Anti-Bullying Policy
March 2024

Document title	Anti-Bullying Policy
Author (name & role title)	*Julie Swann – DSL, Priya Pillay - Head of Therapy*
Version number	**V5**
Date approved	**March 2024**
Review cycle	**Annually**
Approved by	**Senior Leadership Team**
Date of review	**March 25**

Document history

Version	Date	Author	Note of revisions
V1	Jun 20		
V2	Nov 21	JS	Annual Review
V3	Nov 22	JS	Annual Review
V4	Jan 23	CF	Update due to Change of ownership. Updated peer-on-peer to child-on-child
V5	March 2024	JS/PP	Update due to annual review

Heathermount School is owned and operated by Cavendish Education.

This policy is one of a series of school policies that, taken together, are designed to form a comprehensive statement of the school's aspiration to provide an outstanding education for each of its students and of the mechanisms and procedures in place to achieve this. Accordingly, this policy should be read alongside these policies. In particular, it should be read in conjunction with the policies covering equality and diversity, Health and Safety, safeguarding and child protection.

All of these policies have been written, not simply to meet statutory and other requirements, but to enable and evidence the work that the whole school is undertaking to ensure the implementation of its core value of building confidence and preparing students for life.

While this current policy document may be referred to elsewhere in Heathermount School documentation, including particulars of employment, it is non-contractual.

In the school's policies, unless the specific context requires otherwise, the word "parent" is used in terms of Section 576 of the Education Act 1996, which states that a 'parent', in relation to a child or young person, includes any person who is not a biological parent but who has parental responsibility, or who has care of the child. Department for Education guidance Understanding and dealing with issues relating to parental responsibility considers a 'parent' to include:

- all biological parents, whether they are married or not
- any person who, although not a biological parent, has parental responsibility for a child or young person - this could be an adoptive parent, a step-parent, guardian or other relative
- any person who, although not a biological parent and does not have parental responsibility, has care of a child or young person.
- A person typically has care of a child or young person if they are the person with whom the child lives, either full or part time and who looks after the child, irrespective of what their biological or legal relationship is with the child.

The school employs the services of the following consulting companies to ensure regulatory compliance and the implementation of best practice:

- Peninsula BrightHR
- Peninsula BusinessSafe (Health and Safety)
- Atlantic Data (DBS)
- Educare (online CPD)

Heathermount School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff, volunteers, pupils and visitors to share this commitment. All outcomes generated by this document must take account of and seek to contribute to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people at Heathermount School.

The policy documents of Heathermount School are revised and published periodically in good faith. They are inevitably subject to revision. On occasions a significant revision, although promulgated in school separately, may have to take effect between the re-publication of a set of policy documents. Care should therefore be taken to ensure, by consultation with the Senior Leadership Team, that the details of any policy document are still effectively current at a particular moment.

Contents

1. Mission Statement

Heathermount School is a specialist school for children and young people with Autism, where all students and staff have a right to go about their daily lives without the fear of being threatened, assaulted, or harassed and where they are respected.

At Heathermount School, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all of our students and staff, so that they can learn and work in a relaxed and secure atmosphere free from abuse. Bullying of any kind at Heathermount is unacceptable and if it does occur, we encourage everyone in our community to report it. Any incidents of bullying will be dealt with promptly and effectively and will be fully investigated.

2. Aims of the policy

The aims of this policy are to:
- ensure all students, staff, parents and governors have an understanding of what bullying is and can identify forms of bullying;
- clearly identify what preventative measures are in place to prevent bullying;
- identify the responsibilities of everyone at Heathermount to prevent bullying;
- create an environment where it is understood and accepted that bullying in any form, is not acceptable;
- identify the procedure and actions that need to be taken if bullying occurs and how the school will support both the victim and the bully;
- ensure that the school continues to evaluate and monitor its preventative strategy and review the anti-bullying policy.

3. What is Bullying?

Bullying is defined as behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the bully and the victim. Often the bully has a level of control over the relationship, and this makes it difficult for the victim to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest physically, psychologically (knowing what upsets someone), be due to an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate.   Bullying has been identified as a key area where child on child abuse can occur. This could be carried out either directly or via the internet (Cyberbullying). Child on child abuse is when a young person is exploited or harmed and/or bullied by their peers who are the same or similar age; everyone directly involved in child on child abuse is under the age of 18. Further details regarding the definition and symptoms of child on child abuse and the management of child on child abuse allegations is available in the Heathermount child on child abuse policy.

4. Types of Bullying

- **Emotional** – being unfriendly, excluding someone deliberately, tormenting (such as hiding books or bags), threatening gestures or laughing at someone who is upset;
- **Verbal** – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours and teasing;
- **Physical** – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, or any use of violence;

- **Extortion** – demanding money or goods with threat;
- **Racist** – writing offensive notes or graffiti, gestures, racial taunts, making someone feel worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith or national origin;
- **Sexual or sexist** – unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive comments, or where sexuality is used as weapon by boys or girls;
- **Homophobic** – targeting someone because of their real or perceived sexual orientation
- **Disablist** – bullying someone because of their disability, ability, appearance, or way of speaking or mannerisms
- **Cyber** – All areas of internet misuse, such a nasty or threatening emails, mobile threats by text messaging or calls, internet chat rooms, misuse of camera and video facilities including those on a mobile phone, gaming websites;

Cyberbullying

Given the ever changing nature of how children and young people communicate, it is important to understand and recognise the increased use of the internet to bully, deliberate or not. The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click

5. Signs & Symptoms of Bullying

People often find it difficult to speak out and may indicate by signs or their behaviour that they are being bullied. Everyone should be aware of these signs and should investigate if the person:
- is unwilling to go to school;
- begins to truant;
- starts stammering;
- becomes aggressive, abusive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- feels ill in the morning;
- their performance starts to drop;
- continually "looses" money;
- comes home with possession damaged or clothing torn;
- has unexplained cuts and bruises;
- is bullying others;
- is frightened to say what's wrong;
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- jumps or is nervous when a text or email is received;
- cries themselves to sleep at night;
- threatens or attempts suicide or self harm;
- threatens or attempts to run away from home;
- changes their eating habits;
- is unable to sleep;
- wets the bed.

6. Prevention

Bullying hurts and it can affect the social, mental and emotional health of those who are bullied. People with Autism often have very little understanding of the feelings of others and as an Autism specific school we recognise the impact that this can have in respect of bullying incidents and their interpretation. Whilst, autism should not be an excuse for bullying, we recognise that some students may make remarks or have responses that are not set out to be deliberately hurtful or cause harm, nor understand the intention of others who make comments or act towards them. All incidences of perceived bullying will be considered on

an individual basis.

At Heathermount we recognise that it is essential that our response to bullying does not start when it occurs but by taking preventative action beforehand. At Heathermount we will do this by:

- ensuring that all students receive insight into bullying through the use of the PSHE & RSE curriculum and across other areas of the curriculum such as through Drama and English or ICT;
- ensuring that parents and staff are aware of the signs and symptoms of bullying and know how to respond;
- supporting parents with their understanding of the vulnerabilities experienced by our students and guiding and encouraging them to monitor their child's online activity;
- developing empathy and emotional intelligence including "Theory of mind" using the school READY strategy to assist them in being with and working with others;
- celebrating differences and encouraging students to openly discuss the difficulties that others may experience based on their religion, race, gender, sexuality or family situations;
- creating an atmosphere throughout the whole school environment where praise of positive and supportive behaviour is demonstrated by all;
- all staff modeling appropriate and high standards of behaviour in their own physical, emotional and social responses;
- using specific events such as assemblies and Anti-bullying week to highlight the impact of bullying and that bullying is not acceptable behaviour;
- creating visuals to promote positive behaviour, highlight that bullying is not acceptable and also how to get help if you are being bullied;
- creating school rules that promote respect of others and are clear about expectations of behaviour;
- involving students in the development of the school strategy and emphasise their part to play in preventing bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders;
- dealing with any incidences quickly and effectively;
- working with the student council to ensure that students ideas or concerns are heard;
- creating a "student friendly" Anti-bullying policy to aid all students in their understanding;
- seeking guidance, updates and advice from local authority and national services and charitable organisations;
- reviewing the developments in technology that may impact on the e-safety of the school and its students;
- Reduce the risks by restricting the use of mobile phones whilst on the school premises;
- at least annually reviewing the school's preventative strategies and the Anti-bullying policy.

7. Responsibilities of School

The school will administer an Anti-bullying preventative strategy throughout the school and share this with all members of the school community. The School will provide a robust and clear Anti Bully Policy that will be shared with each individual member of staff and we will ensure they have a clear understanding of the policy. The Anti-bullying policy will be made available to parents via the school website or in hard copies.

We will ensure that all students and staff are aware of the importance of reporting bullying.

If bullying incidences do occur, the school are committed to:
- dealing with the incident quickly and effectively;
- recording a clear and precise account of the incident;
- dealing with the incident to support both the victim and the bully;
- making it clear that the bully's behaviour is unacceptable and must stop;
- using re-building and reconciliation to drive the process;

• working with both the families of the victim and the bully;
• reviewing the incident fairly and with respect to all concerned and their difficulties; and
• if consequences are needed to be applied, then they will depend on the individual circumstances of each incident.

8. Responsibilities of Students

At Heathermount we expect our students to:
- not become involved either directly or as a bystander in any form of bullying;
- tell staff if they witness bullying or are being bullied themselves;
- not retaliate if they are bullied or have witnessed bullying; and
- actively take part in all activities that the school provides to help their understanding of bullying, even though it might be difficult to understand.

9. Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers have a vital role to play in working with the school to prevent bullying in our school. We expect our parents to:
- encourage their child to be respectful and kind to others;
- highlight the importance to their child about following school rules;
- be aware of the types, signs and symptoms of bullying;
- monitor their child's internet activity to help prevent cyberbullying;
- take part in e-safety training provided by the school, particularly as people with autism often find it easier to participate in social situations via the internet than directly with others and this makes them vulnerable;
- encourage their child to talk to the school and report the bullying or report the bullying themselves;
- making sure that their child understands that it is not acceptable to retaliate against bullying, especially not violently;
- support their child by re-assuring them when reporting incidences, that they have done the right thing and that it is not their fault;
- work with the school, should bullying occur, in resolving the issue quickly and effectively;
- not retaliate or take matters into their own hands against the bully or their family; and
- cooperate with the school, even if it is their child who is accused of bullying and try to ascertain the truth.

10. Procedure to Report Bullying

All staff are responsible for implementing this policy and reporting any incidents of bullying as quickly as possible. The immediate response to an incident should be made by the member of staff who first learns of the matter. They should:
- challenge all incidents of bullying and take immediate action to secure the safety of all concerned where necessary;
- acknowledge that there is an issue;
- establish the facts of the incident such as what happened who was involved and how long it has been happening;
- make sure that both the victim and the bully are supported. Those students who may have difficulties with expressing themselves need to be supported effectively using school therapists, visuals, comic strip etc. to get an accurate account of what happened; and
- record the details as quickly as possible, using Arbor/My Concern (if there is a safeguarding concern linked to the bullying), this will automatically generate a message notifying the Head teacher, Deputy Head teacher and the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

11. Monitoring and Evaluation

Data will be gathered using the school's behaviour database - Arbor, and will also include data from parent and student questionnaires.

This Policy and procedures will be monitored and the effectiveness will be evaluated, in light of:
- • Number of students being bullied;
- • Student's willingness to report incidents;
- • Staff vigilance and response to the bullying behaviour e.g.; reporting on Arbor;
- • Number of student and parents feeling secure about the school's response to bullying; and
- • Discussion with the school council about levels of bullying.

12. Responses to and Monitoring of Bullying Incidents

As highlighted previously, people with Autism often have difficulty in their vocal and physical responses, especially in social situations. These actions can often lead to misunderstandings and their reactions may not be deliberate intentions to bully.

The immediate response will be for the matter to be recorded by staff and forwarded to the Senior Leadership team to establish the next course of action. In all cases, it must be made clear that the bully's behaviour is unacceptable and must stop, whether intentional or not.
Once the facts have been established the Parents/carers of the victim and the bully will be informed of the situation and the school's next steps.
The school will refer to the procedure outlined in the school's Child on child abuse policy and procedure July 2023 for guidance on next steps.
In some cases of bullying, this may include the need to involve the Children's services, Safeguarding teams, other local agencies or even the Police.
Any actions or next steps will be dependent on the individual circumstances of each incident. These could include (but not be limited to):
- ● Working with the school therapy teams to review the incident and provide insight into the bully's and victims actions;
- ● Re-build and reconciliation with peers;
- ● Discussion with the Senior Leadership Team, sometimes with parents/carers present
- ● Loss of privileges such as leisure time, specific activities;
- ● Review of any Autism Support Plans/EHCP/Risk assessment;
- ● Development of a Positive Behaviour Plan/Student agreements;
- ● Internal isolation; to be used to de-escalate anxiety for both the victim and the bully and as an opportunity of reflection and further work with the bully.
- ● Fixed term suspension;
- ● Permanent exclusion. This step will only be taken as a last resort, or as a result of extreme violent or persistent bullying that has not been resolved despite a variety of interventions.

All steps and actions will be taken in consultation with the victim, the bully, the Senior Leadership team, and parents/carers.
All steps and actions will be monitored for a period of 3 weeks to establish there has been no repetition and this will then be further monitored to check repetition each half term for 2 terms.

Policy Monitoring
Senior members of staff with responsibility for this policy area are the Head teacher, Deputy Headteacher, and Designated Safeguarding Lead. A child-friendly version of this policy, written by the student council is also available.

13. Other Associated School Policies, Guidance and Legislation and Links
This document has been drawn up using guidance and legislation from and in conjunction with:
- Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2000
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Equality Act 2020
- Keeping Children Safe in Education September 2023
- Promoting and supporting Mental health and well being in schools and colleges (June 2021)
- Mental Health and behaviour in schools (2018)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017)
- Cyberbullying; Advice for headteachers and school staff (2014)

This policy is also linked to the following school policies:

- Heathermount Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy March 2024
- Heathermount Child on Child Abuse Policy & Procedure July 2023.
- Heathermount Behaviour Policy 2024
- Heathermount E-safety Policy 2024

We would refer the reader to the following Links:
The use of social media for online radicalisation - GOV.UK
UK Safer Internet Centre
CEOP Education