

Anti-Bullying and Harassment Policy

1. Policy statement and scope

Birkenhead Sixth Form College is committed to a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. Bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment and violence are unacceptable and will be addressed promptly and proportionately.

This policy applies to students' conduct towards other students and towards staff or other members of the College community. It covers conduct on College premises; during College activities, trips, placements and travel; and online or outside College where it affects safety, welfare, education or the orderly running of the College.

Concerns about the conduct of a member of staff towards a student will be managed under the College safeguarding allegations or low-level concerns procedures. Staff concerns about workplace bullying or harassment are addressed under the relevant staff policy.

2. Aims

- Prevent bullying and harassment through education, clear expectations and early intervention.
- Make reporting routes accessible and ensure concerns are taken seriously.
- Protect and support those affected, address harmful behaviour and prevent recurrence.
- Meet the College's safeguarding, equality and data protection responsibilities.

3. Legal and policy framework

This policy has regard to current legislation and guidance, including:

- Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997 and Sexual Offences Act 2003.
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation.
- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Department for Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children updated 2026.
- Department for Education, Preventing and tackling bullying (2017) (supplementary advice that may be useful to further education settings).
- Department for Education, Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges (updated April 2026).
- UK Council for Internet Safety, Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (updated March 2024).

It should be read alongside the College Safeguarding, Student Conduct, Complaints, Equality and online safety/acceptable-use arrangements.

4. Definitions

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, which intentionally hurts another person or group physically or emotionally. It may involve an imbalance of power and may be direct, indirect, prejudice-based or online. A single incident may not meet this definition but may still constitute harassment, discrimination, abuse, sexual misconduct or a breach of the Student Conduct Policy and will be taken seriously.

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to a relevant protected characteristic which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. It can be a single incident, does not always require an intention to cause harm, and may be based on perception or association.

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature, online or offline, that violates dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Sexual violence refers to sexual offences such as rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault. Harmful sexual behaviour may include sexual comments, touching, coercion, upskirting, sexualised online bullying and consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images, including AI-generated images.

Cyberbullying and online harassment include harmful messages, images, recordings, impersonation, exclusion, rumours, threats or other activity through social media, messaging, gaming, apps or digital services.

Victimisation means subjecting someone to a detriment because they raised, supported or were believed likely to raise a concern or complaint under equality law.

5. Safeguarding and child-on-child abuse

Bullying, cyberbullying, discriminatory behaviour, relationship abuse, physical abuse, sexual harassment and sexual violence may constitute child-on-child abuse. It can occur inside or outside College and online. It must never be dismissed as banter, part of growing up or insignificant. The absence of reports does not mean that abuse is not taking place.

Concerns will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will decide whether children's social care, adult safeguarding, the police or another agency should be involved.

6. Responsibilities

- The LGB provides oversight and seeks assurance that arrangements are effective.
- The Principal and Senior Leadership Team ensure that the policy is implemented, resourced and monitored.
- The DSL leads the safeguarding response and advises on risk, information sharing and referrals.
- All staff challenge inappropriate behaviour, respond to disclosures, record concerns and report safeguarding matters promptly.
- Students are expected to treat others with respect, avoid supporting or sharing harmful content and report concerns.

7. Reporting a concern

A student who experiences or witnesses bullying or harassment should tell their Tutor, Teacher the Safeguarding Team or any trusted member of staff. A parent, carer, friend or other person may also raise a concern. Reasonable adjustments and alternative ways to report will be provided where needed, including for students with SEND or communication needs.

Students will be listened to, taken seriously and supported. No student will be made to feel that they are creating a problem by reporting. Immediate danger should be reported to emergency services and College staff without delay.

8. College response

The response will be prompt, fair and proportionate. The member of staff receiving the concern will record the essential facts, consider immediate safety and pass any safeguarding concern to the DSL. The College will then:

- assess risk and put proportionate interim measures in place;
- consider the wishes, age, needs and welfare of those involved;
- investigate under the appropriate safeguarding, conduct or complaints procedure;
- record concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons;
- involve parents or carers and external agencies where appropriate; and
- review the situation to check that the behaviour has stopped and there is no retaliation.

Interim measures are protective and do not indicate that a conclusion has been reached. Until findings have been made, the College will use neutral, non-prejudicial language and choose terminology carefully on a case-by-case basis, taking account of the language with which each student is comfortable. Outcomes may include education, restorative work where safe and agreed, support, risk management and disciplinary action. Police involvement does not prevent the College taking appropriate safeguarding or disciplinary action, subject to liaison with the police.

9. Support and confidentiality

Support will be tailored to the circumstances and may be offered to the reporting student, the student alleged to have caused harm and others affected. Particular attention will be given to students who may face additional barriers to reporting or be at greater risk of harm.

Concerns will be handled sensitively and information shared only with those who need it to safeguard and support students, investigate the concern or meet legal obligations. Staff cannot promise confidentiality. Information will be recorded, retained and shared in accordance with safeguarding requirements and data protection law.

10. Monitoring and review

The Senior Leadership Team will monitor the nature, frequency, location, protected-characteristic factors, actions, outcomes and recurrence of incidents. Anonymised themes and the effectiveness of preventative action will be reported to the LGB. The policy will be reviewed by September 2029, or earlier following legal or statutory change, a serious incident or evidence that arrangements are not effective.

*The legal and guidance references will be checked annually, notwithstanding the three-year policy review cycle.