


Earlscliffe

Senior School | Sixth Form



Anti-Bullying Policy

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1. Statement of Intent

Earlscliffe is committed to fostering a safe, respectful and inclusive community in which every student is able to learn, live and flourish free from intimidation, fear or harm. We recognise that bullying can have a profound and lasting impact on a young person's mental health, emotional wellbeing, sense of identity and academic progress. It can also negatively affect those who engage in such behaviour and those who witness it. Accordingly, bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

As an international boarding school, we place particular emphasis on the quality of relationships within our community. Students live and learn together in close proximity, often far from home, and it is therefore essential that Earlscliffe is a place characterised by kindness, mutual respect, cultural understanding and personal responsibility. We are committed to ensuring that all students feel safe, supported and confident to be themselves.

We recognise that relationships between young people can be complex and that not all conflict constitutes bullying. Where appropriate, we will support students in resolving disagreements through restorative and educational approaches. However, where behaviour meets the definition of bullying, it will be addressed promptly, consistently and effectively.

Bullying may, in some circumstances, constitute a safeguarding concern. In line with statutory guidance, including *Keeping Children Safe in Education*, all staff are expected to remain alert to the possibility that bullying behaviour may form part of child-on-child abuse. Such behaviour must never be dismissed as "banter", "just a joke" or "part of growing up". Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a student is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, the matter will be managed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and may involve external agencies.

Bullying, or cyberbullying, is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, however harassment, malicious communications, stalking, threatening violence, and incitement are all crimes. There are a range of laws that criminalise activity that may be related to cyberbullying, including discrimination, harassment and threats. These laws include: -

Equality Act 2010,
Protection from Harassment Act 1997,
Communications Act 2003,
Computer Misuse Act 1990,
Criminal Justice and Courts Act 2015,
Protection of Children Act 1978 and
Criminal Justice Act 1988.

Where a student has experienced sexual harassment or abuse at school, or an adult needs emotional support or advice, the NSPCC helpline 'Report Abuse in Education' is available: 0800 136 663 (Monday to Friday 8am – 10pm or 9am – 6pm at the weekend) or help@nspcc.org.uk.

If staff feel an offence has been committed, the police or social care services will be informed.

Earlscliffe aims to:

- create an environment in which all students feel safe, valued and able to thrive;
- ensure that incidents of bullying are reported, recorded and addressed swiftly and effectively;
- prevent, de-escalate and stop harmful behaviour;
- support students who experience bullying with care, sensitivity and appropriate intervention;
- ensure that those responsible for bullying understand the impact of their actions and are supported to make better choices;
- promote a culture in which students and staff take responsibility for challenging inappropriate behaviour, including as active bystanders;
- monitor patterns of behaviour and respond strategically to emerging concerns;
- work in partnership with parents, recognising their important role in supporting students and reinforcing expectations.

We are committed to maintaining a culture of openness in which students, staff and parents feel confident to raise concerns, knowing they will be taken seriously, handled sensitively and resolved appropriately.

2. Definition of Bullying

Bullying occurs when an individual or group deliberately seeks to threaten, intimidate, frighten, abuse, humiliate or harm another person, causing them to feel unsafe, unhappy or distressed. This may include taunting, name-calling, damaging a person's property, clothing or schoolwork, as well as ganging up on someone or deliberately isolating them. Bullying:

- is deliberately hurtful behaviour and a misuse of power.
- is often repeated over a period of time, causing ongoing distress and fear of further incidents. However, a single incident may still be considered as bullying and may be treated as such where appropriate.
- is action taken to intentionally hurt another student or group physically and emotionally (which may cause psychological damage) and is often motivated by prejudice or discrimination, for example on the grounds of race, religion, culture, sex, sexual orientation, gender, special educational needs or disability, or because a child is adopted or is a young carer.

- can happen at any time and anywhere, including in person or online, and can involve anyone: students, other young people, staff and parents.
- can leave the person experiencing bullying feeling powerless to resist. A person of any age may be the perpetrator, or the person being bullied.

3. Forms of Bullying

Bullying may take many forms, including: -

- Physical: e.g. hitting, kicking, pushing, intimidating behaviour or interference with personal property (including any threat of or use of violence of any kind).
- Verbal: Name calling, insulting another person's friends or relations, repeated teasing or ridiculing someone else including making racist, religious, cultural, homophobic or transphobic remarks including insulting remarks about someone being or perceived to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender-questioning or remarks about disability.
- Non-verbal: E.g., making negative, hurtful or insulting physical gestures towards a person, invading personal space after being asked to move or step away.
- Sexual: e.g. unwanted/inappropriate physical contact or sexual innuendo (including the sharing of nudes/semi-nudes)
- Exclusion: Deliberately leaving someone else out of a game or conversation, spreading nasty rumours about someone else, ignoring them.
- Cyberbullying: Use of information and communication technologies to deliberately and repeatedly upset someone else; please see the 'Cyberbullying' section below for more details.
- Initiation/hazing type violence and rituals: Activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element.

4. Prejudice-based bullying

Is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups and may involve actions or comments regarding a person's race, religion, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions, or because of a child's familial circumstances, such as they are adopted, in care or that they have caring responsibilities. Examples include:

- Racist Bullying: e.g. physical, verbal, written, online or text abuse or ridicule based on differences of race, skin colour, ethnicity, nationality, culture or language.
- Faith-based bullying: e.g. negative stereotyping, name-calling or ridiculing based on religion.
- Cultural bullying: e.g. mocking of beliefs or ideals.

- Sexist bullying: e.g. use of sexist language or negative stereotyping based on sex.
- Homophobic/transphobic bullying: e.g. name-calling, innuendo, negative stereotyping or excluding from activity based sexual orientation, gender identity or use of homophobic or transphobic language.
- SEN/disability bullying: e.g. name-calling, negative stereotyping or excluding from activity based on disability, learning difficulties or additional needs.
- Able/talented bullying: e.g. name-calling, innuendo, ostracism or negative peer pressure based on high level of ability or effort.

5. Signs of Bullying

- Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a child is being bullied may include: unwillingness to attend/return to school and/or fear of the journey to and from school,
- frequent absence, erratic attendance or late arrival to class,
- frequent visits to the medical room with symptoms that may relate to stress or anxiety such as headaches or stomach aches,
- unexplained cuts, bruises and scratches,
- books, bags, money or other belongings suddenly go “missing”, or are damaged,
- change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary),
- an unusual request for extra pocket money or loss of money,
- choosing the company of adults rather than peers,
- failure to produce work or an unexpected decline in standards of work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with, or spoilt by others,
- difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares,
- obvious distress or decline in cheerfulness but with reluctance to discuss this’
- displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact,
- talking of suicide or running away from home or school.

At school, staff may not notice these manifestations as quickly as parents will. The school therefore asks parents to contact the school immediately with concerns they might have. They are encouraged to:

- advise their child to talk to his/her form teacher or other trusted teachers.
- identify places together where bullying takes place and work out ways to avoid them.
- tell their child to travel to and from school with other students, if at all possible.
- tell their child not to attempt to buy the bullying person off with sweets or other ‘presents’ and to avoid giving the bully money.
- tell them not to fight the bullying person.
- work out a plan of action together. If the bullying is repeated, the plan must be followed and child must tell an adult that the bullying has recurred. In such cases it is advisable to keep a detailed record of any further incidents.

In the case of cyberbullying: It is also essential that parents inform the school if they are aware of any form of cyberbullying taking place between their child and (an)other student(s) of the Earlscliffe community.

6. Bullying and Safeguarding

Bullying is a form of child-on-child abuse and must always be taken seriously.

Staff must recognise that behaviours described as “banter” or “just a joke” may in fact constitute abuse.

A bullying incident will be treated as a safeguarding concern where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or likely to suffer, significant harm.

In such cases:

- concerns must be reported immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL);
- procedures in the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed;
- external agencies may be involved, including social care or the police.

7. Reporting Bullying

The school can deal only with incidents of bullying it knows about. Earlscliffe is a ‘telling’ school - in other words, students are urged to confide their worries and concerns to a friend, an adult, a teacher or a parent so that appropriate measures can be taken to stop bullying. Concerns can be made anonymously and will be reviewed by the deputy head, DSL or DDSL.

Students can also arrange to speak to a member of staff. Staff should, however, be particularly alert to children who may be vulnerable and at risk from bullying and recognise changes in behaviour. Vulnerable students may include students with SEND, gender-questioning students or students with protected characteristics. In certain situations, a student with SEND or a student with protected characteristics could also be a perpetrator. The school also recognises that certain children may face additional barriers to reporting an incident of bullying because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation.

If parents have concerns, they should contact their child’s tutor or boarding staff.

Staff must report any alleged incident of bullying – in the first instance – to a student’s tutor. The nature of the pastoral structure is such that the tutor should be aware of early warning signs of unhappiness amongst their students. It also acts to foster an atmosphere of trust whereby students and parents/carers can approach tutors and heads of year at any time.

Any incident of bullying will be thoroughly investigated and followed up with sensitivity.

8. Guidance for Staff when a student reports a bullying incident

All staff must:

- Acknowledge that they have done the right thing to speak up and reassure them that they are not at fault, will be supported and kept safe.
- Listen carefully to their account of the incident.
- Avoid asking leading or suggestive questions. Take the report seriously and approach it with sensitivity.
- Offer reassurance to the victim, ensuring they do not feel embarrassed or ashamed.
- Avoid promising absolute confidentiality but explain that the information will be shared with those who can help.
- Take accurate notes of the alleged incident(s) and pass these on to the form tutor, head of year and head of section.
- Provide practical help/support/advice and discuss possible courses of action with the victim. Encourage the student to allow you to inform the form tutor or any other trusted adult. Consult with the head of year or head of section as needed.

Immediate action may be necessary, but it is advisable to wait until you have consulted with the form tutor or head of year regarding the appropriate course of action and who should take it.

9. Responding to Bullying

Everyone has a role to play in responding to bullying. The school will take all reported or identified incidents of bullying and cyberbullying seriously and will address them promptly. Where bullying or cyberbullying is linked to discrimination, the school will respond appropriately in line with its legal duties and values. Support will be offered as early as possible.

Each bullying incident is unique, and any action taken will reflect the specific circumstances and individuals involved, informed by the professional judgement of staff responsible for investigating the concern.

The school will:

- ensure immediate safety of the student affected;
- gather information from all parties;
- involve the DSL where appropriate;
- inform parents in a timely and constructive manner;
- record all actions taken.

10. Support

Support will be provided for both parties, which may include:

- pastoral support from tutors and boarding staff
- counselling or wellbeing support
- mentoring or structured guidance.

11. Outcome and Sanctions

Support is provided for both the student who has been bullied and the individual responsible for the bullying. This support is offered by pastoral staff, the school chaplain, the school nurse, school counsellors or, where necessary, external or specialist services.

Where a student with SEND is involved as the initiator, the SENDCo may be involved to support understanding of the impact of their actions and to ensure appropriate provision.

Restorative justice approaches which hold students to account for their behaviour and engage with them to agree actions to be taken to restore relationships and repair the harm caused are often used.

Students who have experienced bullying should feel safe, supported and confident that incidents will not be repeated, and that the school community has learnt from the incident. Where bullying behaviour is identified, appropriate sanctions will be applied in line with the school's Behaviour Policy. These measures are intended to ensure that the student responsible takes responsibility for their actions, understands the impact of their behaviour, and does not repeat it. Disciplinary measures will be applied fairly, consistently and proportionately, taking into account the needs of vulnerable students. In cases of serious or persistent bullying, the school may impose a suspension or permanent exclusion in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy.

When bullying is identified, parents and carers will be informed as early as possible and in a constructive manner, whether their child has experienced bullying or has been responsible for bullying behaviour. Where the matter is serious or bullying persists, parents and carers will be invited to meet with the school to discuss the matter, including appropriate actions and sanctions in line with the Behaviour Policy.

All incidents of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, are recorded centrally. Once a course of action has been agreed, progress is monitored and reviewed to support effective resolution. Records are maintained to evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted and to identify patterns or trends, enabling the school to maintain a clear and comprehensive overview of bullying across the school. These records are reviewed by the safeguarding team, pastoral committee and the safeguarding governor. Consideration of any necessary mitigating factors will be made and recorded in the central registers, alongside details of resolution for either party.

12. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying (see definition in 'Forms of Bullying Behaviour') can affect all members of the school community. Research from Key Attributes and Experiences of Cyberbullying among Children in the UK (National Centre for Social Research) identified motivations for children engaging in cyberbullying as including a desire for power or control, social and peer pressure (including a desire to fit in), and the normalisation of negative behaviours online.

Reasons why children may experience cyberbullying vary and include perceived differences between children (such as physical appearance, character or interests), as well as personal disagreements and relationship breakdowns. The school plays a key role in equipping students with the knowledge, skills and behaviours needed to navigate the online world safely and confidently, regardless of device, platform or app.

At Earlscliffe, clear policies govern the use of the internet in school. All communications via the school network are monitored and internet access is filtered. Students are expected to be familiar with, and adhere to, the rules outlined in the Student Acceptable Use Policy.

13. Forms of Cyberbullying

The school acknowledges that cyberbullying may take many different forms. Childnet's cyberbullying guidance for schools (Cyberbullying: Understand, Prevent and Respond) categorises the forms that cyberbullying can take as follows:

- Threats and Intimidation: Threats can be sent e.g. by mobile phone/email/within online games and may include (sexual) violence, threats to disclose information about someone that may harm them or that they are not ready to share. (e.g. making someone's sexual orientation known when they may not feel ready for this).
- Harassment or Stalking: Examples include repeatedly sending unwanted text or instant messages or making phone calls (including silent calls); using public forums to repeatedly harass, or to post derogatory or defamatory statements; tracking someone's activity and collecting information about them; by pretending to be other people and 'friending' the person.
- Vilification/Defamation: Posting upsetting or defamatory remarks about an individual online, or name-calling, general insults, and prejudice-based bullying, for example sexist or racist messages.
- Ostracising/Peer Rejection/Exclusion: Intentionally leaving someone out of a group such as group messages, online apps, gaming sites and other online engagement.
- Identity Theft/Unauthorised Access and Impersonation: This is when someone will hack into someone's email or social networking account and use the person's online identity to send or post vicious or embarrassing material to/about others.
- Publicly posting, sending or forwarding personal or private information or images (including sharing nudes/semi-nudes) or the creation of AI generated imagery.

Although cyberbullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are criminal laws (e.g. Malicious Communications Act 1988 and Communications Act 2003) that may apply to harassing or threatening communications, as well as the unauthorised publication and distribution of private images, deepfakes, upskirting, nudes/semi-nude images and sexting.

14. Responding to Cyberbullying Incidents/Allegations

The school will act as soon as possible a cyberbullying incident has been reported or identified. This will include providing appropriate support for the person who has been cyberbullied, stopping the incident from spreading and assist in removing material from circulation and working with the person who has carried out the bullying to ensure that this does not happen again. In response to an allegation of cyberbullying, certain authorised staff are permitted to search students and their possessions including electronic devices, such as student's mobile phones, if they have reasonable grounds for suspecting that the student is in possession of a banned/illegal item.

Illegal activity includes indecent images of children, obscene content, hate crimes and incidents (including racist and homophobic material), stalking and harassment, threats of violence. Where the school considers that a reported incident of cyberbullying may amount to a criminal offence, it will inform the Police as soon as reasonably practicable. If an allegation includes the sharing of inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones, the procedure described in the Online Safety Policy will be followed by staff. In the event that a search highlights a safeguarding concern in respect of any student, the school will consider the appropriate safeguarding response, following the procedures set out in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

15. Cyberbullying Advice for Students

The school makes sure that the students understand how to use technologies safely and know about the risks and consequences of misusing them, via their Computing lessons but also talks in PHSEE, school forums, focus groups and presentations by outside speakers.

The school advises students never to reply to unpleasant emails or messages but tells them to keep the cyber bully's messages as evidence.

The school asks students to inform their tutor or another trusted adult about this bullying. With cyberbullying, there is often the added apprehension that a child will no longer be allowed internet access or will have his / her mobile phone taken away if he / she reports the bullying.

The planned programme of PHSEE helps students to adjust their behaviour to reduce risks and build resilience. The risks posed by adults or young people who use the internet and social media to bully, groom, abuse or radicalise other people are discussed. The school will consider what action to take where cases of cyberbullying are brought to its attention.

16. Prevention

Earlscliffe adopts a proactive approach to preventing bullying through:

- a strong pastoral system, including boarding support;
- induction programmes emphasising expectations and reporting;
- PSHE/RSE and tutorial programmes;
- forums addressing respect, diversity and inclusion;
- staff training and safeguarding awareness;
- monitoring of high-risk times and locations, including boarding houses;
- promoting positive relationships and student voice.

We recognise that some students may be more vulnerable and require additional support.

17. Monitoring and Reporting

All incidents are recorded on CPOMS.

The school will:

- monitor patterns and trends;
- review data regularly at senior level;
- use findings to inform preventative strategies.

18. Staff Training

All staff receive regular training to ensure they:

- understand this policy;
- recognise signs of bullying;
- respond appropriately;
- understand safeguarding responsibilities.

19. Complaints

If parents are dissatisfied with the handling of a bullying concern, they should follow the school's Complaints Procedure.

20. Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy• Behaviour Policy• Online Safety Policy• Boarding Policy• Childnet / Cyberbullying Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Complaints Policy• SEND & PHSE Policies• Acceptable Use Policy• Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy• KCSIE 2025
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