



# **Anti – Bullying Policy**

Top Hat Theatre School is committed to providing a safe, welcoming and inclusive environment in which every child and young person can enjoy performing arts, develop confidence and form positive friendships.

Bullying, intimidation, harassment, threatening behaviour, discrimination or deliberate attempts to isolate or humiliate another pupil will not be tolerated.

We recognise that disagreements, friendship difficulties and occasional arguments are not necessarily bullying. However, all concerns will be taken seriously and considered fairly.

Top Hat will not automatically assume that the person making a complaint is the victim or that the person named in a complaint is responsible. Allegations will be considered objectively, with appropriate information gathered from all relevant parties.

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## **2. What do we mean by bullying?**

Bullying is behaviour which causes, or is intended to cause, physical or emotional harm, distress, fear, humiliation or intimidation.

Bullying may be:

- physical;
- verbal;
- emotional or psychological;
- social or relational;
- exclusion or deliberate isolation;
- threatening or intimidating;
- discriminatory;
- carried out online or through social media;
- repeated or part of an ongoing pattern.

Bullying may involve a perceived imbalance of power, but this is not always present.

A single incident may not meet the definition of bullying but may still be unacceptable behaviour and may require action.

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### 3. Friendship difficulties and conflict

Children and young people sometimes experience disagreements, arguments, falling-outs and changes in friendships.

Top Hat will distinguish, where possible, between:

**Bullying:** behaviour involving harm, intimidation, harassment, exclusion or repeated unacceptable conduct.

**Conflict:** a disagreement or dispute between individuals where neither party is necessarily exercising power over the other.

**Mutual or reciprocal behaviour:** situations where more than one child has behaved inappropriately towards another.

**Allegation:** a concern raised by a child, parent/carers or other person which has not yet been established as fact.

The fact that a child reports feeling bullied will always be taken seriously. However, feeling upset does not, by itself, establish that bullying has occurred.

Equally, evidence that the reporting child has behaved inappropriately does not automatically mean that they cannot also have experienced unacceptable behaviour.

Each situation will therefore be considered on its individual facts.

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### 4. Examples of unacceptable behaviour

Examples may include, but are not limited to:

- name-calling or insulting another pupil;
- deliberately humiliating another pupil;
- threatening behaviour;
- spreading malicious rumours;
- deliberately encouraging others to exclude someone;
- repeatedly mocking or targeting another pupil;
- deliberately interfering with another pupil's participation;
- intimidating behaviour;
- discriminatory comments or behaviour;
- inappropriate messages or group-chat behaviour;

- online harassment or cyberbullying;
- encouraging others to target another pupil;
- sharing embarrassing or harmful content about another pupil;
- deliberately provoking another pupil in order to cause a reaction.

The context, frequency, intention, impact and circumstances will be considered.

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## **5. Reporting a concern**

A pupil may report a concern to:

- a teacher;
- the Principal/Director of Top Hat;
- another trusted member of staff;
- their parent/carer, who may then contact Top Hat.

Parents/carers are encouraged to raise concerns directly with Top Hat rather than attempting to resolve disputes between children themselves.

Concerns should, wherever possible, be communicated privately and factually.

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## **6. How Top Hat will respond to an allegation**

When a concern is raised, Top Hat will:

1. Listen to the child raising the concern and take what they say seriously.
2. Establish what is alleged to have happened.
3. Record the concern and relevant information.
4. Consider whether there are any immediate safeguarding concerns.
5. Speak separately with relevant pupils where appropriate.
6. Gather available evidence, which may include messages, screenshots or witness accounts.
7. Avoid leading questions or encouraging children to confront one another.
8. Consider information provided by all relevant parties.
9. Consider whether the behaviour amounts to bullying, conflict, unacceptable behaviour or another safeguarding concern.
10. Take proportionate action based on the information available.
11. Keep appropriate records of decisions and actions taken.
12. Monitor the situation afterwards where appropriate.

Top Hat will not promise absolute confidentiality to a child, as information may need to be shared where necessary to safeguard a child or manage a concern appropriately.

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## **7. Evidence and social media**

Where concerns involve online behaviour, parents/carers may be asked to provide screenshots or other relevant evidence.

Top Hat may retain copies of relevant evidence for the purpose of investigating and recording a concern.

Children and parents/carers should not be encouraged to retaliate online, publicly identify other children, circulate allegations or attempt to conduct their own investigation through social media.

Top Hat will not engage in public discussions about individual children or individual safeguarding/behaviour matters.

Where inappropriate, threatening, abusive or defamatory material concerning Top Hat, its staff, pupils or families is posted publicly, Top Hat reserves the right to:

- remove or hide comments from its own social media pages where possible;
  - retain screenshots or other evidence;
  - request that the material is removed;
  - restrict or block accounts where appropriate;
  - consider whether further action is necessary.
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## **8. Concerns involving parents, relatives or other adults**

Top Hat expects parents, carers and other adults connected with pupils to communicate respectfully.

Concerns about a pupil should be raised privately with Top Hat and should not be pursued through public social media.

Abusive, threatening, intimidating, harassing or malicious communications directed towards Top Hat, its staff, pupils or families will not be accepted.

Where necessary, Top Hat may restrict communication to appropriate written channels and may take further action in response to persistent unacceptable conduct.

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## **9. When both parties may have behaved inappropriately**

Top Hat recognises that some situations are not straightforward.

It is possible for:

- one child to report bullying and for some of their allegations to be substantiated;
- the allegation not to be substantiated;
- both children to have behaved inappropriately;
- behaviour to have developed into a conflict involving several pupils;
- a child to have experienced genuine distress without the behaviour meeting the definition of bullying.

Top Hat will therefore avoid labelling children as "the bully" or "the victim" while an investigation is ongoing.

Where evidence indicates that more than one pupil has behaved inappropriately, each child's behaviour will be considered separately and appropriate action will be taken.

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## **10. Possible actions**

Depending on the circumstances, action may include:

- speaking with the pupils involved;
- restorative conversations where appropriate;
- increased staff awareness or supervision;
- agreeing behavioural expectations;
- separating pupils temporarily where necessary;
- informing parents/carers;
- monitoring interactions;
- implementing an agreed support plan;
- formal warnings;
- sanctions under Top Hat's behaviour expectations;
- suspension or termination of membership in serious or persistent cases.

Any action will be proportionate to the circumstances and based on the information available.

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## **11. Safeguarding**

Bullying concerns may sometimes indicate a wider safeguarding issue.

Where Top Hat believes that a child may be at risk of harm, the matter will be managed in accordance with Top Hat's safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate, relevant external safeguarding agencies may be contacted.

Safeguarding concerns will take priority over ordinary behaviour management.

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## **12. Confidentiality and information sharing**

Top Hat will respect the privacy of pupils and families.

Information about an individual child will only be shared with others where there is an appropriate reason to do so, including where information is necessary to safeguard a child or investigate a concern.

Parents/carers should understand that Top Hat cannot provide confidential information about another child, including details of any action taken against another pupil.

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## **13. False or malicious allegations**

Top Hat recognises that children may sometimes misunderstand situations, perceive events differently or make allegations which cannot be substantiated.

An allegation which cannot be substantiated will not automatically be treated as malicious.

However, deliberately fabricated allegations, knowingly false statements or deliberate attempts to cause harm to another child will be treated seriously and may result in appropriate action.

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## **14. Responsibilities of pupils**

All pupils are expected to:

- treat others with respect;
  - behave appropriately towards other pupils;
  - avoid deliberately excluding or humiliating others;
  - not participate in bullying or harassment;
  - not encourage others to target another pupil;
  - report concerns to a trusted adult;
  - not retaliate against another pupil;
  - not share harmful or inappropriate content about others online.
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## 15. Responsibilities of parents and carers

Parents/carers are asked to:

- raise concerns directly with Top Hat;
  - provide factual information and relevant evidence where available;
  - avoid confronting other children;
  - avoid discussing individual children publicly or on social media;
  - avoid encouraging children to retaliate;
  - support Top Hat's efforts to resolve concerns fairly;
  - communicate respectfully with Top Hat staff.
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## 16. Our approach

Top Hat's approach is based on three principles:

### **Listen.**

Every child who raises a concern should feel heard.

### **Investigate.**

Allegations should be considered fairly and objectively rather than assumptions being made.

### **Act.**

Where unacceptable behaviour is identified, appropriate action will be taken.

Our priority is always the safety and wellbeing of the children entrusted to Top Hat Theatre School.

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## 17. Historic or Previously Reported Concerns

Where a concern or allegation was raised in relation to a previous period, but no formal investigation or action was undertaken at the time, Top Hat will consider the matter afresh if circumstances change.

This may include circumstances where:

- a pupil who was expected to leave Top Hat subsequently returns;
- pupils who were previously separated are again attending the school;
- new information or evidence becomes available;
- a previously reported concern appears to have an ongoing impact on pupils;
- a parent or pupil raises a concern again following a significant period of time.

A previous allegation will not automatically be treated as an established finding simply because it was reported previously.

Where appropriate, Top Hat will review the information originally provided alongside any new information, evidence or accounts from those involved.

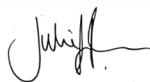
The fact that no formal action was taken at the time does not prevent Top Hat from taking appropriate action if a concern becomes relevant again.

Where a pupil returns to Top Hat following a previous concern, the school may put proportionate measures in place to support a positive and safe return. This may include monitoring, clear behavioural expectations, communication with parents/carers and appropriate staff awareness.

Top Hat will seek to avoid prejudging any pupil based on historic allegations and will consider the behaviour of all individuals involved fairly and objectively.

## 18. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if circumstances, safeguarding guidance or legislation require it.

**Signed:** 

**Name/Role:** Julie McKenna Company Director

**Date:** 15.9.2026

**Next review:** September 2027p