

THE MOUNT SCHOOL

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

2026-2027

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This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, SEND Policy, RSE/PSHE arrangements, Complaints Procedure and Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy.

1. General statement

The Mount School is committed to providing a caring, happy and safe environment in which every child can flourish. Everyone has the right to be treated with kindness and respect and to be properly supported when harm occurs. Bullying in any form is unacceptable and will be taken seriously.

Prevention comes first. The School seeks to create a culture in which pupils understand difference, reject prejudice, speak up safely and trust adults to respond.

2. Status and framework

The Mount is an independent school. Its anti-bullying arrangements form part of its wider duties under the Independent School Standards, safeguarding requirements, Equality Act 2010 and Behaviour Policy. The School also has regard to current DfE Preventing and tackling bullying guidance and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.

3. Aims and objectives

- maintain a safe environment for all pupils;
- establish and sustain a positive, caring and inclusive ethos;
- ensure pupils, parents and staff understand what bullying is and how to report it;
- prevent bullying through curriculum, culture, supervision and early intervention;
- respond promptly, proportionately and consistently to reports;
- support the child experiencing harm and address the behaviour and needs of the child responsible;
- identify prejudice-based, discriminatory, sexual and online bullying;
- recognise when bullying may constitute child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern;
- monitor patterns and recurrence rather than treating incidents in isolation; and
- work with parents and external agencies where necessary.

4. What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally and commonly involves an imbalance of power. Power may arise from physical strength, popularity, social status, knowledge, group size, access to embarrassing information, technology or a perceived difference.

Bullying can occur face-to-face or online and can continue across school, home and social settings.

5. What bullying is not - and why one-off harm still matters

A one-off argument, friendship fall-out or isolated disagreement will not normally meet the definition of bullying. It will still be addressed under the Behaviour Policy and may require pastoral support.

A single incident can nevertheless be serious child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment, violence, discriminatory abuse, online harm or another safeguarding concern. Staff must never dismiss a serious one-off incident merely because it is not repeated.

6. Forms of bullying

- Physical - hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging or taking belongings, unwanted physical acts or intimidation.
- Verbal - name-calling, threats, insults, mocking, humiliating comments or repeated taunting.

- Relational/indirect - deliberate exclusion, manipulation of friendships, rumour-spreading or encouraging others to isolate a pupil.
- Online/cyber - abusive messages, group-chat exclusion, impersonation, humiliating posts, gaming abuse, image misuse, threats or coordinated online targeting.
- Prejudice-based/discriminatory - related to race, nationality, ethnicity, religion or belief, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or other actual/perceived difference.
- Sexist, sexual or misogynistic - sexualised comments, harassment, unwanted sexual attention, rumours, image-based abuse or conduct rooted in misogyny.
- SEND/disability-related - targeting a child's disability, communication, learning, sensory, medical or support needs.
- Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying.
- Faith-based or racist bullying.
- Bullying connected with family circumstances - for example adoption, care experience, caring responsibilities, poverty or perceived social status.

7. Child-on-child abuse and safeguarding

KCSIE 2026 requires schools to recognise child-on-child abuse, including harassment and violence. Bullying may be a safeguarding issue where it involves significant harm, coercion, sexual behaviour, exploitation, threats, violence, discriminatory abuse, image-based abuse or persistent targeted harm.

Where safeguarding thresholds may be met, the Form Teacher must not conduct a standalone behaviour investigation before speaking to the DSL/DDSL. Safeguarding action takes priority and the DSL will determine information-sharing, risk assessment and external referral.

The School will not minimise harmful conduct as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'boys being boys', 'girls falling out' or an inevitable part of growing up.

8. Signs a child may be experiencing bullying

- reluctance or refusal to attend school or particular activities;
- unexplained headaches, stomach aches or other recurring complaints;
- changes in mood, sleep, eating, toileting or behaviour;
- becoming withdrawn, anxious, tearful, aggressive or unusually quiet;
- loss/damage of belongings or requests for money;
- decline in engagement or attainment;
- changes in friendship groups or social isolation;
- distress connected with a phone, game, group chat or social media;
- unexplained injuries; or
- self-harm, hopelessness or significant emotional distress.

These signs do not prove bullying but should prompt sensitive enquiry and professional curiosity.

9. Why children may display bullying behaviour

Possible factors include desire for status or group acceptance, jealousy, learned behaviour, insecurity, difficulties in the child's own life, prejudice, poor emotional regulation, SEND/communication needs, exposure to harmful online content or being harmed themselves. Understanding causes helps intervention but does not excuse harmful behaviour.

10. Advice for pupils

If something is happening to you or someone else, tell an adult you trust. Reporting is not 'grassing' or 'sneaking'; it is asking for help and helping keep the community safe.

- get away from an unsafe situation where possible;
- tell a teacher, parent or another trusted adult as soon as possible;
- ask a friend to go with you if telling feels difficult;
- save online evidence where safe to do so rather than forwarding harmful content;
- keep speaking until an adult understands and acts;
- do not retaliate physically or online; and
- remember that being bullied is not your fault.

11. What parents/carers should do

- listen calmly and reassure the child they will be taken seriously;
- record what the child says and preserve relevant online evidence;
- contact the Form Teacher promptly, or the DSL/SLT directly where the concern is serious or safeguarding-related;
- avoid encouraging retaliation or directly confronting another child;
- avoid public/social-media discussion that could escalate harm or identify children;
- work with the School while maintaining communication if concerns continue; and
- raise unresolved concerns through SLT, the Headteacher and ultimately the Complaints Procedure.

Parents should not normally keep a child away from School because of bullying without discussing safety arrangements with the School. Where a child feels unsafe, leaders will consider immediate protective measures.

12. Proactive prevention

The Mount believes prevention is more effective than reacting after harm has become established. Ready, Respectful, Safe provides the common behavioural language.

- PSHE/RSE teaching on healthy relationships, respect, consent, boundaries, difference, prejudice and help-seeking;
- online-safety education including group chats, gaming, image-sharing, impersonation and reporting/blocking;
- assemblies and initiatives including Anti-Bullying Week;
- active supervision and identification of higher-risk locations/times;
- pupil voice through School Council and pupil leadership;
- challenging stereotypes and discriminatory language when they arise;
- staff training and safeguarding updates;
- support for pupils with SEND or communication barriers to report concerns; and
- analysis of behaviour, safeguarding and bullying records for patterns.

13. Reporting routes

A pupil, parent, staff member or other person may report bullying verbally or in writing to any member of staff. Pupils do not have to use the word 'bullying' for the School to act. Staff receiving a report must listen, reassure, record and pass the information to the appropriate person.

Reports involving possible child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment/violence, serious discrimination, threats, significant violence, exploitation, self-generated intimate imagery or serious online harm must be shared with the DSL/DDSL without delay.

14. School procedure for handling reports

- 1. Receive and safeguard: listen carefully, establish immediate safety, reassure the child and avoid promises of confidentiality.
- 2. Record: log the allegation/concern promptly using the School's approved system, including the child's own words where relevant.
- 3. Triage: Form Teacher/SLT considers whether this is relational conflict, behaviour, bullying or a potential safeguarding matter. The DSL leads where safeguarding may be involved.
- 4. Investigate appropriately: obtain accounts separately and fairly, review available evidence and avoid confrontational group questioning. Do not compromise a safeguarding/police investigation.
- 5. Protect and support: agree immediate measures for the child experiencing harm, including supervision, seating, online/contact arrangements or a safety plan where required.
- 6. Respond to the child displaying bullying behaviour: establish consequences under the Behaviour Policy and provide education/support aimed at stopping recurrence.
- 7. Parent communication: inform relevant parents appropriately, subject to safeguarding and confidentiality considerations.
- 8. Review: set a follow-up point and check whether the behaviour has stopped rather than assuming resolution after an apology or sanction.
- 9. Escalate: repeated, serious or escalating behaviour is referred to SLT/Headteacher and DSL as appropriate. External agencies/police/children's social care may be involved where necessary.
- 10. Record outcome: retain the evidence, decisions, actions, support, sanctions and review outcome.

15. Restorative approaches and apologies

Restorative work can be valuable when all involved are safe and willing. A child who has experienced bullying or abuse will not be required to meet, reconcile with or accept an apology from the child who harmed them.

An apology is not treated as evidence that risk has ended. Staff will continue to monitor the situation.

16. Support for the child experiencing bullying

Support will be individual and may include a trusted adult, check-ins, friendship/pastoral support, changes to supervision or routines, SEND support, online-safety assistance, wellbeing support, safety planning and referral to external services where appropriate.

The burden of solving the bullying will not be placed on the child experiencing it. Changes such as moving class/seat/activity should not automatically disadvantage the victim when the risk can be managed differently.

17. Support and consequences for the child displaying bullying behaviour

The School will use proportionate sanctions under the Behaviour Policy while also addressing the causes and teaching safer behaviour. This may include targeted pastoral work, parent involvement, SEND assessment/support, online-safety education, prejudice education, behaviour plan, restorative work, suspension or permanent exclusion in serious cases.

The School avoids labelling a child permanently as 'a bully'. The behaviour must be named clearly, stopped and changed.

18. Prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying

All prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying will be challenged. Incidents will be recorded in sufficient detail to identify patterns and inform curriculum, pastoral, safeguarding and leadership action.

The Equality Act 2010 applies to The Mount. Harassment or victimisation related to protected characteristics may engage legal duties even where behaviour does not meet the repeated-bullying definition.

19. Sexual harassment, misogyny and harmful sexual behaviour

Sexualised bullying, sexual harassment, misogynistic abuse, sexual rumours, unwanted sexual comments/contact and image-based abuse require safeguarding consideration. KCSIE 2026 expressly strengthens references to misogyny and child-on-child harassment and violence.

Staff will follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and will not resolve sexual harm solely through mediation or an apology.

20. Online bullying

Online bullying can happen at any time and can rapidly reach a large audience. The School may act on online conduct outside School where it affects pupils, staff, safeguarding, orderly School life or the School community.

Staff will consider preserving evidence, blocking/reporting accounts, platform reporting, parent involvement, Online Safety procedures and police involvement where conduct may be criminal. Harmful content must not be unnecessarily copied or circulated.

Mobile-phone-related incidents are also governed by the Mobile Phone Policy, including the statutory mobile-phone-free-by-default arrangements from 1 September 2026.

21. Bullying involving SEND or vulnerable pupils

Pupils with SEND can face additional bullying and safeguarding risks and may communicate harm differently. Staff must consider whether behaviour, attendance changes, distress or apparent 'friendship difficulties' could reflect targeted harm.

Reasonable adjustments will be made so pupils can report concerns and participate in investigations. Staff must not attribute bullying indicators automatically to disability or additional need.

22. Bullying in the Early Years

Young children's relational conflict, impulsive behaviour and developing social understanding require careful developmental interpretation. Staff should avoid prematurely labelling ordinary one-off conflict as bullying, while still intervening immediately where behaviour is harmful or repeated.

- Early intervention: staff step in calmly when behaviour becomes harmful, repeated or imbalanced and model conflict resolution.
- Support for all children: the child experiencing harm is reassured and protected; the child displaying the behaviour is taught safer ways to interact.
- Speaking up: children are helped to identify trusted adults and communicate when something feels wrong.
- Avoid labelling: staff describe the behaviour rather than defining a young child as a 'bully'.
- Positive behaviour: Ready, Respectful, Safe and age-appropriate positive expectations are reinforced.
- Modelling: adults demonstrate respectful relationships and language.
- Stories, dolls and role-play: used to develop empathy, friendship skills and help-seeking.
- Challenge stereotypes: discriminatory or gendered assumptions are challenged positively.
- Restorative work: used only at a level the child can understand and never as a forced reconciliation.
- Work with parents: key persons communicate patterns and strategies and encourage children to seek adult help rather than retaliate.

- Safeguarding: repeated sexualised, coercive, highly aggressive or developmentally unusual behaviour is discussed with the DSL and may require further assessment/referral.

23. Bullying of or by staff/parents

This pupil anti-bullying policy does not replace employment, complaints or staff-conduct procedures. However, threatening, abusive or bullying behaviour by pupils or parents towards staff is unacceptable and will be addressed under the Behaviour Policy, Complaints arrangements and relevant employment/safety procedures.

DfE published new non-statutory guidance on preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff in July 2026. Although parts are directed primarily at maintained schools and academies, The Mount will use relevant principles as good practice.

24. Recording, monitoring and governance

The School will maintain a central or clearly retrievable record of reported bullying concerns, findings, actions and review outcomes. Records should distinguish allegations from substantiated findings and link to safeguarding records where appropriate.

Leaders will monitor recurrence, locations, year groups, online/offline context, prejudice/discrimination, SEND vulnerability, victimisation patterns and the effectiveness of interventions. Serious sanctions are also recorded in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and Independent School Standards.

The Headteacher will provide the Director/Proprietor with appropriate assurance about bullying trends and policy implementation while protecting pupil confidentiality.

25. Complaints and escalation

Parents should normally raise concerns with the Form Teacher, then SLT and Headteacher where necessary. A formal complaint may be made under the School's Complaints Procedure if concerns remain unresolved.

The complaints route must not delay safeguarding action. Where a child may be at risk of harm, the DSL process takes priority.

26. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a serious incident, significant pattern, statutory/guidance change or evidence that procedures are not working effectively.

Appendix A - Bullying concern and review record

Child reporting/affected:

Date/time/location/online platform:

What was reported - child's words where relevant:

Frequency/history/power imbalance:

Immediate safety action:

Possible safeguarding issue? DSL informed/time:

Other pupils involved/witnesses:

Evidence considered:

Finding - conflict/behaviour/bullying/safeguarding/other:

Support for child affected:

Action/support for child responsible:

Sanction:

Parent communication:

Review date:

At review - has behaviour stopped?

Further action:

Appendix B - Professional-noticing prompts

- Is there a power imbalance?
- Is the behaviour repeated or likely to be repeated?
- Is a group targeting one child?
- Is prejudice or discrimination involved?
- Is there sexualised or misogynistic conduct?
- Is the harm continuing online after School?
- Does SEND/communication make reporting harder?
- Has attendance or behaviour changed?
- Is this actually child-on-child abuse requiring DSL action?
- Have we checked later that the behaviour really stopped?

Appendix C - Pupil help card

- You do not have to deal with bullying alone.
- Tell an adult you trust.
- If the first person does not understand, tell someone else.
- Do not fight back or retaliate online.
- Save evidence safely if the bullying is online.
- Ask a friend to come with you if telling feels difficult.
- If you are worried about someone else, tell an adult too.
- We will listen and act.