



Marlborough House
Vinehall
A REPTON SCHOOL

Prevention of Bullying Policy

For day, boarding and EYFS pupils

This policy explains how Marlborough House Vinehall prevents, identifies, records and responds to bullying. It should be read alongside the Safeguarding and Child Protection, Behaviour Management, Online Safety and Complaints policies.

Policy control	Details
Version	2.0 (Reviewed 02 October 2026)
Policy owner	Nicky Whittaker, Deputy Head Pastoral
Safeguarding oversight	Nicky Whittaker, Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
Accountable leader	Head
Approval	Head - 02 October 2026
Ratification (pending)	Board of Governors through the APC in November
Next scheduled review	September 2027, or earlier following relevant changes
Publication	Internal and website

Recent Update - October 2026

- Updated the reference base to KCSIE 2026, Working Together 2026, the September 2026 EYFS framework, the May 2026 Boarding NMS and the September 2026 ISI framework/handbook - p. 9.
- Clarified the definition of bullying, including repetition, power imbalance, prejudice-based/discriminatory bullying and serious one-off incidents - p. 2.
- Strengthened online-safety wording and removed reliance on the withdrawn 2014 cyberbullying advice for school staff - pp. 2-3.
- Updated child-on-child abuse, safeguarding referral, recording and information-sharing expectations - pp. 2, 5 and 7.
- Removed language that could minimise a pupil report or imply responsibility for being bullied; strengthened SEND- and vulnerability-aware responses - pp. 2, 5-6.
- Updated EYFS terminology and clarified safe, proportionate physical intervention and escalation - p. 8.

Aims and Objectives

Marlborough House Vinehall School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly and with consideration and we expect them to reciprocate towards each other, the staff and the School.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and is prevented as far as reasonably practical. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *telling* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

MHV prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/guardians have an important role in supporting the School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that school and homes have consistent expectations of behaviour and that they co-operate closely together. Acceptance of this policy forms part of our standard terms and conditions and the policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on our website or on request from the School office. It is also available and known to staff and boarders, including junior and recently appointed staff.

This policy applies to all day and boarding pupils in the School, including those in the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Definition

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. Bullying often involves an imbalance of power, whether real or perceived. It may be direct or indirect, and it may take place face to face or online. A serious one-off incident may not meet this definition of bullying, but it will still be addressed under the School's Behaviour Management and/or Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures where appropriate.

Bullying can include physical behaviour; verbal abuse or name-calling; relational or emotional behaviour such as deliberate exclusion or spreading rumours; online bullying; and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying. It may relate to actual or perceived race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, special educational needs, culture, appearance, family circumstances, adoption or caring responsibilities, or another difference. Sexual violence and sexual harassment are safeguarding matters and are managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy rather than being treated simply as bullying.

Not every disagreement, friendship difficulty or instance of teasing is bullying. Staff consider the pattern, context, intent, impact, power imbalance and the individual child's age, development and vulnerabilities. Teasing that becomes persistent, targeted, humiliating or power-imbalanced may amount to bullying and will be addressed accordingly.

Online bullying may occur through messaging, social media, games, images, video, group chats, email or other digital services, in or outside school and at any time. Online behaviour can rapidly reach a wide audience, be persistent or anonymous, and may overlap with other forms of child-on-child abuse. The School teaches pupils to recognise harmful online behaviour, report it, preserve relevant evidence and seek help. Online concerns are managed in accordance with the Online Safety and Safeguarding and

Child Protection policies, including the School's filtering and monitoring arrangements and liaison with external agencies where required.

When a concern is reported, the School listens carefully to the child's account and considers the available evidence, the wider context, any pattern of behaviour, the impact on those involved, any imbalance of power and known vulnerabilities. A child's report is never dismissed because an incident appears minor in isolation or because staff have not previously witnessed it.

Bullying can cause significant distress and harm to wellbeing, attendance, relationships and learning. Staff remain alert to signs of anxiety, self-harm, suicidal thoughts or other safeguarding concerns. Any immediate risk to a child is acted on without delay through the School's safeguarding procedures. Some conduct associated with bullying may also constitute a criminal offence, including assault, harassment, threats, hate crime, sexual offences or communications offences.

MHV treats reports and allegations of bullying seriously and proportionately. Prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying is specifically identified in the School's records so that patterns can be monitored and appropriate action taken. Bullying may also constitute child-on-child abuse and, where there is a safeguarding concern, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy takes precedence.

Signs of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Books, bags and other belongings suddenly go missing, or are damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary)
- Diminished levels of self confidence
- Frequent visits to the matron or School Nurse with symptoms such as stomach pains, headaches
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Choosing the company of adults
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Difficulty in sleeping, experiences nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for some of the above symptoms, a repetition of, or a combination of these possible signs of bullying should be investigated by parents and teachers.

Prevention

At Marlborough House Vinehall we aim proactively to prevent bullying from starting in the first place. This can be done by:

- Teaching the children to respect other people who are different from themselves.
- Paying care and attention to school rules which are designed to encourage mutual respect.

- Using PSHE, Relationships Education and the wider curriculum to teach respectful relationships, the safe and responsible use of technology, and how to report concerns. Online-safety education considers the four broad areas of risk identified in KCSIE: content, contact, conduct and commerce. Teaching is age- and developmentally appropriate and is reinforced through assemblies, tutor time and wider school life.
- Actively promoting National Anti-bullying weeks.
- Working on Themes of the Week with specific focus on online use and bullying.
- Working together in Sports teams / Form groups / Houses.
- Listening in Chapel and in morning assemblies.
- Using links between staff, pupils and parents to gather intelligence about issues which could develop into bullying.
- All staff being watchful and alert, particularly when on duty.
- Prefects, Boarding Prefects and House Captains being vigilant and reporting any concerns to staff.
- Ensuring that all new pupils (including boarders and our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the School's expected standards of behaviour.
- Not allowing any form of 'initiation' ceremony designed to cause pain or humiliation.
- Celebrating success through assemblies and weekly award presentations.
- Informing parents of developments in technology which could encourage cyberbullying through online advice workshops, talks and newsletters.

Preventative Measures

We take the following preventative measures to ensure that bullying does not become a problem:

Pupils

- All new pupils (including boarders and our youngest pupils) are briefed thoroughly on the School's expected standards of behaviour, including what to do if they encounter bullying.
- Pupils are taught about the different roles that can arise in bullying situations, including the child experiencing harm, the child displaying bullying behaviour and bystanders, and how bystanders can seek help safely.
- All children who feel that they are being bullied (or teased) must tell a member of staff (Form Teacher, class/subject teacher, Head of Boarding, Teaching Assistant or any other) in confidence, or their parents.
- All children are briefed at the start of every term on the school 'Worries Box' and the School's Independent Person as ways to speak to adults.
- If children see anyone being bullied (or teased) they must inform a member of staff immediately. 'Whistle blowers' who act in good faith will be supported and not penalised.
- Children must never support a bully.
- Pupils are encouraged to maintain healthy boundaries, seek help and avoid joining in, sharing or amplifying harmful behaviour.
- Children must remember that they can hurt others by saying unpleasant things as well as being a physical bully.
- Children have access to a telephone helpline so they can have support in private (Independent Person and ChildLine).

Staff will

- Always be alert to potential bullying or teasing in all its forms, including 'cyber-bullying'.

- Raise any concerns with senior/relevant staff and in staff meetings.
- Be trained so that they are aware of all types of bullying. New staff, including boarding staff and Gap Students, are given guidance on the School's policy for the prevention of bullying and how to react to allegations of bullying when they first arrive at MHV.
- Keep a particularly careful eye on behaviour in the corridors, in the changing rooms, outside, in between lessons and in free time. All incidents are to be investigated at once.
- Discuss any incidents or any signs of trouble with the Form Teacher, class/subject teacher concerned, Head of Boarding, Deputy Head Pastoral, Senior Deputy Head.
- Deal calmly with any report or incident, prioritising immediate safety and support. Staff must not prejudge the outcome before appropriate enquiries have been made, but this must never prevent immediate protective or safeguarding action where needed.
- Record reported bullying and significant teasing on Engage and, where the threshold for bullying is met or a pattern is emerging, in the central bullying log. Records should capture the concern, evidence considered, decisions, actions, rationale, outcomes and review arrangements. The Deputy Head Pastoral oversees bullying records.

Safeguarding information is shared and recorded in accordance with KCSIE 2026, Working Together 2026 and the School's safeguarding procedures. Information sharing is necessary and proportionate to the purpose, and data protection law must not be treated as a barrier to protecting a child. The rationale for significant sharing decisions is recorded.

- Follow the School's filtering and monitoring arrangements and report any concern that technology is being used to facilitate bullying or other harm.
- Monitor use of mobile phones either off or on-site.
- Ensure that security systems are in place to prevent images and information about pupils or staff being accessed improperly from outside school.

Further measures include:

- [If a punishment were given] After punishment has been completed, pastoral work by relevant members of staff will always be essential (e.g. Form Teachers and Deputy Head Pastoral).
- INSET sessions are used to brief and train staff. Outside experts may be used.
- In the Boarding House, there is a strong team of staff and gappers supporting the Head of Boarding, who acts *in loco parentis*. The informal house environment is important in reinforcing a pupil's standards and values, providing the opportunity for friendly, informal discussion of matters of concern to the individual pupil outside the formal classroom. A member of the Boarding House staff is always on duty to supervise the pupils.
- We encourage close contact between the Head of Boarding and parents/guardians and would always make contact if we were worried about a pupil's well-being.
- All boarders and their parents are made aware of the contents of the School's policy for the prevention of bullying and are aware that they can download copies from the School's website. All boarders know how to report anxieties to the Head of Boarding or to another member of the pastoral team (e.g. their personal Tutor).
- Our dispensary displays advice on where pupils can seek help, including details of confidential help lines and web sites connecting to external specialists, such as Childline.
- The School's Independent Person forms part of the pastoral support available to pupils. Pupils are told how to contact the Independent Person/Listener privately, alongside other trusted adults and external sources of support such as Childline.
- Our School Nurse also provides support in this way and is a member of our Welfare Team.
- Where bullying or online behaviour raises concerns about extremism or radicalisation, staff follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the School's Prevent duty procedures.

Parents

We welcome feedback from parents/guardians on the effectiveness of our anti-bullying measures.

Not every friendship difficulty, disagreement or isolated unkind act is bullying; however, parents and staff should listen carefully, avoid making assumptions and look for patterns, changes in behaviour or signs that a child feels unsafe.

- Unwillingness to go to school.
- Signs of distress, bruising, unexplained sleepiness, headaches, etc.
- Personal belongings continually going missing.

If you are concerned:

- Encourage your child to:
 - Talk to a member of staff if they feel they are being teased or bullied
 - Reassure them that they should report concerns, preserve relevant online evidence where safe to do so, and avoid retaliating or escalating the situation.
 - Never retaliate.
- If you are still concerned, contact the Form Teacher, class/subject teacher, Head of Boarding, Deputy Head Pastoral, Senior Deputy Head or the Head/Head of Pre-Prep. Ask for a meeting and present a detailed record of any incidents.
- If bullying continues and you are not satisfied with the School's response, contact the Chair of Governors.
- Parents of boarders have the right to make a referral directly to ISI if they are unhappy about the way their complaint has been handled. (See Parental Complaints Procedure).

The School's Response

The Head and staff take reports of bullying seriously. The School will investigate promptly, fairly and in a child-centred way and may consider relevant behaviour outside school, including online behaviour, school journeys, trips and incidents in the local community, where it affects pupils' welfare or the orderly running of the School. Parents of the children involved will normally be informed at an appropriate stage, subject to safeguarding considerations.

The action or combination of actions shown below may be taken against those children found to have committed bullying.

Procedures for Dealing with Reported Bullying

If an incident of bullying is reported, the following procedures are adopted:

- In all except the most serious cases, a variety of methods can be used to defuse and repair situations.
- The member of staff to whom it was reported or who first discovers the situation, will control the situation, reassure and support the pupils involved.
- They will inform an appropriate member of the pastoral team as soon as possible, usually the Deputy Head Pastoral.
- The member of staff will calmly explain the range of disciplinary measures that are potentially involved.

- The child reporting or experiencing bullying will be spoken with separately and given a safe, age- and developmentally appropriate opportunity to explain what has happened. Staff will record the account; a child will not be required to produce a written statement where this would be inappropriate or create a barrier because of age, SEND, communication needs or distress.
- The child or children alleged to have displayed bullying behaviour, and relevant witnesses, will be spoken with separately. Accounts will be recorded fairly and the investigation will avoid unnecessary repeated questioning.
- The incident will be recorded on iSAMS and, where appropriate, in the central bullying log. The Deputy Head Pastoral is responsible for monitoring bullying patterns.
- Relevant staff, including the Head of Boarding where a boarder is involved, will be informed on a need-to-know basis. The Welfare Team will be involved whenever the concern may constitute child-on-child abuse or otherwise meets a safeguarding threshold.
- The child who has experienced bullying will receive appropriate pastoral support and a clear plan for safety, communication and review. Their wishes and feelings will be considered, while recognising that the School may need to take action to safeguard them or others.
- The child whose behaviour has caused concern will be helped to understand its impact and the expectations for change. Support, education and proportionate disciplinary action may all be appropriate. Sanctions are applied in accordance with the Behaviour Management Policy; serious or persistent bullying may lead to suspension or permanent exclusion.
- The parents/guardians of all parties should be informed and invited into school to discuss the matter. Their support should be sought.
- A way forward, including disciplinary sanctions and possible counselling, should be agreed. This should recognise that suitable support is needed both for children who are being bullied and for pupils who bully others, as well as dealing with appropriate disciplinary measures in accordance with the School's Behaviour Management Policy or the Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy.
- Restorative work may be considered only where it is safe, voluntary and appropriate for the children involved. It will not be used in a way that pressures a child who has experienced harm to meet, forgive or reconcile with another pupil, and it will not replace safeguarding action.
- A monitoring and review strategy will be put in place.
- Where the concern may involve significant harm, a criminal offence or a need for statutory services, the DSL will consider referral to Children's Social Care and/or the Police in line with KCSIE and Working Together. Internal disciplinary or pastoral processes must never delay a necessary safeguarding referral. In an emergency or where a child is in immediate danger, the Police should be contacted without delay.
- Bullying must be treated as a safeguarding and child protection matter where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, or where the circumstances otherwise meet the School's safeguarding referral thresholds. The DSL will decide and record the appropriate response, including early help, Children's Social Care, Police or other multi-agency involvement.

For procedures on child-on-child abuse, including sexual violence, sexual harassment and harmful online behaviour, see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying) may be a form of child-on-child abuse and must be considered within that wider safeguarding context.

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) Children

See Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy

Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) children at MHV refer to children from 2 to 5 years of age, in our Nursery, Kindergarten and Reception classes. Requirements for EYFS children comply with the EYFS statutory framework and sit alongside other legal obligations, legislation and MHV School policies which cover the children of statutory school age. The child's behaviour is managed effectively, consistently and in conjunction with the Pre-Prep Policy for Behaviour Management and has regard for the children's stage of development and individual needs.

Any physical intervention involving an EYFS child must be lawful, necessary, proportionate and in accordance with the current EYFS statutory framework and the School's Behaviour Management/Reasonable Force procedures. It must never be used as punishment. Any intervention is recorded and parents are informed on the same day where required, with safeguarding concerns escalated to the DSL.

Behaviour Management in the EYFS is evaluated and any outcome informs the departmental self-evaluation and our development planning.

Early Years children are supported through the Personal, Social and Emotional Development area of learning, including self-regulation, managing self and building relationships. Expectations and responses are developmentally appropriate and take account of individual needs, including SEND and communication needs. Concerns are managed initially by the child's key person/class team, with involvement from the Head of Pre-Prep, SENCO and DSL as appropriate.

A copy of the Pre-Prep Behaviour Management Policy is available on the School website or on request from the School Office.

Concluding Comment

The School aims to prevent and stop bullying behaviour without defining a child by that behaviour. Our response combines clear boundaries and accountability with support, education and opportunities to change. We work with children and parents to restore safety, reduce recurrence and support healthy relationships, while recognising that safeguarding and disciplinary action may be necessary.

Complaints Procedure

Parents and pupils are encouraged to use the relevant complaints procedure, published on the School website or available from the School Office, if they consider that a bullying concern has not been addressed appropriately. Raising a complaint does not prevent or delay safeguarding action where this is required.

Related Documents:

1. Parental Complaints Procedure.
2. Behaviour Management Policies.
3. Complaints Policy for Pupils.
4. Online Safety Policy
5. Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
6. Parents' Handbooks

APPENDIX 1: Sample Bullying Log, outlining the school's process following the report of a suspected bullying case.

Bullying Log - 2026-27							
Pupil reporting / experiencing harm and form	Pupil alleged to have displayed bullying behaviour and form	Day / Boarder	Date	Raised by	Nature of concern	Actions / decisions	Outcomes / review
Johnny Appleseed (3A)	Jemima Pear (3B)	Johnny day; Jemima boarder	07.01.2025	Parent	Message from Jenny Appleseed (mother of Johnny Appleseed) saying that Jemima has been unkind to him. "Taunting" and "shoving into wall."	Mrs Teacher met with both pupils. Mrs Teacher spoke to both sets of parents. Mr Deputy Head emailed Jenny Appleseed on the evening of 7 January to reassure her we were taking things seriously. Mrs Deputy Head emailed Mr Games Teacher and asked that games department supervise Jemima more closely, including in changing rooms, as this is where the incident took place. Mrs Teacher agreed to escort Jemima to games lessons. As this was not the first time that Jemima has been unkind, she is to be placed on a positive behaviour report card and this was emailed to all prep teachers. Report card to be reviewed in a fortnight.	Update on 21.01.2025: positive behaviour report card has been effective. Jemima to be taken off the report card. Staff have noticed an improvement in the pupils' interactions. Games staff to continue to monitor unstructured times closely. Both parents satisfied with outcome.