



Stowe School does not tolerate bullying, and this policy is a central part of the School's pastoral provision. All members of the School community are expected to base their behaviour on respect for others, regardless of differences of age, status, physical ability, belief, race, gender or sexual orientation. Bullying is always an abuse of power and cannot be allowed to continue. In extreme cases, it may be punished by suspension, or ultimately, expulsion.

### **AIMS**

1. To prevent bullying at Stowe.
2. To raise awareness of bullying and of what can be done about it, amongst pupils, parents, and staff.
3. To ensure that all pupils have knowledge of and access to a support structure within the School.
4. To provide guidelines for dealing with instances of bullying.
5. To ensure that the School's approach to bullying is a consistent one.

### **WHAT IS BULLYING?**

- it is an abuse of power
- it is hurtful behaviour
- it can be a single incident or may be repeated over a period of time
- it can be physical, verbal or indirect

### **CYBERBULLYING**

Bullying includes the use of ICT, particularly using mobile phones for 'sexting', where sexually inappropriate mobile phone images of one person are used by another person to upset, demean, harass or isolate the person in the image. Cyberbullying also includes posting abusive or demeaning comments on social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Craiglist and Little Gossip (this list is not exhaustive) to cause offence or to isolate or exclude someone. If there is evidence that any Stoic is not following the strict rules on ICT use, as expressed in the school's 'Acceptable Use Policy', the pupil will be liable to expulsion and any mobile phones or other hardware may be confiscated and examined. Pupils should be aware that for their protection and that of others, their use of email and of the internet will be monitored by the School. The punishments for anyone involved in cyber-bullying are the same as for any other serious offence, namely sanctions, suspension, or ultimately expulsion, as determined by the Headmaster.

### **RACIST & RELIGIOUS BULLYING**

Racist and Religious bullying includes making any demeaning or insulting reference to a person's race, religion, nationality or ethnicity. Any reference designed to highlight the difference between one person's set of beliefs and cultural practices and those of a larger group could be interpreted as racist bullying.

### **HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING**

Homophobic bullying includes making any insulting or demeaning reference or innuendo to a person's sexuality which is designed to isolate, harass or exclude that person.

### **SEXUAL & SEXIST BULLYING**

Sexual bullying includes using offensive, hurtful or derogatory terms to describe another person, with reference to a judgement that someone has made about their sexuality or sexual activity. All offensive terms when aimed at another person constitute sexual bullying. Displaying sexual or pornographic images, on mobile phones, computers or any other electronic device, with intent to insult, demean or harass someone else, would constitute sexual bullying. Sexual bullying also includes any unwanted physical contact, or any coercion in a sexual act.



## DISABILITY BULLYING

Disability bullying includes any offensive comments, or physical interference, aimed at another person who has a physical or mental disability, or who has a learning difficulty that is seized upon and exploited by others and used as a means to demean or humiliate that person.

### WHO CAN YOU TURN TO?

**Bullying behaviour can only be stopped if information is shared.**

A pupil who is being bullied or who sees another pupil being bullied is urged to approach any member of staff or other responsible person. Those who can help might include:

- a friend
- a responsible older boy or girl (school prefects or house prefects)
- a member of the Peer Support Group
- parents
- Housemaster or Housemistress, Matron or other member of the House staff
- Tutor
- any member of staff or trusted adult
- the Chaplain
- the School Counsellor
- the School Doctor or Medical Centre staff
- Childline

If a pupil wishes to give information anonymously, a note can be sent to the School Counsellor. They will not know who has written it, and will not try to find out. They will pass the information on to someone who will be able to help.

Parents of children who may be being bullied should contact the Housemaster, Housemistress or Tutor as soon as they feel they need to.

**In all cases pupils, parents and staff can expect that they will be taken seriously and that the information they give will be dealt with as confidentially as possible. Punishment will depend upon the severity of the incident. Very severe or persistent cases of bullying may be punished by Headmaster's Sanctions, suspension, or ultimately expulsion, as determined by the Headmaster.**

## HOW TO TACKLE BULLYING

### 1. Prevention

- through the promulgation of this policy
- through the PSHE programme and through chapel services, assemblies, tutor group discussions and by engaging with outside agencies and groups (e.g. *Kidscape*) aimed at raising awareness of bullying at schools
- through the promotion of the Peer Support Group
- by ensuring that all new staff are made aware of the School's anti-bullying policy through the new staff induction programme
- by raising awareness amongst staff through frequent training opportunities and ensuring they are active in supervising situations/areas in which bullying can take place
- by raising awareness amongst pupils, encouraging solidarity amongst them and making them realise that adults do have the ability to stop bullying



## **2. Action to stop bullying which is happening**

### **(a) The immediate aims of this action must be:**

- to prevent further bullying
- to encourage the victim to take control over what happens next

### **(b) The eventual aims of this action must be:**

- to increase the victim's self-esteem and assertiveness
- to make the bully acknowledge and accept responsibility for his/her actions

Therefore:

- a bullying incident must be communicated to those who can deal with it effectively
- the Housemaster or Housemistress must be informed, and he/she has the responsibility for ensuring that an investigation takes place, or in very serious cases, for passing on that responsibility to the Headmaster, the Deputy Head or the Assistant Head – Senior Housemaster. The Housemaster or Housemistress should also consider at what stage to consult with parents
- the Housemaster or Housemistress must ensure that information about the incident is passed on to other Housemasters at the next Housemasters' meeting, or at the next regular staff meeting (Monday, Wednesday, Friday)
- the member of staff investigating the incident must work with the victim and if possible obtain his/her consent for any further action; a written record of the details of the incident(s) must be kept

### **(c) Possible courses of action**

Every incident of bullying is different and will need sensitive handling by the member of staff dealing with it. An investigation must take account of the fact that the victim's point of view is inevitably subjective. In all cases, the victim can feel immediately supported by any or all of the following:

- encouraging the victim to talk about the incident and, in particular, their feelings and taking them seriously
- asking the victim to think of other pupils who may be being bullied in the same way
- suggesting that a friend or group of friends is brought in to talk about the incident
- identifying the times/places/situations where the bullying happens and thinking of ways of avoiding these
- suggesting ways in which the bully can be confronted/dealt with:
  - friends standing by the victim in the face of the bully
  - 'discovery' of the bullying in progress by a member of staff
  - staff-led group discussion in which the bully is involved but not identified
  - the official reporting of the bully to staff by a larger group of pupils which includes the victim
  - staff confronting the bully
- using the services of the School Counsellor to help the victim to be more assertive or socially skilled.
- using the services of the School Counsellor to help bullies to control their aggression and to be more empathetic.

## **3. Punishment**

Very severe cases of bullying may be punished by Headmaster's Sanctions, suspension, or ultimately expulsion, as determined by the Headmaster. In other cases, it is important that a bully is punished, but the type of punishment will depend upon the severity of the incident. It is advisable, however, if the cycle of bullying is to be broken, that the punishment is discussed with the bully so that he or she can understand why it is just.



### **BULLYING AT SCHOOL: THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT**

There are short and long-term consequences for both bullies and victims of bullying. Adults who were chronically victimised in their youth are at an increased risk of clinical depression, low self-esteem and other mental health problems. Children bullied over long periods may develop symptoms similar to Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), including hyper-alertness and being easily startled or emotionally distant.

Short-term effects of bullying at school include aggression with siblings, anxiety, stress and insomnia. Other characteristics may include self-isolation, mood swings and physical manifestations such as cuts or bruises. Childhood bullying and abuse may cause problems later in life that are difficult to overcome without the help of intensive therapy and treatment, leading clinicians and professionals to try and understand the root causes of bullying.

Mental healthcare professionals have sought to find out why young people become bullies to begin with. Young people with low self-esteem may intimidate others to gain a sense of power or control. Girls with self-confidence or other personality issues may bully their peers out of jealousy, resentment or because other girls are doing it.

Bullies may be experiencing emotional or physical abuse by a family member or other adults. Parents who discipline children with violence or intimidation can lead children to believe that the way to deal with conflicts is with anger or aggression. Thus bullies may intimidate others, believing that it is acceptable behaviour. Additionally, parents who provide little guidance for or monitoring of their children may contribute to the continuation of bullying behaviour at school.

The Stowe bullying policy aims to empower victims to stand up to bullies, encourages parents, teachers, bystanders and Stoics themselves to report bullying incidents, and works to create a school environment that prevents and censures bullying. In addition the Peer Support Group and PSHE curriculum seek to instil resilience in Stoics and teach them techniques that will help them withstand other types of stress as they grow older.