



## **Overview**

The Anti-Bullying Policy should be read alongside and in conjunction with the Safeguarding, Good Behaviour and Sanctions and Online Safety policies. These form part of the suite of policies to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Rochester Independent College.

As stated in the Department for Education document Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017), bullying is defined as behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Kidscape also includes as part of their definition that there is an imbalance of power where it is difficult for the person being bullied to defend themselves. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via instant messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and 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. The website link to these guidelines is in Appendix A of this policy.

One-off incidents that involve arguing, teasing or name-calling are not usually bullying behaviour, although they may still be frightening and harmful. However, in a group situation it may be the case that lots of children say or do something to a child, and though each individual child may only say or do something once, the behaviour has been repeated throughout the group, and is therefore likely to be bullying.

Schools have a moral and legal duty to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among students and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parent/guardian and students. All College staff and students should note that this policy must be followed at all times. It is not appropriate to shout at, use intimidating body language or to use swear words. Bullying is recognised as a form of peer-on-peer abuse and abusive comments and interactions are not tolerated by the College or passed off as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. This policy is promoted and implemented throughout the College. It is also important that parents support the College's anti-bullying message and the measures it takes to prevent bullying from taking place.

The coronavirus pandemic, and other adverse situations may lead to some individuals being at increased risk of bullying, discrimination or harassment, for example, due to their ethnicity or nationality, or perceived illness. The College has a zero tolerance attitude to bullying of all kinds and insists that staff and students behave with consideration and show respect to all, whatever their role in the College, or outside community.

The College maintains records of all bullying incidents and these are monitored by the Principal to enable patterns to be identified and to ensure that single incidents do not become the first in a series. Bullying on the basis of the protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously and incidents of this type are distinguished in our bullying record.

The College ensures that all the students and staff are aware of the seriousness of bullying in causing psychological damage and is mindful that some forms of bullying can constitute criminal activities under laws applying to harassment and threatening behaviour.

We aim to ensure that all students learn in a supportive and secure environment without the fear of being bullied. Bullying is anti-social behaviour which affects everyone, is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Many students join Rochester Independent College after having difficult experiences of bullying elsewhere and it is therefore particularly important that we are alert to this issue.

Those who find themselves as bystanders to bullying behaviour have a responsibility to pass on to staff what they have seen, heard or read. Unreported bullying allows bullies to continue their antisocial behaviour.

### **Types of Bullying**

Examples of types of bullying as defined by Kidscape are as follows:

**Emotional:** unfriendliness, excluding, tormenting (eg: hiding belongings)

**Physical:** pushing, hitting, kicking, punching, any use of violence

**Verbal:** sarcasm, name-calling, spreading rumours, teasing

**Cyber:** all areas of the internet (email, social websites and internet chat room misuse), mobile phone threats via text messages and calls, misuse of camera/video on mobile phone

Bullying behaviour may be:

**Racist:** racial taunts, racial graffiti, gestures

**Sexual:** sexually abusive comments, unwanted physical contact

**Homophobic:** focusing on the issue of sexuality or sexual orientation

**Religious:** dismissive or deliberately antagonistic comments or actions against any religion

**Cultural:** name calling, taunting, teasing against a person's upbringing and beliefs

**Special Educational Needs/Disability:** name calling, taunting, teasing about a physical or mental disability

**Targeting any difference:** weight, height, acne, body odour, poverty, wealth, talents

Connected to emotional bullying, **relational bullying** is probably the least considered but also one of the most common forms of bullying and can have more damaging effects than the other, better known forms of bullying. Relational bullying is harmful because it destroys an individual's peer relationships and social status. The bully convinces their peers to exclude, isolate or reject the victims from their social connections. It could also involve social exclusion: not inviting peers to take part in activities, for example, or spreading rumours and embarrassing information. This type of bullying is sometimes also called indirect or social bullying. While there may be subtle differences, they largely refer to the same types of bullying behaviour. It is often linked to verbal bullying and cyberbullying. Relational bullying can be difficult to spot because the behaviours are subtle and, as they occur within friendship groups, an outsider may have to distinguish between normal conflict and bullying.

## Cyber Bullying

The widespread use of technology has given rise to cyberbullying. As stated in the DoF Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017) this medium for 'virtual' bullying can occur in or outside school. Cyberbullying can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click. The '[Cyber Bullying: advice for headteachers and school staff](#) (2014)' gives further advice and the website link is attached in Appendix A to this policy.

According to the NSPCC, cyberbullying is a form of bullying behaviour that happens on social networks and mobile phones, taking the form of spreading rumours about a person or posting/sending messages, images or videos intended to humiliate a person. It is easy to be anonymous online, which may increase the likelihood of engaging in online bullying. Cyberbullying is particularly damaging because it can happen anytime, anywhere, and potentially reach a wider audience, as people are easily able to share and forward content.

It includes:

- sending threatening or abusive instant messages
- creating and sharing embarrassing images or videos
- 'trolling' - the sending of menacing or upsetting messages on social networks, chat rooms or online games
- excluding children from online games, activities or friendship groups
- setting up hate sites or groups about a particular child
- encouraging young people to self-harm
- voting for or against someone in an abusive poll
- creating fake accounts, hijacking or stealing online identities to embarrass a young person or cause trouble using their name
- sending explicit messages, also known as sending nudes
- pressuring children into sending sexual images or engaging in sexual conversations.

With students having ready access to mobile phones and the internet, it is important that they are aware of what can happen and the wider implications of being involved in cyberbullying. This means teaching them to engage with social media in a conscious and responsible way. The College's online safety policy goes into this in more detail. There is a lot of e-safety information at [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk), which gives advice about staying safe online. Students at the College also sign an IT agreement, which gives details of acceptable and unacceptable use of ICT.

## **Supporting and Reporting**

We raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through PHSE, regular Form/Personal Tutor interviews, class discussions and form times to help minimize such behaviour. We try to maintain an atmosphere where students can feel at ease and confident enough to speak about their problems with someone they trust.

Bullied students may suffer psychologically. Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour. All staff, whether teaching or ancillary, must be aware of the signs of bullying and be aware of patterns emerging. They should act promptly against it in accordance with this policy. The signs of bullying are given in the appendix at the end of this policy. Parents/Guardians and students should also know the College policy on bullying and what to do if bullying takes place.

As with any incident involving a student, staff will initially report it using the Incident Form (a copy of this form can be found in Appendix B of this policy) or verbally. Any verbal reports should be noted on an Incident Form as soon as possible. The Incident Form or verbal report should initially be given to the relevant Head of School or Boarding, depending on the student involved, or their deputy. All acts of bullying will be investigated initially by Form Tutors in the Lower School and Personal Tutors in the Sixth Form. If the act of bullying needs further investigating it should be passed to the Head of Lower School or the Head of Sixth Form. The Head of Lower School/Sixth Form will refer the act of bullying to the DSL or the assistant DSL if required and an overall decision made by the Principal in accordance with the College's Safeguarding Policy.

A bullying incident will be addressed as a Safeguarding concern when, in line with the College Safeguarding policy and staff Safeguarding training, there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, the DSL will report their concerns to Kent/Medway Children's Services. If a criminal offence is thought to have occurred the College will inform the Police. Cases of serious bullying that are subsequently referred to Police or Children's Services will also be recorded as a safeguarding incident. Following advice directly from the local authority, where there are concerns about where a particular case of bullying may be a safeguarding issue advice should be sought from Specialist Children's Services (Kent)/Children's Social Care Services (Medway).

If the act of bullying has been carried out by a member of staff this should be reported to the Principal for investigation; if the act of bullying has been carried out by the Principal then this should be reported to the Safeguarding Governor for investigation.

If the bullying involves a physical assault, as well as seeking medical attention where necessary, consideration should be given to whether there are any child protection issues to consider and whether there should be a referral to the Police where a criminal offence may have been committed.

Those students concerned will be interviewed by one of the Principals; the incident will be recorded and placed in the students' files. It may be necessary to take into consideration previous bullying incidents. When an incident has been concluded all the relevant paperwork and the initial Incident Form will also be filed in the Bullying Incidents file kept in the Principal's office in Star Hill.

Form/Personal Tutors will be kept informed and if the bullying persists, they will advise the subject tutors. The bully's and victim's parents/guardians will be kept informed and if necessary, the Principals may ask to see them to discuss matters.

#### **Areas where bullying could occur**

- mainly areas which do not have a member of staff present, for example:
- gardens
- corridors
- walking from room to room
- walking from building to building
- sports pitch
- minibuses – on them and waiting for them, for home or sport
- common rooms – day and boarding
- toilets

Rochester Independent College is mindful of the fact that head teachers in the state sector have a specific statutory power to discipline pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives head teachers the power to regulate pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff. 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.

While this legislation does not specifically apply to independent schools, Rochester Independent College will consider carefully whether reported instances of bullying outside school should be acted upon by college staff or passed on to parents to deal with.

The Principal should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the Police or Anti-Social Behaviour Coordinator in their Local Authority of the action taken against a student. If the misbehaviour could be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.

All reported incidents will be taken seriously. Students and parents/guardians will be supported if they report bullying is taking place.

#### **Students who have been bullied will be supported by:**

- offering the immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their Form/Personal Tutor or a member of staff of their choice
- reassuring the student
- offering continued support
- restoring confidence and self-esteem

#### **Students who have bullied will be helped by:**

- discussing what happened
- discovering why the student became involved

- establishing the wrong doing and the need to change their behaviour and attitude
- making them aware of the effect of their behaviour upon others
- informing parents/guardians to help change the attitude of the student
- the bully will be asked to offer a genuine apology, verbally or in writing

**The following disciplinary steps can be taken:**

- official warnings to stop offending
- supervised study minor fixed-term exclusion
- major fixed-term exclusion
- permanent exclusion

Staff involved will work towards both the bully and victim finding a way forward. After the incident has been dealt with, monitoring will continue to ensure that there is no reoccurrence. This will be done through Form/Personal Tutor interviews and meetings to check that the situation is better than previously.

**During College hours**

There will always be a trained member of staff available for students to confide in if they are being bullied, or know of another student who is a victim of bullying or racial remarks. Normally this will be a DSL. However other members of staff will also be available should the student prefer to talk to him/her. If a boarding student wishes to speak to somebody not related to the College they can contact the Independent Listener, or other outside contact, whose numbers can be found in the Boarding Student Handbook, as well as in the Staff Handbook and on the College website. Students over the age of 16 also have access to the student assistance program.

**Outside College hours**

Any one of the helpline numbers in the Handbooks (also on the College website) can be contacted. Lists are also displayed on College notice boards and in boarders' rooms.

**Training**

All staff are issued with the Staff Handbook including our Anti Bullying and Safeguarding Policies and also receive basic Safeguarding training as part of their induction when they start working at RIC. Our ongoing professional development includes key staff attending relevant INSET meetings as and when they deem necessary. Staff are strongly recommended to follow the DfE Guidance 2017 Preventing and Tackling Bullying on the DfE website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

When they join RIC, all staff undergo basic safeguarding training which includes covering bullying.

**Other contacts**

The Anti-bullying Alliance	<a href="https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/">https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/</a>
Bullying Online	<a href="http://www.bullying.co.uk">www.bullying.co.uk</a> and <a href="http://www.ceop.police.uk/reportabuse">www.ceop.police.uk/reportabuse</a>
Thinkuknow	<a href="https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/">https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/</a>
Kidscape	<a href="https://www.kidscape.org.uk/">https://www.kidscape.org.uk/</a>
Kidscape Parent's Helpline	0207 823 5430
The Anne Frank Trust UK	<a href="https://annefrank.org.uk/">https://annefrank.org.uk/</a>
Stonewall (homophobic bullying)	0207 593 1850

### Signs of Bullying

Everyone should be aware of the signs and symptoms as given by Kidscape and report if a student:

- is scared of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go to school on the bus
- begs to be driven to school
- makes a change to their usual routine
- does not want to go to school (school phobic)
- starts to play truant
- becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacks self-confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- has nightmares or cries themselves to sleep
- feels ill or sick in the morning
- starts to underperform at school
- comes home with torn clothes or belongings
- has damaged belongings or things go missing
- starts stealing money or asks for money (to pay the bully)
- 'loses' dinner money
- has unexplained cuts and bruises
- comes home starving because dinner money has been taken
- becomes aggressive or unreasonable
- bullies others in turn
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what is wrong
- offers unlikely excuses for the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is agitated when a text message is received

The above signs and symptoms may or may not be because of bullying but bullying should be a consideration.

This policy has been written with regard to DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017) and DfE Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff (2014) guidelines.

Created/Updated	Author	Approved by	Date
August 2017	ME & KF	AB	August 2017
July 2018	CD & KF	AB	July 2018
September 2019	ME	AB	September 2019
August 2020	ME	AB	August 2020
August 2021	BG	AB	August 2021

## **Appendix A**

DofE Preventing and Tacking Bullying (July 2017):

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/623895/Preventing\\_and\\_tackling\\_bullying\\_advice.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf)

DofE Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff (2014):

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying\\_Advice\\_for\\_Headteachers\\_and\\_School\\_Staff\\_121114.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/374850/Cyberbullying_Advice_for_Headteachers_and_School_Staff_121114.pdf)



**Appendix B**

**INCIDENT REPORT FORM**



**ROCHESTER**  
INDEPENDENT COLLEGE

Date:

Names of student/s involved:

Member of staff reporting incident:

Details of incident:

Continue overleaf if necessary

Staff signature:

Incident reported to:

Signature:

Action taken: