



Preventing Bullying Policy

Aim

Runnymede College is committed to promoting all aspects of personal development, and we consider it our duty to safeguard both the emotional and physical well-being of every member of our school community.

This policy is based on our own expertise and experience at Runnymede, the UK Government Department for Education guidance "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" July 2017 and supporting documents. It also takes into account the statutory guidance found in "Keeping Children Safe in Education 2024", as well as "La convivencia en los centros docentes de la Comunidad de Madrid" (Decreto 32/2019 de 9 de Abril, del Consejo de Gobierno).

At Runnymede we acknowledge that bullying does happen from time to time, indeed it would be unrealistic to claim that it does not. However, it is our aim to:

- Ensure that children and adults within school have a common understanding of what bullying is.
- Minimise all forms of bullying through making early interventions.
- Communicate clearly to children and parents the school's strong response.
- Stress that the whole school community act unanimously on this issue.
- Continually work to maintain a warm and harmonious atmosphere within school, where civility and respectful relationships between peers is a minimum expectation.

Definitions

Bullying is purposeful and repeated action conducted by an individual or group, and directed against an individual who cannot defend themselves in the situation. Bullying may also be defined as the experience of repeated unkind action by an individual or group, directed at them from changing sources. Bullying can take different forms:

1. **Verbal bullying:** name calling, use of threatening or provocative language.
2. **Psychological bullying:** excluding an individual from group play, refusing to talk to or even acknowledge an individual.
3. **Physical bullying:** hitting, kicking, grabbing an individual; taking or hiding another's property.
4. **Cyberbullying:** bullying that takes place using electronic technology i.e. mobile phones, computers and tablets as well as communication tools including social media sites, text messages, chat and websites.

Approach

- Prevention and early intervention represent the priorities of the school in order to minimise bullying behaviour.
- For pupils, preventative strategies will include the regular discussion and reflection on healthy and respectful relationships via the PSHE curriculum, as well as regular references to the Prevention Bullying Policy. Children will be taught strategies to help them deal with bullying situations which they may encounter, as well as recognising the difference between targeted bullying and the natural fluctuations of friendships.
- For parents, we will regularly provide recommendations of lectures and seminars provided by external agencies, as well as making them aware of school policies and teaching approaches to relationships and bullying.
- For staff, ongoing training in relationships and, specifically, the management of conflict for girls, will take place, as well as reflection on our approach to preventing bullying in pastoral meetings.
- All allegations of bullying will be treated seriously and will be investigated carefully.
- Children, parents and staff will be encouraged to talk openly about the issue.
- Staff will respond calmly and consistently to allegations or incidents of bullying.
- The school will protect and support all parties on school premises both during and after school hours whilst issues are resolved.
- The significance and impact of bystanding is emphasised to students, including the emphasis that is placed on this in Spanish law. Failure to report to the school staff situations of harassment of or situations that may put the physical or moral integrity of other members of the educational community at serious risk, which they witness or of which they are aware, will be considered illegal and a serious misconduct.
- The school will make every effort to engage parents and involve them to ensure they know how to respond if bullying occurs and the part they can play to prevent bullying. This includes when they find themselves as bystanders or in a position to share information which may help the school respond to cases of bullying.

Education

The school employs a three-pronged approach to bullying and to being bystanders of bullying. We:

- provide pupils with clear information on the types and impact of bullying, as well as places to turn for support, as part of our PSHEE curriculum.
- promote the school values of respect and kindness, and reward demonstrations of these values to reinforce positive relationships between peers.
- have clear sanctions for those who are accused of bullying or being bystanders of bullying.

Preventing Cyberbullying

Some students may not even realise that the behaviours they are engaging in fall within the scope of cyberbullying, especially if their initial motivations are to be funny or joking. However, the following are all forms of cyberbullying:

- Starting online conflicts with aggressive or offensive language that will ignite cruel conversations, repeatedly harassing others, making demeaning comments, posting gossip, or purposely trying to exclude someone from an online group to hurt them.
- Impersonating someone else in order to create trouble or embarrass someone as well as revealing humiliating secrets or information online are forms of cyberbullying.
- Cyberbullying is different, not least because it will mainly take place outside school hours. Children who are cyberbullied are often bullied in person as well. Additionally, these children have a harder time escaping from the behaviour.
- Cyberbullying can happen 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and reach a child even when they are alone. It can happen any time of day or night.
- Cyberbullying messages and images can be posted anonymously and distributed quickly to a very wide audience. It can be difficult, and sometimes impossible, to trace its source.
- Deleting inappropriate or harassing messages, texts and pictures is extremely difficult after they have been posted or sent.

Apart from the measures outlined above the school must strive to work together with parents and pupils to inform, raise awareness and develop channels of communication to allow incidents of this nature to be reported as soon as they occur. The emphasis should, therefore, be on prevention.

In Spanish child protection legislation when a school is concerned that a student is at serious risk or is being subjected to serious cyberbullying (such as sexting, grooming and gender-based abuse), the school may, after considering the case and in accordance with the established disciplinary protocol, demand access to the mobile phone of a student without the permission of the student or their parents. Unless this is the case, the permission of parents for those under the age of 14 and the permission of the student for those aged 14-18, should be received before viewing any content on a personal device for safeguarding purposes.

Protocol for Tackling Bullying

The following steps should be treated as a guide to dealing with cases of bullying, although it may be adjusted in agreement depending on the context of the case. This guidance mirrors the protocols advised by the *Consejería de Educación e Investigación* in Madrid, although Runnymede's status as a private, British school grants us a degree of autonomy in the handling of bullying. All communication must be documented appropriately on MyConcern, to maintain a clear chronology.

1. In the event of a reported case of bullying, from a pupil, parent or other member of the school community, those making the disclosure will firstly be reassured and congratulated for bringing this to the attention of staff, thus supporting the ethos of the school. The staff member should document the disclosure from them directly into MyConcern, and confirm with them that what they have written is accurate. As with any type of safeguarding

disclosure, confidentiality must not be promised at this point, and questions should be asked for clarification.

2. This disclosure will be received by the appropriate phase pastoral lead, who will inform members of the pastoral and leadership team, as appropriate. Two members of the pastoral team will be assigned to the case at this point, in order to seek further evidence and testimony from those involved and bystanders. In cases deemed notably serious, the Assistant Headmistress and the Headmaster may be involved earlier.

3. The designated member of staff will lead from this point onward, including gathering further evidence, including CCTV footage and written statements from bystanders (staff, friends and peers of the wider community). This evidence will be shared between the pastoral team via MyConcern, and a meeting will be held to decide whether we consider this to be a case of bullying.*

3. In the event that this case is not considered bullying, those to have made the accusation will be met with to explain this, this will also be communicated to parents, and a summary of the process will be written on MyConcern.

4. In the event that bullying is seriously suspected, those accused will be invited to a meeting with the coordinating members of staff to provide them with an opportunity to disclose involvement in the incident. Should they not be forthcoming with admissions of involvement, accusations will not be made at this time, although references to explicit evidence may be made.

5. In the event of an admission of involvement, a statement will be made by the student(s) guilty of bullying behaviour. Parents will then be informed that this has taken place, and that the school intends to consider all gathered evidence before issuing a punishment. The punishment will be decided by the pastoral team, and communicated to parents in writing before being issued.

6. In the event of no admission of involvement, parents will be informed that their child has been accused of bullying, and an anonymous summary of the evidence collected by the school will be communicated to them. Additional supporting evidence may be collected ahead of this communication. Following this, a meeting will be held between the accused student(s), their parents, and the pastoral team, in which the proposed corrective sanction will be explained before its issue.

7. Following the completion of the sanction, a reintegration exercise will take place between all those involved, supervised by pastoral staff, in which agreed guidelines for future will be made between all parties, which will then be communicated to parents. Support will be given to both bullied child and to the bullying child in order to raise self esteem and develop appropriate social skills.

8. Following the reintegration exercise, all parties involved in this reported case of bullying will be monitored by pastoral staff, to ensure that no such behaviour is repeated. Victims of this incident should be met with after a period of time to discuss how things are going in an open and supportive environment where they can be honest.

**Clearly, if a bullying incident is serious enough to justify such a referral, advice will be sought from an appropriate external agency (e.g. Direcciones de Área, Fiscalía de menores)*

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy
- Runnymede College Safeguarding Policy
- Runnymede College PSHE and RSE Policy

Reviewed: September 2024

Next review: September 2025

Appendix A: Girls on Board

In the academic year 2022-23 several members of the pastoral team undertook online training in Andrew Hampton's "Girls on Board" programme in order to improve our practice when girls fall out.

The initial "Girls on Board" approach was rolled out to many year groups, and will continue to be in 2023-24.

Further information about this approach can be found in the [teacher handbook](#), and in the [parent handbook](#) that was distributed in the summer term of the previous academic year.