

Anti-Bullying Policy

Category of Policy: Central Education Policy Adapted by School

Willow Tree Park School

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Statement of Intent

The school believes that all students 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, such as 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 students. These measures are part of the school's Behavioural Policy, which is communicated to all students, school staff, carers, and parents.

All staff, parents, carers and students work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at the school. The school takes a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and will respond to all reported or identified concerns promptly, proportionately and in accordance with the individual circumstances of the students involved.



Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation, including, but not limited to:

Education and Inspections Act 2006

Equality Act 2010

Protection from Harassment Act 1997

Malicious Communications Act 1988

Public Order Act 1986

Communications Act 2003

Human Rights Act 1998

Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Education Act 2011

Online Safety Act 2023

This policy has been written in accordance with statutory and non-statutory guidance, including, but not limited to:

DfE (2017) *Preventing and tackling bullying*

DfE (2018) *Sexual violence and sexual harassment between students in schools and colleges*

DfE (2018) *Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools*

DfE (2026) *Keeping children safe in education*

DfE (2023) *Working Together to Safeguard Children*

DfE (2026) Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff

This policy operates in conjunction with the following school policies:

Promoting Positive Behaviour Policy

Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy



Social, Emotional and Mental Health Policy

Child-on-Child Abuse Policy

Exclusion Policy

Online Safety 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 a period of time.

Intent: The perpetrator(s) 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 students 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 students may include, but are not limited to:

Students with SEND.

Students who are adopted.

Students suffering from a health problem.

Students with caring responsibilities.

A single incident may not meet the definition of bullying where the characteristics of repetition are not present; however, this does not mean that the behaviour is acceptable or that action will not be taken. Serious incidents, including discriminatory behaviour, sexual harassment, sexual violence, threats or other harmful behaviour,



will be addressed in accordance with the school's Behaviour and Safeguarding policies.

SEND and Communication Considerations

The school recognises that students with SEND may experience or communicate bullying in different ways. Some students may be unable to verbally report an incident or may communicate distress through changes in behaviour, communication, emotional regulation, attendance, engagement or presentation.

Staff will therefore consider a student's individual communication profile and use appropriate communication methods, including AAC, Makaton, symbols, visuals and other personalised approaches, when identifying, reporting and investigating possible bullying.

The school will also consider whether behaviour between students is linked to SEND, communication needs, sensory needs or an unmet need. Such behaviour will not automatically be considered bullying. However, SEND will not be used as a reason to minimise or disregard behaviour that is harmful, targeted, intimidating or discriminatory.

Types of Bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying and can be related to almost anything.

Teasing another student because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual-orientation, home life, culture, disability, or need are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

Verbally

Physically

Emotionally

Online (Cyber)

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



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

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/dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

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

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

Roles and Responsibilities

The head teacher is responsible for:

- Evaluating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it is not discriminatory.
- The overall implementation of this policy.
- 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.
- 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 any data in the bullying log at termly intervals to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members.

Teachers are responsible for:

- Corresponding and meeting with parents where necessary.



- Providing a point of contact for students and parents, when more serious bullying incidents occur.
- Being alert to social dynamics in their class.
- Being available for students who wish to report bullying.
- Providing follow-up support after bullying incidents.
- Being alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups,
- Refraining from gender stereotyping when dealing with bullying.
- Understanding the composition of student groups, showing sensitivity to those who have been the victims of bullying.
- Reporting any instances of bullying once they have been approached by a student for support.
- Offering emotional support to victims of bullying.

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Informing their student's teacher if they have any concerns that their student is the victim of bullying or involving in bullying in anyway.
- Being watchful of their student's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff members of any changes.

Students are responsible for:

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

Bullying and Harassment of Staff

The school recognises that bullying and harassment may also be directed towards members of staff by students, parents, carers or other members of the school community.

Concerns relating to bullying, harassment, intimidation or abusive behaviour towards staff will be taken seriously and managed in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy, Parental Code of Conduct and relevant safeguarding or HR procedures.



Where appropriate, incidents will be recorded, reported and reviewed to identify recurring patterns or wider concerns. Staff will be supported to report concerns and will be provided with appropriate support and clear escalation routes.

The school will have regard to the Department for Education's Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff guidance (2026).

Statutory Implications

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

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, 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 students and young people at the school to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously.

The Head Teacher will ensure that this policy complies with the HRA; the Head Teacher 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.

Prevention

The school clearly communicates a whole-school commitment to addressing bullying through PSHE.

All reported or investigated instances of bullying will be investigated by a member of staff.

Staff will encourage student cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work.

All types of bullying will be discussed as part of the curriculum.

Diversity, difference and respect for others is promoted and celebrated through various lessons.

Seating plans will be organised and altered in a way that prevents instances of bullying.

Potential victims of bullying are placed in working groups with other students who do not abuse or take advantage of others.

Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills are encouraged and provided through participation in special events, for example, inter-class shared learning opportunities, sporting activities and various other groups.

All members of the school are made aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it.

All staff members receive training on identifying and dealing with the different types of bullying as part of the safeguarding induction training.

A safe place, supervised by a teacher, teaching assistant or carer, is available for students to go to during free time if they feel threatened or wish to be alone.

The member of staff supervising will speak to students to find out the cause of any problems and, ultimately, stop any form of bullying taking place.



All teachers will also offer an 'open door' policy allowing students to discuss any bullying, whether they are victims or have witnessed an incident.

Before a vulnerable student joins the school, the student's teacher and the DSL will develop a strategy to prevent bullying from happening – this may include giving the student a buddy to help integrate them into the school.

Due to the extensive assessment period before a student starts at their education, the school will be alert to and addresses any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst students, as these can be a cause of bullying behaviour.

The school will ensure potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional and social development isn't negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g. mental health issues.

Signs of Bullying

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a student is a victim of bullying:

Being frightened to travel to or from school

Asking to be driven to school

Unwillingness to attend school

Becoming anxious or lacking confidence

Saying that they feel ill in the morning

Decreased involvement in schoolwork

Returning home with torn clothes or damaged possessions

Missing possessions

Asking for extra money or stealing

Cuts or bruises

Lack of appetite

Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices

Becoming agitated when receiving calls or text messages

Lack of eye contact



Becoming short tempered

Change in behaviour and attitude at home

Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating.

Students who display a significant number of these signs are approached by a member of staff, to determine the underlying issues, whether they are due to bullying or other issues.

In addition, staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a person is likely to have bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to the student becoming aggravated

They have been the victim of domestic abuse

They are stressed due to home life situations

If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify the student's teacher, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

Staff Principles

The school will ensure that prevention is a prominent aspect of its anti-bullying vision.

Staff will treat reports of bullying seriously and they will not ignore signs of suspected bullying.

Unpleasantness from one student towards another is always challenged and never ignored.

Staff act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident; this applies to all staff, not solely teaching staff.

Staff always respect students' privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying are not discussed with others, unless it is in a setting that the victim has given consent to, or there is a safeguarding concern.

If a member of staff believes a student is in danger, e.g. of being hurt, they will inform the Head Teacher immediately.



Follow-up support is given to both the victim and bully in the months following any incidents, to ensure all bullying has stopped.

Preventing Child-on-Child Abuse

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

The school will also ensure that students are taught about safeguarding, including online safety, as part of a broad and balanced curriculum in PSHE lessons, RSE and group sessions. Such content will be age and stage of development specific, and tackle issues such as the following:

- Healthy relationships
- Respectful behaviour
- Gender roles, stereotyping and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- Prejudiced behaviour
- That sexual violence and sexual harassment is always wrong
- Addressing cultures of sexual harassment

All staff will be aware that students of any age and sex are capable of abusing their peers and will never tolerate abuse as “banter” or “part of growing up”.

All staff will be aware that child-on-child abuse can be manifested in many ways, including sexting and common gender issues, such as girls being sexually touched or assaulted, and boys being subjected to hazing/initiation type of violence which aims to cause physical, emotional or psychological harm.

Where a student is found to have been involved in harmful sexual behaviour, the school will help the student to move forward from the incident reporting by supporting them in adopting more positive behaviour patterns and attitudes.

All staff are aware of the heightened vulnerability of the students with SEND, who are three times more likely to be abused than their peers.

Staff will not assume that possible indicators of abuse relate to the student's SEND and will always explore indicators further.



Lesbian, gay and bisexual students can be targeted by their peers. In some cases, students who are perceived to be lesbian, gay or bisexual, whether they are or not, can be just as vulnerable to abuse as lesbian, gay and bisexual students.

The school's response to boy-on-boy and girl-on-girl sexual violence and sexual harassment will be equally as robust as it is for incidents between students of the opposite sex.

Students 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 student has been harmed, is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral will be made to student's social care services (CSCS).

Managing Disclosures

Victims will always be taken seriously, reassured, supported and kept safe.

Victims will never be made to feel like they are causing a problem or made to feel ashamed.

If a friend of a victim makes a report or a member of staff overhears a conversation, staff will act – they will never assume that someone else will deal with it. The basic principles remain the same as when a victim reports an incident; however, staff will consider why the victim has not chosen to make a report themselves and the discussion will be handled sensitively and with the help of CSCS where necessary. If staff are in any doubt, they will speak to the DSL.

The DSL will be informed of any allegations of abuse against students.

Confidentiality

The school will only engage with staff and agencies required to support the victim and/or be involved in any investigation.

If a victim asks the school not to tell anyone about the disclosure, the school will not make this promise.

Even without the victim's consent, the information may still be lawfully shared if it is in the public interest and protects students from harm.

The DSL will consider the following when making confidentiality decisions:



- Parents will be informed unless it will place the victim at greater risk.
- If a student is at risk of harm, is in immediate danger or has been harmed, a referral will be made to CSCS.
- Rape, assault by penetration and sexual assaults are crimes – reports containing any such crimes will be passed to the police.

More information regarding the school's stance on preventing child-on-child sexual abuse is available in our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Cyber Bullying

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to cyber bullying.

The school views cyber bullying in the same light as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in this policy if they become aware of any incidents.

The school will support students who have been victims of cyber bullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the student 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 students' personal devices, e.g. mobiles 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.

If an electronic device is seized by a member of staff, and there is reasonable ground to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, the device must be given to the police as soon as it is reasonably practicable.

If a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, the Head Teacher will decide whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of the relevant policies.

Procedures and Sanctions

Minor incidents are reported to the victim's teacher, who investigates the incident, sets appropriate sanctions for the perpetrator and informs the Headteacher of the incident and outcome.

When investigating a bullying incident, the following procedures are adopted:

The victim, alleged bully and witnesses are all interviewed separately



Members of staff ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the students being interviewed, including electronic communication

If a student is injured, members of staff take the student immediately to the school nurse for a medical opinion on the extent of their injuries

A room is used that allows for privacy during interviews

A witness is used for serious incidents

If appropriate, the alleged bully, the victim and witnesses, are asked to write down details of the incident; this may need prompting with questions from the member of staff to obtain the full picture. Students that communicate differently are provided with the opportunity to communicate the information in the way that is preferred by them. This could include AAC devices, visuals, signs and symbols.

Premature assumptions are not made, as it is important not to be judgemental at this stage

Members of staff listen carefully to all accounts, being non-confrontational and not attaching blame until the investigation is complete

All concerned students are informed that they must not discuss the interview with other students

Due to the potential for sexist, transphobic, sexual, etc bullying to be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviour, staff members involved in dealing with the incident are required to consider whether there is a need for safeguarding processes to be implemented.

If the Head Teacher is satisfied that bullying did take place, the student will be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and warned that there must be no further incidents.

If possible, the Head Teacher will attempt reconciliation and will obtain a genuine apology from the bully. This will either be in writing to the victim (and/or witnesses if appropriate), or face-to-face, but only with the victim's full consent. Discretion is used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the bully.

The perpetrator is made to realise, by speaking once per week with their teacher, that some students do not appreciate the distress they are causing, and that they should change their behaviour.

Parents are informed of bullying incidents and what action is being taken.



The teacher informally monitors the students involved over the next half-term.

For a month after the initial complaint of bullying, the teacher holds an informal discussion, on a weekly basis, to check whether the bullying has stopped.

The Head Teacher holds a formal meeting, on a monthly basis, to check whether the bullying has stopped – these formal meetings will continue to take place once a month until the head of year and victim are confident the bullying has stopped.

If necessary, group dynamics are broken up by members of staff by assigning places in classes.

The victim is encouraged to tell a trusted adult in school if bullying is repeated.

The victim is encouraged to broaden their friendship groups.

The school, particularly the teacher, will work with the victim to build resilience, e.g. by offering emotional therapy.

The school realises 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.

Follow up Support

The progress of both the bully and the victim are monitored by their teachers.

One-on-one sessions to discuss how the victim and bully are progressing may be appropriate.

If appropriate, follow-up correspondence is arranged with parents one month after the incident.

Students who have been bullied are supported in the following ways:

Being listened to

Having an immediate opportunity to meet with their teacher or a member of staff of their choice

Being reassured

Being offered continued support



Being offered counselling, where appropriate

Students who have bullied others are supported in the following ways:

Receiving a consequence for their actions

Being able to discuss what happened

Being helped to reflect on why they became involved

Being helped to understand what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour

Appropriate assistance from parents

Students who have been bullied will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the DSL will, if necessary, refer the victim of bullying to CAMHS.

Bullying Outside of School

Under Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the Head Teacher has the statutory authority to regulate students' behaviour outside of the school premises, where it is reasonable to do so. This includes, for example:

Travelling to and from school.

When wearing school uniform or otherwise identifiable as a student at the school.

Behaviour that could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school.

Behaviour that poses a threat to another student, member of staff, or member of the public.

Behaviour that could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

Sanctions can only be applied when the student is on school premises or under the lawful control of a member of staff (e.g. during a school trip or fixture).

The Head Teacher will decide whether it is appropriate to involve the police or other agencies in response to serious incidents outside school. Where the behaviour is considered potentially criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the school will normally inform the police and consider any safeguarding implications.



Policy Revision Log

Policy Title: Anti-Bullying Policy

Revision Number	Date of Revision	Nature of Revision
1	September 2025	Review, updates to guidance.
2	September 2026	Bullying and Harassment of Staff section added, changes in line with KCSIE 2026, SEND and Communication Considerations section added, sentence added in definitions around single incidents and appropriate actions.