MOUNT HOUSE SCHOOL
INSPIRING EVERY INDIVIDUAL

SCHOOL POLICIES

ANTI-BULLYING

Review	Date	By
Current Review	September 2024	
Next Review	September 2025	

Statement of intent
Bullying of any form at Mount House will not be tolerated. It is recognised that bullying has a seriously adverse effect on the social and emotional wellbeing of individuals and on their educational achievements. We therefore do all we can to prevent it, by developing a School ethos in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable. It is our belief that all students should always treat other students with dignity and respect and that, in their behaviour towards others, they should always consider the effect this behaviour is likely to have.

As a School that is serious about child protection and safeguarding children, Mount House is also serious about preventing and tackling bullying of any kind (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying) which, if repeated over time, can threaten both the mental health and educational progress of our students while also posing threat to their emotional wellbeing. We believe that all students are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment. This policy outlines how instances of bullying are dealt with, including the procedures to prevent occurrences of bullying.

These strategies, such as learning about tolerance and difference as part of the School's curriculum, aim to promote an inclusive, tolerant and supportive ethos at the School.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 outlines several legal obligations regarding the School's response to bullying. Under section 89, schools must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst students. These measures are part of the School's Behaviour Policy, which is communicated to all students, School staff and parents.

All staff, parents and students work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at the School. There is a zero-tolerance policy for bullying at the School.

Legal framework
This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:
Education and Inspections Act 2006
Equality Act 2010
The Children Act 1989
The Education (independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
Protection from Harassment Act 1997
Malicious Communications Act 1988
Education Act 2011
Public Order Act 1986

This policy has been written in accordance with guidance, including, but not limited to:
DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying – advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies'
DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in Schools'

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and School staff - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)
Govt guidance 'UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
Independent School Standard Regulations 2018
Keeping Children Safe in Education, DFE, 2024.
Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Code of Practice January 2015

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/or communications may be considered criminal offences:

- Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or in a way which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or contains information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message, or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information through any media, including internet sites.
- Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to the police include: violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment, upskirting, or intimidation and hate crimes.

As is the consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or video images of under 18-year-olds, or the threat to share.

Related School Policies
Behaviour Policy
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Exclusion Policy
ICT, Internet and Social Media Acceptable use of IT Policy
Online Safety Policy
Relationship and Sex Education Policy (RSE Policy)
Safeguarding Policy
SEND Policy
Smoking, Drugs, Alcohol and Other Substances Policy

Definition
The DfE definition of bullying is: "Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally." However not every incident of unkind behaviour between children will be bullying, and the School will take an objective approach in considering the details of each incident to decide whether it is, or is not, bullying.

A further definition, which is provided by the Anti-Bullying Alliance, is: "The intentional hurting of one person by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It is usually repetitive or persistent, although some one-off attacks can have a continuing harmful effect on the victim".

'Victim' refers to the person who has been bullied or retaliated against, and is the terminology used in KCSIE. The School recognises the emotive nature of the term, and that some people who have been targeted may not always come forward as they don't feel like, or want to be, a 'victim'. The School may therefore not use this terminology when actually dealing with instances of alleged bullying 'on the ground'.

Bullying is generally characterised by:
- Repetition: incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over a period of time.
- Intent: the perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental.
- Targeting: bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.
- Power imbalance: whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations.

In the context of this Policy, the following definition will be used:

> *Bullying is a consistent and persistent, inappropriate exercise of power, to the advantage or satisfaction of the bully. It may include violence, name-calling, intimidation, humiliation, extortion and other similar behaviours directed at a vulnerable person or persons by a more powerful individual or group. Bullying may take many forms, and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, some of which may include harassment on grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation (including homophobia), special educational needs, race, religion or belief, gender or culture (including cyber-bullying via social websites, mobiles phones, text messaging, photographs and email). It may be because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences."*

Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose. Bullying is often hidden and subtle, it can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve everyone: students, other young people, staff and parents. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

Types of Bullying
Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying and can be related to almost anything. Teasing another student because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual-orientation, home life, culture, disability, or SEND are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:
- Verbally
- Physically
- Emotionally
- Online (Cyber)

Cyber: unpleasant contact using texting, social networking, email, trolling, encouraging young people to self-harm, setting up hate sites, exclusions from online forums. The consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nudes images and/or video images, or engaging on sexual conversations.

Racist bullying: bullying another person based on their ethnic background, religion, or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.
Homophobic and biphobic bullying: bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Transphobic bullying: bullying based on another person's gender 'variance' or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.

Sexist bullying: bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.

Sexual bullying: bullying behaviour that has a physical, psychological, verbal or non-verbal sexual dimension/dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

Prejudicial bullying: bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics, e.g. SEND or mental health issues.

Relational bullying: bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

Ableist bullying: bullying behaviour that focusses on another person's disability or support needs; this can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability

Socioeconomic bullying: bullying based on prejudices against the perceived social status of the victim, including, but not limited to, their economic status, their parents' occupations, their health or nutrition level, or the perceived "quality" of their clothing or belongings.

Signs of bullying

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a student is a victim of bullying. Here are some examples, but not limited to:

- Being frightened to travel to or from School
- Asking to be driven to School
- Unwillingness to attend School
- Truancy
- Becoming anxious or lacking confidence
- Saying that they feel ill in the morning
- Decreased involvement in School work
- General appearance
- Returning home with torn clothes or damaged possessions
- Missing possessions
- Missing dinner money
- Asking for extra money or stealing
- Cuts or bruises
- Lack of appetite
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices
- Becoming agitated when receiving calls or text messages
- Lack of eye contact
- Mood swings
- Becoming short tempered
- Change in behaviour and attitude at home.

Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating.

Students who display a significant number of these signs are approached by a member of staff, to determine the underlying issues, whether they are due to bullying or other issues.

In addition, staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a person is likely to have bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to the student becoming aggravated
- They have been the victim of domestic abuse
- Their academic performance has started to fall, which has meant they are stressed

If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify the student's tutor, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

Vulnerable Students

Vulnerable students are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves.

Vulnerable students may include, but are not limited to:

- Students with SEND.
- Students who are adopted.
- Students suffering from a physical or mental health problem.
- Students with caring responsibilities.
- Students who identify, or are perceived to identify, as LGBTQ+
- Students who identify, or are perceived to identify, as homosexual or bisexual

Roles and responsibilities

Role of Directors:
- A report is made to the Directors at full Directors' meetings.
- Appointing a safeguarding link governor who will work with the DSL to ensure the policies and practices relating to safeguarding, including the prevention of cyberbullying, are being implemented effectively.

The Senior Leadership Team is responsible for:
- Evaluating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it is not discriminatory.
- The overall implementation of this policy.
- Ensuring that the School adopts a tolerant and open-minded policy towards difference.
- Ensuring the School is inclusive.
- Analysing any bullying data to establish patterns and reviewing this policy in light of these.
- Organise anti-bullying staff training to empower all staff at Mount House to deal with and eradicate bullying.
- Guide colleagues on how to deal with incidents of bullying if and when these arise and monitor these incidents closely.
- Raise awareness of anti-bullying amongst students/students through various activities and Anti-Bullying Week.
- Review the Anti-Bullying Policy, and other policies linked with anti-bullying.
- Incidents of harassment, assault or threatening behaviour whereby criminal laws may apply.
- Discussions at Senior Leadership meetings and any issues, action taken and follow-up is documented.
- Ensuring bullying is investigated and conclusions drawn based on an evidence-based approach.

The Head is responsible for:
- Reviewing and amending this policy, accounting for new legislation and government guidance, and using staff experience of dealing with bullying incidents in previous years to improve procedures.
- Keeping a record of all reported incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for proper analysis of the data collected.
- Analysing the data in the bullying record at regular intervals to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members.

- Ensuring bullying is investigated and conclusions drawn based on an evidence-based approach.

Heads of Year are responsible for:
- Corresponding and meeting with parents where necessary.
- Providing a point of contact for students and parents, when more serious bullying incidents occur.
- Supporting students (all parties including victims, perpetrators, bystanders and witnesses) to recover from any instances of bullying
- Ensuring bullying is investigated and conclusions drawn based on an evidence-based approach.

Teachers are responsible for:
- Being alert to social dynamics in their class.
- Being available for students who wish to report bullying.
- Providing follow-up support after bullying incidents.
- Being alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups, and that they inform the student's Form Tutor and Head of Year of such observations.
- Refraining from gender stereotyping when dealing with bullying.
- Understanding the composition of student individuals / groups and adapting their approach where necessary or seek support from alternative members of staff (i.e. those with SEND or who identify, or are perceived to identify, as LGBTQ+)
- Understanding that the bully may also have been the victim at some point and address all students in a sensitive and supportive manner
- Reporting any instances of bullying once they have been approached by a student for support.
- Ensuring bullying is investigated and conclusions drawn based on an evidence-based approach.

Parents are responsible for:
- Informing their child's Form Tutor and Head of Year if they have any concerns that their child is the victim of bullying or involving in bullying in anyway.
- Being watchful of their child's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff members of any changes.

Students are responsible for:
- Informing (at the earliest opportunity) a member of staff if they witness bullying or are a victim of bullying.
- Not making counter-threats if they are victims of bullying.
- Walking away from dangerous situations and avoiding involving other students in incidents.
- Keeping evidence of cyber-bullying and informing a member of staff should they fall victim to cyber-bullying.
- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.

- Intervene to protect the student who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- Report (at the earliest opportunity) to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.

Anyone who becomes the target/victim of bullies should:
- Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out, to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.

The School's Anti-Bullying principles
- The School will ensure that prevention is a prominent aspect of its anti-bullying vision.
- Staff will treat reports of bullying seriously and they will not ignore signs of suspected bullying.
- Unpleasantness from one student towards another is always challenged and never ignored.
- Staff act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident; this applies to all staff, not solely teaching staff.
- Staff always respect students' privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying are not discussed with others, unless it is in a setting that the victim has given consent to, or there is a safeguarding concern.
- If a member of staff believes a student is in immediate danger (i.e. of being hurt) they will inform the DSL immediately. In exceptional circumstances the School reserves the right to keep a student under their care for their own safety. In such a circumstance, the DSL will liaise with the Head and Safeguarding Director or Chair where possible.
- Follow-up support is given to the victim, the bully, any bystanders or witnesses in the months following any incidents, to ensure all bullying has stopped and students are able to recover from their experiences (for example, if there are allegations of abuse against students with SEND, the SENCO will be informed and help determine what course of action is necessary, with the best interests of the student in mind at all times).

Prevention of Bullying
All students, staff and directors must know and are permanently reminded that Mount House does not tolerate bullying. There are also clear channels to communicate these policies to parents. All members of Mount House, including students, staff, Directors, parents, guardians and visitors, are urged to do everything in their power to establish and foster a social environment in which bullying is institutionally and collectively rejected.

Mount House recognises that bullying can never be permanently and finally eradicated because of the changing nature of its (largely adolescent) population, and that the School must therefore always be on its guard to recognise and respond to any new incidents.

We have the following preventative measures in place in order to ensure that bullying does not become a problem:

- The School clearly communicates its commitment to addressing bullying in the form of a written statement which is regularly promoted across the whole School.
- We have a strong and experienced pastoral team of Form Tutors, class teachers, Heads of Year, Heads of Houses, Pastoral Assistant, Assistant Head (Pastoral) and Deputy Head (Pastoral).
- Our pastoral team gives support and guidance to other staff on handling and reporting incidents, and on the follow-up work with all parties.
- All staff are required to read the School's Anti-Bullying Policy, so it is understood and implemented, their legal responsibilities are known and they are aware of how to access sources of support. Staff are trained to be alert to the needs of and understand how to support students with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, race, disability, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation), or special educational needs and in how to react to allegations of bullying.
- All reported or investigated instances of bullying will be investigated by a member of staff.
- Staff will encourage student cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work, fostering an ethos of mutual respect.
- All types of bullying will be discussed as part of the curriculum, including Anti-Bullying education at induction and as an integral part of the RSE, PSHE and Morning Programme. This includes assemblies and visiting speakers.
- Use of the Student Council and Student Leadership to raise awareness of the School's approach to bullying.
- Student antibullying ambassadors provide peer-lead strategies and interventions and the opportunity for the student voice to guide the SLT in making changes to polices and making them aware of the key areas of concern from their lived experiences.
- Students will be educated about cyber-bullying through School programmes, including Anti-Bullying Week and assemblies linked to the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Centre (CEOP).
- Diversity, difference and respect for others is promoted and celebrated through the curriculum and as part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.
- Seating plans will be organised and altered in a way that prevents instances of bullying.
- Potential victims of bullying are placed in working groups with other students who do not abuse or take advantage of others.
- Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills are provided through participation in special events, for example, drama productions, sporting activities and cultural groups, as well as through the School's Co-Curricular Programme.
- All staff members receive training on identifying and dealing with the different types of bullying.
- Staff are on duty at times when students are not in class, supervising the children and being particularly aware of areas where bullying might occur. They are trained to be alert to and act on inappropriate language or behaviour.

- There will always be a safe teacher to turn to for support for each child; our Pastoral Assistant is readily available throughout the day, but equally students can report to reception, their Form Tutor, their class teacher, their Head of Year or one of the Pastoral Team.
- Students deemed vulnerable (see section on Vulnerable Students), will be monitored closely by their Form Tutor, Head of Year and class teachers.
- Tutors will also offer an 'open door' policy allowing students to discuss any bullying, whether they are victims or have witnessed an incident.
- Before a vulnerable student joins the School, the student's Form Tutor and the DSL will develop a strategy to prevent bullying from happening – this will often include giving the student a buddy to help integrate them into the School.
- The School will be alert to, and address, any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst students, as these can be a cause of bullying behaviour.
- The School will ensure potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional and social development isn't negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g. mental health issues.
- The School recognises that students do not always wish to report bullying, but an open approach is encouraged, and it is hoped that any student who is being bullied will seek help. It may, for instance, be appropriate to seek help from a senior student or 'sixth-form guardian' rather than a member of staff. Whatever the circumstances, bullying is never acceptable, and it is vital that any victim of bullying feels supported and feels able to report the incident to an appropriate person.

The School reserves the right to act in what it considers to be the best interests of the student and/or the School community as a whole, when dealing with incidents of bullying or suspected bullying, even if this conflicts with the wishes of the parent of the alleged victim of the bullying.

Raising Awareness in School
The School raises the awareness of bullying with staff through INSET training, staff briefings, staff communications and emails / bulletins, and by acting to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely to succeed. This is also informed by annual 'hot spotting site surveys' carried out by the students. There are assemblies led by anti-bullying ambassadors where bullying is the focus for students, as and when necessary when there is concern that bullying may be occurring.

Once it has been established that bullying has been or is taking place, then the School will intervene to protect the bullied and to re-educate, and where necessary to discipline, the bully or bullies.

Through the School rules and their implementation, the curriculum (especially the PSHE programme), the rewards system, and the pastoral support provided in various forms to the students and through this specific Anti-Bullying Policy, the School seeks to:
- promote self-discipline and a proper regard for authority among students
- encourage good behaviour and respect for others to ensure as far as is reasonably

practicable the prevention of all forms of bullying among students
- ensure students' standard of behaviour is acceptable
- regulate students' conduct
- ensure staff and older students set helpful examples to younger students
- Students throughout the School serve as Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, promoting a kind and caring culture; supporting students if they experience bullying behaviour; and promoting equality and celebrating diversity.

When a disclosure of alleged bullying is made, it must always be treated seriously. All staff should be able to reassure victim/s that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe. A victim should never be given the impression that they are creating a problem by reporting bullying, abuse, sexual violence or sexual harassment. Nor should a victim ever be made to feel ashamed for making a report.

All staff are aware that students of any age and sex are capable of bullying and/or abusing their peers and will never tolerate abuse as "banter" or "part of growing up". Such behaviour will be challenged. It is bullying, and downplaying such abusive behaviour can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours, an unsafe environment for children, and a culture that might normalise such behaviour leading to it being accepted as normal and left unreported.

While others may not feel that certain actions or words are of a bullying nature, if the recipient feels they are being bullied, that may be sufficient evidence to treat the case as *prima facie* bullying. As *Preventing and Tackling Bullying* (DfE, 2017) indicates, we have to make our own judgement about each specific case.

Child-on-child sexual abuse
The School's Safeguarding Policy outlines our stance on addressing child-on-child sexual abuse [see the section: Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children (Child on Child Sexual Abuse)], and the procedures in place will be adhered to if any instances of sexual harassment or sexual violence be suspected.

The School has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child sexual abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

Confidentiality
The School will only engage with staff and agencies required to support the victim, perpetrator and / or other students involved. If a victim, perpetrator, bystander or witness asks the School not to tell anyone about the disclosure, the School will not make this promise. Even without the victim's consent, the information may still be lawfully shared if it is in the public interest and protects children from harm.

More information regarding the School's stance on confidentiality can be found in our Communication and Confidentiality section of the Safeguarding Policy.

Cyber-bullying

The School has a zero-tolerance approach to cyber bullying. The School views cyberbullying in the same light as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in the sanctions section of this policy if they become aware of any incidents.

The School will support students who have been victims of cyber-bullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the student about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped, in accordance with support section and follow up support section of this policy.

In accordance with the Education Act 2011, the School has the right to examine and delete files from students' personal devices, e.g. mobile phones, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all Schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone.

If an electronic device is seized by a member of staff, and there is reasonable ground to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, the device must be given to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

If a staff member finds material that they suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, the Head will decide whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of the relevant policies.

The ICT, Internet and Social Media Acceptable use of IT Policy contains the following:
- Clearly defined roles and responsibilities for online safety as part of the School's wider safeguarding strategy;
- Guidance on the use of technology in the classroom and beyond for all users, including staff, students and visitors which references permissions/restrictions and agreed sanctions;
- Information on the School's technical provision/infrastructure, online filtering and monitoring, and the safeguards in place to filter and monitor inappropriate content and alert the School to safeguarding issues;
- Information on how the School builds resilience in its students to protect themselves and their peers through education and information;
- Detail on staff safeguarding professional development that includes online safety;
- Reporting mechanisms available for all users to report issues and concerns to the School and how they are managed and/or escalated;
- How the School informs, communicates with and educates parents/carers in online safety;
- The management of personal data in line with statutory requirements.

What is Cyber-bullying?
Cyber-bullying is when one person or a group of people try to threaten or embarrass someone else using a mobile phone or the internet.

The most common ways of cyber-bullying are through:
- chat rooms, blogs and forums – although many of these are moderated, people involved in discussions can be sent abusive responses
- text messaging – abusive and threatening texts can be sent to mobile phones
- abusive or prank phone calls – these can be made to your child's mobile phone
- picture and video clip messaging – offensive images can be sent to mobile phones
- email – new addresses can be set up in minutes and used to send offensive messages and images
- social networking and personal websites (like Instagram) – offensive or humiliating messages and images can be posted on these sites
- identity theft – in many cyber environments, fake profiles can be set up pretending to be someone else with the aim of bullying others
- agreed use of someone else's identity – students sharing their usernames and passwords with other students, giving an opportunity to bully someone else using an alias (in this instance both parties are guilty of cyber-bullying as they have entered willingly into this agreement; students should never share their key information)
- instant message services – quicker than email, these allow users to have 'real time' conversations, and offensive messages or content can be sent in this way
- webcams – usually used to view each other when chatting online, children can also be sent abusive images or encouraged to act in an inappropriate way while being filmed
- video hosting sites (like YouTube) – children may find themselves the subject of films being shown (happy slapping) or be accidentally exposed to pornographic images
- gaming sites, consoles and virtual worlds – chatting is possible within many games, and name calling, abusive remarks and picking on particular players can occur
- Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the phone owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, the perpetrators often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified.
- Bullying via websites includes the use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites. There has also been a significant increase in social networking sites, which can provide new opportunities for cyber-bullying.
- Trolling: posting derogatory messages about sensitive subjects on newsgroups and chat rooms to bait users into responding, often using a pseudonym.

What's different about cyber-bullying?
Bullying is not new, but some features of cyber-bullying are different from other forms of bullying:
- 24/7 and the invasion of home/personal space.
- Cyber-bullying can take place at any time and can intrude into spaces that have previously been regarded as safe or personal.
- The audience can be very large and reached rapidly.

- The difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages means the scale and scope of cyber-bullying can be greater than for other forms of bullying. Electronically forwarded content is hard to control, and the worry of content resurfacing can make it difficult for targets to move on.
- People who cyber-bully may attempt to remain anonymous.
- This can be extremely distressing for those being bullied. The person cyber-bullying may never be in the same physical space as their target.
- The profile of the bully and target.
- Cyber-bullying can take place both between peers and across generations; teachers have also been targets. Age or size are not important. Bystanders can also become accessories to the bullying; for example, by passing on a humiliating image.

Some instances of cyber-bullying are known to be unintentional.
It can be the result of not thinking (something sent as a joke may be deeply upsetting or offensive to the recipient) or a lack of awareness of the consequences – for example saying something negative online about another student or friend that they don't expect to be forwarded or viewed outside their immediate group.

Mount House School ensures that:
- the curriculum teaches students about the risks of new communications technologies, the consequences of their misuse, and how to use them safely including personal rights
- all e-communications used on the School site or as part of School activities off-site are monitored
- clear policies are set about the use of mobile phones at School (see the School Mobile Phone Policy) and at other times when students and staff are under the School's authority
- filtering and monitoring systems are continually updated and harmful sites blocked
- we work with students and parents to make sure new communications technologies are used safely, taking account of local and national guidance and good practice
- security systems are in place to prevent images and information about students and staff being accessed improperly from outside School
- they work with police and other partners on managing cyberbullying

Cyber-bullying and the Law:
Education law: bullying is never acceptable. The School community has a duty to protect all its members and provide a safe, healthy environment. A range of Education Acts and government initiatives highlight these obligations.
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 (EIA 2006) outlines some legal powers which relate more directly to cyber-bullying. Head teachers have the power 'to such an extent as is reasonable' to regulate the conduct of students when they are off site. The EIA also provides a defence for School staff in confiscating items such as mobile phones from students.

- Civil and criminal law: although bullying is not a specific criminal offence in UK law, there are laws that can apply in terms of harassing or threatening behaviour, for example, or indeed menacing and threatening communications. In fact, some cyber-bullying activities could be criminal offences under a range of different laws, including the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, which has both criminal and civil provision, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, section 127 of the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.

Investigating incidents
All bullying incidents should be properly recorded and investigated.

Cyber-bullying can be a very serious matter and can constitute a criminal offence. In UK law, there are criminal laws that can apply in terms of harassment or threatening and menacing communications.
- Advise students and staff to try and keep a record of the bullying as evidence.
- It can be useful to show parents, teachers, pastoral care staff and the police, if necessary, what has happened.
- Take steps to identify the bully, including looking at the School systems, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, and contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary. The police will need to be involved to enable the service provider to look into the data of another user.

Procedures

The School strives to sustain and foster an ethos in which students are confident and willing to approach appropriate adult(s) and anti-bullying ambassadors to express concerns about bullying, either on their own behalf or on behalf of others, at an early stage.

The School has a pastoral system that encourages open, and, if necessary, confidential discussions between students, parents/guardians and other relevant adults, including non-academic personnel such as the Pastoral Assistant, reception, catering staff and anti-bullying ambassadors. Appropriate adults for students to approach with concerns include their Form Tutor, Head of Year, class teacher, the Assistant Head (Pastoral), the Deputy Head (Pastoral), any member of the SLT or any other responsible person.

Any allegation of or expression of concern over bullying is passed on immediately to the relevant Form Tutor, Head of Year and/or pastoral team member who undertake(s) a thorough investigation and reports as quickly as possible to the Deputy Head (Pastoral).

The complaint and subsequent actions are logged on ISAMS via the "bullying" log. This information is monitored by SLT to try to identify and respond to developing patterns.

When investigating a bullying incident, the following procedures are adopted:
- The victim, alleged bully, bystanders and witnesses are all interviewed separately

- Members of staff ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the students being interviewed, including electronic communication (this is sometimes impossible to enforce, but students will be told they cannot communicate or risk jeopardising the investigation)
- If a student is injured, members of staff take the student immediately to the School First Aider for a medical opinion on the extent of their injuries
- A room is used that allows for privacy during interviews
- A witness, where possible, is used for serious incidents
- If appropriate, the alleged bully, the victim and witnesses, are asked to write down details of the incident; this may need prompting with questions from the member of staff to obtain the full picture
- Premature assumptions are not made, as it is important not to be judgemental at any stage
- Members of staff listen carefully to all accounts, being non-confrontational and not attaching blame until the investigation is complete
- All concerned students are informed that they must not discuss the interview with other students (if they do, this may be subject to further investigation and disciplinary action)
- The relevant members of staff will gather evidence of a cyber-bullying incident; this may involve text messages, emails, photos, etc. provided by the victim.

Due to the potential for sexist, transphobic, sexual, etc bullying to be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviour, staff members involved in dealing with the incident are required to consider whether there is a need for safeguarding processes to be implemented.

Sanctions

The Form Tutor, Head of Year, Assistant Head (Pastoral), Deputy Head (Pastoral), member of SLT or Head has a variety of responses available to them; these may include:
- Implementing sanctions
- Mediation between relevant parties
- Obtaining an apology
- Providing appropriate training
- Providing mentor support for both various / all parties.

If the member of staff in charge of the investigation is satisfied that bullying did take place, the student will be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and warned that there must be no further incidents. This will typically involve a meeting with parents, especially if the perpetrator has served an exclusion. The perpetrator is made to realise the distress they are causing, and that they should change their behaviour.

The relevant member of staff informs the student of the type of sanction to be used in this instance (detentions, service-based activities, exclusions etc.) and future sanctions if the bullying continues.

If possible, the staff member(s) will attempt reconciliation and will obtain a genuine apology from the bully. This will either be in writing to the victim (and/or witnesses if appropriate), or face-to-face, but only with the victim's full consent. Discretion is used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the bully.

A bullying incident should be addressed as a Child Protection concern and the DSL informed when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or is likely to suffer significant harm'. If School staff feel that a 'criminal' offence may have been committed they should seek assistance from the police.

The Form Tutor and Head of Year informally monitors and actively supports the students involved in the months following the incident.

Support

Once a case of bullying has been dealt with, both bullies and victims are monitored by the appropriate pastoral team members. The support may include, but is not limited to:

- The Form Tutor and / or Head of Year ensures that a formal meeting is held on a regular basis, to check whether the bullying has stopped and work with the student on overcoming their experiences – these formal meetings will continue to take place until the Form Tutor and / or Head of Year is confident the bullying has stopped.
- If necessary, group dynamics are broken up by members of staff by assigning places in classes.
- The victim is encouraged to tell a trusted adult or Anti-Bullying ambassadors in School if bullying is repeated.
- The victim is encouraged to broaden their friendship groups by joining lunchtime or after-school clubs or activities.
- The School particularly will work with the victim to build resilience and support recovery.
- The School realises that bullying may be an indication of underlying mental health issues.
- The School will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlaying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.
- The School will keep staff abreast of any incidents, to closely monitor patterns of behaviour.
- The School will work with families / external agencies to support students (where necessary).

Students who have been bullied are supported in the following ways:

- Being listened to
- Having the opportunity to meet with their Form Tutor / Head of Year or a member of staff of their choice in a timely fashion.
- Being reassured
- Being offered continued support
- Being offered counselling, where appropriate

- Keeping parents informed, to work on building self-esteem and confidence following an incident.

Students who have bullied (perpetrators) others are supported in the following ways:
- Receiving a consequence for their actions
- Being able to discuss what happened
- Being helped to reflect on why they became involved
- Being helped to understand what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour
- Appropriate assistance from parents
- The School will remain cognisant of the fact that continued access to School can be important for rehabilitation of harmful behaviour, and will not exclude students unless as a last resort – where there have been serious or consistent incidents of bullying, the School will act in line with the Exclusion Policy.

Students who have been bullied will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the DSL will, if necessary, refer the victim of bullying to CAMHS or refer to our School Pastoral Assistant.

All staff involved in managing instances of bullying will be aware that taking disciplinary action and providing support are not mutually exclusive actions, and should be conducted simultaneously to encourage more positive behaviour in future.

Bullying outside of School
The Head has a specific statutory power to discipline students for poor behaviour outside of the School premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives the Head the power to regulate students' conduct when they are not on School premises, and therefore not under the lawful charge of a School staff member.

Teachers have the power to discipline students for misbehaving outside of the School premises. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the School premises, such as on School or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

Where bullying outside School is reported to School staff, it is investigated and acted on.

In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying, members of staff can only discipline the student on School premises, or elsewhere when the student is under the lawful control of the member of staff (e.g. on a school trip).

The Head is responsible for determining whether it is appropriate to notify the police, or the anti-social behaviour coordinator, of the action taken against a student.

If the misbehaviour could be of a criminal nature or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police are always informed.

Bystanders

In cases of cyber-bullying bystanders, or 'accessories' to the bullying, often have a more active role, e.g. forwarding messages or contributing to chat room discussions. Therefore, they may not have started the bullying they are active participants and often make the matter worse.

The School makes it clear to all students that bystanders have a key responsibility to the School community and to anyone they see being bullied or victimised. They are encouraged not to tolerate such behaviour and to stand up for what they know to be right (i.e. by telling a member of staff what they have seen or heard).

Record keeping

The DSL will ensure that robust records are kept with regard to all reported or otherwise uncovered incidents of bullying – this includes recording where decisions have been made (such as sanctions, support, escalation of a situation and resolutions).

The Headteacher and DSL will ensure that all decisions and actions recorded are reviewed on a regular basis for the purposes of:

- Identifying patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour on the part of certain students that may need to be handled (i.e. with pastoral support).
- Reflecting on whether cases could have been handled better and using these reflections to inform future practice.
- Considering whether there are wider cultural issues at play within the School (i.e. whether School culture facilitates discriminatory bullying by not adequately addressing instances, and planning to mitigate this).
- Considering whether prevention strategies could be strengthened based on any patterns in the cases that arise

Complaints Procedure

Parents and students are encouraged to use our Complaints Procedure (which is published on our website) if they feel that any concerns about bullying (or anything else) are not being addressed properly.

Appendix A - Important Contacts, Useful Websites and Advice

- Gerrard Crosby (Deputy Head - Pastoral), our Designated Safeguarding Lead may be contacted on: crosbyg@mounthouse.org.uk
- Childline: **0800 1111**
- The Anti-bullying Alliance:
- http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/advice/support-from-the-sector/.
- Kidscape: **www.kidscape.org.uk**
- Police: In the event of immediate danger call **999**, or, in an event which does not require immediate intervention call **101**
- Barnet Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH): **020 8359 4066,** or out of hours Emergency Duty team: **020 8359 2000**

Useful websites

- Department for Education Anti-Bullying information
- www.kidscape.org.uk
- www.bullying.org
- www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
- www.bullyfreezone.co.uk
- www.bullying.co.uk
- www.beatbullying.org
- Childnet International
- www.restorativejustice.org.uk
- EACH Educational Action Challenging Homophobia

Cyberbullying: Advice to students

If you're being bullied by phone or the internet……

Remember, bullying is never your fault. It can be stopped, and it can usually be traced.

- Don't ignore the bullying. Tell someone you trust, such as a teacher or parent, or call an advice line.
- Try to keep calm. If you are frightened, try to show it as little as possible. Don't get angry, it will only make the person bullying you more likely to continue.

There's plenty of online advice on how to react to cyber-bullying. For example, www.kidscape.org and www.wiredsafety.org have some useful tips.

Text/video messaging

- You can easily stop receiving text messages for a while by turning off incoming messages for a couple of days. This might stop the person texting you by making them believe you've changed your phone number. To find out how to do this, visit www.wiredsafety.org.
- If the bullying persists, you can change your phone number. Ask your mobile service provider (such as EE, O2, or Vodafone).
- Don't reply to abusive or worrying text or video messages. Your mobile service provider will have a number for you to ring or text to report phone bullying. Visit

their website for details.

- Don't delete messages from cyber-bullies. You don't have to read them, but you should keep them as evidence.
- Text harassment is a crime. If the calls are simply annoying, tell a teacher, parent or guardian. If they are threatening or malicious and they persist, report them to the police, taking with you all the messages you've received.

Phone calls

- If you get an abusive or silent phone call, don't hang up immediately. Instead, put the phone down and walk away for a few minutes. Then hang up or turn your phone off. Once they realise they can't get you rattled, callers usually get bored and stop bothering you.
- Always tell someone else: a teacher, parent or guardian. Get them to support you and monitor what's going on.
- Don't give out personal details such as your phone number to just anyone. And never leave your phone lying around. When you answer your phone, just say 'hello', not your name. If they ask you to confirm your phone number, ask what number they want and then tell them if they've got the right number or not.
- You can use your voicemail to vet your calls. A lot of mobiles display the caller's number. See if you recognise it. If you don't, let it divert to voicemail instead of answering it. And don't leave your name on your voicemail greeting. You could get an adult to record your greeting. His/her voice might stop the caller ringing again.
- Almost all calls nowadays can be traced.
- If the problem continues, think about changing your phone number.
- If you receive calls that scare or trouble you, make a note of the times and dates and report them to your Tutor. If your mobile can record calls, take the recording too.

Emails

- Never reply to unpleasant or unwanted emails — the sender wants a response, so don't give them that satisfaction.
- Keep the emails as evidence. And tell an adult about them.
- Ask an adult to contact the sender's Internet Service Provider (ISP) by writing abuse@ and then the host, e.g. abuse@hotmail.com
- Never reply to someone you don't know, even if there's an option to 'unsubscribe'. Replying simply confirms your email address as a real one.

Web bullying
If the bullying is on a School website, tell a teacher or parent, just as you would if the bullying were face-to-face.

Chat rooms and instant messaging

- Never give out your name, address, phone number, school name or password online. It's a good idea to use a nickname. And don't give out photos of yourself.
- Don't accept emails or open files from people you don't know.

- Remember it might not just be people your own age in a chat room.
- Stick to public areas in chat rooms and get out if you feel uncomfortable.
- Tell your parents or carers if you feel uncomfortable or worried about anything that happens in a chat room.
- Think carefully about what you write; don't leave yourself open to bullying.

Three steps to stay out of harm's way

1. Respect other people - online and off. Don't spread rumours about people or share their secrets, including their phone numbers and passwords.
2. If someone insults you online or by phone, stay calm – and ignore them.
3. 'Do as you would be done by.' Think how you would feel if you were bullied. You're responsible for your own behaviour – make sure you don't distress other people or cause them to be bullied by someone else.