ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Reviewed:	July 2026
Next Review Due:	July 2027
Applies To:	Whole School
Owner:	Head of School
Approved By:	Board of Directors

Mission, Vision and Values

Mission
To inspire our children to reach their full potential by fostering curiosity and an interest in learning, awakening their minds and illuminating their world.

Vision
To create an affordable international secondary school with a high standard of education where children learn through practical and project-based work. To develop our students' moral and intellectual capacity, and to encourage creativity and adaptability.

Aim
An education that is broad, balanced and challenging, with an emphasis on developing strong connections to our host country, Uganda.

Values
Desire for lifelong learning; an ability to adapt; be innovative and reflective thinkers; open minded, and empathetic while achieving high academic success according to individual potential.

7 HILLS INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL
ADVENTURE IN LEARNING

Contents

1. Introduction and Policy Rationale
2. Policy Aims
3. Scope of Application
4. Definition of Bullying
5. What Bullying Is Not
6. Forms of Bullying Recognised by the Policy
    6.1 Physical bullying
    6.2 Verbal bullying
6.3 Emotional and psychological bullying
6.4 Cyberbullying
6.5 Prejudice-based bullying
6.6 Sexual or gender-based bullying
7. Ethos, Culture, and Preventative Approach
8. Responsibilities Within the School Community
    8.1 The Head of School
    8.2 Staff and Adults in School
    8.3 Students
    8.4 Parents and Carers
9. Reporting Bullying Concerns
10. Responding to Bullying Allegations
11. Cyberbullying Response
12. Supporting Students Affected by Bullying
13. Supporting Students Who Engage in Bullying Behaviour
14. Sanctions and Restorative Responses
15. Preventative and Educational Strategies
16. Monitoring, Data, and Review
17. Distribution and Access

1. Introduction and Policy Rationale

7Hills International School (7Hills) is a diverse, multicultural and values-driven secondary school located in Kampala, Uganda, serving students from a wide range of nationalities, languages, family backgrounds and cultural identities. Our aim is to create a learning community in which every student feels emotionally safe, academically supported and personally respected, and where differences are celebrated as a strength rather than a source of exclusion or discrimination.

Bullying behaviour undermines these aims by causing emotional distress, eroding trust within relationships and creating barriers to learning and participation. Bullying can have a long-term impact on a child's mental health, their self-confidence, their identity formation and their sense of belonging in school. As an international school in Uganda, we recognise that our context brings additional complexities, including linguistic diversity, differing cultural understandings of discipline, hierarchical family norms and varied expectations about social behaviour and peer relationships. For this reason, 7Hills adopts a clear, consistent, compassionate and educative approach to preventing and addressing bullying, grounded in our Stoplight Behaviour Philosophy and restorative culture.

This policy outlines how bullying is defined and understood at 7Hills, how it is prevented, how it is reported and recorded and how the school responds when incidents occur. The policy applies equally to face-to-face interactions, digital and online environments and situations that occur on or off the school campus where they impact learning, safety, or wellbeing. All members of our school community share collective responsibility for sustaining a culture in which bullying is not tolerated, respectful relationships are modelled and students are supported to develop empathy, resilience and self-regulation.

2. Policy Aims

Through this policy, 7Hills seeks to:

1. Establish a clear, shared understanding of what constitutes bullying, and how it differs from general conflict, relational tension or occasional unkind behaviour.
2. Promote a proactive and preventative culture in which emotional safety, respect, kindness and inclusion are integral to daily school life.
3. Create safe, accessible, and trusted routes for students, parents and staff to report concerns or seek help.
4. Respond to incidents in a manner that is fair, proportionate, restorative and aligned with our Stoplight Approach and Behaviour Policy.
5. Support both students who have experienced bullying and students who have engaged in bullying behaviour, recognising that both may require guidance, structure and pastoral care.
6. Ensure that all incidents are recorded, monitored and reviewed so that patterns and emerging risks can be identified early.
7. Embed awareness of Ugandan cultural context, international diversity and safeguarding considerations in our approach to anti-bullying practice.

The purpose of the policy is therefore not only reactive, but developmental. Our commitment is to help students understand the impact of their behaviour, take responsibility for harm caused and learn how to restore trust and rebuild relationships in constructive and meaningful ways.

3. Scope of Application

This policy applies to:

- all students enrolled at 7Hills
- all staff employed by the school
- volunteers, visiting staff, coaches, and contracted service providers
- parents and carers engaging in school environments
- visitors to the school campus

The policy applies to behaviour that occurs:

- on the school site
- during school activities, trips, events, or sports fixtures
- while students are travelling to and from school
- when students are in school uniform or representing the school
- online or through digital platforms where behaviour affects a student's safety, dignity or wellbeing
- off-site or outside of school hours where actions create a significant impact on learning or emotional safety

This policy also applies to situations where a student experiences bullying or harassment by individuals not enrolled at or employed by the school, including students from other schools, former students, adults or unknown online users, where such behaviour affects the wellbeing, safety or educational experience of a 7Hills student.

While the school may not have direct disciplinary authority over individuals outside its community, it will take reasonable steps within its safeguarding responsibilities to support affected students and, where appropriate, liaise with families, other institutions or external agencies.

Where behaviour indicates risk of harm, exploitation, or abuse, the matter will be addressed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. Criminal matters may be referred to appropriate Ugandan authorities where necessary.

4. Definition of Bullying

At 7Hills, bullying is defined as:

Repetitive, intentional behaviour carried out by an individual or group, that causes physical, emotional or psychological harm to another person, where there is an actual or perceived imbalance of power.

Power imbalances may arise from:

- physical strength or size
- social influence or peer status

- age or year group
- group dynamics or numbers
- language proficiency
- academic confidence
- economic privilege
- digital access or online presence
- cultural authority or perceived social standing
- Additional Learning Needs

Bullying may be visible or subtle, direct or indirect and may take place openly or in private spaces, including online environments. Bullying behaviours include, but are not limited to:

- physical aggression or intimidation
- verbal abuse, threats, taunting, or humiliation
- social exclusion, isolation, or targeted avoidance
- spreading rumours or manipulating group relationships
- coercion, extortion, or emotional pressure
- harassment linked to identity, appearance, or background
- deliberate and sustained cyberbullying activity

The school acknowledges that bullying can be emotionally harmful even in the absence of physical aggression, and that psychological harm may be long-lasting if not addressed appropriately.

5. What Bullying Is Not

It is important to distinguish bullying from other forms of interpersonal difficulty, so that appropriate responses are used and students receive the right kind of support. Bullying is **not**:

- occasional disagreements between friends
- misunderstandings arising from language or cultural difference
- one-off incidents of unkind behaviour or poor judgement
- normal fluctuations within adolescent friendships
- accidental actions without intent to harm
- balanced disagreements in which all parties hold equal power

Such situations are classified as relational conflict rather than bullying.

However, relational conflict is still taken seriously. Unresolved interpersonal tension may escalate into bullying over time if patterns develop, power becomes unbalanced, or behaviour becomes targeted or repetitive. Staff therefore monitor repeated conflict between students and intervene early using restorative guidance, social coaching and structured support.

6. Forms of Bullying Recognised by the Policy

This policy covers all forms of bullying, including:

6.1 Physical bullying

- hitting, pushing, tripping, or blocking movement
- damaging or stealing personal property
- physical intimidation or threat displays

6.2 Verbal bullying

- name-calling or mocking
- degrading or humiliating comments
- threats or intimidation
- repeated teasing designed to cause distress

6.3 Emotional and psychological bullying

- exclusion from groups or activities
- social manipulation or isolation
- spreading rumours
- deliberate embarrassment or shaming

6.4 Cyberbullying

- hostile messaging or group targeting
- impersonation, digital harassment, or online stalking
- damaging posts, doctored images, or shared content
- exclusion from digital group spaces
- hostility within WhatsApp or similar platforms

The school recognises that students in Uganda frequently use mobile phones, messaging groups and social media as everyday communication tools and that online activity often intersects with school relationships. Cyberbullying incidents outside school hours may still be investigated where emotional impact is carried into the school environment; appropriate and available intervention strategies may be used in accordance with this policy and the wider school ethos, taking into consideration the schools capacity for intervention in limiting circumstances.

6.5 Prejudice-based bullying

This includes behaviour relating to:

- race, ethnicity, or nationality
- religion or belief
- perceived socio-economic status
- disability or learning difficulty
- physical appearance or body image
- accent, language, or English proficiency
- family circumstances such as guardianship or care responsibility

Given the diverse composition of the 7Hills community, the school places particular emphasis on intercultural respect, tolerance and the rejection of stereotypes or discriminatory assumptions.

6.6 Sexual or gender-based bullying

Sexual or gender-based bullying refers to behaviour that demeans, humiliates or intimidates a student based on sex or gender-related expectations. This may include:

- sexist or derogatory remarks
- unwanted sexualised comments or jokes
- inappropriate gestures, language or behaviour
- shaming linked to perceived gender roles or expectations
- sexual humiliation, harassment or intimidation

Any incident of a safeguarding nature will be escalated immediately in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

7. Ethos, Culture, and Preventative Approach

Bullying prevention is not addressed solely through policies and sanctions, but through the cultivation of a positive school climate in which students feel valued, respected and connected to a supportive community.

At 7Hills, this is rooted in:

- the Stoplight Approach and common emotional regulation language
- restorative conversations that promote empathy and accountability
- staff modelling of respectful and professional behaviour
- explicit teaching of social-emotional skills across the curriculum
- the House system, which promotes belonging, student leadership, and shared responsibility
- encouragement of student voice through councils, peer initiatives, and informal dialogue
- structured induction support for new and transitioning students
- cultural awareness, tolerance, and celebration of diversity

All staff are expected to remain vigilant to early signs of relational distress, subtle exclusion or escalating conflict. Staff are encouraged to intervene calmly and supportively at the earliest stage rather than waiting for behaviour to become entrenched.

Bullying prevention is reinforced through:

- assemblies and pastoral programmes
- digital citizenship and online safety education
- PSHE and wellbeing initiatives
- targeted support for vulnerable students
- supervision in identified risk spaces
- regular review of community hotspots and patterns

The school recognises that a safe environment is sustained through everyday interactions as much as formal procedures.

8. Responsibilities Within the School Community

8.1 The Head of School

The Head of School holds overall responsibility for ensuring that the policy is implemented consistently, reviewed regularly and embedded in school practice. The Head of School ensures that sufficient staff training is undertaken and that serious or complex cases are appropriately managed and reported.

8.1 Student Behaviour and Leadership Coordinator

The SBLC:

- oversees cases where risk or harm requires safeguarding intervention
- supports staff in threshold decisions
- supports staff in reporting and dealing with incidents and follow up actions
- records and monitors high-level cases
- liaises with external professionals where necessary

8.2 Staff and Adults in School

All staff are expected to:

- model respectful and inclusive behaviour
- challenge unkind or discriminatory language
- notice and respond to early signs of distress
- report incidents promptly through the appropriate channels
- maintain objective and professional records
- support restorative practice when appropriate

Bullying must never be dismissed as joking, personality conflict, or normal adolescent behaviour.

8.3 Students

Students are expected to:

- treat peers and adults with respect
- act as active upstanders rather than passive bystanders
- report concerns for themselves or others
- participate constructively in restorative processes

Students are reminded that seeking help is a sign of courage and responsibility, not weakness.

8.4 Parents and Carers

Parents are key partners in anti-bullying work. Parents are expected to:

- communicate concerns respectfully and constructively
- avoid escalating conflict through social media or informal channels

- support agreed behaviour and restorative plans
- promote empathy, tolerance, and responsible online conduct at home

Where parents disagree with outcomes, the Complaints Policy may be followed.

9. Reporting Bullying Concerns

Bullying may be reported through:

- a class teacher or subject teacher
- Form Tutor or House Leader
- the Head of School
- any trusted member of staff
- pastoral referral communication channels
- direct contact from parents or carers

Students may report privately if they feel uncomfortable speaking publicly. Anonymous reports will be investigated where possible, though anonymity may limit the scope of action. All reports are taken seriously, whether substantiated immediately or requiring further investigation.

10. Responding to Bullying Allegations

When a concern is raised, the school will:

1. Ensure the immediate emotional and physical safety of those involved.
2. Listen carefully to the student's experience using a calm, non-judgemental approach.
3. Establish an initial account of events.
4. Inform relevant pastoral staff and where appropriate, the DSL.
5. Investigate the concern fairly and proportionately.
6. Avoid assumptions and ensure that all parties are heard.
7. Decide on Stoplight and Behaviour Policy alignment.
8. Implement support, sanctions, or restorative actions as appropriate.
9. Record outcomes and planned review actions.
10. Implement review actions with concerned parties where appropriate and where confidentiality allows

Investigations are conducted sensitively and confidentially and students are supported throughout the process. The school will not promise secrecy, but will manage information professionally and discreetly.

Where allegations prove unfounded, but relational tension is evident, support will still be provided to restore positive interactions.

11. Cyberbullying Response

Cyberbullying incidents will be handled with particular attention to:

- safeguarding risks
- digital evidence retention

- involvement of parents on both sides
- school device restrictions where relevant
- potential wider online exposure

Students are supported to:

- avoid retaliation
- block or remove harmful contacts
- reflect on safe online conduct
- understand legal and ethical implications

Repeated or serious cyberbullying may trigger higher-level sanctions or safeguarding referrals.

12. Supporting Students Affected by Bullying

Students who have experienced bullying may receive:

- reassurance and pastoral care
- a named staff contact for ongoing support
- regular check-ins across an agreed period
- facilitated peer mediation where appropriate
- safe-space arrangements during vulnerable times
- wellbeing interventions or counselling if necessary
- family partnership meetings where helpful

The goal is to restore confidence, belonging, and emotional safety.

13. Supporting Students Who Engage in Bullying Behaviour

The school recognises that bullying behaviour may emerge from:

- social insecurity
- desire for dominance or control
- personal stress or emotional strain
- previous exposure to harmful models of behaviour
- gaps in empathy or social-emotional development

Students responsible for bullying behaviour will be supported to:

- understand the impact of their actions
- reflect on harm caused
- develop alternative prosocial strategies
- initiate or otherwise participate in restorative processes
- rebuild trust within the school community

Support does not replace accountability and consequences are applied alongside guidance rather than instead of it.

14. Sanctions and Restorative Responses

Responses will be proportionate and contextual. Possible actions include:

- restorative conversation
- written or verbal apology
- reflection activities
- loss of privileges or leadership roles
- internal removal from activities
- targeted social coaching
- detention or removal from events
- internal suspension
- external suspension in serious or persistent cases
- behaviour contract or safety plan
- referral to the Board where warranted

Restorative conferencing will only take place when it is safe, appropriate, and agreed by those affected. No student will be compelled to meet a peer against their wishes.

15. Preventative and Educational Strategies

Prevention is embedded through:

- pastoral curriculum
- intercultural understanding initiatives
- mentoring and peer leadership
- celebration of diversity
- explicit modelling of inclusion by staff
- visible whole-school messaging
- student-led awareness campaigns
- induction for new students and families
- strengthening bystander awareness

The school recognises that prevention is an ongoing process, not a one-off activity.

16. Monitoring, Data, and Review

All confirmed bullying incidents are recorded and reviewed.

Data is used to:

- identify emerging patterns
- evaluate hotspot areas
- track repeat incidents
- monitor vulnerable groups
- inform pastoral planning
- refine school practice

A summary review may be shared with the Board where appropriate and this policy will be reviewed annually or sooner if required.

17. Distribution and Access

This policy is available to all staff, students and parents via the school website and on the school Google drive. Printed copies can be requested from the school reception.

Appendix A - Bullying Incident Recording Form

Student name:	Year group:	Date / Time of incident:	Location:

Type of bullying (tick):

- Physical
- Verbal
- Emotional / social
- Cyber
- Prejudice-related
- Sexual / gender-based
- Other (specify)_____

Description of incident:

Individuals involved:

Target(s):
Perpetrator(s):
Bystanders / witnesses:

Immediate response taken:

Follow-up actions:

- restorative work
- sanction
- parent contact
- referral to DSL
- mentorship support

Staff completing form:	Signature:	Date:

Appendix B - Student Support & Safety Plan

Student strengths and protective factors:

Identified risks or needs:

Support actions:

- Pastoral monitoring
- oral check-ins
- peer support
- safe spaces
- timetable adjustments
- wellbeing intervention

Family partnership strategies:

Monitoring review date:

Appendix C - Restorative Conference Record

Participants present:
Student(s):
Facilitator:
Parent(s):
Staff:

Date:

Guiding questions:

What happened?

Who was affected and how?

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What needs to be repaired?

What needs to change?

What support is needed?

Agreement reached: