

**Earlscliffe (Earlscliffe Ltd)**

**Policy: Anti- Bullying**

**Member of SLT responsible: Deputy Head (Pastoral & Boarding)**

**Date of review: September 2025**

**Date of next review: June 2026**

## **Statement of Intent**

This policy applies to all students at Earlscliffe, and to the interactions between students and staff, both in school, in boarding, online, and during off-site activities where the school has a duty of care.

Earlscliffe is committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment in which every student can learn, board, and thrive. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. Bullying is also recognised as a safeguarding concern when it causes, or is likely to cause, significant harm to a child's physical or mental health and wellbeing.

Bullying can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- **Verbal** – name-calling, insults, teasing, threats.
- **Physical** – hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging property.
- **Relational** – spreading rumours, excluding others, manipulation.
- **Online/Cyberbullying** – abusive messages, exclusion from online groups, sharing images without consent.
- **Prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying** – including racist, sexist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, or disability-related abuse.

If bullying does occur, all students should know that they can report it and that it will be dealt with promptly, consistently, and effectively.

We are a values-based school. This means that anyone who knows bullying is happening is expected to tell a trusted adult. Students can report concerns to:

- Their **Senior Tutor**
- Their **Housemaster/Housemistress**
- The **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or a Deputy DSL
- Any member of staff they trust

Anti-bullying education and principles are embedded across the curriculum and co-curricular programme, including PSHE, RSE, digital literacy, assemblies, and Forum sessions led by Senior Tutors. These opportunities help students develop the knowledge, skills, and values to recognise, resist, and report bullying, and to act as positive and respectful members of the Earlscliffe community.

This policy reflects the statutory requirements set out in **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2025)**, the **Equality Act 2010**, and the DfE guidance *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* (2017). It also aligns with Earlscliffe's Safeguarding and Behaviour Policies.

## What Is Bullying?

At Earlscliffe, bullying is defined as **the deliberate, repeated misuse of power or influence with the intention of causing physical, emotional, or psychological harm**. It can take many forms and results in pain, distress, humiliation, or isolation for the victim.

Bullying may include, but is not limited to:

- **Emotional:** Excluding someone from activities, manipulating friendships, spreading rumours, or deliberately making another student feel unwelcome.
- **Physical:** Pushing, hitting, kicking, tripping, or any use of violence.
- **Verbal:** Name-calling, sarcasm, mocking, or persistent teasing.
- **Racist or discriminatory:** Derogatory language, slurs, graffiti, or gestures targeting race, ethnicity, culture, religion, or language.
- **Sexual:** Unwanted physical contact, sexual comments, gestures, or sharing explicit material.
- **Homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic:** Behaviour targeting someone because of, or perceived to be because of, sexual orientation or gender identity.
- **Disability-related:** Bullying focused on physical or learning needs, health conditions, or differences.
- **Cyberbullying:** Misuse of technology (social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, email, or image/video sharing) to intimidate, exclude, defame, threaten, or invade privacy. This includes image-based abuse, non-consensual sharing of personal material, and online harassment that continues beyond the school day.

In a boarding context, bullying may occur in communal spaces, online, or outside formal lesson times. Wherever it happens, it is taken seriously and addressed with equal priority.

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

## What Is Not Bullying?

Not all conflict, disagreement, or falling out between friends amounts to bullying. While these situations can still cause upset and require staff support, they are different from bullying because they are not characterised by an **imbalance of power** or **deliberate, repeated harm**.

Examples of behaviour that is **not bullying** include:

- Occasional arguments or disagreements between friends.
- A single incident of unkindness, unless it forms part of a wider pattern.

- Mutual conflict where both parties are equally involved and there is no power imbalance.
- Teasing or “banter” that is **not** intended to cause harm and is received as friendly (though staff will always intervene if such behaviour risks crossing a line).

However, repeated or targeted behaviour, even if initially framed as a “joke” or “banter,” can quickly become bullying and will be treated as such. Staff will always respond proportionately, supporting all students to resolve conflicts respectfully while addressing any behaviour that undermines Earlscliffe’s values.

## Why Is It Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying causes significant harm. It can damage a young person’s confidence, self-esteem, mental health, and academic progress. No student at Earlscliffe should ever feel unsafe or marginalised. Everybody has the right to be treated with dignity and respect.

Students who engage in bullying behaviour must also be supported to understand the impact of their actions and to develop more positive and respectful ways of interacting with others.

As an education and boarding community, we recognise that:

- Bullying is a **safeguarding issue** and may indicate wider risks of harm or abuse.
- All forms of bullying, including prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying (linked to protected characteristics under the **Equality Act 2010**), will be taken seriously.
- We have a legal and moral duty to respond promptly, proportionately, and effectively to every concern raised.
- Failing to address bullying risks normalising harmful behaviour, undermining our school values of **Respect, Community, Aspiration, Curiosity, and Personal Development**.

At Earlscliffe, we make it clear that bullying of any kind is unacceptable, will always be challenged, and that victims will be listened to, supported, and safeguarded.

## Objectives of this Policy

- To ensure that all **students, staff, and parents/guardians** have a clear understanding of what constitutes bullying, including online and prejudice-based forms.
- To ensure that all **teaching and non-teaching staff** know the school’s anti-bullying policy, apply it consistently, and follow agreed procedures when bullying is reported or suspected.
- To ensure that all **students and parents/carers** know the school’s approach to bullying and understand the steps they should take if they experience or witness it.
- To provide clear systems of **reporting, recording, and responding** to bullying so that concerns are addressed promptly, fairly, and effectively.

- To reassure students and parents/carers that concerns will always be taken seriously, that victims will be **supported and safeguarded**, and that appropriate interventions will be put in place for those engaging in bullying behaviour.
- To promote a **culture of respect, inclusion, and accountability**, making it clear that bullying in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

## Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

Bullying is not always immediately visible. Students may not always feel able to talk about what is happening to them, and some may fear that reporting will make matters worse. Staff, parents, and peers should remain alert to potential signs that a young person may be experiencing bullying.

Possible indicators include:

- Reluctance or refusal to attend school, lessons, or particular activities.
- Regular complaints of feeling unwell before school or in the evenings.
- Avoidance of communal areas, boarding houses, or social events.
- Becoming withdrawn, anxious, tearful, or displaying a sudden loss of confidence.
- Significant or unexplained decline in academic performance.
- Uncharacteristic aggression, irritability, or disruptive behaviour.
- Physical signs such as unexplained injuries, damaged clothing, or loss of personal belongings.
- Frequent reports of “lost” pocket money or possessions.
- Changes in eating or sleeping patterns, including persistent tiredness or nightmares.
- Increased secrecy, particularly around phone or internet use.
- Sudden reluctance to use technology, or conversely, visible distress after using a device.
- Evidence of cyberbullying (e.g. hostile messages, exclusion from online groups, inappropriate sharing of images).
- Risk-taking behaviours, self-harm, or talking about hopelessness, running away, or suicide.
- Engaging in bullying behaviour themselves towards peers or siblings.

While these signs do not automatically mean a student is being bullied, they **should never be ignored**. Any concern should be reported and investigated under this policy, in line with our pastoral and safeguarding procedures.

## Reporting Bullying Incidents

At Earlscliffe, students are made aware during induction and throughout the year that they must report any safeguarding or bullying concern, whether affecting themselves or others. The school takes all reports seriously, and students are supported to raise issues in confidence.

## How students can report bullying:

- Speak directly to any trusted adult, including:
  - Group Tutor
  - House Master/Mistress
  - Senior Tutor
  - School Nurse
  - Deputy Head (Pastoral & Boarding)
  - Deputy Head (Academic)
  - Head Teacher
  - Class Teacher
- Tell a friend and ask them to pass the concern on to a member of staff.
- Use written or electronic reporting (e.g. email, online form, or note to staff) if they find it difficult to speak in person.
- Raise the issue through the Student Council or Student Voice structures, although urgent or safeguarding-related concerns must be reported directly to staff.

## How staff respond:

Every member of staff has a duty to listen to, take seriously, and act upon any report of bullying.

Staff will immediately pass the concern to a **Senior Tutor, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)**, or the **Head Teacher**.

All incidents will be recorded on **CPOMS** to ensure consistent monitoring, follow-up, and safeguarding oversight.

Parents/guardians will be informed as appropriate, and the student will be supported throughout any investigation.

Retaliation or victimisation against those who report concerns will not be tolerated.

## Our Community

At Earlscliffe, we recognise that creating a culture where bullying is not tolerated requires the commitment of the whole school community, including students, staff, parents/guardians, governors, and boarding staff. Together, we:

- **Monitor and Review:** Regularly review our anti-bullying policy and practice, ensuring alignment with KCSIE 2025, the National Minimum Standards for Boarding, and emerging best practice.
- **Promote Positive Relationships:** Support staff to build strong, respectful relationships that reduce the likelihood of bullying and encourage students to uphold our values.
- **Recognise Vulnerability:** Understand that some members of our community, such as those with SEND, international students, or those with specific personal

circumstances, may be more vulnerable to bullying and its impact. We commit to providing tailored support where needed.

- **Intervene Promptly:** Identify, challenge, and address bullying behaviour consistently, proportionately, and without delay.
- **Create a Safe Environment:** Ensure that all students know that reports of bullying will be taken seriously, managed sensitively, and followed through effectively.
- **Ensure Accountability:** Respond promptly to any concerns or complaints about the handling of bullying in line with the school's Complaints Policy.
- **Learn and Improve:** Actively seek to learn from best practice, including external reviews, sector guidance, and feedback from students through Student Voice structures.
- **Engage External Support:** Where appropriate, work with external agencies such as Kent Police, the KSCMP, or specialist anti-bullying organisations to strengthen our response.
- **Promote Student Voice:** Provide students with multiple ways to raise concerns and contribute ideas to improve our anti-bullying culture.

## Responding to Bullying

Earlscliffe takes all reports of bullying seriously and responds swiftly, fairly, and in line with statutory safeguarding guidance. The following steps may be taken when dealing with incidents of bullying:

- **Immediate Action:** If bullying is suspected or reported, the concern will be addressed immediately by the member of staff who witnessed it or to whom it was reported. The safety of the student being bullied will be prioritised, and they will be involved in decisions about next steps where appropriate.
- **Deputy Head (Pastoral and Boarding) Oversight:** The pastoral team will interview all parties involved, assess risk, and determine whether the case meets the threshold for a safeguarding concern.
- **Safeguarding Considerations:** Where there are safeguarding concerns, the DSL will follow the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and, if necessary, consult with external agencies such as the Local Authority, Social Services, or Kent Police. If a potential criminal offence has been committed (e.g. hate crime, harassment, assault, sharing of indecent images), the Police will be informed.
- **Parental/Guardian Involvement:** Parents/carers of all students directly involved will be kept informed of concerns, investigations, and actions taken, in line with safeguarding and data protection requirements.
- **Staff Communication:** Relevant staff will be informed on a need-to-know basis so they can provide appropriate supervision, support, and follow-up.
- **Sanctions and Support:** Responses may include sanctions (as outlined in the Behaviour Policy) and targeted support for both the victim and the perpetrator, recognising that those who bully may also need help to change their behaviour.
- **Off-Site and Online Bullying:** Bullying that takes place off-site or outside of normal school hours, including online or via social media, will be fully investigated. The school will take appropriate action, including sanctions and support, even where the behaviour occurs beyond the physical school environment.

- **Recording and Monitoring:** All incidents will be recorded on CPOMS in line with school procedures, including details of the concern, actions taken, and outcomes. The DSL and Senior Tutors will monitor cases to ensure patterns are identified and follow-up support is in place.
- **Follow-Up:** The wellbeing of the victim will be checked regularly, and the behaviour of the perpetrator monitored to prevent recurrence. Where necessary, restorative approaches will be used to repair relationships and rebuild trust within the community.

## Outcomes

- **Accountability and Reflection:** Students who engage in bullying behaviour will be asked to take responsibility for their actions. This may include offering a genuine apology and, where appropriate, engaging in restorative conversations or mediation to rebuild relationships.
- **Sanctions:** Consequences will be applied in line with the school's Behaviour Policy and may range from strikes and detentions through to Deputy Head Reflections, suspension, or permanent exclusion in the most serious or persistent cases.
- **Reconciliation and Repair:** Wherever possible and appropriate, students will be supported to reconcile and restore trust within the community. Restorative practices will be encouraged but will never be forced.
- **Safeguarding and Criminal Thresholds:** Where bullying constitutes a safeguarding concern or may involve criminal behaviour (e.g. hate crime, harassment, assault, online exploitation), the DSL will consult with external agencies such as Kent Police or Children's Social Services.
- **Monitoring:** After the incident has been addressed, both the victim and the perpetrator will be monitored to ensure the behaviour does not reoccur and that appropriate support is in place. This monitoring may involve Senior Tutors, House Masters/Mistresses, or boarding staff as part of the wider pastoral team.
- **Support for All Students Involved:** The school recognises that both the victim and the perpetrator may require ongoing support. Interventions may include mentoring, counselling, or referral to external services where appropriate.

## Prevention

At Earlscliffe, we are committed to building a culture where bullying is actively prevented through education, modelling of positive behaviour, and the promotion of our core values: **Aspiration, Community, Curiosity, Personal Development, and Respect.**

We take a proactive approach, ensuring students understand what bullying is, how to challenge it, and how to contribute to a respectful, inclusive community. Prevention strategies include:

- **Student Induction and Guides:** Clear expectations set during induction and through the Student Guide, including the Code of Conduct and behaviour expectations in both academic and boarding contexts.
- **Curriculum Integration:** Anti-bullying themes are explored through PSHE, RSE, assemblies, tutor sessions, and themed days, covering respect, online safety, inclusion, and the impact of harmful behaviours.
- **Student Voice:** Students are empowered to raise concerns and propose improvements via the Student Council, Wellbeing Committee, and Boarding House Meetings, ensuring that student perspectives inform practice.
- **Peer Leadership:** Boarding leaders, Values Champions, and student mentors are there to model positive behaviours and provide peer support.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Termly initiatives such as poster competitions, themed Forum discussions, and engagement with national campaigns (e.g., Anti-Bullying Week) to keep the issue visible and relevant.
- **Skills Development:** Role-play, discussion groups, and case studies (age-appropriate and contextualised) used to help students understand the impact of bullying and practise strategies for safe intervention and support.
- **Positive Culture in Boarding:** House staff actively promote inclusive living, respect for shared spaces, and constructive resolution of conflict within the boarding community.
- **Staff Training:** All staff receive training in recognising, preventing, and responding to bullying, with refresher updates during INSET and safeguarding briefings.

Through this integrated approach, we ensure students not only know that bullying is unacceptable but also understand their role in **preventing it, challenging it, and building a respectful community**.

## Guidance

All staff at Earlscliffe are expected to be proactive in preventing bullying, vigilant in recognising early signs, and confident in responding in line with this policy. To support this, staff can refer to the following statutory and best-practice resources:

### Department for Education (DfE) Guidance

- *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* (DfE).
- *Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff* (DfE).
- *Advice for Parents and Carers on Cyberbullying* (DfE).
- *Keeping Children Safe in Education* (KCSIE, 2025).

### Practical Support and Helplines

- **Childline** – 0800 1111 | [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
  - (24/7 confidential support for children and young people)
- **Kidscape** – Parent Advice Line: 0300 102 4481 | WhatsApp: 07496 682785 | Email: [parentsupport@kidscape.org.uk](mailto:parentsupport@kidscape.org.uk) | [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)

- (Specialist anti-bullying charity offering resources for families and schools)
- **Family Lives** – 0808 800 2222 | WhatsApp: 07441 444125 | [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)
  - (Support for families on bullying, parenting, and relationships)
- **UK Government** – [Preventing and Tackling Bullying guidance](#)

### **Internal Guidance**

- Staff must record all bullying concerns promptly on **CPOMS**.
- All cases must be reported to the **Senior Tutor, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)** or the **Head Teacher**, in line with the school's safeguarding and behaviour policies.
- Staff should remind students and parents that support is available both within school (Senior Tutors, Boarding HMs, Nurse, DSL/Deputy Heads) and via the above organisations.