Respectful Language Policy 2026

Approved by:	Mel Hitchcocks	**Last reviewed on:**	August 2026
Date:	August 2026	**Next review due by:**	August 2028

Introduction

The British International School of Ljubljana is a community of resilient, respectful lifelong learners which offers a safe, supportive and stimulating learning environment where every member of the community is encouraged to strive for excellence.

At BISL we are committed to providing all learners with high quality learning experiences that lead to a consistently high level of student achievement and attitude.

This policy summarises our expectations and common working practices, which reflect the aims and objectives of the School and support its Vision, Mission and Values.

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

We aim to inspire lifelong learners and caring global citizens, in a community where everyone feels encouraged, supported and challenged.

Mission

We provide a high-quality British style international education in English, balancing tradition and innovation. Our passion is creating a positive, safe and nurturing learning environment in which everyone is valued as individuals, empowering them to be versatile, motivated and caring people. We will endeavour to create opportunities to develop creativity, collaboration and critical thinking skills through an inclusive and personalised experience.

Values

RESPECT - We celebrate diversity, encouraging respect for the people and the world around us.
RESPONSIBILITY - We are engaged, promoting actions and behaviours that support a sustainable future.
EMPATHY - We develop empathy for those around us.
EXCELLENCE - We are ambitious, developing resilience, independence and a lifelong love of learning.
INTEGRITY - We are transparent, honest and ethical in all our relationships.

Learning, teaching and community well-being are enhanced when standards of behaviour are high and positive attitudes are prevalent within a school. However, they can be compromised if the behaviour and attitudes are incompatible with the school's ethos and expectations.

At BISL, we encourage high standards of behaviour through the promotion of mutual respect and student self-discipline rather than through a regime of authoritatively-imposed punishment. Students understand that high standards of politeness, consideration and behaviour are required of them and teachers expect classes in which students are well-behaved and positive. Positive reinforcement is used wherever possible, and the balance of praise outweighs admonishment.

This Policy outlines practices to meet these expectations of high standards and the disciplinary processes which are used when circumstances make it necessary to go beyond the usual positive reinforcement strategies. It should be considered in conjunction with, and with reference to:

- BISL Vision, Mission and Values;
- BISL Anti-Bullying Policy;
- BISL Staff and Parent Handbooks;
- BISL Concerns & Complaints Policy;
- BISL Terms & Conditions;
- BISL Positive Behaviour Policy;
- Group and BISL Safeguarding Policy.

Aims

At BISL, we aim to:

- promote high standards of behaviour and an atmosphere where all members of the school community feel valued;
- ensure an environment in which the students feel safe, secure and respected, and in which effective learning can take place;
- develop a moral framework within which initiative, responsibility and sound relationships can flourish;
- enable students to develop a sense of self-worth and a respect and tolerance for others;
- develop intercultural understanding by recognising and where applicable, celebrating the ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic diversity of our school community and promoting these aspects as positive features; foster equality of opportunity and a sense of fairness;
- encourage all students to always give their best, be it in the classroom or in other school activities and life opportunities.

We are supported in reaching these aims by a clear code of conduct and expectations of students, staff and parents/guardians. Our expectations for behaviour and managing behaviour are framed by the following principles:

- The purpose of sanctions is to require reflection upon the consequences of inappropriate behaviour or attitudes, with a view to ensuring that the likelihood of a repeat offence is reduced;
- The offender must understand for what offence they are being disciplined;
- Disciplinary processes should follow as swiftly as possible after the offence;
- The disciplinary sanctions should be appropriate to the offence;
- Staff using their professional discretion, utilise a broad range of behaviour-management strategies, and the step programme as appropriate to the circumstances and the age of the individual students;

- Militaristic or authoritarian models of behaviour control are not acceptable and corporal (physical) or humiliating punishment may never be used at BISL;
- Sanctions should always be given and taken politely and respectfully. Staff and students should ensure that appeals should always be in private

Definitions

Prejudice

(a) an irrational attitude of hostility directed against an individual, a group, a race, or their supposed characteristics
(b) an adverse opinion or leaning formed without just grounds or before sufficient knowledge
(c) preconceived judgment or opinion

Prejudiced Language

Words, expressions, or behaviours that demean, marginalize, or discriminate against individuals or groups based on characteristics such as race, gender, disability, sexual orientation, religion, age, or language.

Misogyny

(a) hatred of, aversion to, or prejudice against women
(b) something (such as speech or behaviour) that reflects and fosters misogyny

Racism

(a) a belief that race is a fundamental determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority of a particular race
(b) behaviour or attitudes that reflect and foster this belief: discrimination, prejudice, or violence against people because of their race

A racist incident is "any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person", according to the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report (page 362, section 45.17)

- In recording incidents under this definition, it is not the intention to label individuals as racist.
- The schools will eliminate discrimination against pupils due to factors including race which cover skin colour, Nationality and/or ethnic or National origins.
- Records of incidents are held on CPOMS for the children involved, along with the restorative justice process and any relevant sanction.
- All racist bullying is treated as seriously as other forms of bullying and will be dealt with in line with the anti-bullying/cyber bullying policies

Other types of discriminatory and derogatory language including swearing

Under the Equality Act (2010) schools have duty to eliminate discrimination against pupils for all protected characteristics.

In the first instance, any incident which is perceived to be discriminatory or derogatory by the victim or any other person will be challenged and addressed using a Restorative Justice and educational approaches.

Harassment

This can include:

- Derogatory and or discriminatory name calling, taunts, insults and 'jokes', both in person, retold, written and/or online
- Racist, discriminatory and/or derogatory graffiti, both physically and/or in representation online
- Wearing badges/clothing which share/promote discriminatory or derogatory messages
- Verbal (sounds and words) and non-verbal abuse (including gestures) and threats, in person, retold and/or online
- Incitement of others to behave in a discriminatory or derogatory manner, both in person and/or online
- Expressing prejudices or deliberate misinformation on racial or ethnic distinctions
- Racist, discriminatory or derogatory comments in discussions in lessons and during non-structured times such as playtime and lunchtime
- Attempts to recruit for groups which promote racist, discriminatory or derogatory actions towards others. Attempts to recruit for such groups will be dealt with under the Prevent strategy and/or Slovenian law and regulations.

Expectations and Conduct

At BISL, staff, students and parents/guardians are all expected to share a collective responsibility for the promotion of positive behaviour.

Staff

BISL staff are required to:

General staff body

- Have high expectations of student's language, behaviour, and attitudes towards others
- Spend time explaining and reinforcing positive language so that students are clear on what is expected from them, including for new students who may not be familiar with the expectations.
- actively model the type of behaviour considered acceptable in their interactions with all members of the school community.
- Be alert to signs of bullying and prejudiced attitudes and deal firmly with such issues in accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy
- Address concerns regarding inappropriate language with children in a calm, quiet and fair manner, while dealing sensitively with children in distress, by listening to them and dealing with any incidents appropriately;
- Actively establish positive relationships with students, parents and the wider community;
- Recognise the students' achievements and use positive reinforcement.
- Provide opportunities for the students to demonstrate responsibility;
- Maintain a professional approach in discussions relating to students.

- In instances where a staff member is unsure of how to deal with an incident of prejudiced language or other inappropriate language, refer to the Working Group responsible for dealing with such issues
- Log, where relevant, any incidents of use of inappropriate language in a place where other staff can follow up if necessary and to keep a log of concerning interactions, as well as parent involvement. An alternative could be to pass on concerning interactions to the Key Stage Coordinators.

Working Group staff

- Educate themselves on issues of misogyny, racism, and other information pertaining to prejudiced language, or global issues that might be the topic of (controversial) conversation in the School
- Support students in reflecting on their language and attitudes either through Restorative Justice/reflective paperwork or conversations
- Support staff in dealing with incidents that may arise and the staff member needs help with
- Provide CPD for staff which will help them to do the jobs listed in the 'General Staff' section above
- Organise assemblies, teach PSHE lessons and mentor students who have been identified on relevant topics to educate the student body on appropriate language
- Log any work, intervention, or concerning incidents that have come to their attention in the relevant place

Safeguarding

It is important to note that any instances of prejudiced language used against another student is a safeguarding issue. To protect the wellbeing of students, these instances should be logged in the relevant safeguarding way. This is because such language can have a serious emotional, academic and social impact on the targeted student and can contribute to a toxic classroom environment. BISL has a responsibility to protect all students from such language and to ensure that all students can learn and thrive in an equitable and inclusive environment.

It is important to note that students who repeat extreme statements or concepts are also likely to be vulnerable to indoctrination or grooming and should therefore be given wellbeing support should it be seen as necessary. It is also important to note that repeated incidents will be referred to social services.

Students

We expect the students at BISL to be respectful to each other and to be:

- honest,
- caring and kind,
- helpful,
- sensible and hard-working,
- tolerant or others' opinions and differences
- Feel safe as a member of the school community

To meet these expectations, our students are encouraged to:

- be polite and courteous at all times;
- treat others as they would like to be treated themselves (i.e. fairly and with tolerance and respect for other's views and rights)
- follow our BISL values, the school rules and accept responsibility for their own choices and actions;
- actively participate in assemblies and lessons that are used as an opportunity to promote appropriate and supportive relationships
- be aware of who they can talk to if they are upset or have any incidents they wish to discuss, whether the incidents occurred in school or online
- understand why their language is either praised or otherwise
- Use anonymous (or otherwise) reporting systems to inform staff of any incidents so that these can be dealt with appropriately, even if the student might be reluctant to come forward

Students will be educated on the following regarding appropriate and inappropriate language:

- The expected standard of behaviour they should be displaying at school.
- That they have a duty to follow the school's positive behaviour policy and the school values.
- Misconceptions around commonly used slang that is offensive
- Comments that show prejudice, either explicitly or implicitly
- If curious around controversial topics, how they can ask questions that are respectful and open to understanding, and who to ask
- Understanding what respectful listening is, what respectful dialogue, or even disagreements, are
- The importance of keeping an open mind towards others' views, cultures, backgrounds, sexes, sexualities, etc.
- Consequences they will face if they don't meet the standard.
- The Working Group support that is available to them to help them meet the behavioural standards.
- Students will be supported to develop an understanding of the school's behaviour policy and wider culture.

The school will ensure that all new students are briefed thoroughly on the school's expected standards of behaviour. We work closely with all students from the day they start at BISL and support them with transition all the way from Early Years to Primary, Secondary and 6th Form, until students leave school. Part of the PSHE curriculum and form/class-time morning sessions is used to teach students about the meaning and benefits of living in a diverse community and how to demonstrate respect in the community; the importance of and strategies for building positive and healthy friendships and tackling bullying; what it means to be a global citizen.

Parents/Guardians

Parents/guardians have a vital role in promoting good behaviour in school and at home. We consider liaison with the school very important.

We encourage parents to:

- work actively in partnership with staff and follow school policies;

- respond to concerns raised by members of staff;
- Support the school in educating students on appropriate language to use

Appropriate and Inappropriate Language

Positive language and habits

BISL will educate and encourage students to:

- Use language that is inclusive of all races, sexes, genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religions, ages, abilities, languages
- Teach students how to ask respectful questions when they are unsure of information to better understand
- Look for information on these topics in appropriate ways: reliable internet sources or specific members of staff
- Use language that is open-minded and curious rather than accusatory and closed to new ideas
- Think critically about statements made, particularly by 'influencers', regarding how extreme they are in nature, whether they fit in with positive values, and what the motivation behind these statements might be

Inappropriate language

Incidents of inappropriate language will be separated by

1. Intent
2. Impact
3. Awareness
4. Repetition

BISL students will be educated and given an opportunity to reflect on language that:

- Has implied prejudiced meaning
- Is commonly used slang (such as 'that's/you're gay', 'don't be such a girl' or 'Asian people are good at maths') with undertones of harmful, prejudiced impact
- Is stereotyping ('women shouldn't have hair on their arms')
- Any other language that is deemed by the Principal or Key Stage Coordinators to have underlying prejudice or has a negative impact on a person or community in the long term
- Any language or gestures or actions that imply someone is inferior to another (such as clicking, snapping fingers, whistling to get attention)

Should students be heard or found to be using language like this, a Step 2 (break/lunch detention – according to the behaviour policy) will be issued and reflective document filled out. In instances where staff are deciding whether to give a step 2, they are encouraged to ask themselves:

- Was this intentional or not?
- Is peer habit a reason the student might have used this language?
- Is the student unaware of what the harm is?
- Does the comment cause limited harm?
- Is there a clear, easy opportunity for correction?

BISL students will be reminded that the following language is unacceptable:

- Any language that is blatantly prejudiced towards races, sexes, genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religions, ages, abilities, languages
- Any hand gestures or body language that is blatantly prejudiced towards races, sexes, genders, sexualities, ethnicities, religions (for example, making monkey gestures)
- Any sexualised language or gestures
- Commonly known hate symbols or gestures (such as Nazi salutes)
- Any language that is stereotypical which is clearly known to not be true and is harmful ('all women are unintelligent and should be subordinate')
- Any dehumanising or threatening language
- Any targeted harassment

Students who intentionally use language like this will be issued with a step 5 (according to the behaviour policy) and will be given a reflective document to fill out which will form part of a conversation at the reintegration meeting with parents.
In instances where staff are making a decision about whether a step 5 should be given, they are encouraged to ask themselves:

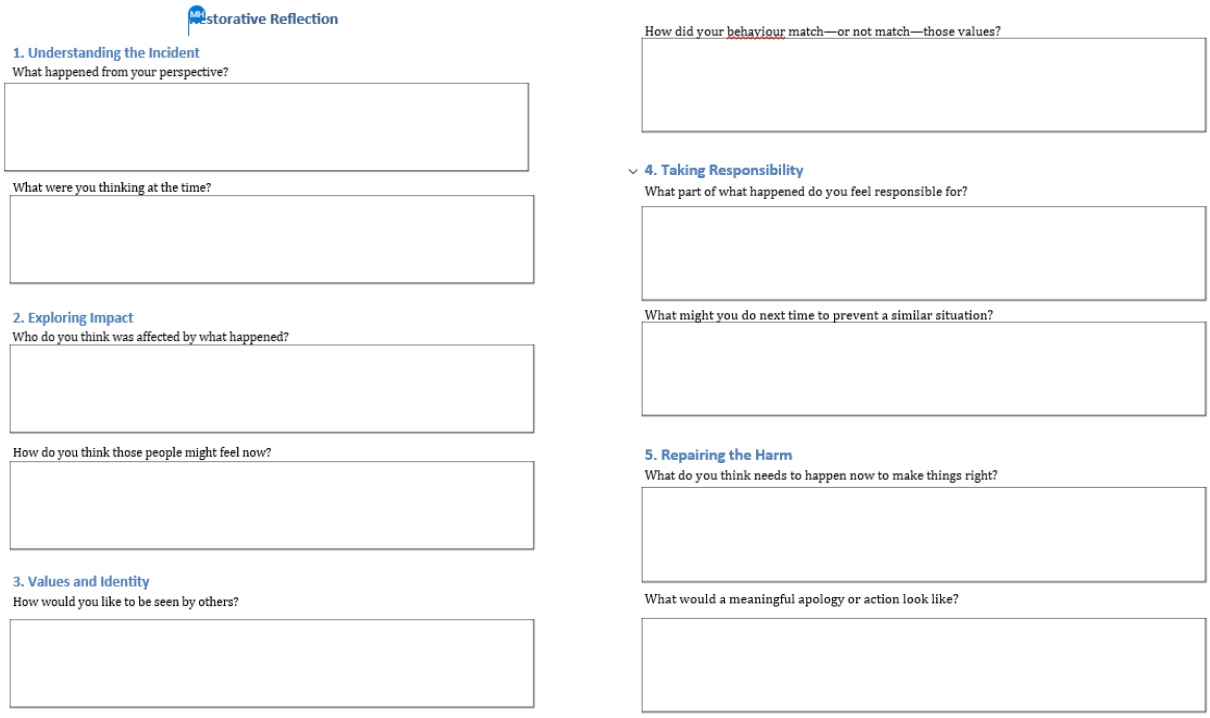
- Was harm intended? Is the student aware of how harmful their comment is?
- Is more than one student involved in ganging up on another?
- Is the behaviour repeated despite previous (logged) education?
- Does the comment cause distress, hurt, upset?

Parents will be informed of any offences and are encouraged to support the school in the education of BISL students. All incidents, reflections and conversations will be logged so that an accurate record is kept.
If a student repeats the offenses of the first bullet point list, then the Principal or Key Stage Coordinators can decide to go to a step 5 immediately. This is why keeping a log of incidents is vital.

<u>Restorative Justice and Reflection</u>

Reflection

When given a sanction, students will be told to reflect on the language or gestures used and what the impact of this might have been. Example of possible questions below, although this can be adjusted to fit the situation.



Restorative Reflection

1. Understanding the Incident

What happened from your perspective?

What were you thinking at the time?

2. Exploring Impact

Who do you think was affected by what happened?

How do you think those people might feel now?

3. Values and Identity

How would you like to be seen by others?

How did your behaviour match—or not match—those values?

4. Taking Responsibility

What part of what happened do you feel responsible for?

What might you do next time to prevent a similar situation?

5. Repairing the Harm

What do you think needs to happen now to make things right?

What would a meaningful apology or action look like?

Restorative Justice conversations

According to the University of San Diego, “Restorative justice in education is a relationship-focused, non-punitive framework that replaces traditional, exclusionary discipline (like suspension) with dialogue and accountability to address behaviour. It aims to repair harm, improve school climate, and reduce racial disparities in discipline by fostering empathy, communication, and community among students and staff.” Therefore, the reflection done by a student (above) can be used as the basis for a conversation with the relevant member of staff, and perhaps with parents present. Where relevant, an apology can be made to those impacted, in the presence of a member of staff. This supports the idea of education over punishment and holds students accountable for how their actions and words impact others.

Where applicable, the Wellbeing Team may follow up on both the student who received consequences and the one who was the target of the comments, so that wellbeing is looked after for both cases involved. This becomes particularly important when considering the earlier note that some students who repeat extreme comments or language may also be vulnerable themselves.

<u>The Positive Behaviour Policy</u>

The use of inappropriate language or gestures will be dealt with in accordance with the Positive Behaviour Policy. The main aim of the School is to educate first, whilst maintaining a positive, safe feeling throughout the school body. Should this policy not cover a specific scenario, the Positive Behaviour Policy should be referred to, as well as consulting the Principal and Key Stage Coordinators.

<u>Monitoring/Tracking student use of inappropriate language</u>

Logging and dealing with unacceptable language

The wide range of stages of development and experiences out of school means that there are some children who use racist, discriminatory or derogatory language (including swearing) in an echolalic manner (repeat words they have heard) and these are used out of context i.e. without intent to cause harm. However, this does not mean that the victim in the incident has not been offended – both factors must be considered when logging the incident and responding appropriately.

It is important to note that discriminatory incidents/bullying can be subtle and may not always be directly explicit. These kinds of incidents can be just as damaging to victims as explicit discrimination. Pupils may also suspect the motives and intent of their fellow pupils when perfectly acceptable language is being used.

Importantly, wherever offence is caused it needs to be understood and resolved, and will be recorded as a discriminatory incident and tagged accordingly to support in school monitoring.

It should be noted that under the prescribed definition, racist and other discriminatory incidents related to protected characteristics can occur without a victim or target being present, for example telling a racist joke or making derogatory remarks about a particular ethnic community or sexuality. Such incidents will also be recorded and resolved. Some discriminatory incidents involve allegations that the school itself has failed to provide equal and fair opportunities or treatment to individuals or groups on the basis of their protected characteristics. Where such an allegation is made, this too will be recorded and investigated as a discriminatory incident.

Monitoring by the senior teams

CPOMS has 2 flags – contextual or non-contextual - so that the senior staff can undertake monitoring of incidents to ensure that these are dealt with swiftly and appropriately. DSL meetings and/or SLT meetings are used to monitor incidents and discussed. This is then recorded in the meeting minutes and/or on the CPOMS incident so that this is clear, and any next steps are identified to ensure that incidents are dealt with fairly and consistently by all staff.

Monitoring and Review

Policy written by Tessa Kerr (Head of English) and Emma Knight (KS4 Coordinator)

Date: June 2026.

This policy will be reviewed annually by: SLT, the Head of English and relevant KS Coordinators.

Approved by: Mel Hitchcocks, Principal

Date of next review: June 2028 or earlier, if required.