Cobham Montessori School

Education for life

Anti-Bullying Policy

(including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)

Contents

Key References: In addition to this policy Cobham Montessori School takes due regard for, and refers to, any additional details found in the following publications: 1

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Key References: In addition to this policy Cobham Montessori School takes due regard for, and refers to, any additional details found in the following publications:
KCSIE 2025 Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE, 2026)
The Equality Act, 2010
SEND Code of Practice, January 2015 (DFE-00205-2013)
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65ce3721e1bdec001a3221fe/Behaviour_in_schools_-_advice_for_headteachers_and_school_staff_Feb_2024.pdf
Preventing and Tackling Bullying, July 2017 (DFE-00160-2017)

Links are current as of 27th August 2026

For further information please refer to our full policy list for related policies.

1.0 Aims and Principles

We believe that it is a basic entitlement of all pupils and staff to be allowed to receive and deliver education free from humiliation, abuse and oppression. We take a positive anti-bullying stance, which makes it clear that any form of bullying will not be tolerated, and that unacceptable behaviour will be dealt with swiftly and firmly. All forms of bullying must be taken seriously, both physical and emotional (which may cause psychological damage). We aim, as a school, to produce a safe and secure environment where all can learn without anxiety.

2.0 What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for

instance, cyberbullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video). It may be of a physical, verbal or social nature and may be intimidating, coercive, threatening or violent. It may also be a combination of these.

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Bullying can be perpetrated by any child who has reached a stage of cognitive development where he or she is able to plan to carry out a premeditated intent to cause distress to another. It is recognised that many children will, in the process of developing relationships with other children, experiment with socially unacceptable behaviour. This does not make a child 'a bully' but does require an immediate and clear response from the school. It is also recognised that there are playground games such as mock fighting that some children find intimidating. Name-calling is always intimidating.

Many distressing behaviours are not examples of bullying, even though they are unpleasant and may often require intervention and management. There are three socially unpleasant situations that are often confused with bullying.

- Mutual conflict situations – In mutual conflict situations there is an area of disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation with one person becoming targeted repeatedly for retaliation in a one-sided way.
- Social rejection or dislike – unless the social rejection is directed to towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or create dislike by others, it is not bullying.
- Single episode acts - single episodes of nastiness or physical aggression, are not the same as bullying. If a student is verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. Nastiness or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

Whilst these situations are not classified as bullying, it would be expected that students can report these incidences to a member of staff, who in turn will deal with them appropriately.

2.1 The effects of bullying

All forms of bullying are hurtful and may have a devastating effect on those who are bullied. Whilst some children may recover from bullying, there are others who suffer lasting consequences. Children who are bullied may see themselves as inadequate and friendless and suffer from loss of confidence and low self-esteem.

Bullies may also suffer from long lasting consequences and if offered no support, may continue with bullying behaviour into their adult lives. For this reason, it is important that they receive support to enable them to change their behaviour.

2.2 Child on Child Abuse

We recognise that children are capable of abusing other children and their peers and this will be dealt with under our child protection policy and in line with KCSiE (2025). Child on child abuse can take the form of verbal, cyber or physical behaviour and may incorporate one or more of the following:

- bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying) abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (sometimes known as 'teenage relationship abuse')

- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages physical abuse)

- sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault; (this may include an online element which facilitates, threatens and/or encourages sexual violence)

- sexual harassment, such as sexual comments, remarks, jokes and online sexual harassment, which may be standalone or part of a broader pattern of abuse

- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party

- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos (also known as sexting or youth produced sexual imagery) UKCIS guidance: Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice for education settings

- upskirting, which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm, and

- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals (this could include activities involving harassment, abuse or humiliation used as a way of initiating a person into a group and may also include an online element).

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We are clear that sexual violence and sexual harassment are not acceptable.

We will minimise the risk of child-on-child abuse by:

- making clear that there is a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment, that it is never acceptable, and it will not be tolerated. It will never be passed off as "banter", "just having a laugh", "a part of growing up" or "boys being boys". We believe that failure to do so can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviour, an unsafe environment and in worst case scenarios a culture that normalises abuse, leading to children accepting it as normal and not coming forward to report it.

- recognising, acknowledging, and understanding the scale of harassment and abuse and that even if there are no reports it does not mean it is not happening, it may be the case that it is just not being reported.

- challenging physical behaviour (potentially criminal in nature) such as grabbing bottoms, breasts and genitalia, pulling down trousers, flicking bras and lifting up skirts. As we believe that dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Prevention

- Taking a whole setting approach to safeguarding and child protection
- Providing training to staff

- Providing a clear set of values and standards, underpinned by the setting's behaviour policy and pastoral support; and by a planned programme of content delivered through the curriculum.
- Engaging with specialist support and interventions.

Responding robustly to reports of sexual violence and sexual harassment

Children making any report of sexual violence or sexual harassment including "upskirting" (The Voyeurism Offences Act 2019) will be taken seriously, kept safe and be well supported.
If the report includes an online element staff will be mindful of the guidance.
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1091132/Searching__Screening_and_Confiscation_guidance_July_2022.pdf
The key consideration is for staff not to view or forward illegal images of a child. The guidance provides more details on what to do when viewing an image is unavoidable. In some cases, it may be more appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve any evidence and hand them to the police for inspection

3.0 Prevention

The prevention of bullying is our starting point. Children are reminded of the way in which members of the school community are expected to behave towards each other. We use a variety of methods to contribute proactively (rather than just reactively) towards the prevention of bullying, including through our own positive behaviour, promotion of good relationships and vigilance both in group discussions and within the curriculum. The purpose of this is to prevent bullying, rather than focus on past problems and incidents, but it can also serve to prompt children with problems to talk about them. Continued failure to follow the school's Behaviour Policy will result in the Exclusions Policy being implemented.

The school behaviour policy makes expectations clear to children in each community about their behaviour with others and promoting positive behaviours.

Staff pay careful attention to the design of the physical environment (such as the garden space) and the activities available to the children each day, to maximise opportunities for pro-social development.

Risk Assessments of the school premises are undertaken and reviewed regularly to highlight any areas which may harbour bullying behaviour and to identify mitigation measures to reduce the risk if bullying occurring.

At Staff Meetings and Inset Training Days, staff are regularly made aware of the following:

- The principles of the school policy
- Legal responsibilities
- Action identified to resolve and prevent problems.
- The sources of support that are available
- Educational elements for group lessons to discuss differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice.
- School disciplinary sanctions, which reflect the seriousness of the incident and convey a deterrent effect.
- The risks of cyber-bullying and the manner in which this can manifest itself – through mobile phones and social media.

Safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via peer on peer (child to child) abuse. This is most likely to include, but not limited to: bullying (including cyber bullying), gender-based violence/sexual assaults or harassment, sexting and up-skirting.

All staff who deal with children should ensure that this policy is implemented by taking the following actions:

- Watch for signs of distress in children; they might range from unwillingness to attend school, complaints of headaches or stomach aches, to damaged clothing or bruising.
- Follow up any concerns raised by parents immediately.
- discuss friendships and how playtime is spent with the pupils.
- Age-appropriately, ensure that pupils are aware of the dangers and effects of cyber-bullying and the zero tolerance response taken by the school to this type of bullying.
- Ensure that children are aware of the need to report all incidents to staff, and in the knowledge that information will be treated with sensitivity and discretion.
- Record and report all incidents of bullying, including cyber-bulling, to the Behaviour lead / Head of School who can evaluate the effectiveness of the approach adopted and enable patterns to be identified.
- All children should regularly be made aware that we are a telling and listening school and that they can tell someone if they are being made unhappy, including through bullying. We hope that they feel that they can go to their teachers, but they should feel equally able to go to another member of staff. The school also encourages bystanders to report any incidents of bullying to a member of staff.

4.0 Procedures and Reporting

Much of the behaviour which leads to both bullying and intimidation may be difficult to observe or can be seen as innocent when it is not. It is therefore essential that staff listen carefully to what children say and watch for any signs that a child may be being intimidated. All members of staff must always pass on a concern to the members of staff working with the child and report concerns to the Behaviour Lead/Head of School.

Isolated incidents of unkind behaviour are noted on the Daily Observation records for each Community. Where an incident involves children from more than one community a note will be made on all relevant Daily Observation records. More significant incidents are recorded on the in Transparent Classroom (if parental awareness is not yet deemed necessary) or on Accident and Incident Forms which are communicated to parents of each affected child on the day.

These may be low level incidences of unkindness towards a child. Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on a pupil's wellbeing. If left unchallenged or dismissed as 'banter' or 'horseplay' it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Responses to low level isolated incidents should be undertaken in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

Staff must be alert to any accumulation of low-level incidents involving specific children. The lead Guide shall review Daily Observation records over extended periods to identify any repeating behaviour indicative of bullying. If there is any suspicion that unkind behaviour is becoming bullying in its nature any notes or observations concerning the behaviour will be recorded in the child's Chronology Report on Transparent Classroom. The Head of School is informed of the concerns immediately. The Chronology Reports are reviewed by the Behaviour Lead, termly so that any patterns in behaviour can be seen easily. Repetitive low-level incidences that fall within the definition of bullying, will be treated as such.

The Behaviour Lead/Head of School will decide how best to proceed, with due regard to the School's Behaviour policy and Exclusion policy and may include exclusion for severe and persistent bullying. When there is reasonable cause to believe that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm, such a bullying incident would be considered a child protection concern, and dealt with according to our Safeguarding policy and procedures, and with the advice and guidance of the DSL/DDSL.

4.1 Anti-bullying procedure

The Alleged Bullying Report Form will be used to record incidents where bullying is suspected. The child who has experienced the bullying will be interviewed by their teacher, who may ask them

to write an immediate account of events or may write the account on their behalf. Alternatively, the report may come from a parent. The teacher may also invite the child to discuss their own reaction and behaviour towards the child who bullied them. The process for dealing with the incident will be clearly explained to them. The teacher may give them further support and advice, if deemed appropriate.

Once the teacher is clear that a bullying incident has occurred, the child who was responsible for the bullying will be interviewed, as will any others related to the incident. Each will be asked to give an immediate account of events. The process for dealing with the incident will be clearly explained to them.

Parents of both the bully and the victim will be contacted as soon as the situation is established and both sets of parents will be reminded of the school's Behaviour, and Exclusion Policy. Both sets of parents will be supported and helped to deal with the situation. The School aims to embed a caring and friendly environment which enables pupils to make informed decisions and choices with friendship and with the hope of treating each other with respect.

Details of the incident will be recorded in all the pupils' files. The Behaviour Lead is copied in and will record the incident as a bullying incident. The teacher will discuss with the Behaviour Lead what the appropriate and most helpful course of action is. This may include:

- A formal bullying warning where it is made clear what the bullying incident was, and what would constitute a continuation of the bullying including discussion of the incident or process in a hurtful way.
- Clear strategies on what work would help both children (or groups of children) to be kind and loving with each other.

If the Behaviour Lead decides it is appropriate, or if it is a pupil's second offence, the parents of the child who was bullying will be informed by email or telephone. The following sanctions may be applied in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and Exclusion Policy:

1. Formal school warning.
2. Suspension
3. Exclusion

In very serious cases it may be necessary to make a report to the Police or Social Services. However, it is the policy of the School to attempt to resolve such issues internally using our own disciplinary sanctions, unless the matter is of such gravity that a criminal prosecution is likely.

The staff will discuss this policy and its implications on their practice at least once every year. Where possible, parents will be invited to contribute to the School's policy and procedures to prevent bullying. The records of bullying offences will be reviewed by the Head of School once every term.

5.0 Bullying involving Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) covers a wide mix of children with a range of physical, learning, behavioural and sensory needs. Research indicates that children with SEN and disabilities are adversely affected by negative attitudes and perceptions of difference including forms of discrimination which often involves bullying. While children with SEND have many skills and talents, they also have a wide range of very different needs. Due to the complexity of these needs, it is harder for them to learn or access education or build the same friendships and relationships than most children of the same age, leaving them vulnerable to isolation and social exclusion.

Some children with SEND may not recognise bullying behaviour. In particular they may not realise that they are being bullied, that their own behaviour may be seen by someone else as bullying, or that they are being provocative and therefore inflaming bullying situations.

Some SEND children may have difficulty remembering things so it may be necessary for staff who either witness or are told about an act of bullying to act very quickly, while the child concerned can still remember what bullying took place.

It may be harder for SEND pupils to resist bullies as they may already be more isolated, not have many friends and not understand that what is happening is bullying

SEND pupils may have specific difficulties telling people about bullying or reporting it. Staff should ensure that they take care check the child's actual understanding. Many children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders for example are assumed to understand much more than they do in social situations.

It is also important to recognise that all children are potentially vulnerable to bullying and that children with SEN and disabilities may be bullied for a range of other reasons. We recognise that responsive work needs sensitivity and awareness of the strengths of the individual or individuals involved. Knowledge of the child's particular SEND and the impact on their social development is essential. Although no child has the right to disrupt the intellectual, emotional or social development of others, some allowance may be made where a child demonstrates anti-social behaviour but did not intend to bully. Communication across the staff team is essential. Staff are made aware of individuals' needs and the extent to which a child's SEND may lead them to bully others or display disruptive behaviour. Regular staff briefings and communications ensure that all staff are fully informed. In turn it is the responsibility of all staff to be alert to changes in children's behaviour and to make sure that they understand the cause, including if it is due to factors not related to the child's SEN or disability. The SENCO plays a particular role in ensuring the well-being of pupils with SEN and disabilities.

As well as being champions of inclusion, SENCO will work with other staff members to:

- ensure that learners with SEN and disabilities who are bullied receive support and help in preventing and dealing with it.
- monitor the impact of anti-bullying interventions on individual children with SEN and disabilities.
- ensure that children with social and behavioural needs receive appropriate support to prevent bullying behaviour where needed.

Further useful information and support may be found on the Anti-Bullying Alliance website – www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

6.0 Bullying outside of school premises

When bullying takes place outside of school, it may be by pupils at the school, pupils at other schools, or people not at school at all.

Where the bullying is by pupils at the school it should be brought to the attention of a teacher (by a pupil or parent), who will investigate the issue in accordance with this policy, and take action if appropriate (though only on school premises and at times when the pupil is under the lawful control of the school).

In these and other cases, we will advise parents of further steps they can take:

- Talk to the local police about problems on local streets
- Talk to the transport company about bullying on buses and trains
- Talk to the head of another school whose pupils are bullying off the premises
- Map safe routes to school, and tell pupils about them

Talk to pupils about how to handle bullying outside the school premises

7.0 Generative Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, pupils and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard. Cobham Montessori Scholl recognises that AI has many positive applications, but may also have the potential to be used to bully others. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

Conham Montessori School will treat any use of AI to bully pupils in line with this policy.