



Hope Tree School

Where difference is valued

Anti-Bullying Policy 2026/2027

Introduction:

This policy has been developed using the Department for Education (DfE) Guidance documents 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' (July 2017) and 'Behaviour and Discipline in Schools' (Jan 2016) and is mindful of the Equality Act 2010.

This policy relates to bullying between students only.

Every young person has the right to live each day in school without fear. Bullying, threats, name-calling, racial or sexual harassment, interference with property and any other action designed to frighten, humiliate or embarrass are entirely unacceptable. All stakeholders have a responsibility to work together as a community and to create an environment in which everyone feels accepted, valued, and able to get on with learning and growing.

Aims:

At Hope Tree School we aim to:

- Adopt a definition of bullying that is aligned with the Anti-bullying Alliance and the Department for Education.
- Have a consistent approach to any bullying incidents that occur.
- Raise awareness of bullying and promote positive relationships based on mutual respect.
- Promote positive action to prevent bullying through our PSHE and pastoral programme, related activities, and curriculum opportunities.
- Provide support for all members of the school community that may be involved in dealing with an incident of bullying.
- Provide appropriate training for staff to support the implementation of the policy at school.
- Ensure fair treatment for all, regardless of age, culture, disability, gender, religion or sexuality, and encourage understanding and tolerance of different social, religious, and cultural backgrounds.
- Be aware of the social/communication difficulties that our students experience and provide alternate forms of communication enabling them to report incidences of bullying.

Definition of Bullying:

There may sometimes be misunderstanding about the meaning of the term 'bullying'. One-off incidents, whilst they may be very serious and must always be dealt with, do not fall within the definition of 'bullying'.

The anti-bullying alliance define bullying as:

"The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online".

The Department for Education use the following definition:

"Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities.

It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences." (Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017)

The definitions provided above inform our definition of bullying, which we define as 'persistent (repeated over time), deliberate attempts to hurt or humiliate someone several times, on purpose by the same person/group'.

School Context:

As Hope Tree School is a school for autistic girls, there is an increased likelihood of incidences where a student who may struggle with their communication skills makes a comment which could be considered unkind, direct, or thoughtless, as they are either not mindful of the impact of their language, or are thinking 'out loud'. These situations do not align with the definition of bullying (as they are not 'deliberate attempts to hurt or humiliate', nor 'on purpose'). In situations where there is no deliberate attempt to cause harm, the incident will be managed pastorally.

Where there is an incident or episode of hurt feelings which has occurred as part of the usual day-to-day activities, where there is no imbalance of power or evidence of an attempt to cause deliberate harm, staff will discuss the incident with the relevant students, role model alternate ways of communicating as needed, and put a stop to any activity which exceeds the boundaries of expected day-to-day life in school. This will not be regarded as bullying unless the behaviour is repeated over time by the same person with the intent to harm.

Types of Bullying:

There are various types of bullying, but most have three things in common:

- It is deliberately hurtful behaviour.
- It is repeated over time.
- There is an imbalance of power, which makes it hard for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour. It can be:

Verbal: Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, harassment, insults.

Emotional: Being unfriendly, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures or actions). Inappropriate 'looks' or body language designed to intimidate or exclude from groups, games or activities. Body shaming.

Physical: Pushing, kicking, shaking, biting, hitting, punching or any use of violence that may cause physical harm. Unwanted physical contact including an 'invasion of personal space', This includes the threat of violence or the encouragement of physical harm towards another. Destruction of personal property.

Prejudiced: Racial / sexual / homophobic taunts, graffiti, gestures, comments on identity / culture / beliefs. Unwanted physical contact or threats / harassment

Sexual: Unwanted physical contact, sexual harassment or sexual comments, remarks, jokes. Causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent including forcing someone to strip or touch themselves sexually. Rating appearance and derogatory remarks. Upskirting designed to obtain images of buttocks or genitalia which can cause distress, alarm or humiliation. In extreme cases, rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault / violence.

Cyberbullying: All areas of internet use such as email, social media and internet misuse and misuse of associated technology; i.e. phone, camera and video facilities. This may include impersonating a victim, creation of deepfake images or voice cloning, spreading gossip threats by text messaging and calls, sharing of consensual or non-consensual nude or semi-nude images, sexting or youth produced sexual imagery. Trolling, excluding the victim online and/or continually targeting someone in an online game.

Hazing: Or initiation rituals which may involve harassment, abuse or humiliation, this can be online or in person

Covert: Attempted behind the victims back, often aiming to damage the victim's reputation and can include creating rumours, mimicking and humiliation. This is the most frequent form of bullying.

Alienation: Encouragement of peers to alienate the victim and treating the victim like an outcast. This so-called "pack mentality" is most frequently seen in secondary settings but can be evident at any age.

Bullying which occurs outside school premises:

Staff members have the power to discipline students for misbehaving outside the school premises. Sections 90 and 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 say that a school's disciplinary powers can be used to address students' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff, but only if it would be reasonable for the school to regulate students' behaviour in those circumstances. Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, and **accompanied by evidence**, it will be investigated and acted on in the same way as bullying in school. The Head of Learning will also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or other external agency.

Overall Approach:

There is no single solution to bullying which will suit all circumstances, however, we will:

- Establish and maintain a caring ethos so that bullying is less likely to occur.
- Encourage discussion about bullying so that it does not become a hidden activity.
- Listen to students when they talk about or report bullying.
- Provide good adult role models, i.e. never misusing authority as power to humiliate or dominate.

Prevention:

Hope Tree School aims to create an environment that prevents bullying from being a serious problem in the first place. The best way of reducing or even eliminating bullying is through constantly expecting all members of the school community to treat each other with respect and understanding in line with the standards of behaviour outlined in the behaviour policy.

- All members of staff will help to promote a whole-school ethos of mutual respect and will encourage students to show care, politeness, respect and honesty that will teach and promote empathy.
- Within the curriculum the school will raise awareness of the nature of bullying in PHSE.
- Students will be taught to celebrate differences of others and their families alongside an appreciation of differences in others.
- We highlight and value examples of kind, considerate and compassionate behaviour, both in school and in the wider world, e.g. in the news, media, entertainment, etc.
- We openly discuss differences between people, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality, or appearance related differences. We also discuss children with different family situations, such as looked after children or those with caring responsibilities.
- We provide effective staff training on Anti-bullying laws, procedures and prevention.
- We make it easy for students to report bullying so that they are assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted on. This is done through 'safeguarding friends' available in all class bases, supporting safe and trusting relationships between students, alongside rewards for displaying kindness, consideration and compassion.

Incidents which do not meet the threshold for bullying but have been reported:

The following steps will be used where a student has reported an event/incident where they have been hurt, felt upset, or have witnessed something that has caused discomfort.

- Once the report has been received, the student will be given the opportunity to talk to a trusted member of staff.
- Once the information has been received, the staff member will determine next steps. This could include reassurance, the opportunity to think through the event where there has been misunderstanding, speaking to other parties and/or reporting the event to the SLT for further action.
- If the event is considered to be serious, or follows the definition of bullying, a member of the SLT may choose to conduct a more formal investigation which may include taking a formal statement, speaking to parents and/or providing information/education to a class during form time or wellbeing sessions.

Incidents which do meet the threshold for bullying:

- When bullying is suspected or reported, the school will do all it can to ensure that there is no repeat of the behaviour, so that the person suffers no further distress.
- Each case of bullying will be dealt with individually, following the guidelines in this policy.
- If bullying or a hate crime is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached or witnessed the concern.
- The school will provide appropriate support for the person being targeted, making sure they are not at risk of immediate harm and will involve them in any decision-making, as appropriate.
- A member of the SLT will interview all parties involved.
- The designated safeguarding lead will be informed of all issues where there are safeguarding concerns.
- The school will inform other staff members, and parents/carers, where appropriate.
- Support for individuals will be implemented, in consultation with all parties concerned.
- If necessary, other agencies may be consulted or involved, such as: the police (if a criminal offence has been committed) or other local services including Early Help or Children's Social Care (if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm).
- Where the bullying/incident of hate takes place off the school site or outside of normal school hours (including cyberbullying), and the school has been provided with the appropriate evidence, the school will ensure that the concern is fully investigated. Appropriate action will be taken, including providing support.
- A clear and precise account of the incident will be recorded by the school in accordance with existing procedures. This will include recording appropriate details regarding decisions and action taken.
- Where an incident of hate is reported/witnessed, a member of the safeguarding team will discuss this incident with parties involved to determine if it is motivated by bias or prejudice.
- If the incident is bias or prejudice-motivated, this will be recorded as an

'incident of hate' and be reported to relevant agencies.

- Everyone involved will be informed about how the school plans to address the issues and they will receive regular updates until they feel confident that the behaviour, and any associated problems, have ceased to distress the person.

Education and Training:

The school will:

- Train all staff to identify all forms of bullying and take appropriate action, following the school's policies and procedures (including recording and reporting incidents).
- Consider a range of opportunities and approaches for addressing bullying throughout the curriculum and other activities e.g. small group discussion etc.
- Publicise the details of internal support, as well as external helplines and websites.
- Provide systematic opportunities to develop students' social and emotional skills, including building resilience and self esteem.

Involvement of students:

The school will:

- Ensure all students are taught what bullying is, the various forms that it can take, and where bullying/other kinds of incidents differ.
- Ensure that all students know how to express any concerns they may have about bullying.
- Ensure that all students are aware of the range of outcomes which may be applied against those engaging in bullying.
- Involve students in anti-bullying, inclusive campaigns in schools and embed messages in the wider school curriculum.
- Offer support to all students involved in the bullying incident.

Involvement with parents and carers:

The school will:

- Ensure that parents are aware that the school does not tolerate any form of bullying.
- Make sure that key information about bullying (including policies) are available to parents/carers in a variety of formats.
- Ensure all parents and carers know who to contact if they are worried about bullying.

We will ask our parents to support their children and the school by:

- Taking appropriate responsibility for the use and misuse of technology, including social media.
- Advise their children to report any bullying to a member of staff and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other students.
- Inform the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved.

Monitoring and review:

- The school will ensure that they regularly monitor and evaluate mechanisms to ensure that the policy is being consistently applied.
- Any issues identified will be incorporated into the school's development plan.
- The Head of Learning will be informed of all bullying concerns.
- Any bullying incident will be reported and recorded during meetings with the advisory board.

Useful Links and supporting organisations:

- Anti-bullying Alliance: www.antibullyingalliance.org.uk
- Childline: www.childline.org.uk
- Family lives: www.familylives.org.uk
- Kidscape: www.kidscape.org.uk
- MindEd: www.minded.org.uk
- NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
- PHSE Association: www.phse-association.org.uk
- Victim Support: www.victimsupport.org.uk
- Young Carers: www.youngcarers.net

Cyberbullying:

- Childnet International: www.childnet.com
- Internet Watch Foundation: www.iwf.org.uk
- UK Safer Internet Centre:
www.saferinternet.org.uk

Signed:

Head of Learning:



Head of Pastoral Care



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