year.
- The Trust ICT Team will look at issues regarding ICT, safe use of the internet and issues such as filters, password security etc. at school.
- We will develop an approach which constantly revisits our line regarding the use of tablets and ICT in school and modify it as appropriate.
- Parents/carers will be encouraged to always report cyberbullying and malicious communications to the relevant external authorities and to keep all evidence.

Staff will be given clear guidance on the use of ICT, social media and other social networking platforms both in and out of school through the Staff Code of Conduct and 'Houlton School Family Fundamentals.'

Parents/carers have the responsibility of ensuring that their child is not using social media inappropriately and that pupils are adhering to the appropriate age restrictions in place for any given social media platform. Whilst Houlton School will tackle all forms of bullying robustly, the school may not always be able to resolve pupil behaviour occurring outside of school either physically or remotely on social media platforms. Where serious incidents occur outside of school, parents/carers will be encouraged to report them to the police.

5. Expectations for Staff

- Be on time to lessons as well as duties at break;
- Be constantly vigilant in learning areas;
- Keep careful records of all incidents to build up accurate pictures of bullying;
- Follow the school Positive Behaviour Policy in relation to any consequence given.

All staff are expected to work proactively to prevent the occurrence of bullying and to limit the potential for incidents. Staff are expected to model the core values of the school and exhibit the following behaviours which will assist in a positive ethos:

- modelling positive behaviours in how we speak to others and in how we manage our relationships with others;
- seek to maintain and praise successful positive pupil interactions;
- when on duty, seek to actively monitor pupil interaction and intervene and challenge if necessary;
- when on duty, actively monitor pupil interaction - monitor areas of high pupil movement such as corridors, at movement time between lessons, at lunchtimes, and before and after school;
- to confiscate mobile devices if being used on the school site and are not handed in as per the school policy on mobile phones;

- to be vigilant at all times within classrooms, and to think carefully about seating plans and classroom movement.

6. Bullying: Action and Protocols

All stakeholders must be made aware of our policy on anti-bullying and the mechanisms by which bullying incidents should be dealt with. All pupils and staff have a responsibility to immediately inform any concerns over bullying. All staff have a responsibility to deal with (where appropriate), incidents which may arise and to tackle them robustly.

In the primary phase, the Head of School will work with pupils and their families at the earliest opportunity if bullying is reported or suspected to ensure an immediate stop. Appropriate steps for support, reconciliation, restoration and/or consequences will be employed.

Any incidents of bullying that takes place in a classroom is the responsibility of the class teacher. They may choose to deal with the incident through the consequence system, and/or refer it to senior colleagues where appropriate.

Any incidents of bullying that take place in communal areas, e.g. outdoor space, corridors or the Refectory, is the responsibility of staff on duty or any nearby member of staff. Again, the staff member may deal with this through the consequence system or make a referral to a senior colleague as appropriate.

Staff will issue sanctions using the school's consequence system on Edulink. As all incidents are different, staff must use their professional judgement as to how to proceed and refer up if the incident requires further investigation.

Serious incidents or concerns regarding a pupil's welfare or mental state or repeated issues, should always be referred to the Head of Year and DSL and logged on CPOMS. A separate log of all serious bullying incidents will also be held by the Principal's PA or Head of School in the primary phase.

Where an incident of bullying is of a racist, homophobic or discriminatory nature this must also be recorded separately by the Principal's PA or Head of School in primary. Consequences will be logged on Edulink and kept. Pupils can report bullying in a confidential way and will be made aware of mechanisms for reporting. Regular opportunities for pastoral check ins are part of the fortnightly tutor programme to allow pupils to meet and discuss any concerns they have. Heads of year are available to pupils at all times where a pupil needs to make a disclosure.

All pupils and staff will be regularly reminded of who the Designated Safeguarding Lead (and deputies) are in the school. The DSL will meet regularly with the Trust Lead DSL and Local Governing Board link Governor to review safeguarding issues.

7. Monitoring

Data relating to bullying will be shared and used by:

- The leadership team to inform new practice, raise concerns and successes;
- SLT, Heads of Year, Heads of School, safeguarding team and tutors to help address issues, inform appropriate response and co-ordinate actions;

- SENDCo in order to understand current needs and support procedures for individual pupils;
- Pupils through assemblies and lessons, to instil positive values and challenge negative attitudes. Pupil groups will be consulted regarding potential changes;
- The Local Authority and the Trust, for data such as racist incidents;
- Parents/carers(s) where such data is deemed appropriate to share;
- The Head of School/Vice Principal to consult with staff, pupils and parent/carers(s) on a regular basis so that the school can respond quickly and appropriately to the changing patterns of bullying, in order to modify the school's responses to bullying and seek innovative approaches to its reduction.

8. Advice - staff dealing with issues of bullying

Staff should aim to remain calm, objective and measured. Reacting emotionally may add to the bully's fun and give the bully control of the situation or might cloud a staff member's judgement. Staff should take all reports of bullying seriously and take appropriate action as detailed above as quickly as possible.

Staff should reassure the victim(s) without leading or passing judgement. Staff should offer concrete help, advice and support to the victim(s).

Where staff witness bullying, they must express their disapproval and encourage the bully to see the victim's points of view using restorative justice questions (see Positive Behaviour Policy).

Staff dealing with bullying behaviour should explain clearly, the consequence or procedure to be followed, and why. Houlton School is a mixed comprehensive school with a wide range of pupils with varied needs and therefore staff should adapt their approach as appropriate when dealing with pupils with special education needs, children in care or previously looked after, or EAL needs, and should consult with the SENDCo or DSL if unsure on how to do so.

All incidents should be treated on an individual basis. It is important that staff log incidents appropriately on Edulink or CPOMS as appropriate, in order to inform others if incidents that may have been triggered through issues such as personal, family, medical complaints, or bereavement among others.

Once the incident has been dealt with, staff must ensure that efforts are made to avoid a recurrence through. Interventions could consider seating plan changes, vigilance in social times, and other interventions as appropriate.

Staff dealing with bullying

Staff should try to avoid the following:

- being over-protective. It is important to allow the victim to help themselves if they can;
- if the bully is a repeat offender, staff must be objective at the behaviour;
- trying to hide the incident from the parent/carers(s) of the victim or the bully;
- calling the parent/carers(s) without having a constructive plan to offer either side;
- being hesitant to seek support or guidance.

9. Preventing Bullying: The Curriculum

Anti-bullying themes will be embedded across a number of curriculum areas including PSHRE, assemblies and tutor time activities as part of a prevention programme. The curriculum should support the school's aims and help to embed the anti-bullying message as much as possible. Co-operative work and non-aggressive behaviour should be rewarded. Regular assemblies and visual reminders around the school site will ensure anti-bullying remains a constant focus for the school.

The school's personal development programme will reinforce the negative impact of bullying and support pupils to understand that bullying is not acceptable.

Houlton School subscribes to the Diana Award package to support our curriculum delivery. Senior leaders, heads of faculty and heads of year will undergo training on anti-bullying strategies from the Diana Award. The school achieved the Diana Award accreditation quality mark for anti-bullying. We continue to work on implementing effective use of pupil anti bullying ambassadors and LGBTQ+ ambassadors as well as bespoke training. Houlton School also subscribes as a Stonewall Champion School to proactively ensure that diversity and inclusion are at the centre of all that we do.

10. Critical Incidents

The school retains the right to escalate procedures when there is a serious incident of bullying. With the growth of social networking, cyberbullying has become an issue for all schools. The school will not condone the misuse and abuse of technology, and pupils will be made aware that this could be regarded as a critical incident. The school reserves the right to engage with outside agencies such as Social Care, PREVENT or the Police, where appropriate.

11. Monitoring and Impact

A positive and caring ethos demands an active Anti-bullying policy which will be frequently reviewed based upon new approaches, findings, in consultation with all stakeholders. Pupils and staff will be consulted periodically to enable the school to monitor and adapt the policy and PSHRE curriculum accordingly.

Restorative Justice processes will be used, where possible, to rebuild relationships between pupils and staff that have been subjected to any form of bullying and all staff will be trained in restorative practice.

Leadership opportunities and rewards will be built into the Positive Behaviour Policy to encourage positive behaviours in our pupils. The victim where possible, must be allowed to help themselves, and helped to become more socially skilled and assertive. All pupils should be encouraged to demonstrate leadership in this area.

The school will seek to embed and develop the following pupil led approaches:

- Pupil leaders will be effectively used to support our work in tackling bullying;
- pupils will have the opportunity to develop materials for lessons and assemblies;
- pupils will be given opportunities to use first hand experiences, taking part in active discussion to question and debate with staff;

- pupils will be given a forum to voice concerns over bullying in our safe and secure forum;
- use trained pupil individuals to intervene in selected issues where a restorative approach or where support and guidance from a non-teacher may be felt desirable;
- all pupils will be fully aware of the school policy on bullying and will be involved in consultation regularly through pupil voice on its impact.

Houlton School will always seek to explore and develop methods for pupils and their parent/carer(s) to be able to communicate their concerns as effectively as possible, through email, text, meetings and reinforcing the use of the online referral system.

This policy will be reviewed, monitored and submitted to the Local Governing Board for approval.

[1] *Bullying at School* – UK Department for Education .gov website (accessed 28 April 2021)