

Anti-Bullying Policy

Guildford City Swimming Club — in association with Swim England's Wavepower

Statement of intent

Guildford City Swimming Club (GCSC) is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our members so that they can train, compete and socialise in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Every member has the right to enjoy swimming free from fear of bullying, whatever form it takes.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our Club. If bullying does occur, all members and parents/carers should be able to tell someone and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. This policy applies to everyone involved in GCSC activities — swimmers, parents/carers, coaches, teachers, volunteers, committee members and officials — whether the bullying takes place at the pool, at competitions, on club trips, or online.

What is bullying?

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online, and can be carried out by an individual or a group. It can be:

- Emotional — being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding kit, threatening gestures)
- Physical — pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Verbal — name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Sexual — unwanted physical contact, or sexually abusive or inappropriate comments
- Discriminatory — racist, faith-based, gendered, homophobic or transphobic remarks, or comments/behaviour targeting a disability or additional need
- Cyber/online — abusive texts, emails or social media posts, sharing images or video without consent, excluding someone from group chats, or setting up fake accounts to target someone

Bullying can be a one-off serious incident or a pattern of behaviour over time. It is different from an isolated falling-out between friends, though such situations should still be taken seriously and addressed.

Why it matters

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying, and everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Members who bully need to learn different ways of behaving, and GCSC has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively.

Signs and symptoms

A member may indicate, through words or behaviour, that they are being bullied. Adults should be alert to these possible signs and investigate if a member:

- Is reluctant or refuses to attend training or competitions
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Cries easily, or has unexplained mood swings
- Has possessions go missing or arrives with damaged kit
- Has unexplained bruises, scratches or cuts

- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Stops eating properly, or their performance in training declines suddenly
- Is frightened to say what is wrong, or gives improbable excuses for any of the above

These signs could indicate other problems, but bullying should always be considered as a possibility and always investigated.

Roles and responsibilities

The Welfare Officer

- Acts as the first point of contact for concerns or reports of bullying
- Ensures all reports are taken seriously and dealt with promptly, fairly and consistently
- Keeps confidential written records of concerns and actions taken
- Liaises with the Committee, parents/carers and, where necessary, external agencies (such as the local Child Protection Unit, Swim England's Safeguarding Team, or the NSPCC)

Coaches, teachers and volunteers

- Model respectful behaviour at all times and treat all members fairly
- Are vigilant for signs of bullying and act on concerns promptly
- Never ignore a suspected incident of bullying
- Report all concerns to the Welfare Officer

Parents and carers

- Watch for signs of distress in their child
- Advise their child to report bullying to a coach, official or the Welfare Officer if it happens
- Inform the Club of any suspected bullying, even if their own child is not directly involved
- Encourage their child to be tolerant and respectful of other Club members

Members

- Treat other members with respect, both at the poolside and online
- Report bullying, whether it happens to them or to someone else, to an adult they trust
- Refuse to join in with bullying behaviour

Reporting and responding to concerns

Anyone who becomes aware of bullying should report it to a coach, committee member or, wherever possible, directly to the Club Welfare Officer. Concerns can be raised verbally or in writing, and can be raised anonymously. On receiving a report, GCSC will follow this procedure:

1. The Welfare Officer will be informed and will record the details of the incident or concern.
2. The Welfare Officer will speak separately and calmly with those involved, including any witnesses, and keep confidential written records.
3. Parents/carers of all children involved will be kept informed and involved in agreeing a resolution, appropriate to the age of those involved.
4. Where appropriate, mediation between those involved will be attempted, with agreement sought that the bullying must stop.
5. A proportionate sanction may be applied in line with the Club's Codes of Conduct and Disciplinary Policy (see 'Sanctions' below).

6. The situation will be monitored and reviewed to ensure the bullying has stopped, with follow-up meetings as needed.
7. If the bullying involves suspected abuse or puts a member at risk of significant harm, the matter will be referred immediately in line with GCSC's Welfare and Safeguarding policy, and to the relevant statutory agencies without delay.

All reports will be handled sensitively and confidentially, with information shared only with those who need to know in order to resolve the situation and keep members safe.

Sanctions

Where bullying is confirmed, GCSC will take proportionate action which may include, depending on severity and age:

- A verbal warning and clear expectation that the behaviour stops immediately
- A meeting with parents/carers to agree next steps
- A written warning recorded on file
- Temporary suspension from training sessions, competitions or club events
- Removal of membership in serious or repeated cases
- Referral to external agencies where a criminal offence or child protection concern is suspected

Any sanction will be applied in accordance with the Club's Disciplinary Policy and with regard to the age and understanding of those involved. Support will also be offered to the person who has been bullied, and, where appropriate, to the person displaying bullying behaviour, to help them understand and change their actions.

Prevention

- Promoting an ethos of kindness, respect and fair play throughout the Club
- Ensuring all members, parents/carers and volunteers are aware of this policy and the Club's Codes of Conduct
- Discussing bullying and its impact with members in an age-appropriate way
- Ensuring adequate adult supervision at all training sessions, competitions and club events
- Reviewing this policy at least annually, or sooner following any significant incident

Immediate danger or urgent risk

If a child or adult is in immediate danger, or there is an immediate risk of serious harm, call 999.
For non-emergency police assistance, call 101.

Related policies and further support

This policy should be read alongside GCSC's Welfare and Safeguarding policy, Codes of Conduct, and Disciplinary Policy.

- [GCSC Welfare and Safeguarding](#)
- [Codes of Conduct – Swimmers, Parents, Coaches and Officials](#)
- [Swim England Safeguarding Team — \[safeguarding@swimming.org\]\(mailto:safeguarding@swimming.org\) / 01509 618 700](#)
- [NSPCC Child Protection in Sport Unit \(CPSU\) — \[cpsu.org.uk\]\(http://cpsu.org.uk\) / 0116 234 7278](#)
- [NSPCC Helpline — 0808 800 5000](#)

- [Childline — 0800 1111](https://www.childline.gov.uk/contact/0800111111/)

Contact

- [GCSC Welfare Officer — welfare.officer@gcsc.co.uk](mailto:welfare.officer@gcsc.co.uk)
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This policy will be reviewed annually by the GCSC Committee, or earlier if required by a change in legislation, national governing body guidance, or as a result of an incident or lessons learned. Date adopted: September 2026. Next review due: September 2027.