



GEMS Winchester School Dubai



Anti-Bullying Policy

Person(s) Responsible: Executive Vice Principal and Deputy Head Teacher (Children's Services)

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Contents

1. [Introduction](#)
2. [Definition of Bullying](#)
3. [Dealing with Bullying](#)
4. [Links to other Policies](#)

1. Introduction

At GEMS Winchester School Dubai (WSD), we aim to create a caring, safe and nurturing environment that promotes mutual respect and trust through the Gemstones Leadership programme - 'Stand Up and Speak Out'. WSD is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion, diversity and belonging. We celebrate differences and will not tolerate bullying or discrimination based on race, religion, nationality, disability, special educational needs, gender, appearance or family circumstances.

WSD adopts a proactive approach to prevent bullying through the curriculum, assemblies, student leadership opportunities, awareness campaigns, restorative practices, and the promotion of positive relationships throughout the school.

We recognise that all forms of bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals, can create barriers to learning, and have serious consequences on mental wellbeing. By preventing and tackling bullying effectively, we can help to create a safe and disciplined environment where students are able to learn and fulfil their potential in line with our core values of Tolerance, Respect and Responsibility.

This policy applies to all forms of bullying and outlines the ways we aim to keep the students at WSD safe, secure, and successful. This is done by:

- A proactive approach to prevent bullying
- Protecting students from bullying in order to provide a caring, safe and nurturing environment
- Identifying all signs of bullying and taking pre-emptive, prompt and appropriate action to stop it
- Implementing clear and robust systems for responding to any incidents of bullying
- Developing confidence in students to stand up against bullying and to report any incidents

Every stakeholder is responsible for playing their role to prevent and eradicate any form of bullying.

Principal

- Has overall responsibility for implementation of the policy

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Oversight of safeguarding concerns arising from bullying
- Referral to safeguarding agencies where appropriate

Heads of Year

- Investigation and monitoring

Staff

- Challenge and report all bullying
- Attend regular safeguarding and anti-bullying training, including recognising signs of bullying, cyberbullying, discriminatory bullying and peer-on-peer abuse.

Students

- Report concerns
- Support others

Parents

- Work collaboratively with the school

2. Definition of Bullying

WSD defines bullying as an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. It can happen face-to-face or online. Bullying is not defined by: single episodes of social rejection or dislike; single acts of nastiness; random acts of aggression or intimidation; disagreements or fights. These actions can undoubtedly cause great distress; however, they do not fit the definition of bullying unless they are being deliberately and repeatedly done.

Bullying can include name calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, taking belongings, producing offensive graffiti, gossiping, excluding people from groups, and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours.

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place through digital technologies, including social media, messaging platforms, gaming platforms and mobile devices. It is repeated behaviour intended to scare, anger, shame, threaten or otherwise harm another person. This may include spreading false information; sharing embarrassing photographs or videos; sending hurtful, abusive or threatening messages; impersonating another person or using fake accounts; excluding others from online groups; or using digital and generative AI tools to harass, humiliate or bully.

Cyberbullying may occur alongside face-to-face bullying and can leave a digital record. Students who experience or witness cyberbullying should not respond or retaliate. They should preserve relevant evidence, such as messages and screenshots, block or report the account where appropriate, and speak to a parent, teacher or another trusted adult as soon as possible.

Certain forms of bullying may constitute peer-on-peer abuse and require referral under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

WSD recognises that some groups of students may be disproportionately vulnerable to bullying, including those with SEND, disabilities, looked-after children, EAL learners, and students perceived as different from their peers.

This policy covers all types and forms of bullying including:

Type of Bullying	Definition
Emotional	Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting
Physical	Hitting, kicking, pushing, taking another's belongings, any use of violence
Prejudice-based and discriminatory, including: • Race and ethnicity • Faith-based • Gendered • Disability and SEND	Taunts, gestures, graffiti or physical abuse focused on a particular characteristic (e.g. gender, race, appearance, SEND, socio economic)
Sexual	Explicit sexual remarks, display of sexual material, sexual gestures, unwanted physical attention, comments about sexual reputation or performance, or inappropriate touching
Direct or indirect verbal	Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Cyber-bullying	Bullying that takes place online, such as through social networking sites, messaging apps or gaming sites

[Click here to return to the Contents page](#)

3. Dealing with Bullying

Teachers will respond to all episodes of bullying in order to send a clear message that it is unacceptable. Different responses may be appropriate depending on the nature and degree of the bullying. Any student or family can report an incident of bullying by contacting the Home Room Teacher/Form Tutor, Head of Year or relevant member of SLT. Once staff become aware of a bullying allegation, they should take a written statement and contact the appropriate colleague (for example, the Head of Year or a Senior Leader).

The school will investigate and respond to bullying that occurs beyond the school premises where it impacts the wellbeing, safety, or education of students within the school community.

The following investigation steps will be taken:

- Initial report received
- Statements gathered
- Witnesses interviewed
- Parents informed
- Outcome determined
- Actions implemented
- Follow-up review

Initially, the questions identified below will be used to determine if the incident is primarily bullying or if it falls into another sanction's category. The teacher will ask the student the following types of questions:

- Was there teasing or aggressive words or actions said?
- Was the bullying unprovoked?
- Did the bullying intend to hurt, harm or frighten?
- Was it by one or more students?
- Was it a pattern of acts? (More than one) Does it happen regularly?
- Was there:
 1. Physical contact? (Pinching, flicking, poking, punching, slapping, hitting, or being pushed down the stairs.
 2. Use of verbal/written expression? (Name calling, derogatory comments, ridiculing, threats to cause harm, threats to take away friendship, and writing hurtful comments or threats in notes, on photos, lockers, mirrors, walls, or on paper or other material.
 3. Use of electronic communication device? (Use of a camera, e-mail, text or instant messaging, social media application, internet website, spreading rumors/gossip through social media, taking and sending embarrassing pictures/ videos without permission, creating a fake profile and pretending to be another student, threatening violence through a group, photoshopping someone's image to humiliate, harass, or embarrass, or recording and posting fight videos.
 4. Reasonable fear of harm, creating an intimidating or threatening environment? (The student is fearful of going to class because the student who is bullying them is in the same class or/and, the student is threatened online and is fearful to return to school.

In determining whether an incident constitutes bullying, staff will consider factors including intent, repetition, power imbalance, impact, and context. Not all indicators need to be present for behaviour to be considered bullying.

- Conflict: this may require conflict resolution
- Discipline: this may require HoY/SLT sanction

- Learning: this may require learning support

Where appropriate, restorative approaches will be used to rebuild relationships, increase accountability, and promote understanding between those involved. In addition to this, the following support and interventions will be used to help students displaying bullying behaviour

- Restorative conversations
- Reflection activities
- Social skills intervention
- Counselling where appropriate
- Behaviour support plans

WSD recognises that some students may feel uncomfortable or worried about reporting bullying concerns directly. To ensure all students feel safe to speak up, the school provides a range of reporting options, including opportunities to report concerns confidentially or anonymously where appropriate.

Students can report bullying by:

- Speaking to a trusted member of staff
- Informing their Home Room Teacher/Form Tutor, Head of Year or a member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Reporting concerns through student leaders, wellbeing ambassadors or peer mentors
- Using any school-approved safeguarding or wellbeing reporting systems
- Using anonymous reporting methods made available by the school

All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately. While anonymous reports can sometimes limit the school's ability to investigate fully, they will be used to identify concerns, monitor patterns of behaviour and inform appropriate action. Students are encouraged to follow the school's 'Stand Up and Speak Out' ethos by reporting concerns for themselves or others, helping to create a safe, respectful and inclusive school community.

To prevent bullying, our students need to:

- Work to create a happy school environment for all
- Respect themselves and others
- Learn to tolerate and accept individual differences
- Stand up against bullying behaviour
- Ensure they use acceptable language when communicating with others
- Support the school policy on bullying

If a student feels they are being bullied, then they should:

- Tell the bully to stop
- Seek help and talk about it to someone they trust
- Report it to a teacher
- Try not to show you are upset - this is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear
- Stay with a group of friends/people - there is safety in numbers
- Not fight back as it may make matters worse – instead they should inform a teacher

If a student is the victim of cyber-bullying, they should:

- Tell a trusted adult about the bullying

- Not open or read messages from cyber bullies
- Tell a teacher/HoY or SLT at school if it is school related
- Not erase the messages - they may be used to act against the bullies
- Protect themselves - never agree to meet face to face with anyone they meet online
- Block bullies on 'chat or instant' messaging websites
- Always make sure their privacy settings are tight

If a student is aware of another student being bullied, they should:

- Care enough to do something about it, whether it affects them personally or not
- Step in early and try to defuse the situation before it gets out of hand
- Report it to a teacher and/or parent - take a friend with them if they want
- Not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully
- Not be tempted to forward cyber messages on
- Not join a cyber-group just to find out 'what is going on'

If parents are aware of bullying taking place, they should do the following:

- Work with the school to support their child – do not deal with the issue themselves but, instead, ask for the support from the school
- Call or email the school via their child's Home Room/Form Tutor, not the other child's parents
- Report the incidents even if their child does not want this
- Tell their child the following:
 - That bullying is wrong - all students have the right to attend school without fear
 - The problem is unlikely to stop without adult intervention
 - For school related cyber-bullying, make a screen print of the bullying comments/photos and take to the relevant Assistant Principal
 - Check their child's device and computer privacy settings
 - Report the bullying person's cyber name to the website provider
 - If extremely explicit, take the screenshots to the police or local safeguarding authority set in place by the UAE
 - Help their child learn to stand up against bullying behaviour
 - Support the school's stance on bullying and their various policies

If a parent finds out that their child is cyberbullying, we expect them to:

- Ensure their child knows that there will always be a footprint in cyberspace of their child's behaviour and it can be traced
- Ensure their child knows that cyber-bullying has no geographical boundaries and their child can be involved in it 24 hours a day, seven days a week
- Take away IT hardware/Mobile phone from their child's bedroom, particularly at night
- Work with the school and support the school policy on anti-bullying

All confirmed bullying incidents will be logged on the school's safeguarding and behaviour recording system and monitored by pastoral leaders and the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Victims of bullying will receive ongoing support and monitoring to ensure the behaviour has ceased and that they feel safe and supported in school. Pastoral staff will conduct follow-up checks with students involved within one week and again within four weeks to ensure the bullying has ceased and support remains effective.

Through the Leadership Gemstones Programme and the 'Stand Up and Speak Out' initiative, students are encouraged to demonstrate courage, empathy, respect and responsibility when challenging bullying and supporting others.

[Click here to return to the Contents page](#)

4. Links to Other Policies

At WSD, we are committed to developing an anti-bullying culture where the bullying of adults, children or young people is not tolerated in any form. This policy links with a number of other school policies, practices and action plans including:

- Behaviour Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- BYOD Policy

[Click here to return to the Contents page](#)