MAHARISHI SCHOOL

Anti-bullying Policy

March 2025

Start Date: March 2025

Review Date: March 2027

Signed by:

Headteacher Lisa Edwards Date Mar 25 Chair of

Governors Ian Birnbaum Date Mar 25

Contents:

Statement of intent

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Harmony can only be established if everyone is at peace within themselves. We aim

to guide and support our pupils to establish peace within themselves through our system of Consciousness-based Education. At Maharishi School, we are committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment so that our pupils can learn in a relaxed and supportive atmosphere.

Bullying of any kind is not acceptable and staff, pupils and parents have a responsibility to ensure that bullying does not happen at Maharishi School. If bullying does occur, all pupils should know who they can tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

This policy outlines how instances of bullying are dealt with, including the procedures to prevent occurrences of bullying.

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Equality Act 2010

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Malicious Communications Act 1988

Public Order Act 1986

Communications Act 2003

Human Rights Act 1998

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Education Act 2011

DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying'

DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'

DfE (2022) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023'

DCMS, DSIT and UK Council for Internet Safety (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

Enabling Good Behaviour Policy

Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Remote Education Policy

Relationships and Health Education Policy (primary)

Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy (secondary)

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, "bullying" is defined as persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another person or group. Bullying is generally characterised by:

Repetition: Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over an

extended period of time.

Intent: The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental.

Targeting: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.

Power imbalance: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal

power relations.

Vulnerable pupils are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. Vulnerable pupils may include, but are not limited to, pupils who are adopted, pupils suffering from a health problem, pupils with caring responsibilities, pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Pupils with certain characteristics may also be more at risk of bullying, including, but not limited to, pupils who are LGBTQ+, or perceived to be LGBTQ+, Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils, pupils with SEND.

3. Types of bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Teasing another pupil because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, home life, culture, or SEND are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums: verbal, physical, emotional, online (cyberbullying).

Racist bullying: Bullying another person based on their ethnic background or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.

Homophobic and bi-phobic bullying: Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Transphobic bullying: Bullying based on another person's gender identity or gender presentation, or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.

Sexist bullying: Bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.

Sexual bullying: Bullying behaviour that has a physical, psychological, verbal or non-verbal sexual dimension or dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or

intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

Ableist bullying: Bullying behaviour that focuses on another person's disability or support needs; this can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability.

Prejudicial bullying: Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics or experiences, e.g. religion or mental health issues.

Relational bullying: Bullying that primarily consists of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

Socioeconomic bullying: Bullying based on prejudices against the perceived social status of the victim, including, but not limited to, their economic status, their parents' occupations, their health or nutrition level, or the perceived "quality" of their clothing or belongings.

4. Statutory requirements

The school understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, it has a responsibility to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- The school understands that, under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, it could have charges brought against it if it allows the rights of pupils to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously. The headteacher will ensure that this policy complies with the HRA; the headteacher understands that they cannot do this

without fully involving their teaching staff.

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/or communications may be considered criminal offences:

- Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or in a way which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or contains information which is false and known and known or believed to be false by the sender.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message, or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene, or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information through any media, including internet sites.
- Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to the police include violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment, or intimidation, and hate crimes.

5. Prevention

The school has a whole-school commitment to addressing bullying and a clear set of values and standards, underpinned by Consciousness-based Education, which is regularly promoted across the whole school.

At the primary phase, all types of bullying will be discussed in line with the Relationships and Health Education Policy - Primary Phase.

At the secondary phase, all types of bullying will be discussed in line with the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy - Secondary Phase.

The curriculum will explore and discuss issues at age-appropriate stages such as: Healthy and respectful relationships; Boundaries and consent; Stereotyping, prejudice and equality; Body confidence and self-esteem; How to recognise abusive relationships and coercive control; Harmful sexual behaviour, the concepts involved and why they are always unacceptable, and the laws relating to it.

Cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills will be encouraged. Diversity, difference, and respect for others will be promoted and celebrated. Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills will be provided.

Opportunities to speak with staff members will be provided and where appropriate, a key person will be allocated.

The school will be alert to, and address, any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst pupils, as these can be a cause, or a result, of bullying behaviour.

The school will ensure potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional, and social development is not negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g. mental health issues.

6. Signs of bullying

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is a victim of bullying: Being frightened to travel to or from school; Unwillingness to attend school; Repeated or persistent absence from school; Becoming anxious or lacking confidence; Saying that they feel ill repeatedly; Decreased involvement in school work; Leaving school with torn clothes or damaged possessions; Missing possessions; Missing dinner money; Asking for extra money or stealing; Cuts or bruises; Lack of appetite; Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices; Lack of eye contact; Becoming short tempered; Change in behaviour and attitude at home.

Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional, or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating.

Staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a pupil is likely to exhibit bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following: They have

experienced mental health problems, which have led to them becoming more easily

aggravated; They have been the victim of abuse; Their academic performance has started to fall and they are showing signs of stress.

7. Staff Principles

The school will ensure that prevention is a prominent aspect of its approach to anti-bullying through its commitment to Consciousness-based Education, which helps pupils to develop awareness of themselves and the world around them, thereby creating a positive school environment.

Staff will treat reports of bullying seriously and will not ignore signs of suspected bullying. Staff will act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident. If a member of staff believes a pupil is in danger, e.g. of being hurt, they will inform the DSL immediately.

8. Child-on-child abuse

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. To prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate pupils about abuse, its forms, and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE lessons.

The school's Child-on-Child Abuse Policy outlines the school's stance on addressing child-on-child abuse, including sexual abuse, and the procedures in place will be adhered to if any instances are uncovered or disclosed.

9. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can take many forms and can go even further than face-to-face bullying by invading personal space and home life and can target more than one person. It can also take place across age groups and target pupils, staff and others, and may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. It can sometimes draw bystanders into being accessories.

Cyberbullying can include the following: Threatening, intimidating, or upsetting text messages; Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips; Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress; Silent or abusive phone calls; Using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible; Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name; Menacing or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom; Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging; Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites and social networking sites, e.g. Facebook.

NB. The above list is not exhaustive, and cyberbullying may take other forms.

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying. The school views cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in this policy if they become aware of any incidents.

All learning at home will follow procedures outlined in the Remote Education Policy. During times when remote education is being utilised, the school will frequently be in contact with parents to make them aware of their activities online and to reinforce the importance of pupils staying safe online and explaining how filtering and monitoring procedures work.

Staff will be aware that a cyberbullying incident might include features different to other forms of bullying, prompting a particular response. Significant differences may include the following:

- **Possible extensive scale and scope** – pupils may be bullied on multiple platforms and using multiple different methods that are made possible by virtue of the bullying taking place online

- **The anytime and anywhere nature of cyberbullying** – pupils may not have an escape from the torment when they are at home due to the bullying continuing through technology at all times

- **The person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is** – it is easy for individuals to remain anonymous online and on social media, and pupils may be bullied by someone who is concealing their own identity

- **The perpetrator might not realise that their actions are bullying** – sometimes, the culture of social media, and the inability to see the impact that words are having on someone, may lead to pupils crossing boundaries without realising

- **The victim of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened** – pupils may have taken screenshots of bullying, or there may be a digital footprint that can identify the perpetrator

Staff and pupils will be instructed not to respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. Evidence of the incident should be recorded, e.g. taking screenshots. Staff will report incidents to a member of the DSL team for the incident to be investigated and support to be provided.

Where offensive content is posted online targeting a staff member or pupil, the person targeted will be encouraged to use the reporting mechanism on the website or social media platform to request its removal. If the person who posted it is known to the school, they will be requested to remove it directly.

In accordance with the Education Act 2011, the school has the right to examine and delete files from pupils' personal devices, e.g. mobiles phones, where there is good reason to do so.

10. Sanctions

If the headteacher, or designated staff member, is satisfied that bullying did take place, the perpetrator will be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and informed of the type of sanction to be used in this instance. Sanctions will be in line with the school's Enabling Good Behaviour Policy.

If possible, there will be an attempt at reconciliation and an apology will be sought from the perpetrator. Victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the perpetrator. Parents will be informed of bullying incidents and what action is being taken.

All staff involved in managing instances of bullying will be aware that taking disciplinary action and providing support are not mutually exclusive actions and

should be conducted simultaneously to encourage more positive behaviour in future.

The school will avoid unnecessarily criminalising pupils for bullying or abusive behaviour where possible, as young people with criminal records face stigma and discrimination in future aspects of their lives. The school's focus when handling perpetrators will be supporting them to develop more positive behaviours and to refrain from abusive and bullying behaviours in the future.

11. Support

Victims will be offered a range of support, depending on individual circumstances, but may include one or more of the following: Emotional support and reassurance from the Family Support Worker or another designated member of staff; Reassurance that it was right to report the incident and that appropriate action will be taken; Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff; Advice on aspects of online safety, in the event of cyberbullying, to prevent re-occurrence, including, where appropriate, discussion with their parents to evaluate their online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online; Discussion with their parent on whether police action is required (except in serious cases of child exploitation or abuse where the police may be contacted without discussion with parents).

The school acknowledges that bullying may be an indication of underlying mental health issues. Perpetrators will be required to attend mandatory sessions to assist with any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. The school will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.

Pupils who have bullied others will be supported in the following ways: Receiving a consequence for their actions; Being able to discuss what happened; Being helped to reflect on why they became involved; Being helped to understand what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour; Appropriate assistance from parents.

12. Bullying outside of school

Staff will remain aware that bullying can happen both in and outside of school and will ensure that they understand how to respond to reports of bullying that occurred

outside school in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Child-on-child Abuse Policy.

The headteacher has a specific statutory power to sanction pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives the headteacher the power to regulate pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises, and therefore, not under the lawful charge of a school staff member.

Teachers have the power to sanction pupils for misbehaving outside of the school premises. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, e.g. on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

13. Record keeping

The DSL team will ensure that robust records are kept with regard to all reported or otherwise uncovered incidents of bullying. Incidents will be reviewed at regular DSL meetings for the purposes of: Identifying patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour on the part of certain pupils that may need to be handled, e.g. with pastoral support; Reflecting on whether cases could have been handled better and using these reflections to inform future practice; Considering whether there are wider cultural issues at play within the school, e.g. whether school culture facilitates discriminatory bullying by not adequately addressing instances, and planning to mitigate this; Considering whether prevention strategies could be strengthened based on any patterns in the cases that arise; Responding to any complaints about how cases have been handled.

15. Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed every two years by the headteacher and the DSL. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

The scheduled review date for this policy is March 2027.