Anti-bullying Policy

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Changes to this Edition

DATE	VERSION	DETAILS OF CHANGES
September 2025	1.0	First Edition – using National College template
September 26	2.0	Comprehensive review in line with current DfE guidance. Embedded a relational and restorative approach throughout the policy, strengthening the focus on belonging, inclusion, safeguarding, prevention, proportionate responses, restorative practice, pupil voice, recording, governance and continuous improvement, while ensuring consistency with the St Francis CMAT Inclusion Framework.

Statement of intent

St Francis CMAT is committed to creating schools where every child feels safe, valued, respected and that they belong. We believe positive relationships, inclusion and mutual respect create the conditions in which bullying is less likely to occur and every member of our community has a role to play in building and maintaining that culture.

Bullying undermines wellbeing, attendance, participation, achievement and a child's sense of belonging. It is never accepted, never ignored and will always be addressed promptly, fairly and consistently.

Our approach is rooted in high expectations and high support. We recognise that children displaying bullying behaviour may themselves require understanding, guidance and support to change their behaviour, whilst ensuring that children experiencing bullying are listened to, protected and supported.

We are committed to responding to bullying through a relational and restorative approach wherever appropriate, recognising that accountability, education and the repair of relationships work together to reduce future bullying and strengthen our inclusive school communities.

Key Principles

At St Francis CMAT we believe:

- Every child has the right to feel safe, respected and that they belong.
- Bullying is never acceptable, never ignored and always addressed.
- Children will be listened to and taken seriously when they raise concerns.
- Responses will be fair, proportionate and based on the individual circumstances of those involved.
- Bullying may indicate wider safeguarding, wellbeing or inclusion needs and these will always be considered.
- Restorative approaches, where appropriate, help repair relationships and reduce future bullying.
- We will learn from bullying incidents to strengthen our culture, practice and prevention.

1.0 Legal Framework

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

- 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
- DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
- DfE (2026) Keeping Children Safe in Education
- DfE (2026) Working Together to Safeguard Children
- DCMS, DSIT, and UK Council for Internet Safety (2024) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'
- 2024 (DfE) Behaviour in Schools
- 2022 (DfE) Searching, Screening and Confiscation

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

2.0 Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, "bullying" is defined as repeated or 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 child displaying bullying behaviour 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.

Bullying may occur face-to-face, online or through a combination of both and may occur inside or outside school where it impacts upon a pupil's safety, wellbeing or education.

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+.
- Children from Black, Asian and other racially minoritised communities
- Pupils with SEND.

3.0 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 may involve one or more of the protected characteristics defined within the Equality Act 2010. Schools will take particular care to identify and respond appropriately to prejudice-related bullying and will record any such incidents accordingly.

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 bi-phobic 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 focusses 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 and poverty-related bullying: Bullying based on a child or young person's actual or perceived socioeconomic circumstances, social status or family background. This may include bullying related to clothing, school equipment, access to technology, free school meal entitlement, housing, family occupation, family income, financial hardship or other perceived indicators of wealth or poverty. It may involve teasing, exclusion, humiliation, stereotyping or discrimination based on these circumstances.

Appearance-based bullying: Bullying based on a person's physical appearance or perceived attractiveness, including, but not limited to, body shape, weight, height, hair, skin conditions, visible differences, clothing, or other aspects of appearance. This may also include bullying linked to body image, self-esteem or perceived conformity to social expectations.

Young carer bullying: Bullying directed towards a child or young person because of their caring responsibilities, family circumstances or the impact these responsibilities have on their daily life, including teasing, exclusion, stereotyping or discriminatory comments.

Schools recognise that some children may experience bullying for more than one reason simultaneously. This intersectionality can increase vulnerability and impact. Staff will consider the individual experiences, identities and needs of each child when responding to incidents of bullying.

4.0 Roles and responsibilities

The Trust and local academy committee 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.
- 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.
- Seeking assurance that schools maintain cultures where children feel safe, respected and able to report concerns.
- Receiving anonymised analysis of bullying trends across the Trust.
- Ensuring learning from incidents informs Trust-wide practice.

The headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy 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 (minimum) to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- Ensuring the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the role.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members.
- Promoting a culture of belonging, inclusion and positive relationships.
- Ensuring bullying data is analysed alongside attendance, behaviour, safeguarding and wellbeing information.
- Ensuring restorative approaches are embedded where appropriate.

- Ensuring bullying trends inform whole-school improvement planning.

Senior and pastoral staff are responsible for:

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

The DSL is responsible for:

- Considering safeguarding implications arising from bullying incidents.
- Identifying vulnerable children requiring additional support.
- Ensuring appropriate support is provided for children experiencing bullying.
- Considering contextual safeguarding risks.
- Liaising with external agencies where appropriate.
- Ensuring accurate safeguarding records are maintained.

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 relevant staff of such observations.
- Refraining from stereotyping when dealing with bullying.
- Creating classroom environments where pupils feel safe, respected and able to belong.
- 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.
- Developing positive relationships that encourage pupils to report concerns.

- Remaining professionally curious about changes in behaviour, friendships, attendance or wellbeing.
- Responding consistently and restoring relationships where appropriate.

Parents are responsible for:

- Informing their child's teacher, pastoral staff or senior staff if they have any concerns that their child is the victim of bullying or involving in bullying in anyway.
- Being watchful of their child's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff members of any changes.
- Working in partnership with school to resolve concerns.

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.
- Seek support from a trusted adult and avoid responding in ways which may escalate the situation.

5.0 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 Trust recognises that prejudice-related bullying may constitute unlawful discrimination and will be treated with particular seriousness.

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.

6.0 Prevention

St Francis CMAT recognises that preventing bullying is far more effective than responding to it after it has occurred. We believe bullying is less likely to occur where children feel safe, known, valued and that they belong. Schools will therefore take a proactive, relational and inclusive approach to preventing bullying by promoting positive relationships, creating a strong sense of belonging and fostering a culture of mutual respect.

Preventative work will be embedded throughout school life and will involve pupils, staff, families, governors and the wider community.

6.1 Building a Culture of Belonging

Each school will actively promote a culture where every child feels safe, respected and included. Positive relationships between pupils, staff and families will be intentionally developed and maintained, recognising that children who experience a strong sense of belonging are less likely to experience or engage in bullying behaviour.

Schools will:

- promote kindness, empathy, respect and inclusion as core school values
- celebrate diversity and encourage understanding of difference
- foster positive relationships through high-quality teaching and pastoral care
- ensure pupils know how and where to seek help
- provide opportunities for pupils to contribute to school life and have their voices heard
- recognise and celebrate positive behaviour and respectful relationships.

6.2 High-Quality Universal Provision

Preventing bullying is everyone's responsibility and should be reflected in everyday practice.

Schools will provide a high-quality universal offer that includes:

- an inclusive curriculum which promotes equality, diversity and respectful relationships
- high-quality Relationships Education and Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE), as appropriate to the age of pupils
- clear behaviour expectations that promote kindness, respect and inclusion

- staff modelling respectful language and positive relationships
- opportunities for pupils to develop emotional literacy, empathy and conflict resolution skills
- effective supervision during unstructured times of the school day.

6.3 Early Identification

Schools recognise that bullying rarely occurs in isolation and that changes in behaviour, attendance, friendships or wellbeing may indicate that a child requires additional support.

Staff will remain professionally curious and use available information to identify emerging concerns before bullying becomes established.

This may include consideration of:

- attendance patterns
- behaviour incidents
- safeguarding concerns
- wellbeing information
- pupil voice
- friendship dynamics
- observations from staff
- vulnerability factors, including SEND, mental health, caring responsibilities and other known barriers to learning and participation.

Where concerns are identified, appropriate support will be implemented promptly in accordance with the school's graduated response.

6.4 Pupil Voice

Children and young people play an important role in shaping safe and inclusive school communities.

Schools will regularly seek pupils' views regarding:

- how safe they feel within school

- where and when they feel least safe
- friendships and relationships
- online experiences
- their sense of belonging
- the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying work.

Pupil voice will be used to inform school improvement, evaluate practice and identify emerging concerns.

6.5 Partnership with Families

Positive partnerships between home and school are essential in preventing bullying.

Schools will work collaboratively with parents and carers by:

- promoting open communication
- encouraging early reporting of concerns
- sharing information appropriately
- involving parents in plans to support children where appropriate
- providing advice and guidance to help families promote respectful relationships and online safety.

6.6 Staff Development

All staff contribute to creating safe and inclusive school environments.

Schools will ensure staff receive appropriate training to:

- recognise different forms of bullying
- understand vulnerability and protected characteristics
- identify potential safeguarding concerns
- respond consistently and proportionately
- use relational and restorative approaches where appropriate
- promote belonging, inclusion and positive relationships.

[Primary schools] All types of bullying will be discussed as part of the relationships and health education curriculum, in line with the Relationships and Health Education Policy.

[Secondary schools] All types of bullying will be discussed as part of the RSE and health education curriculum, in line with the Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy.

- The curriculum will explore and discuss issues at age-appropriate stages such as:
- Healthy and respectful relationships.
- Boundaries and consent.
- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality.
- Body confidence and self-esteem.
- How to recognise abusive relationships and coercive control.
- Harmful sexual behaviour, the concepts involved and why they are always unacceptable, and the laws relating to it.

Staff will encourage pupil cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work. Diversity, difference, and respect for others will be promoted and celebrated through various lessons. Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills will be provided through participation in special events, e.g. drama productions, sporting activities and cultural groups.

Seating plans will be organised and altered in a way that prevents instances of bullying. Potential victims of bullying will be placed in working groups with other pupils who do not abuse or take advantage of others.

A safe place, supervised by a teacher, will be available for pupils to go to during free time if they feel threatened or wish to be alone. The teacher supervising the area will speak to pupils to find out the cause of any problems and, ultimately, stop any form of bullying taking place.

Pupils deemed vulnerable will meet with their relevant staff on a **regular** basis, where appropriate, to ensure any problems can be actioned quickly. Pastoral and senior staff will also offer an 'open door' policy allowing pupils to discuss any bullying, whether they are victims or have witnessed an incident.

Before a new pupil joins the school, particularly when this happens in-year, the pupil's teacher/form tutor will implement a strategy to prevent bullying from happening – this may include your school's strategy for integrating new pupils. Where a new pupil is deemed vulnerable, this strategy may involve further observation or intervention on the part of the DSL.

The school will be alert to, and address, any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst pupils, as these can be a cause, or a result, of bullying behaviour.

The school will ensure potential children displaying bullying behaviour are given support as required and the motivation behind any bullying behaviour is considered.

Professional Curiosity

Staff will remain professionally curious where changes in behaviour, friendship groups, attendance or presentation suggest that a child may be experiencing bullying or wider safeguarding concerns.

By creating environments where children feel safe, known, valued and that they belong, St Francis CMAT seeks not only to respond effectively to bullying, but to reduce the likelihood of bullying occurring in the first place.

7.0 Signs of bullying

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

- Being frightened to travel to or from school
- Unwillingness to attend school
- Repeated or persistent absence from school
- Becoming anxious or lacking confidence
- Saying that they feel ill repeatedly
- Decreased involvement in school work
- Leaving school with torn clothes or damaged possessions
- Missing possessions
- Missing dinner money
- Asking for extra money or stealing
- Cuts or bruises
- Lack of appetite
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices

- 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. Pupils who display a significant number of these signs will be approached by a member of staff to determine the underlying issues causing this behaviour.

Staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a pupil is likely to exhibit bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to them becoming more easily aggravated
- They have been the victim of abuse
- Their academic performance has started to fall and they are showing signs of stress

If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify the pastoral or senior staff, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

8.0 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 will not ignore signs of suspected bullying. Staff will act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident. Unpleasantness from one pupil towards another will always be challenged and will never be ignored.

Staff will always respect pupils' privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying is not discussed with others, unless the pupil has given consent, or there is a safeguarding concern. If a member of staff believes a pupil is in danger, e.g. of being hurt, they will inform the DSL immediately.

Follow-up support will be given to both the victim and perpetrator in the months following an incident to ensure all bullying has stopped.

9.0 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, in line with the Prevention section of this policy.

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 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 video 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.

10.0 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 access 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 post 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. 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. In these cases, the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy will be followed.

11.0 Procedures

Minor incidents will be reported to the victim's teacher or form tutor, who will investigate the incident, take appropriate action in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy, ensure that appropriate support is provided for all children involved, and record the incident and outcome in line with school procedures.

When investigating a bullying incident, the school may use the following strategies: -

- The child experiencing bullying, the child displaying bullying behaviour and any witnesses are spoken to separately.
- Members of staff ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the pupils being interviewed, including electronic communication
- If a pupil is injured, members of staff take the pupil immediately to the first aider for a medical opinion on the extent of their injuries
- Discussions take place in a suitable environment that promotes privacy, dignity and psychological safety.
- A second member of staff may be present where appropriate, particularly during more serious or complex incidents.
- Where appropriate, children involved may be asked to provide a written account of events, with suitable support to help them explain what has happened.
- Relevant staff will gather evidence of a cyberbullying incident, where appropriate; this may involve text messages, emails, photos, etc. provided by the victim
- Staff will remain professionally curious, avoid premature assumptions and consider all available evidence before reaching conclusions.
- Members of staff listen carefully to all accounts, being non-confrontational and not assigning blame until the investigation is complete
- All pupils involved are informed that they must not discuss the interview with other pupils
- Staff will consider whether any child involved requires additional pastoral, wellbeing or safeguarding support during or following the investigation.
- Following the investigation, the school will determine whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying and respond proportionately in accordance with this policy and the Behaviour Policy.

- Where appropriate, restorative approaches will be used alongside appropriate consequences to strengthen accountability, repair relationships and reduce the likelihood of future bullying.

Due to the potential for some specific forms of 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.

12.0 Consequences and Restorative Practice

If the member of staff investigating an incident is satisfied that bullying did take place, the perpetrator will be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and warned that there must be no further incidents. The headteacher will inform the perpetrator of the type of sanction to be used in this instance and future sanctions if the bullying continues.

If possible, they will attempt reconciliation and may obtain an apology from the perpetrator. 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 will be used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the perpetrator.

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

All staff involved in managing instances of bullying will be aware that taking disciplinary action and providing support are not mutually exclusive actions and should be conducted simultaneously to encourage more positive behaviour in future.

The school will avoid unnecessarily criminalising pupils for bullying or abusive behaviour where possible, as young people with criminal records face stigma and discrimination in future aspects of their lives. The school's focus when handling perpetrators will be supporting them to develop more positive behaviours and to refrain from abusive and bullying behaviours in the future.

The school will remain cognisant of the fact that continued access to school can be important for rehabilitation of harmful behaviour and will not exclude pupils unless as a last resort – where there have been serious or consistent incidents of bullying, the school will act in line with the Suspension and Exclusion Policy.

13.0 Supporting Children and Restoring Relationships

In the event of bullying, victims will be offered support which may include:

- 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)

Senior staff 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 and pastoral staff, 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. The school will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.

14.0 Follow-up support

The progress of both the perpetrator and the victim will be monitored by their teacher/form tutors/pastoral staff. One-on-one sessions to discuss how the victim and perpetrator are progressing may be appropriate. If appropriate, follow-up correspondence will be arranged with parents after the incident.

Pupils who have been bullied will be offered continuous support. The victim will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in school if bullying is repeated.

Pupils who have bullied others will be supported for example by:

- 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

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

In cases where the effects of bullying are so severe that the pupil cannot successfully reintegrate back into the school, the headteacher may look to transfer the pupil to another mainstream school with the consent and involvement of the pupil's parents.

Where a pupil who has been the victim of bullying has developed such complex needs that alternative provision is required, the pupil, their parents, the headteacher and relevant staff will meet to discuss the use of alternative provision.

15.0 Bullying outside of 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, if appropriate, 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.

16.0 Record keeping

The DSL and pastoral staff 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, DSL and pastoral staff 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.

17.0 Monitoring and review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Trust. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

The scheduled review date for this policy is **September 2027**.

1. Protect

Ensure the immediate safety and wellbeing of all children involved. Take swift action to stop the bullying and remove any ongoing risk.

2. Listen

Provide a safe, calm space for all children to share their experience. Listen without judgement and reassure them that they have been heard.

3. Understand

Gather accurate information from all relevant people. Consider the context, impact and any underlying issues including safeguarding concerns.

4. Respond

Take proportionate, consistent action that addresses the behaviour, supports those affected and ensures accountability.

5. Repair

Support relationships to be restored where appropriate. Use restorative approaches to rebuild trust, empathy and a sense of belonging.

6. Review

Check that the bullying has stopped and that support is effective. Monitor the situation and keep all parties informed.

7. Learn

Reflect on what happened and how it was handled. Use learning to improve practice, strengthen prevention and make our school an even safer place for everyone.

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