



Grove Vale Primary School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Review Date:	September 2026
Last reviewed on:	September 2025
Next Review Date:	September 2027
Consultation:	This policy was developed in consultation with children, staff, parents and governors

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Overview

At Grove Vale Primary, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all members of our school community. This includes pupils, staff, parents/carers, visitors and those in our wider community. Every child has the right to learn and play in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in our setting and may also constitute a safeguarding concern.

Anti-Bullying Policy

All members of the Grove Vale community are committed to challenging, managing and resolving all forms of bullying and harassment in school. It is the right of every pupil to work, study and play without fear of bullying or harassment. These behaviours prevent pupils from progressing and achieving at school and will not be tolerated.

In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026), which came into force on 1 September 2026, bullying – including online bullying and prejudice-based bullying – is recognised as a form of child-on-child abuse (including harassment and violence) and as a safeguarding issue. KCSIE 2026 is clear that child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding matter for both the child who has been harmed and the child who has caused the harm, and our response will reflect this.

As a proactive measure to counter bullying, a suitable PSHE and Relationships and Health Education curriculum will be delivered to pupils, in line with the revised statutory RSHE guidance (DfE, July 2025), which schools must follow from 1 September 2026. In each year group, issues connected to bullying, self-esteem, respect, kindness and empowerment will be addressed.

Scope

This policy applies to all pupils from Nursery to Year 6, including during breakfast club, after-school provision, educational visits and any activity organised by the school. It also covers bullying that happens outside school or online where it affects a pupil's wellbeing, safety or learning in school. Under section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, the headteacher has the power to regulate pupils' behaviour off site to such an extent as is reasonable, and we will act on concerns reported to us.

Our Nursery provision follows the Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage. With our youngest children, we focus on building early friendship skills, turn-taking, sharing and understanding feelings. Unkind behaviour in the Early Years is handled developmentally and with care, while staff remain alert to any safeguarding concern.

Bullying or harassment of staff by pupils, parents/carers or colleagues is not tolerated. This is managed through the Staff Code of Conduct, the school's Grievance and Dignity at Work procedures and the DfE guidance Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff.

Legislation and Guidance

This policy has been reviewed against current legislation and guidance as of September 2026.



Legislation

- **Education and Inspections Act 2006** – section 89 requires the headteacher to determine measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying among pupils.
- **Education Act 2002** – section 175 places a duty on governing bodies to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- **Children Act 1989** – where there is reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, bullying is treated as a child protection concern.
- **Equality Act 2010** – including the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149) and the protected characteristics.
- **Human Rights Act 1998** – including the right to be free from inhuman or degrading treatment and the right not to be discriminated against.
- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Malicious Communications Act 1988 and Communications Act 2003** – some bullying behaviour, including online, may be a criminal offence.
- **Online Safety Act 2023** – places duties on online platforms to protect children and created new criminal offences, including threatening communications and sending false communications intended to cause harm.
- **Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026** – received Royal Assent on 29 April 2026. It strengthens multi-agency safeguarding arrangements (including Family Help) and places a statutory duty on schools to have regard to DfE guidance on mobile phones in schools. Provisions are being brought into force in stages.
- **Data (Use and Access) Act 2025 and UK GDPR** – govern how information about bullying incidents is recorded and shared.

Statutory guidance

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026).
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023.
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education statutory guidance (DfE, July 2025 – in force from 1 September 2026).
- Statutory Framework for the Early Years Foundation Stage.
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England.
- Working Together to Improve School Attendance.

Non-statutory guidance

- Preventing and Tackling Bullying: advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies (DfE, 2017).
- Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE).
- Mobile phones in schools (DfE).



- Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people (UKCIS).
- Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff (DfE).

Definition: What Is Bullying?

At Grove Vale, we use the DfE definition (Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017):

“Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally.”

We also use the Anti-Bullying Alliance definition, which staff and pupils find helpful in practice:

“Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.”

With pupils, we use the simple phrase **STOP – Several Times On Purpose** – to help children understand the difference between bullying and a one-off falling out.

Bullying behaviour is often persistent. However, a single serious incident will always be taken seriously and dealt with under the Behaviour Policy and, where appropriate, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. A single online post or image can also be shared and viewed many times, so it may be repeated in its effect even if it was only posted once.

Bullying is different from ordinary friendship fall-outs or disagreements between children of equal power. These are still supported by staff, as they are an important part of children learning to manage relationships.

Types of Bullying

Bullying may be:

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting; or taking, damaging or hiding possessions.
- **Verbal:** name-calling, taunting, teasing, insulting, threatening or demanding money or belongings.
- **Exclusionary:** intimidating, isolating or deliberately excluding a person from a group.
- **Relational:** spreading rumours, writing unkind notes or messages, or turning others against someone.
- **Online (cyberbullying):** via text messages, social media, messaging apps or gaming, which can include the use of images and video to deliberately upset someone. This includes images that have been digitally altered or wholly generated using artificial intelligence (sometimes called “deepfakes”).

Bullying may also be prejudice-based or discriminatory. KCSIE 2026 includes new guidance on prejudice-based harm, including racism, faith-based prejudice and other forms of discrimination.

Bullying may be:



- **Racist** – related to someone’s race, colour, nationality, or ethnic or national origin.
- **Faith-based** – related to someone’s religion or belief, or lack of belief.
- **Sexist** – related to a person’s sex, including misogynistic or misandrist language, attitudes or behaviour.
- **Sexual** – talking to or touching someone in a sexually inappropriate way, or sharing sexual images or messages.
- **Homophobic or biphobic** – related to a person’s actual or perceived sexual orientation, or that of their family members.
- **Transphobic** – related to gender reassignment, or to a child who is, or is perceived to be, gender questioning.
- **Disablist** – related to a person’s disability, SEND, medical condition or health needs.
- Related to a person’s **appearance**.
- Related to a person’s **home circumstances**, e.g. children in care, previously looked-after children, children in kinship care, young carers, or children affected by family difficulties.
- Related to the fact a child is **adopted** or otherwise vulnerable.

The Equality Act 2010 requires schools to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not. This duty underpins this policy. All prejudice-based incidents are recorded on CPOMS under the relevant category so that patterns can be identified and reported to governors.

Online Bullying

Online bullying (cyberbullying) is the use of technology, particularly mobile phones, tablets, gaming platforms and the internet, deliberately to upset someone else. It can happen at any time of the day, often outside school, with a potentially wider audience, as content is shared quickly.

In line with KCSIE 2026:

- Any incident involving the sharing of nude or semi-nude images – whether real, digitally altered or AI-generated, and whether consensual or not – requires a safeguarding response and must be passed to the DSL immediately. Staff must never view, copy, print, forward or delete such images.
- The school reviews the effectiveness of its filtering and monitoring systems at least once every academic year and keeps a record of this review.
- Grove Vale operates as a mobile phone-free environment for pupils during the school day, in line with DfE guidance and our Mobile Phone Policy.

Grove Vale has separate policies covering this area in more detail (Online Safety Policy, Acceptable Use Policy and Mobile Phone Policy). We work with parents/carers to help children stay safe online, including on apps and games used at home.



Intention

Not all bullying is deliberate or intended to hurt. Some individuals may see their conduct as teasing or “just a joke”. These behaviours are equally unacceptable and will be addressed.

At Grove Vale, we talk about behaviour rather than labelling children. We refer to “the child who has been bullied” and “the child who has displayed bullying behaviour”, because we believe all children can learn and change with the right support. Where a child does not respond to support, advice and sanctions, and the behaviour continues, the school may, as a last resort, use suspension or permanent exclusion in line with the DfE statutory guidance on suspension and permanent exclusion.

Responsibility

It is everyone’s responsibility to ensure no one experiences bullying. Some pupils may be disproportionately affected and may face additional barriers to telling someone, including:

- pupils with SEND or medical conditions;
- pupils with mental health needs;
- children in care, previously looked-after children and children in kinship care;
- young carers;
- pupils from minority ethnic or faith backgrounds;
- pupils with safeguarding needs or who are known to children’s social care or Family Help.

Staff must always consider whether bullying may constitute child-on-child abuse and take advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). In line with KCSIE 2026, all staff are expected to have read and understood Part One of KCSIE in full.

Legal Aspects

Some bullying behaviour may constitute a criminal offence, for example harassment, assault, threatening behaviour, hate crime, or malicious or threatening communications (including under the Online Safety Act 2023). Children aged 10 and over can be held criminally responsible for their actions. In such cases, the DSL will decide whether referrals should be made to external agencies, including the police, children’s social care or Family Help, in line with local Sandwell safeguarding arrangements.

Prevention

Grove Vale is committed to preventing bullying through:

- Raising awareness of reporting systems through PSHE, Relationships and Health Education, assemblies and online safety lessons.
- Delivering the revised RSHE curriculum from September 2026, including respectful relationships, challenging stereotypes and misogyny, online safety and the risks of AI-generated content, in an age-appropriate way.



- Early Years practice that builds friendship skills, empathy and emotional regulation from Nursery onwards.
- Annual Anti-Bullying Week (linked to the national campaign each November).
- Embedding anti-bullying and anti-discrimination messages across the curriculum.
- Use of external agencies to reinforce messages.
- Buddying and mentoring systems.
- Adequate and active supervision at break and lunchtimes, and during wraparound care.
- Pupil voice (school council, pupil conferencing, surveys) to understand where and when pupils feel less safe.
- Clear reporting via CPOMS with DSL oversight.
- Annual staff training so that all staff respond consistently, including training on KCSIE 2026, prejudice-based harm and online safety.
- A mobile phone-free school day for pupils and robust filtering and monitoring.
- Sharing this policy with parents/carers via the school website and regular updates.

Why Bullying May Occur

Children may display bullying behaviour because they:

- do not realise their behaviour is wrong or hurtful;
- are copying others, including behaviour or attitudes they have seen online;
- are still developing social and emotional skills;
- are under stress, or experiencing difficulties at home;
- are seeking power or control;
- are being bullied or harmed themselves;
- have low self-esteem or a poor self-image;
- are seeking recognition through negative peer influence.

Understanding why bullying has happened helps us support change, but it never excuses the behaviour.

Emotional Effects of Bullying

Bullying can lead to feelings of isolation, low confidence, anxiety, depression, helplessness and anger. It can affect a child's learning, friendships and willingness to come to school, and in extreme cases can lead to thoughts of self-harm or suicide. KCSIE 2026 reinforces that mental health concerns can be a safeguarding issue.

Staff must always respond sensitively and involve the DSL if there are safeguarding or mental health concerns. Where bullying is affecting a child's attendance, this will be addressed through our attendance procedures, in line with Working Together to Improve School Attendance, working closely with the family.



Responsibilities of the Governing Body and Headteacher

The Governing Body will:

- ensure the school has an effective anti-bullying policy and strategy that meets current legislation and guidance;
- monitor anti-bullying data, including prejudice-based incidents, through termly reports;
- ensure the school meets the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- ensure all governors have read Part One of KCSIE 2026.

The Headteacher will ensure the policy is implemented consistently, that staff are trained, and that bullying is prevented and responded to as part of the Behaviour Policy, as required by section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Responsibilities of Grove Vale Primary and Its Staff

Staff responsibilities include:

- Complying with Sandwell local authority procedures and statutory guidance.
- Raising awareness and ensuring a consistent response.
- Taking part in training opportunities.
- Supporting pupils and families.
- Monitoring incidents and reporting to governors.
- Creating a safe ethos with a visible anti-bullying culture.
- Modelling respectful language and challenging stereotypes, prejudice and misogyny when they arise.
- Planning curriculum coverage.
- Logging incidents clearly and promptly on CPOMS.
- Informing parents/carers appropriately.
- Consulting stakeholders regularly.

When Bullying Is Reported or Observed

All reports of bullying will be taken seriously. Children will be reassured that they have done the right thing in telling someone and will never be made to feel they are causing a problem. Staff will follow these procedures:

1. Listen to all parties involved and record what was said, using the child's own words where possible.
2. Establish whether the incident is part of a pattern of behaviour.
3. Record the incident on CPOMS on the same day, including the type of bullying and any prejudice-based element.



4. Share information with the DSL and SLT. The DSL will consider whether the behaviour constitutes child-on-child abuse and whether a referral to children's social care, Family Help or the police is needed.
5. Inform parents/carers of all children involved. Information about sanctions given to another child will not be shared, in line with data protection law.
6. Apply consequences in line with the Behaviour Policy. Consequences range from reflection and restorative work, through loss of privileges, to suspension or, as a last resort, permanent exclusion.
7. Provide support for the child who has been bullied, including a trusted adult and a plan to help them feel safe.
8. Provide support for the child who has displayed bullying behaviour, to help them understand the impact of their actions and change their behaviour.
9. Use restorative approaches only where it is safe and appropriate and where the child who has been bullied is willing. Restorative approaches will not be used where there is a significant power imbalance or where it could cause further harm.
10. Review the situation with the children and families involved to check that the bullying has stopped.
11. Refer to external agencies if needed.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with how a concern has been handled, they can raise this through the school's Complaints Policy.

Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

Parents/carers should:

- Work with the school to encourage positive behaviour.
- Report concerns promptly to the class teacher or a member of the pastoral team.
- Support their child at home.
- Never approach or confront other pupils or their families; always raise concerns with the school.
- Avoid posting about incidents, pupils or families on social media.
- Inform staff of any changes in their child's behaviour or wellbeing.
- Monitor their child's use of phones, apps and games at home, including age ratings.
- Reinforce anti-bullying messages at home.

Responsibilities of Pupils

Pupils are expected to:

- Follow the school code of conduct.
- Tell a trusted adult if they are being bullied or see bullying happening.



- Not join in with bullying, including laughing, sharing messages or watching.
- Support peers who may be being bullied.
- Take part in pupil voice initiatives.
- Contribute to assemblies, class work and displays.
- Be kind, respectful role models for others.

Monitoring and Review

Bullying incidents recorded on CPOMS are analysed termly by the Behaviour & Attitudes Lead and the DSL to identify patterns, including prejudice-based incidents, locations and times. Findings are reported to governors. This policy is reviewed annually, or sooner if there are changes to legislation or statutory guidance.

Linked Policies

This policy should be read alongside: Behaviour Policy; Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; Online Safety Policy; Acceptable Use Policy; Mobile Phone Policy; Relationships and Health Education Policy; Equality Policy and Objectives; SEND Policy; Attendance Policy; Complaints Policy; Staff Code of Conduct; and Whistleblowing Policy.

Remember: bullying is a whole-school issue. All members of Grove Vale Primary are committed to challenging and resolving all forms of bullying. Every pupil has the right to work, study and play without fear of bullying or harassment.

Ratified by the Governing Body Signature _____

(Chair of the Governors) Date: _____

This policy will be reviewed in September 2027, or sooner if legislation or statutory guidance changes.