

ANTIBULLYING AND CYBER SECURITY POLICY

Policy Reviewed - March 2025

Date of Next Review - March 2026

RATIONALE

At The Indian Academy Dubai (TIAD) we aim to create a caring, safe, and nurturing environment that promotes mutual respect and trust. We recognize that all forms of bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals, can create barriers to learning, and have serious consequences on mental well-being. By effectively preventing and tackling bullying we can help to create a safe and disciplined environment where students can learn and fulfil their potential.

The scope of this policy includes the prohibition of every form of bullying, harassment, and cyberbullying/harassment, whether in the classroom, on school premises, immediately adjacent to school premises, when a student is traveling to or from school (portal to portal), or at a school-sponsored event, whether or not held on school premises. Bullying or harassment, including cyberbullying/harassment, that is not initiated at a location defined above is covered by this policy if the incident results in a potential material or substantial disruption of the school learning environment for one or more students and/or the orderly day-to-day operations of the school or any school program.

BULLYING

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through deliberate, repeated, and hostile behavior by an individual or group that is intended to harm others. It can happen face-to-face or online. Bullying is not defined by single episodes of social rejection or dislike; single acts of nastiness; random acts of aggression or intimidation; disagreements or fights. These actions can undoubtedly cause great distress; however, they do not fit the definition of bullying unless they are deliberately and repeatedly done.

Bullying can include name-calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, taking belongings, producing offensive graffiti, gossiping, excluding people from groups, and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumors. This includes the same unacceptable behaviors expressed online, referred to as cyberbullying. This can include sending offensive, upsetting, and inappropriate messages by phone, text, instant messenger, through gaming, websites, social media sites, and applications, and sending offensive or degrading photos or videos. Bullying is recognized by the school as being a form of peer-on-peer abuse. It can be emotionally abusive and can cause severe and adverse effects on children's emotional development. Bullying can happen to anyone

Initiators

Students who bully others often do so to gain status and recognition from their peers. Their bullying behaviour is reinforced when they intimidate their targets and when the peer group colludes by not challenging the initiator or reporting the bullying to staff.

Targets: Students of all ages can be at relatively greater risk of being bullied (i.e., being targets) for a whole host of reasons, including:

- being unassertive or withdrawn (eg, isolated students with low self-esteem)
- differing from the majority culture of a school in terms of ethnicity, cultural or religious background, sexual orientation, gender identity, or socio-economic status
- having a disability, special education needs or mental health issues
- Academic achievement (perceived as high or low achiever)
- having recently transitioned into a school (through natural progression through schools, changing to a new school because of behavioural issues at a previous school or moving to the area from another city or country).

Bystanders: (i.e., witnesses to bullying behavior) can have a powerful effect on either encouraging or inhibiting bullying behavior.

There are three main types of bystanders:

- followers (assistants) – do not initiate, but take an active role in the bullying behavior
- Supporters (reinforcer) – support the bullying behaviour (overtly or covertly, e.g., by turning a blind eye) but do not take an active role in the bullying behavior
- defenders – dislike the bullying and try to help the target by intervening, getting teacher support (using safe telling) or providing direct support to the target.

Types of BULLYING

- Verbal (sarcasm, spreading rumors, teasing, name-calling, calling people unkind names, verbal threats of violence)
- Physical (hitting, kicking, biting, punching, pushing, tripping– anything that hurts by touching)
- Emotional (isolating someone, disturbing, hiding someone's property, humiliation, mockery, manipulation and causing stress, leaving them out, threatening looks)
- Sexual (unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comment, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate media)
- Cyber/online (social networking pictures, WhatsApp groups to encourage bullying, abusive text messages, filming people without permission, prank calls)
- Discrimination: Prejudicial treatment of different categories of people, especially on the ground of race, age, gender, or disability

PREVENTING BULLYING

The whole school community will:

- Create and support an inclusive environment that promotes a culture of mutual respect, consideration and care for others which will be upheld by all, recognize that bullying can be perpetrated or experienced by any member of the community, including adults and children (peer-on-peer abuse) and openly discussed differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as:

1. Religion
2. Ethnicity
3. Disability
4. Gender
5. Children with different family situations

- Recognize that bullying can be carried out or experienced by anyone.
- Recognize that some students may be vulnerable to bullying and have strategies and interventions in place to protect them.
- Provide a range of approaches for students, staff, and parents to access support and report concerns.
- Regularly update and evaluate our practice to take into account the developments of technology and provide up-to-date advice and education to all members of the community regarding positive online behaviour.
- Undertake appropriate, proportionate, and reasonable action, in line with existing
- School policies for any bullying brought to the Academy's attention, which involves or affects students, even when they are not on School premises; for example, when using public transport or online, etc.
- Actively create 'safe spaces for vulnerable students
- Implement appropriate disciplinary sanctions; the consequences of bullying will reflect the seriousness of the incident so that others see that bullying is unacceptable.
- Use a variety of techniques to resolve the issues between those who bully, and those who have been bullied.

RESPONDING TO BULLYING: ACTIONS

Under no circumstances will TIAD tolerate any form of bullying, and all incidents of bullying will be dealt with promptly and effectively for the well-being of all students. We apply strong discipline measures to students who participate in bullying to enable them to learn that the behavior is wrong. Disciplinary measures are applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking into account the individual circumstances of those involved. It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviors and to address these too. Some of the following steps may be taken when dealing with allegations and incidents of bullying, including those inside and outside of school hours/building:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be fully investigated and dealt with immediately by the relevant Head of Section and Counsellor under the supervision of the Principal /Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)
- The DSL will be informed of all bullying issues where there are safeguarding concerns
- Appropriate support is provided to the student being bullied to work on restoring self-esteem and confidence (within the student support network of teachers, HOS and Counsellor)
- The school will speak with and inform other members of staff (if appropriate) to inform and guide them to be vigilant of any recurrences.
- Sanctions (as identified within the TIAD Behaviour Policy) and support for individuals will be implemented, in consultation with all parties concerned. If necessary, other agencies may be consulted or involved, such as the police (if a criminal offense has been committed) or other local services (if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm)
- Where the bullying takes place away from the school site, or outside of normal school hours (including cyberbullying), the school will ensure that the concern is fully investigated.
- Appropriate action will be taken, including providing support and implementing sanctions in the school by the TIAD Positive Behaviour Policy.
- A clear and precise account of the incident will be recorded by the school by existing procedures. This will include recording appropriate details regarding decisions and actions taken.
- Collaboration with other schools if the bullying appears to occur across different schools.
- Staff training/induction programs will occur periodically to keep staff informed of current issues/strategies/policy updating for dealing with these matters.
- Parents will be made aware of students' responsibilities in their use of ICT/online learning and provided help and support with regard to internet safety 'netiquette', e-safety, and digital literacy.
- Vigorous entry and exit monitoring duties to ensure prompt responses to incidences of unsafe or disrespectful behaviour which includes blocking access to unsuitable internet sites.
- Planning strategically and pro-actively for those students identified through the Early Intervention strategies, and ensuring preventive measures are in place so as not to repeat the same.
- Providing recognition for positive and appropriate behaviour by credits/awards/positions

INVOLVEMENT OF STUDENTS

Students will be consulted during policy writing and decision making, to ensure that they understand the school's approach, and are clear about the role they play in preventing bullying. Their views on the extent of bullying will be collated to ensure we always have an updated understanding of the extent and scope of bullying, and to ensure that students are aware how they can express their anxieties. It is important that students are aware of the strict sanctions that may be applied against those engaging in bullying and take an active role in learning from any poor choices to prevent repeat occurrences. All students are expected to participate in Anti-Bullying campaigns, and the opportunities offered throughout the Form Time curriculum.

CYBERBULLYING

Cyberbullying (online bullying) refers to bullying by electronic media and includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, headful, false or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

When responding to cyberbullying concerns, the school will:

- Act as soon as an incident has been reported or identified.
- Provide appropriate support for the person who has been cyberbullied and work with the person who has carried out the bullying to ensure that it does not happen again.
- Encourage the person being bullied to keep any evidence (screenshots) of the bullying activity to assist in the investigation.
- Take all available steps where possible to identify the person responsible. This may include:
 - i. looking at the use of the school systems
 - ii. identifying and interviewing possible witnesses
 - iii. contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary
- Work with individuals and online service providers to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation.

This may include:

- Support reports to a service provider to remove content if those involved are unable to be identified or if those involved refuse to or are unable to delete content.
- Confiscating and searching electronic devices from students, such as mobile telephones, by the law and also the behaviour Policy
- Requesting the deletion of locally held content and content posted online.
- Ensure that sanctions are applied to the person responsible for the cyberbullying.
- The school will take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully, as well as ensure access to any additional help they may need, inform the police if a criminal offense has been committed, and provide information to staff and students regarding steps they can take to protect themselves online.

This may include:

- advising those targeted not to retaliate or reply.
- Provide advice on blocking or removing people from contact lists.
- helping those involved to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain.

The most common places where cyberbullying occurs are:

- Social media sites, such as Facebook, Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc. (including hijacking/cloning and catfishing)
- Text messaging and messaging through apps/instant messaging/chats
- Online forums, chat rooms, and message boards
- Email
- Online gaming communities
- The use of mobile phone cameras to cause distress, fear, or humiliation.

Cyberbullying can include:

- Intimidation and threats
- Harassment and stalking
- Vilification or defamation
- Exclusion/ peer rejection
- Impersonation
- Doxing (posting personal information online without their permission)

While technology does not cause bullying, it may be used by people who would not necessarily bully others face-to-face. The perceived anonymity of some online activities, or rude or offensive behaviors due to the physical and emotional distance between people using technology, may mean that the person bullied will do things that they would not do in person. If you believe you or someone else is the victim of cyberbullying, you must speak to an adult as soon as possible. Students should never respond to messages or posts that are suggestive, indecent, aggressive, threatening, or make them feel uncomfortable. These messages should be reported to the relevant Teacher or a member of the Senior Leadership Team. Parents and TIAD must work together to ensure that all students are aware of the serious consequences of getting involved in anything that might be seen to be cyberbullying.

WHAT IS NOT BULLYING

Many distressing behaviors are not bullying even though they are unpleasant and often require teacher intervention and management.

Mutual conflict:

Such as an argument or disagreement between students but not an imbalance of power. Both parties are upset and usually both want a resolution to the problem. However, unresolved mutual conflict sometimes develops into a bullying situation.

Social rejection or dislike:

Unless the social rejection is directed towards someone specific and involves deliberate and repeated attempts to cause distress, exclude or created is like by others it is not bullying.

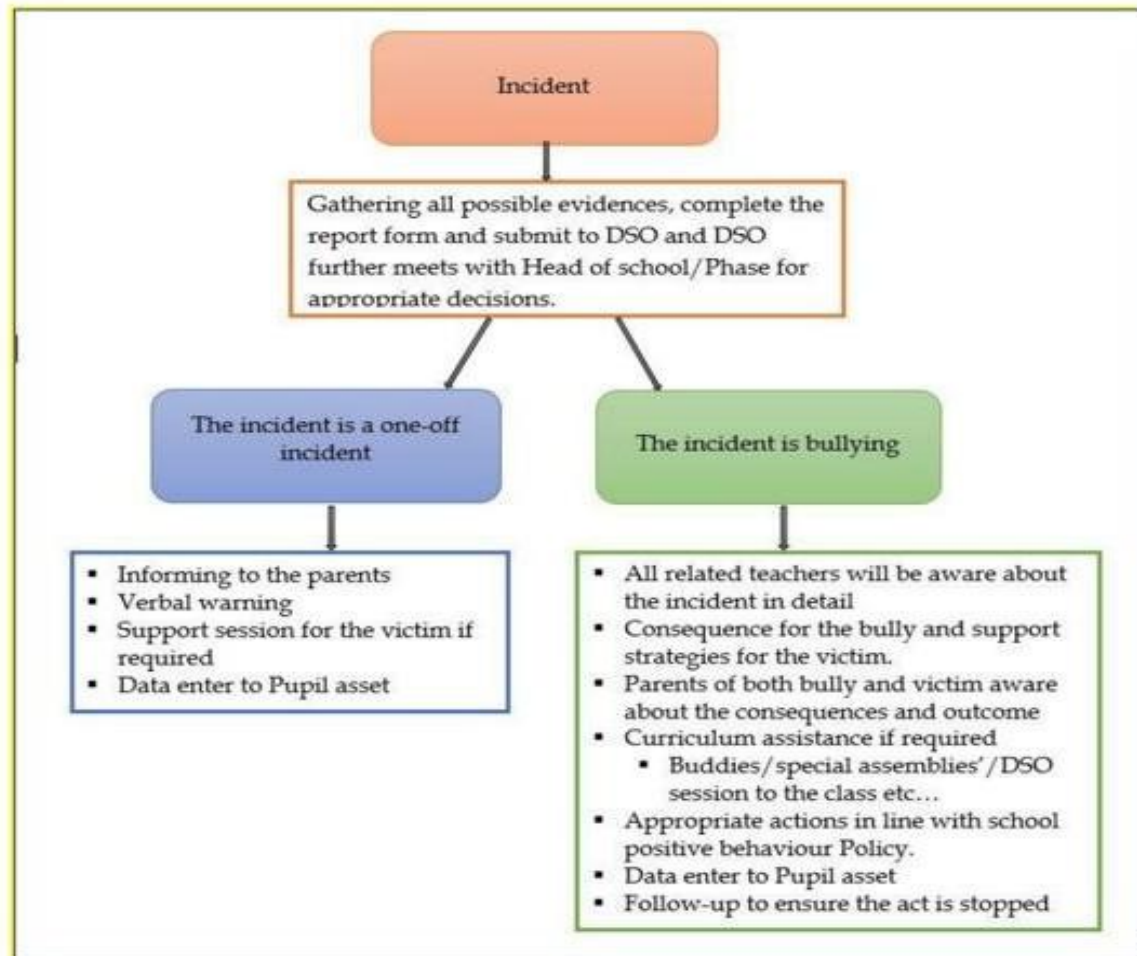
Single episodes of unkindness or physical aggression:

If a student's verbally abused or pushed on one occasion they are not being bullied. An unkind act or physical aggression that is directed towards many different students is not the same as bullying.

INVOLVEMENT AND LIAISON WITH PARENTS

We will take steps to involve parents and caregivers in developing policies and procedures, to ensure they are aware that the school does not tolerate any form of bullying, ensure that key information about bullying (including policies and named points of contact) is available to parents/caregivers in a variety of formats, and ensure all parents/caregivers know who to contact if they are worried about bullying and where to access independent advice.

BULLYING REPORT PROCESS AT TIAD



MONITORING AND REVIEW: PUTTING POLICY INTO PRACTICE

At TIAD we will ensure that we regularly monitor and evaluate our strategies and systems to ensure that the policy is being consistently applied and any issues will be incorporated into the Academy's action planning. The Principal /Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed of all bullying concerns and oversee the investigations and outcomes, reporting to the LAB regularly.

Regards

PRINCIPAL