



# **Bellingham Partnership of Schools Anti-bullying Policy**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Diane Grey</b>
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## Statement of intent

Bellingham Partnership of Schools believes that all pupils are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment; this means being free from all forms of bullying behaviour. This policy outlines how instances of bullying are dealt with, including the procedures to prevent occurrences of bullying.

These strategies, e.g. learning about tolerance and difference as part of the school's curriculum, aim to promote an inclusive, tolerant and supportive ethos at the school.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 outlines several legal obligations regarding the school's response to bullying. Under section 89, schools must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. These measures are part of the school's Behaviour Policy, which is communicated to all pupils, school staff and parents.

All staff, parents and pupils work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at the school. There is a zero-tolerance policy for bullying at the school.

## Legal Framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance, but not limited to the following:

- Education and Inspections Act 200
- Equality Act 201
- Protection from Harassment Act 199
- Malicious Communications Act 198
- Public Order Act 198
- Communications Act 200
- Human Rights Act 199
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Education Act 201
- DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
- DfE (2023) 'Keeping children safe in education 2023
- DCMS, DSIT, and UK Council for Internet Safety (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for Education settings working with children and young people'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy
- **[Primary schools only]** Relationships and Health Education Policy

- **[Secondary schools only]** Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy
- Child-on-child Abuse Policy
- Remote Education Policy

## Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, “bullying” is defined as persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another person or group. Bullying is generally characterised by:

- **Repetition:** Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over an extended period of time.
- **Intent:** The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental.
- **Targeting:** Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.
- **Power imbalance:** Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations.

Vulnerable pupils are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. Vulnerable pupils may include, but are not limited to:

- Pupils who are adopted.
- Pupils suffering from a health problem.
- Pupils with caring responsibilities.
- Pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Pupils with certain characteristics are also more likely to be targets of bullying, including, but not limited to:

- Pupils who are LGBTQ+, or perceived to be LGBTQ+.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils.
- Pupils with SEND.

## Types of Bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Teasing another pupil because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, home life, culture, or SEND are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Online (cyberbullying)

**Racist bullying:** Bullying another person based on their ethnic background or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.

**Homophobic and biphobic bullying:** Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

**Transphobic bullying:** Bullying based on another person's gender identity or gender presentation, or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.

**Sexist bullying:** Bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.

**Sexual bullying:** Bullying behaviour that has a physical, psychological, verbal or non-verbal sexual dimension or dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

**Ableist bullying:** Bullying behaviour that focuses on another person's disability or support needs; this can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability.

**Prejudicial bullying:** Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics or experiences, e.g. religion or mental health issues.

**Relational bullying:** Bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

**Socioeconomic bullying:** Bullying based on prejudices against the perceived social status of the victim, including, but not limited to, their economic status, their parents' occupations, their health or nutrition level, or the perceived "quality" of their clothing or belongings.

## **Roles and responsibilities**

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Evaluating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it does not discriminate against any pupils on the basis of their protected characteristics or backgrounds.
- The overall implementation and monitoring of this policy.
- Ensuring that all governors are appropriately trained regarding safeguarding and child protection at induction
- Ensuring that the school adopts a tolerant and open-minded policy towards difference.
- Ensuring the school is inclusive.
- Analysing any bullying data to establish patterns and reviewing this policy in light of these.

- Ensuring the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the role
- Appointing a safeguarding link governor who will work with the DSL to ensure the policies and practices relating to safeguarding, including the prevention of cyberbullying, are being implemented effectively
- Ensuring that pupils are taught how to keep themselves and others safe, including online

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Reviewing and amending this policy, accounting for new legislation and government guidance, and using staff experience of dealing with bullying incidents in previous years to improve procedures.
- Keeping a log of all reported incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for proper analysis of the data collected
- Analysing the data in the bullying record at termly intervals to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members.

Pastoral lead/ class teacher/ form teacher

- Corresponding and meeting with parents where necessary.
- Providing a point of contact for pupils and parents when more serious bullying incidents occur.

Teachers are responsible for:

- Being alert to social dynamics in their class.
- Being available for pupils who wish to report bullying.
- Providing follow-up support after bullying incidents.
- Being alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups, and informing the pupil's heads of year of such observations.
- Refraining from stereotyping when dealing with bullying.
- Understanding the composition of pupil groups, showing sensitivity to those who have been the victims of bullying.
- Reporting any instances of bullying once they have been approached by a pupil for support
- Supporting the school's recording and monitoring of bullying incidents through providing a written account of incidents, including names, dates and actions taken and pass this on to the Headteacher, recording on CPOMS.
- Ensure information is recorded (CPOMS) and communicated with other relevant staff, in particular the form teacher of any children involved.

Parents are responsible for:

- Informing their child's head of year or form tutor if they have any concerns that their child is the victim of bullying or involved in bullying in any way. They should alert the school as soon as possible and be assured their concerns shall be dealt with sensitively and where requested, or appropriate, confidentially.
- Being watchful of their child's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff members of any changes.

Pupils are responsible for:

- Informing a member of staff if they witness bullying or are a victim of bullying.
- Not making counter-threats if they are victims of bullying.
- Walking away from dangerous situations and avoiding involving other pupils in incidents.
- Keeping evidence of cyberbullying and informing a member of staff should they fall victim to cyberbullying.

### **Statutory requirements**

The school understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, it has a responsibility to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The school understands that, under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, it could have charges brought against it if it allows the rights of pupils to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously. The headteacher will ensure that this policy complies with the HRA; the headteacher understands that they cannot do this without fully involving their teaching staff.

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/or communications may be considered criminal offences:

- Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or in a way which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or contains information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.

- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message, or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information through any media, including internet sites.
- Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to the police include violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment or intimidation, and hate crimes.



## Appendix 1

### Signs and symptoms

A child may not be able to tell that he or she is being bullied, therefore adults should be aware of these possible signs and investigate if a pupil:

- Is frightened of walking to or from school or going on the school bus
- Begs to be driven to school
- Repeated or persistent absence from school
- Changes their usual routine
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- Starts stammering
- Runs away
- Threatens or attempts suicide
- Cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the mornings
- Begins to make less effort with school work than previously
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Has possessions damaged or goes missing
- Asks for money or steals money
- Has dinner money regularly lost
- Comes home unusually hungry or stops eating
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Is frightened to say what's wrong
- Is nervous, jumpy refuses to make eye contact
- Has a change of attitude or seems unhappy
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices
- Lack of eye contact
- Becoming short tempered
- Change in behaviour and attitude at home
- Gives implausible answers to any of the above.

## Appendix 2

### Implementation

#### Prevention

At Bellingham Partnership Schools we use a variety of age-appropriate methods to support our pupils in preventing and understanding the consequences of bullying such as:

- A strong ethos which promotes tolerance and respect, including respect for difference and diversity
- Positive leadership on how to recognise and deal with bullying
- Assemblies
- PHSE, RSE and Citizenship lessons
- SMSC Curriculum
- A planned approach to the issue of bullying, so that it is discussed openly and regularly in a context which promotes self-esteem and confident relationships.
- Regular consultation with children to find out what bullying occurs, when, where and by whom
- Safe areas for children and young people at times when they feel particularly vulnerable
- Identifying independent listeners including pupils and adults eg Pastoral Lead to whom those who are being bullied may turn
- Support the child who is demonstrating bullying behaviour
- The involvement of children and young people in procedures dealing with instances of bullying through friends and peer mediation
- Provision for follow up of those who are bullied and those who bully
- A commitment to the development of a multi-agency approach that might help reduce bullying behaviour
- Anti-bullying week
- Pupil surveys and research carried out and acted upon
- Recording and monitoring of bullying incidents
- Staff training
- Anti-bullying working party
- Anti-bullying strategies explicitly taught across the curriculum
- Structured PSHE programmes covering bullying, self-esteem, assertiveness etc.
- Celebration of differences through assemblies and displays
- Peer mediation work
- A variety of lunchtime clubs and activities
- Explicitly teaching ways of staying safe using technology in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Assuring the positive development self-esteem and emotional well-being through the implementation of SEAL strategy (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning)
- Encouraging an open climate in which bullying behaviour is openly discussed and actively discouraged
- Providing children with the opportunity to raise bullying concerns

- Being alert to the signs of bullying, as identified in this policy
- Model appropriate social relationships built upon respect to children, through their interaction with other members of staff and the way in which they relate to children
- Listening to, and sharing concerns with parents and carers
- Actively teaching anti-bullying strategies when opportunities arise in the curriculum, as well as through work carried out in Anti-Bullying week, PSHE, etc.
- Exploit opportunities that arise throughout the school day to exemplify expected behaviour and reject bullying behaviour
- Act on any information indicating bullying is happening- Implement Close Monitoring system if required.
- Report any incidents of bullying to the Head or Deputy Headteacher
- Being calm and consistent

## **Procedures and systems**

### **Action Taken**

When a member of staff is made aware of any incident, the following procedures must be followed:

- Act promptly to make sure the victim is safe, under no imminent threat and their immediate welfare is addressed.
- Investigate and establish whether the incident is bullying through sensitive discussion with the pupils, parents, witnesses, etc whilst maintaining, wherever possible, confidentiality.
- Once bullying has been confirmed by the Headteacher, the information must then be shared with children and parents and an appropriate course of action will be discussed and planned.
- Recording of the details of the incident should take place, providing a written account via CPOMS, including names, dates and actions taken, keeping the Headteacher informed.
- If it is established that a child has been using bullying behaviour, the child's parents will be informed either by letter, email or telephone. The safety and welfare of the child being bullied will be ensured as a matter of priority: this may mean the child/children involved in the bullying may be kept in at break times or lunch times or kept in after school. Once this has been established, support systems will be put into place to monitor the perpetrator and help them to modify their behaviour.
- School recognises that children use bullying behaviour is sometimes a cry for help and so will work closely with the child so that the behaviour does not continue. These systems may include working with a member of staff during break times or lunch times (or in some cases after school), mentoring by an appropriate person in school, or the use of a behaviour monitoring sheet/diary. Outside agencies, such as the Children's Early Intervention Team, may also be called upon to support the child.

- If a pattern of bullying behaviour is established, a behaviour plan drawn up in an attempt to address the child's behavioural and emotional difficulties. Parents will be kept informed of the school's concern over a child's repeated bullying behaviour. In extreme circumstances, when a child refuses to adhere to the school's anti bullying policy to the detriment of the safety and well-being of other children, a fixed term suspension may be given.
- Parental opinion on how well the school tackles bullying and deals with incidents is actively sought through both parental questionnaires and discussion with parents. The school also welcomes feedback from parents over specific incidents and, in cases where parents are unhappy, they will be informed about the school's complaints procedure.

## **Support**

In the event of bullying, victims will be offered the following support:

- Emotional support and reassurance from the school counsellor
- Reassurance that it was right to report the incident and that appropriate action will be taken
- Liaison with their parents to ensure a continuous dialogue of support
- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff
- Advice on aspects of online safety, in the event of cyberbullying, to prevent re-occurrence, including, where appropriate, discussion with their parents to evaluate their online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online
- Discussion with their parent on whether police action is required (except in serious cases of child exploitation or abuse where the police may be contacted without discussion with parents)

The Headteacher will carefully consider in each instance of bullying that is handled whether it is appropriate to split up the victim(s) and perpetrator(s), e.g. preventing them sharing classes or spaces where possible, and will split up other harmful group dynamics to prevent further occurrences where necessary. Victims will be encouraged to broaden their friendship groups by joining lunchtime or after-school clubs or activities.

Staff, particularly the DSL, will work with the victim to build resilience, e.g. by offering emotional therapy.

The school will acknowledge that bullying may be an indication of underlying mental health issues. Perpetrators will be required to attend a mandatory counselling session to assist with any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. The school will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.

## Appendix 3

### Dealing with bullying that takes place outside school

Staff will remain aware that bullying can happen both in and outside of school and will ensure that they understand how to respond to reports of bullying that occurred outside school in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and the Child-on-child Abuse Policy.

The Headteacher has a specific statutory power to sanction pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives the headteacher the power to regulate pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises, and therefore, not under the lawful charge of a school staff member.

Teachers have the power to sanction pupils for misbehaving outside of the school premises. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, e.g. on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, it will be investigated and acted upon. In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying, members of staff can only sanction the pupil on school premises, or elsewhere when the pupil is under the lawful control of the member of staff, e.g. on a school trip.

The Headteacher is responsible for determining whether it is appropriate to notify the police of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be of a criminal nature or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police will be informed.

#### Bullying on journeys to and from school

- Investigate the nature and extent of the bullying, where possible, through witnesses from the school
- Talk to the transport company and parents about bullying on buses
- Talk to the headteachers of other schools, where pupils from these schools are bullying off the premises
- Plan safe routes to school with the pupils
- Talk to pupils about how to avoid or handle bullying outside school premises
- Talk to the local police about specific problem groups and problem areas
- Talk or write to the parents when the bullying behaviour is carried out by a pupil from this school
- If the bullying continues the school will recommend to the parents of the victim that the matter is reported to the police.

## Appendix 4

### Child on child abuse

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

To prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate pupils about abuse, its forms, and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE lessons.

All staff will:

- Be aware that pupils of any age and gender are capable of abusing their peers.
- Be aware that abuse can occur inside and outside of school settings.
- Be aware of the scale of harassment or abuse, and that just because it is not being reported does not mean it is not happening.
- Take all instances of child-on-child abuse equally seriously regardless of the characteristics of the perpetrators or victims.
- Never tolerate abuse as “banter” or “part of growing up”, and will never justify sexual harassment, e.g. as “boys being boys”, as this can foster a culture of unacceptable behaviours and one that risks normalising abuse.
- Be aware that child-on-child abuse can be manifested in many ways, including sexting, sexual harassment and assault, and hazing or initiation-type violence.
- Always challenge any harmful physical behaviour that is sexual in nature, such as inappropriate touching. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Sexual harassment in particular can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Telling sexual stories, making sexual remarks, or calling someone sexualised names.
- Sexual “jokes” or taunting.
- Deliberately brushing against someone.
- Displaying images or videos of a sexual nature.
- Upskirting (this is a criminal offence).
- Online sexual harassment, e.g. creating or sharing sexual imagery, sexual comments on social media, or sexual coercion or threats.

Pupils will be made aware of how to raise concerns or make a report and how any reports will be handled – this includes the process for reporting concerns about friends or peers. If a pupil has been harmed, is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral may be made to children’s social care services (CSCS) and potentially the police, where the DSL deems this appropriate in the circumstances.

All staff will be aware and sensitive towards the fact that pupils may not be ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. Pupils being abused may feel embarrassed, humiliated, scared, or threatened.

The school's Child-on-child Abuse Policy outlines the school's stance on addressing child-on-child abuse, including sexual abuse, and the procedures in place will be adhered to if any instances are uncovered or disclosed. More information on the school's approach to preventing and managing instances of child-on-child abuse can be found within this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## **Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying can take many forms and can go even further than face-to-face bullying by invading personal space and home life and can target more than one person. It can also take place across age groups and target pupils, staff and others, and may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. It can sometimes draw bystanders into being accessories.

Cyberbullying can include the following:

- Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages
- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips
- Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress
- Silent or abusive phone calls
- Using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible
- Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name
- Menacing or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom
- Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging
- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites and social networking sites, e.g. Facebook

**NB.** The above list is not exhaustive, and cyberbullying may take other forms.

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying. The school views cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in this policy if they become aware of any incidents.

All members of staff will receive training on an **annual** basis on the signs of cyberbullying, in order to identify pupils who may be experiencing issues and intervene effectively.

Many of the signs of cyberbullying will be similar to those found in the signs of bullying section of this policy; however, staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is being cyberbullied:

- Avoiding use of the computer
- Being on their phone routinely
- Becoming agitated when receiving calls or text messages

Staff will also be alert to the following signs which may indicate that a pupil is cyberbullying others:

- Avoiding using the computer or turning off the screen when someone is near
- Acting in a secretive manner when using the computer or mobile phone
- Spending excessive amounts of time on the computer or mobile phone
- Becoming upset or angry when the computer or mobile phone is taken away

Parents will also be invited to attend training sessions in order to educate them on the signs and symptoms of cyberbullying and will be advised to report to the headteacher if their child displays any of the signs outlined in this section.

All learning at home will follow procedures outlined in the Remote Education Policy. During times when remote education is being utilised, the school will frequently be in contact with parents to make them aware of their activities online, but also to reinforce the importance of pupils staying safe online and explaining how filtering and monitoring procedures work.

Staff will be aware that a cyberbullying incident might include features different to other forms of bullying, prompting a particular response. Significant differences may include the following:

- **Possible extensive scale and scope** – pupils may be bullied on multiple platforms and using multiple different methods that are made possible by virtue of the bullying taking place online
- **The anytime and anywhere nature of cyberbullying** – pupils may not have an escape from the torment when they are at home due to the bullying continuing through technology at all times
- **The person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is** – it is easy for individuals to remain anonymous online and on social media, and pupils may be bullied by someone who is concealing their own identity
- **The perpetrator might not realise that their actions are bullying** – sometimes, the culture of social media, and the inability to see the impact that words are having on someone, may lead to pupils crossing boundaries without realising
- **The victim of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened** – pupils may have taken screenshots of bullying, or there may be a digital footprint that can identify the perpetrator



Staff and pupils will be instructed not to respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. Evidence of the incident should be recorded, e.g. taking screenshots. Staff will report incidents to their line manager or the headteacher for the incident to be investigated and support to be provided. Pupils will report incidents to a trusted member of staff.

Where offensive content is posted online targeting a staff member or pupil, the person targeted will be encouraged to use the reporting mechanism on the website or social media platform to request its removal. Where the person who has posted it is known to the school, the headteacher will request they remove it directly.

The school will support pupils who have been victims of cyberbullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the pupil about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped, in accordance with this policy.

In accordance with the Education Act 2011, the school has the right to examine and delete files from pupils' personal devices, e.g. mobile phones, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. In these cases, the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy will be followed.

## Appendix 5

### Record keeping

The Headteacher will ensure that robust records are kept with regard to all reported or otherwise uncovered incidents of bullying – this includes recording where decisions have been made, e.g. sanctions, support, escalation of a situation and resolutions.

The Headteacher and DSL will ensure that all decisions and actions recorded are reviewed on a regular basis for the purposes of:

- Identifying patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour on the part of certain pupils that may need to be handled, e.g. with pastoral support.
- Reflecting on whether cases could have been handled better and using these reflections to inform future practice.
- Considering whether there are wider cultural issues at play within the school, e.g. whether school culture facilitates discriminatory bullying by not adequately addressing instances and planning to mitigate this.
- Considering whether prevention strategies could be strengthened based on any patterns in the cases that arise.
- Responding to any complaints about how cases have been handled.

### Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed every **two years** by the Headteacher, DSL and Governing Body. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.