



Anti-Bullying Policy

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Introduction and Aims

At Ashcroft School we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for everyone. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Staff need to be vigilant and use their knowledge of the pupils and the situation.

- No one deserves to be a victim of bullying.
- Everybody has a right to be treated with respect.
- People who are bullying need to learn alternative behaviours.
- Everyone has a duty to respond promptly and effectively to the issues of bullying.

This policy is in place to minimise the risk of bullying by raising awareness and providing strategies for prevention, as well as managing any incidents of bullying should they arise.

The aims of this policy are.

- To provide a safe environment for pupils, staff and visitors
- To use opportunities within the life of the school and the curriculum to embed a supportive and caring environment.
- To celebrate diversity and difference
- To prevent bullying
- To provide a definition of the types of bullying
- To provide procedures for addressing incidents of bullying and to minimise the risk of re-occurrence.
- To promote an anti-bullying ethos amongst the whole school community
- To support the social and emotional well-being of all pupils
- To work closely with families to achieve the above

This policy should be read in conjunction with.

- Behaviour for Learning Policy (this incorporates PBS, Pace and trauma informed support)
- Child protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Online safety Policy
- Harmful Sexual Behaviours Policy
- Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment between Pupils Policy (peer on peer abuse)
- Debrief policy.

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 (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 for learning Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy
- Relationships and Health Education Policy
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy
- Suspension and exclusion Policy
- Child-on-child Abuse 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 LGBT+ or perceived to be LGBT+.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils.
- Pupils with SEND.
- Pupils who are autistic.

Definition of Bullying

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 or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, sex and gender identity, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

(Preventing and Tackling Bullying - Advice for Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies, DfE)

A pupil may be hurt or upset by another person's behaviour, but this only becomes bullying if it is *repeated deliberately*. It may be that the pupils concerned need support to understand the behaviour of the other, at a level that can be understood by each individual. If repeated behaviours persist after a pupil has been directly taught and has demonstrated understanding of the impact of the behaviour on another, then these incidences *may* be treated and recorded as bullying in nature, alongside more supported teaching continuing. *Each case should be considered individually.*

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, sex and gender identity, 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.

Homophobia: Bullying and discrimination targeted at those who experience same-gender attraction or are perceived to be attracted to the same gender.

Transphobia: Bullying directed against transgender people or those who are perceived to be transgender.

Sexist bullying: Bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender identity. 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 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.

This is list of the main types of bullying however this it is not exhaustive or exclusive. These forms of bullying may occur inside or outside of school hours.

Peer on Peer Abuse

Bullying can also be classified as peer-on-peer abuse. Abuse will never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up”.

Peer on peer abuse includes.

- Inappropriate sexual play
- Harmful sexual behaviour
- Sexting
- Grooming
- Online sexual harassment (including sharing of images)
- Gender based bullying.
- Bullying linked to gender identity and/or sexual orientation.

All peer-on-peer abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. Any allegations that raise safeguarding concerns will be dealt with under The Together Trust’s Safeguarding policy and procedures.

Signs and Symptoms of bullying

A pupil may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child/young person:

- is frightened of being out in the communal spaces.
- doesn't want to go on the school / local authority transport.
- is unwilling to go to school (school-based anxiety)
- becomes withdrawn, anxious, over emotional or lacking in confidence.
- attempts or threatens to self-harm or run away.
- regularly reports feeling ill in the morning.
- school work begins to deteriorate.
- has possessions damaged or go missing?
- has unexplained cuts or bruises.
- becomes aggressive, challenging or unreasonable.
- is bullying other children or siblings.
- stops eating.
- is frightened to say what's wrong.
- substance misuse
- an increase in risk taking behaviour.
- change in behaviour that is not typical for that student.
- the person discloses that they are being bullied.
- other students disclose a fellow student is being bullied.

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
- Openly disclosing that they are being targeted online or via social media.
- Using social media to plan or instigate/pre plan hostility/physical assault.
- 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 **annual** 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.

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 as a safeguarding concern on CPOMS 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.

Cyberbullying will be treated in the same way as in-person bullying. Whilst parents and guardians have a responsibility to monitor online activity outside of school hours, we will work collaboratively with families. Irrespective of cyberbullying happening inside or outside of school hours it will be treated in line with our Online Safety Policy and the scope of this policy and could in the most severe cases, lead to fixed-term exclusion or termination of placement at the school.

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.

Persons covered by this policy.

- All pupils
- All staff whether employed on a permanent or temporary, part-time or full-time basis.
- Any student on placement at the school or volunteers
- Any visitors to the school including agency staff.

Prevention of Bullying

All pupils are actively encouraged to express their views on whether and when they feel safe or unsafe at school.

There are many systems in place to prevent or reduce the incidences of bullying.

- Through the curriculum and the internal additional support services pupils learn to develop their social interaction skills, self-esteem and confidence and to recognise positive behaviours.
- Pupils may have specific targets around developing appropriate social interaction skills as part of their Education Health Care Plan, Individual Behaviour Support Plan, class target trackers or in Speech and Language and Positive Behaviour Support individual and group sessions.

- The level of staff supervision and support will be dependent upon the individual and setting they are in. We aim to promote independence and support students to develop strategies which can be used in a range of situations.
- Positive use is made of assemblies, workshops delivered by internal staff and external professionals, themed days/weeks and the curriculum to develop moral awareness.
- Ashcroft school encourages student voice and self-advocacy through the Student Council, annual reviews and an open-door approach. Pupils also have access to specific groups and clubs. It can be difficult for many pupils to recognise and/or express their feelings and therefore, increasing their ability to do so is a priority. Emotions work is an integral part of the curriculum and internal additional support services.
- Staff need to enable pupils to express their concerns. All pupils should know how and who to voice their concerns to. Members of staff should direct the pupil to an appropriate time and place where their concerns can be responded to sensitively.
- All staff should be aware of the difference between bullying and other behaviours which may be misconstrued as bullying.
- Pupil access to the Internet/e-mail is monitored and appropriate filters are in place. Ashcroft school supports families and carers to ensure online safety at home.
- Frequent communication between parents / carers and school is encouraged. Parents and carers are made aware of and are given information about the general complaints procedure.
- There are policies and systems in place to protect pupils from adults abusing their authority. Any incidents of this will be dealt with extremely seriously in line with Ashcroft School's Safeguarding Policy and Low-Level Concerns Policy.
- Staff are trained in facilitating incident debriefs and restorative conversations. This ensures that students are given the opportunity to reflect on their actions, engage in restorative conversations, and develop empathetic relationships.
- All incidents of behaviour which may be deemed challenging including bullying is recorded, this behavioural data is reviewed regularly by Ashcroft's pastoral lead and Principal PBS Practitioner, this process assists in identifying patterns and trends in behaviour.

Challenging Derogatory Language and Gestures

It is vital that everyone is learning in an environment where discriminatory and derogatory language, comments and gestures are consistently challenged. This should also be supported by an embedded culture and curriculum which teaches the real meanings of words and explains why negative use of words or phrases will not be accepted. This includes LGBT+ phobic, racist and sexist language, and language that is derogatory about disabled people. Phrases such as 'That's so gay' will be challenged, as not doing so may lead to our pupils' lack of understanding making them vulnerable in society. If derogatory language is allowed to persist, it could lead into bullying which at its most serious, could lead to police involvement as a hate incident. It is vital that all pupils, staff, families and visitors to school feel that Ashcroft School is a safe and inclusive environment for all, and that our school actively teaches the celebration of difference and diversity, and explicitly challenges prejudice and stereotypes.

Responding to Bullying

Procedure

- Anyone who is aware of bullying incidents should record the incident on CPOMS and in all incidents the class teacher should be informed.
- Allegations of bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be investigated, and appropriate action taken.
- Programmes/ strategies will be implemented to develop and teach new skills and appropriate behaviour e.g. Positive Behaviour Support Conference, Restorative and Constructive Plans, Individual Behaviour Support Plan and targeted sessions for individual pupils.
- In serious and/or recurrent cases the Head teacher and the parents of the pupils involved will be invited to meet to discuss and address concerns.
- In serious/recurrent cases, a fixed term exclusion may be issued or notice of placement given of those children who are persistently bullying.

Support will be offered to all those impacted by bullying through.

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with the class teacher or member of staff of their choice.
- Reassurance and continued support to restore self-esteem and confidence.
- School Counselling service is also available to support students.

We treat behaviour which targets others, seriously. However, we recognise that our pupils all have varying degrees of difficulty in terms of their social understanding and, in particular, their emotional awareness and ability to empathise. In addition, many of pupils have fragile self-esteem and may have experienced incidents of bullying in previous school placements. We believe that the messages children and young people receive during their school years have a significant impact on their ongoing emotional well-being. For these reasons, it is important that we treat these behaviours seriously, that we teach our pupils of their right to be listened to, and that we promote the learning of appropriate strategies to maximise positive social interaction. However, it is of equal importance that we do not label pupils as ‘bullies’.

Procedures for Adults

If you are being bullied or suspect a colleague is being bullied, you should report your concerns in line with the following Together Trust policies.

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Disciplinary Policy and Procedure
- Avoidance of Disputes and Grievances Policy and Procedure
- Whistle blowing Policy and Procedure
- Anti-intimidation Policy

Allegations of bullying behaviour or threats of bullying will be investigated, and appropriate action taken.

In serious and/or recurrent cases the Headteacher will take appropriate action in accordance with this policy and the above policies.

Record keeping

The DSL 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. 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.