

Anti Bullying Policy

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Purpose and rationale

At Thornden School we strive to create a culture based on our core values of Belong, Care, Aspire and Succeed. We are committed to providing a supportive, caring, friendly and safe environment for all our students, to promote the value of individuality, to respect diversity, to show tolerance and empathy towards others and to promote quality of opportunity for all. It is important that we make our students knowledgeable about bullying and teach them strategies that enable them to stand up to for themselves without resorting to retaliation in any form. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- All stakeholders (parents, students, staff, trustees) share an agreed understanding of what bullying is and that bullying of any kind is unacceptable.
- All stakeholders are able to distinguish between what is bullying and what it is not.
- All stakeholders are clear what the school policy is and how we deal with bullying.
- All stakeholders are clear about how bullying should be reported.
- Students and parents/carers feel listened to and supported in the event of reporting bullying.

Definition

Thornden School uses the Diana Award definition of bullying: **“Repeated negative behaviour that is intended to make others feel upset, uncomfortable or unsafe”.**

The Diana Award defines bullying in three ways:

Types of Bullying – VIP

Verbal bullying is the repeated, negative use of speech, sign language, or verbal gestures to intentionally hurt others, e.g. using hurtful words, discriminatory or offensive language, or swear words.

Indirect bullying is the repeated, negative use of actions, which are neither physical nor verbal, to intentionally hurt others e.g. spreading rumours, purposefully excluding another person, damaging or stealing someone’s property, or cyberbullying.

Physical bullying is the repeated, negative use of body contact to intentionally hurt others, e.g. kicking, punching, slapping, inappropriate touching, or spitting.

Cyberbullying is the repeated, negative use of technology to intentionally hurt others e.g. posting unwanted pictures or messages, accessing another person’s account without permission, creating fake accounts to impersonate or harass someone, and sharing other people’s private information online.

At Thornden we teach students to recognise the difference between bullying behaviour and other types of negative behaviours, such as conflict and meanness. Staff will use questions when speaking to students, to determine whether a negative behaviour is in fact bullying, conflict or meanness.

Type of behaviour	Frequency	Student(s) involved	Intention
Bullying	Several times on purpose	One person hurts another	Planned and deliberate
Conflict	Once or more	Two people hurt each other	Planned and unplanned
Meanness	Once on purpose	One person hurts another	Planned and deliberate

Protected Characteristics

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on the grounds of race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences, or perceived differences. Thornden recognises that students with protected characteristic are more likely to experience one or more of the three negative behaviours: bullying, conflict, meanness. Thornden recognises that sometimes other students might make individual or series of comments which are deliberately discriminatory (meanness and bullying respectively) but that they might make comments which are discriminatory without the intent to be discriminatory.

We have adapted the Protected Characteristics set out in the Equality Act of 2010, in order to make them age and context dependent for a secondary school environment. Our anti bullying policy formally recognises the following protected characteristics:

- Race
- Religion and/or Belief
- SEND and disability.
- Gender and sex.
- Sexual orientation.

The Equality Act of 2010 states that ***'it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of these characteristics'***. Therefore, school sanctions for discrimination will begin at a higher level and escalate quicker than for those for non-discriminatory behaviours. We also recognise the need to educate those whose behaviour are discriminatory, either intentionally or unintentionally is greater than the need to educate those for non-discriminatory behaviour.

Setting the right ethos

Thornden aims to set the right ethos by being a 'telling' school. A 'telling' school is one where students do inform staff when bullying is taking place. We recognise that if students who feel they are being bullied tell us about bullying we must work together to create an atmosphere of trust. Students who are classed as targets must know that their concern will be taken seriously and recognise that thorough investigations take time. We must make it easy for students to report concerns of possible bullying. They must understand that these may result in a number of different outcomes and be familiar with the content of our flow chart – 'Thornden's approach to bullying'. We will aim to create this ethos through assemblies, tutor time and the PSHE curriculum so that they understand bullying related to child-on-child abuse, and gender and sexual harassment linked to KCSIE safeguarding responsibilities.

Prevention of bullying

Thornden aims to prevent bullying occurring by using proactive strategies. These include:

- Assemblies
- Marking the significance of Anti-Bullying Week – an annual campaign aimed at raising awareness about bullying, its impact on individuals, and the importance of preventing bullying in schools, communities, and online spaces.
- Student voice questionnaires
- The role of the tutor and tutor time activities
- The role of Heads of Year and the pastoral team.
- Religious Studies lessons
- PSHE curriculum
- Student Leaders
- Produce and monitor reports of anti-bullying type behaviour incidents – reviewing them regularly with pastoral and SLT teams.
- Clear signage around the school (including classrooms and student toilets) - informing students of Thornden's stepped approach to tackling bullying and ways in which to report their concerns.

The strategies above will help students to understand the following:

- What bullying is and the devastating effects it can have on the victims.
- Ways in which good friends differ from toxic friends.
- How cliques, 'banter' and peer pressure can lead to bullying within friendship groups.
- The reasons why bullies bully.
- How students can respond appropriately to it and report it safely without fear of reprisal.
- How to respond appropriately by becoming upstanders rather than bystanders.
- How students can take away the bullies' power and opportunity to bully.

Thornden also aims to create student anti-bullying ambassadors through The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Campaign. Their role will be to help educate their peers on bullying, report incidents if they witness bullying, lead on anti-bullying campaigns, promote a culture which celebrates and tolerates difference and help keep their peers safe both offline and online.

Reporting and recording incidents

Students are encouraged to report all incidents of bullying, not just as victims, but as upstanders who have seen it or heard about it. However, we also understand why some students may be cautious about doing this. As we know bullies will often pick on others who they believe won't speak out. Students are taught how to report bullying, including:

- Through a parent or friend
- Through a member of Thornden staff
- Through Thornden Student Leaders
- Signposting to external support
- Link in the student bulletin
- 'Report a concern' link on Thornden School website
- Weekly link from Satchel

By providing a range of ways in which students can report a concern, we encourage students to choose the one that they are most comfortable with. If reporting in person, students are encouraged to talk to a member of staff who they feel most comfortable talking to. There may be occasions where we do not let the bully know who has reported it, making it clear it could be a witness rather than the victim who has reported it.

Students should feel confident that effective steps are being taken to make school a safe and secure environment in which to achieve and learn. We want our students to feel that they are supported in reporting incidents of bullying and reassured that action regarding bullying will take place so that they are protected.

Staff should log any incidents of poor behaviour on Arbor, in order for any patterns to be identified. This will include behaviour at breaktime and lunchtime. Any bullying reported to the member of staff, will then be shared with the child's Head of Year. Staff will respond to any incident of bullying as follows:

- Remove student from any immediate danger (if necessary)
- Acknowledge the incident and assure the student(s) that the information will be passed onto the appropriate member of staff to be investigated.
- Listen carefully to all accounts.
- Not make any premature assumptions.
- Treat every student with respect and compassion.
- Never ignore suspected bullying.
- Regularly review class seating plans.
- Talk to the Head of Year as soon as possible.
- HOY/Pastoral team will liaise with the victim and parents/carers after investigations have taken place.
- HOY/Pastoral team will complete check ins with the victim after the incident has been resolved to ensure the behaviours have stopped.

Parents/Carers should understand and feel confident in the steps that are being taken by the school to make sure children are safe at school and will support us in helping us meet our aims. They should:

- Be encouraged to keep a log of the issues and contact the relevant HOY, even if their child has asked for "secrecy" so that they can work the school to bring an end to the bullying.
- Contact the school if they know or suspect that their child is bullying another student.
- Share with the school any suspicions they have that bullying is taking place, even when it does not directly involve their child.
- Restorative conversation - mediation by one of our pastoral team if all parties are in agreement

Response to bullying

Thornden's approach to bullying in school

ONCE	REPEATED	ONGOING	SUSTAINED
One incident of behaviour intended to make others feel uncomfortable, upset or unsafe.	Second incident of behaviour intended to make others feel uncomfortable, upset or unsafe.	Ongoing incidents of behaviour intended to make others feel uncomfortable, upset or unsafe.	Repeated deliberate behaviour that is intended to make others feel uncomfortable, upset or unsafe.
Staff action: Email or phone call to parent.	Staff action: HOY phone call home.	Staff action: Parental meeting with HOY to discuss bullying contract.	Repeated deliberate breach of bullying contract.
Consequence(s): Restorative conversation and /or Break time DT.	Consequence(s): SLT ASDT and /or RBD.	Consequence: Isolation Room and bullying contract.	Staff action: Parental meeting with SLT. Final warning letter.
			Consequence: Suspension. Removed from Thornden.

Reasonable adjustments will be made for students with Special Educational needs = social stories/comic strips.



Belong - Care - Aspire - Succeed

Our stepped approach to bullying at Thornden provides a framework of sanctions which escalate in severity if incidents are repeated by the same student, directed at different victims or the same victim. The aim of having escalating sanctions is that the bully stops their behaviours quickly, as permanent expulsion will be used as a last resort, if necessary, to get the bullying to stop.

Sanctions and consequences that the school will use to manage bullying:

- Restorative conversation – mediated by one of our pastoral team if all parties are in agreement.
- Detentions – both during and after the school day.
- Isolation Room.
- Restorative Behaviour Day – Students can be referred to participate in this day by their Head of Year. The day runs once a week. This day focuses on five key strands – Acknowledgement, Restorative, Community, Strategies, and Positive Life Choices.
- Separation Strategy – behaviour/bullying contracts. These are used in some bullying or conflict-related incidents, if it is appropriate to separate the students involved. The contracts are used to get the bullying or conflict to stop, they are not a punishment or sanction. Instead, they intend to provide an environment in which all students remain separated during out-of-lesson times, during the school day. The contract is likely to provide 'zones' which students are expected to adhere to in order to maintain the separation. The contracts provide clear framework and accountability. Any student deliberately entering another student's zone shows clear intent to breach the contract, which will then lead to an escalation of sanctions being issued.
- Separation Strategy – seating plan changes and class changes. This is a common step taken by teachers once they are made aware of an issue between students. It is likely they will make changes to their seating plan to minimise interaction between the students. An escalation of this approach is that a class change is made to separate the students involved in the conflict or bullying incidents. Therefore, timetable changes are made, where possible, to ensure that the students involved are no longer in any of the same classes. In the instance of bullying, the school will aim to move the perpetrator classes rather than the victim, but this is often not exclusively possible for many reasons and in these cases a combination of both students moving classes will be arranged, weighted as much as reasonable possible towards the perpetrator moving.
- Parental meetings
- Reporting crimes to the Police – Where negative behaviour could be/are a crime, the school will advise parents to report them to the Police. There may be times where the school will report negative behaviour to the Police also.
- Involvement of Safeguarding Team – Should the member of staff involved in managing the negative behaviours have a safeguarding concern, they will report this to the Safeguarding Team. The Safeguarding Team will identify the level of risk to the child and if necessary, share this information with Children's Services.

Out of school incidents/Online bullying related incidents

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Thornden's 'Digital Detox' means if online bullying does occur between students, this is far more likely to occur outside of school hours. Cyber bullying is a different form of bullying, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click. Schools have wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011. This gives teachers authority to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.

All social media apps have minimum age limits. In general, these are typically 13+ except for WhatsApp which is 16+. The minimum age limits are set for multiple reasons, including the following stated by the 'Family Online Safety Institute'.

- They correspond with the stage of children's cognitive development where they can engage in abstract thinking which is a prerequisite for ethical thinking. Before this age it is difficult for a child to fully grasp the impact of their actions upon others, online or otherwise.

- It helps protect children's personal information. GDPR legislation requires that consent from a parent or legal guardian must be provided before a company collects personal data for children under 13. If a child uses a social media app whilst being under the minimum age limit the data protection laws cannot protect their personal information from being collected and shared with third parties. Bypassing these protective laws can give marketers access to the names and addresses of your children, and in many cases, it allows them to observe how/where they play, what they say, and who they hang out with.

Thornden expects parents/carers to follow the minimum age limit for social media relating to their child's online use as it supports children's healthy development and ensures that the laws that are there to protect them can do so.

It is not possible for Thornden staff to monitor and regulate the online activity that takes place on the social media accounts of all Thornden students; it is not reasonable for parents/carers to expect staff to do so. It is therefore important that Thornden clarify its responsibilities for negative behaviours that take place online. Thornden School will fully investigate instances of online meanness, conflict and bullying that take place during the school day or on the college site. To prevent these from happening the school has restricted electronic devices on site. Staff should therefore never see and never hear a student's mobile phone during the school day, except where they have permission from a member of staff to use them.

It would be helpful for parents/carers to inform us of incidents relating to bullying which has occurred out of school. This will allow us to risk assess the likelihood of the incident continuing into school and we are then informed to make any decisions to pre-empt and prevent, if reasonable and possible to do so.

There will be times where we can and cannot issue sanctions for out of school incidents/issues. Generally, if the student is in Thornden School uniform and the incident is to or from school then we are more likely to issue a sanction, with sufficient evidence. Thornden School will not investigate or sanction instances of online meanness, conflict or bullying which are unrelated to events in school and occur outside of school hours. We will encourage parents to report unpleasant online behaviour that does not constitute as a crime, to the social media platform/provider. Parents/carers are reminded that if online posts amount to malicious communication, harassment, abuse, hate crime or sexual harassment (including sharing of naked images) then they need to report this to the Police and the social media provider.

Supporting Documents

- Equality Act of 2010.
- Education Act 2011.
- Childline. www.childline.org.uk
- Family Lives. www.familylives.org.uk
- Kidscape. www.kidscape.org.uk
- MindEd. www.minded.org.uk
- NSPCC. www.nspcc.org.uk
- Young Minds. www.youngminds.org.uk
- Think U Know. www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- UK Safer Internet Centre. www.saferinternet.org.uk
- DfE: 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies', and "Supporting children and young people who are bullied: advice for school" March 2014. www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying
- Anti Bullying from the Diana Award [Anti-Bullying Programme \(antibullyingpro.com\)](http://antibullyingpro.com)

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025
[Keeping children safe in education 2025](#)
- Family Online Safety Institute
[Family Online Safety Institute \(fosi.org\)](#)