HERD THYME

Anti-bullying Policy

This policy document includes information regarding the following topics:

- Definitions of Bullying

- Reporting Bullying

- Herd Thyme Initiatives to prevent and address Bullying

Last Review: July 2027

Latest Update: July 2026

Reviewed: Annually

Policy Aims

Herd Thyme's objective is to cultivate a healthy and secure community in which individuals assume responsibility for their actions and act respectfully towards one another.

Our goal is to empower students to become responsible citizens, preparing them for life in modern Britain. We encourage fostering of positive relationships among all members of our community.

Everyone at Herd Thyme has the right to be themselves, to feel included in a safe, positive environment, and the right to be treated with respect.

Bullying represents anti-social behaviour that impacts all individuals. It is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. At Herd Thyme, the safety, welfare, and wellbeing of every student and staff member are of paramount importance.

We approach all incidents of bullying with the utmost seriousness, recognizing our collective responsibility to prevent and address instances of bullying, harassment, or discrimination. In the event that bullying occurs, all students should feel confident to report such incidents, trusting that they will be addressed promptly and effectively. By tackling instances of bullying head-on, we ensure that students can fully engage in and benefit from the opportunities offered at Herd Thyme.

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Definition of Bullying

Bullying is defined as behaviour that is intentionally aimed at causing harm, fear, or intimidation to an individual or a group. This behaviour is often repetitive, typically occurring without provocation, and can persist over an extended timeframe. A key aspect of bullying is the inherent imbalance of power, which distinguishes it from typical disagreements or conflicts that may arise among children or teenagers.

Common characteristics of bullying include:

- Deliberately hurtful.

- Repeated, often over time.

- Difficult for the victim to defend against.

Types of Bullying

1. Emotional: Being unfriendly or cruel, unfair exclusion from activities or groups, tormenting.

2. Physical: Hitting, kicking, pushing, taking another's belongings, or any form or use of violence.

3. Prejudice-Based and Discriminatory (including but not limited to):

- Racial

- Faith-based (Religion)

- Gendered (Sexist)

- Homophobic/Biphobic (Sexuality)

- Transphobic

- Disability-based

- Special Educational Needs or Disability

- Appearance or Health Conditions

- Cultural or Class-based

This includes language, taunts, gestures, graffiti, or physical abuse centred on a specific characteristic (e.g., gender, race, or sexuality).

4. Sexual: This encompasses explicit sexual comments, the display of sexual materials, sexual gestures, unwanted physical attention, remarks concerning an individual's sexual reputation or performance, as well as inappropriate touching.

5. Verbal: This includes direct or indirect verbal abuse such as name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, or teasing.

6. Cyberbullying: Bullying that occurs online, such as through social media networking sites, messaging apps, video gaming platforms, and other functions of the internet.

It is crucial to acknowledge that we work with children who have social, emotional, and mental health needs, as well as attachment difficulties. Many of our students may not fully grasp how their actions or words impact others, so it is essential to determine whether a particular behaviour was intended to be hurtful.

Signs of Bullying

A young person who is being bullied may show some of the following common responses:

- Increased anxiety; displayed through increasingly obsessive behaviours, such as hand movements, repetitive questioning and statements, or a short temper.

- Withdrawal from social interactions.

- Aggressive behaviours.

- Over-sensitivity or overreacting to minor events, leading to a state of being 'on edge.'

- Seeking revenge.

- Repeatedly putting oneself in similar bullying situations. Even if the student recognizes these interactions as negative, they may perceive them as preferable to no interaction at all. These scenarios become familiar and follow a predictable sequence.

Bullying can occur between individuals but may also take place in the presence of bystanders, whether in person or virtually. It can happen between young people, between young people and staff, or between staff members. This policy applies to all forms of bullying, including that which may involve centre staff by students, parents, or other staff members. Herd Thyme staff who experience or are concerned about bullying within the workplace are encouraged to contact the Director for support or advice or seek external support[SO1] .

Impact of Bullying on all involved:

Bullying can severely harm a person's confidence and sense of self-worth, leading them to believe they are at fault in some way. Students who are being bullied may exhibit behaviour

changes, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, or taking unusual absences. While these symptoms may indicate other issues, bullying should always be considered a possibility and warrant investigation.

We recognise that the bully is also experiencing some sort of challenge and expressing a need through their bullying behaviour and also warrants understanding and support to be able to progress through the experience in a positive way.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Director:

The Director is responsible for ensuring that the anti-bullying policy is upheld by all staff members and that we promote the safety and wellbeing of all young people. In cases of bullying, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed.

Staff:

All Herd Thyme are obliged to:

- Report any incidents of bullying.

- Be vigilant for signs of bullying.

- Actively participate in efforts to prevent bullying, such as talking to students where 'horseplay' might develop into bullying if left unchecked[SO2]

If staff are aware of bullying, they should reassure the students involved and inform the Director and DSL.

Parents/Carers/Wider Networks:

Parents and carers should watch for signs of bullying. This may include distress, lack of concentration, feigning illness, or other unusual behaviours. They should advise their child not to retaliate and encourage them to report the bullying. Parents and carers can report incidents of bullying to Herd Thyme in person, by phone, or by emailing the Director. Additionally, it is important for parents and carers to collaborate with Herd Thyme if their child is engaging in bullying behaviour. Informing relevant associated professionals about concerning behaviours will help create a holistic approach to addressing any underlying issues.

Students:

Students should refrain from participating in any form of bullying and should be observant of potential signs among their peers.

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Reporting Bullying:

Students who are being bullied are encouraged not to retaliate but to confide in a trusted adult (e.g. parents, carers, teacher[SO3]) or Herd Thyme staff member.

Responding to Bullying:

When a bullying incident is reported, the following actions will be taken:

- Staff will document the details as an initial safeguarding concern.

- Support will be provided to those targeted by bullying through restorative justice or other programs.

- Staff will proactively address the bully using restorative justice programs.

- Staff will determine if parents and carers need to be involved.

- Staff will assess whether any external authorities (e.g. police or local authority) need to be contacted, especially for incidents occurring outside of Herd Thyme. If either student may be in danger, urgent intervention is required, including a safeguarding referral.

Bullying Outside of Herd Thyme:

Bullying outside of Herd Thyme is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

Bullying can occur on the way to and from sessions, before or after hours, on weekends, during holidays, or in the wider community. The nature of cyberbullying, in particular, affects students' wellbeing beyond the Herd Thyme day.

Staff, parents, carers, and students must remain vigilant for bullying outside of school and report and respond according to their roles as outlined in this policy.

Derogatory Language

Derogatory or offensive language is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

Such language can fall under any of the forms of bullying outlined in our definition of bullying. Staff will challenge this type of language and document the incidents. In cases of persistent use, parents or carers will be informed, and a meeting scheduled.

Follow-up actions and sanctions may be taken against students and staff found using such language. Staff are also encouraged to document the casual use of derogatory language using informal methods, such as in the Student Notes, written daily.

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Prejudice-Based Incidents

A prejudice-based incident is defined as a one-off incident of unkind or hurtful behaviour motivated by negative attitudes, beliefs, or views towards a protected characteristic or minority group.

Such an incident can target an individual or a group of people and have a significant impact on those affected.

Racist, homophobic, bi-phobic, transphobic, and disablist language includes terms of abuse directed at people because of their race, ethnicity, nationality, sexual orientation, or perceived differences, or those related to disability.

Such language is often used to label someone as inferior, and may also be aimed at young people perceived as different or at their friends and family. Dismissing this language as banter is unhelpful, as it conveys notions of inferiority or brokenness. We will challenge the use of prejudice-related language at Herd Thyme, even if it appears to be used without malicious intent.

Persistent use of prejudice-related language and/or bullying will be addressed as any other form of bullying.

Students are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying at Herd Thyme to a staff member or trusted adult.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is an increasingly prevalent form of bullying. It occurs online through social media. Each incident of cyberbullying will be thoroughly investigated.

It is vital for students and parents of children who are being bullied to document or print evidence of the bullying. However, If the bullying involves photos of partial or full nudity then the images should not be viewed under any circumstance by Herd Thyme staff. This would be considered a safeguarding concern and wewould follow the Herd Thyme Safeguarding Policy.

We regard student-to-student cyberbullying as a serious violation of our anti-bullying policy, as we strive to provide a caring and safe environment for all students, enabling them to learn in a secure atmosphere.

Most incidents of cyberbullying occur outside of Herd Thyme, typically from the student's own home. However, Herd Thyme will take action against this form of bullying, as the overall wellbeing and learning of both the bullied student and bully will likely be impacted.

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In all cases of cyberbullying, the parents or guardians of both the bully and the bullied will be kept informed about the investigations into the allegations. Sanctions will be imposed on students found guilty of cyberbullying, and the police may be notified.

All students should remember that most online content remains accessible indefinitely and can be found by anyone, including potential future employers. Please refer to the Online Safety Policy for advice for students and their parents or guardians on how to address cyberbullying.

Training

The Director is responsible for ensuring that all staff receive regular training on all aspects of the anti-bullying policy.

Monitoring

This policy will be reviewed and updated annually by the Director.

APPENDIX 1

Confirmation of Compliance – Herd Thyme Staff Behaviour Policy (Code of Conduct)

I hereby confirm that I have read, understood and agree to comply with the above policy.

Name ……..

Position Held ……..

Signed ……..

Date ……

Once completed, signed and dated, please return this form to the Proprietor for holding on file.