

GEMS Wellington School Qatar

Anti-Bullying Policy Academic Year 2025-26

Date last reviewed | August 2025

Review period | Yearly

Responsible person | Assistant Headteacher – Culture and Ethos

Vision

An aspirational and globally minded community of happy, high performing learners who achieve personal and academic excellence.

Mission

To create a truly inclusive school that effectively empowers each individual to contribute and maintain a consistently positive, harmonious and vibrant environment conducive to high quality learning. With a clear emphasis on coherent moral values, proactive attitudes and positive behaviours, our students will celebrate diversity and will be well equipped to take their place in our ever-changing world. They will be independent, innovative thinkers who will possess a strong sense of personal and global responsibility with the ability to shape their own destiny.

Introduction

At GEMS Wellington School Qatar (WSQ), we are dedicated to creating an environment whereby students can learn in a safe, relaxed and comfortable setting, without the fear of being bullied.

Students are given the autonomy to be able to speak freely and openly with staff about bullying and if incidents of bullying occur then this is taken seriously and is dealt with in a timely manner. Students are also aware they are able to speak to any member of staff (Teachers, Teaching Assistants, Phase Leads/ Year Leads, SLT, School Councilor or Nurse).

Objectives

We expect all members of the WSQ community to treat each other with respect and courtesy. We pride ourselves on being a community and therefore we should care for and support each other. Likewise, we understand that a partnership between the school and parents is fundamental in facilitating student progress.

If bullying occurs all pupils should be able to inform any member of staff safe in the knowledge that incidents will be dealt with promptly, efficiently and effectively. We are a 'telling' school and anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

WSQ views the issue of bullying as a serious matter and any incidents will be dealt with appropriately. Clear procedures for reporting bullying should be understood and followed by all members of the WSQ community.

As a school community our specific aims regarding bullying are:

- To counter any views that bullying is an inevitable part of school life.
- To adopt a proactive approach to bullying rather than reactive.
- To promote a culture of honesty and information sharing, thus discouraging secrecy.
- To create a supportive climate where the victim is protected.
- To provide a safe, secure learning environment for all pupils.

Defining Bullying

At WSQ we define bullying as: The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.

Bullying is behaviour which is meant to be deliberately hurtful to another person either by an individual or a group. It is repeated over a period of time and it is difficult for the victim to defend themselves against the abuse.

It can take many forms (examples are listed below) such as physical or emotional but can also involve the marginalisation or isolation of individuals from specific groups as well as abuse via media and social networks. It can be motivated by prejudice against specific groups based on race, religion, culture, sex, gender, special educational needs or disability (SEND) or their home background.

Bullying can occur anywhere and at any time and this policy is applicable to all members of the school community at all times. The following list provides examples of bullying, but is not absolute:

Physical- Pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, poking or any other such use of violence;

Verbal- Name-calling, sarcasm, unkind nicknames, spreading rumours, teasing, excluding, tormenting, (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures), being unfriendly;

Racist- Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures;

Sexual or homophobic- Unwanted physical contact or abusive or suggestive comments;

Religious or cultural- Comments that mock either religious practices or belief, cultural, making negative comments about anyone's language, literature or anything that creates the sense of national identity, anything that goes against the Qatari national values;

SEND- Preying on vulnerabilities, making negative comments about any additional/ special need or disability, making fun of a person because of any medical conditions.

Statistically, students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) are more likely to experience bullying, due to vulnerabilities and power imbalances. Children with SEND can often lack the social or communication skills to report such incidents. As an inclusive school, we embody the GEMS vision for inclusion: 'To ensure all students have the right support and opportunities at the right time so they become resilient, happy and successful in their adult life'. At WSQ, all staff are alert to the potential bullying of vulnerable individuals and have structured interventions in place to support this. If there are any concerns regarding bullying, due to SEND, support from the Thrive Team is available.

Cyber-bullying

Online/Cyber Bullying is the use of technology (social networking, messaging, text messages, email, chat rooms etc.) to harass threaten or intimidate someone for the same reasons stated above. Online bullying can take many forms including the following:

- Abusive or threatening texts, emails, videos or messages
- Posting abusive comments on social media sites
- Sharing humiliating videos or photos of someone else
- Stealing someone's online identity
- Spreading rumours online
- Trolling – sending someone menacing or upsetting messages through social networks, chatrooms or games
- Developing hate sites about another person
- Prank calls or messages
- Group bullying or exclusion online
- Anonymous messaging
- Encouraging a young person to self-harm
- Pressuring children to send pictures, videos or messages

Bullying outside of school

Any act of bullying that is reported to WSQ staff and occurs off the school site or outside of normal school hours (including cyber-bullying) will be investigated and acted on in the same manner as if it occurred on school premises.

Bullying of Adults

At WSQ, we feel it is equally important to recognise that bullying of adults, including staff and parents, whether by pupils, parents or other staff members, is unacceptable. The anti-bullying policy and procedures will be followed to investigate any incidents of bullying of adults.

Signs and Symptoms

A student may exhibit behaviour that is indicative that he/she is being bullied. Adults should be aware that the following are possible signs and that they should report these on the safeguarding platform, Guard:

- Begins to do poorly in school work, showing a noticeable and unexplained deterioration in quality and quantity;
- Becomes withdrawn, starts to stammer or develops nervous habits;
- Regularly has books or clothes hidden, lost or destroyed;
- Cries easily;
- Becomes distressed;

- Stops eating;
- Has possessions that go 'missing';
- Starts to steal money;
- Is frightened to say what is wrong;
- Self-harm;
- Has nightmares.

These traits could indicate the existence of other unrelated problems, but bullying should be considered as a possibility.

Procedures

Any incidents of bullying must be reported to a member of staff; we encourage pupils, parents and staff to report any incidents of bullying. All cases of bullying (as defined by WSQ's definition of bullying) will be recorded by staff, logged on Guard, and reviewed regularly by the relevant members of SLT, Designated Safeguarding Leads and Pastoral Leads. All incidents of bullying will be addressed using the WSQ behaviour policy procedures.

It should be noted that children who bully others may not understand that they are making life difficult for another child, and may find this realisation very distressing (NSPCC, 2016). If bullying has been reported, steps will be taken to respond to the needs of both the victim and the perpetrator.

In accordance with the WSQ behaviour policy following action may take place in response to bullying at WSQ:

- The parents of all pupils concerned in the bullying incident will be contacted at the earliest opportunity.
- Relevant staff members will thoroughly investigate each incident
- Use a variety of restorative techniques to ensure the victim and perpetrator are supported and the incident is resolved.
- Feedback to all parties will be carried out, by the relevant members of staff, as and when the investigation is complete.
- Sanctions will be put in place in accordance with the WSQ behaviour and policy.
- Referrals to internal/ external support may be made if needed (e.g., school counselor, Thrive or external agencies providing appropriate mental health support).
- The situation will be monitored by staff to ensure that the bullying has stopped permanently.

Staff Responsibilities

- All members of staff must be aware that bullying will not be accepted at WSQ.
- Vigilantly following the procedures, reporting and acting upon any signs of distress or bullying should they occur

- Enforcing of the school rules and are thus expected to support and implement the anti-bullying policy.
- The SLT and Designated Safeguarding Leads are responsible age-appropriate investigations.
- Foster self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others, in all of our pupils.
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.
- Discuss bullying with all students, so that every pupil learns about the damage it can cause to both the pupil who is bullied and to the bully. The importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens and the responsibilities of being a bystander to bullying.
- Listen to pupils who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
- Develop teaching resources and opportunities to focus pupils on anti-bullying.

Parent Responsibilities

- Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying.
- Advising their children to report any bullying to the appropriate member of staff and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue for themselves and other children.
- Advising their children not to retaliate towards any forms of bullying.
- Be sympathetic and supportive towards their children and reassure them that appropriate action will be taken.
- Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved.
- Co-operating with the school, if their children are accused of bullying, to try to ascertain the truth and point out the implications of bullying for the victim and the perpetrator and to support the school in appropriate sanctions.
- Being aware of the anti-bullying policy and ensuring they know to contact a member of staff if they are concerned about bullying.
- Working with the school to role model positive behaviour for pupils, both on and offline.

Student Responsibilities

- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- Intervene to protect the pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected incidents of bullying to dispel any kind of secrecy and help to prevent further incidences.
- Not suffer in silence and have the courage to speak out to about their own experiences or that of peers to put an end to their own suffering and that of other potential targets.

- Be involved and engage in anti-bullying strategies and initiatives in school to embed the message.

The Pastoral Team

GEMS Wellington School Qatar (WSQ) understands the importance of having a strong presence of pastoral support, across the whole school. We have dedicated Assistant Head Teachers for Pastoral: Alana Brereton (Primary), Emma Wright (Secondary) and Gemma Relph (Sixth Form). Nubla Valakkotil Abdunnafe (Primary School Councilor) Poonam Bedi (Secondary School Councilor) and Phase/ Year Leads are also an integral part of our Pastoral Team. All teachers are trained to support students with pastoral needs, referring to appropriate members of staff when needed.

Promotion of Anti-Bullying Principles

The school actively promotes anti-bullying through the following means:

- Our values, beliefs and ethos, embedded through the HPL VAAs
- Dedicated daily time with the Class Teacher/ Form Tutor
- Growell, PSHE and Self Improvement lessons including topics on bullying and cyber-bullying
- Use of external resources from 'The Happy Confident Company' and 'Upstrive'
- Discussions surrounding healthy relationships and challenging unhealthy behaviours
- Display of literature and policy in communal areas
- Assemblies
- Awareness days and weeks with a focus on celebrating differences
- Robust safeguarding policies and practices, through the use of the Guard platform
- Regular pastoral meetings with key members of staff

All students at WSQ are encouraged to believe that they have a role in safely preventing bullying when they find themselves as bystanders.

End of Policy