

# Anti-bullying Strategy

**May 2026**

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## **1.1- Statement**

There is a statutory duty (Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006) to draw up procedures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying among students, bringing these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and students. These duties are extended to include preventing/responding to bullying that happens outside of school, where it is reasonable to do so.

Schools also have a duty to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of students' (Education Act 2002) and to ensure that children and young people are safe from bullying and discrimination (Children Act 2004). This document also addresses bullying of staff by students, parents or colleagues (DfE, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, 2017).

## **1.2- Objective**

The purpose of the Anti-Bullying Strategy is to ensure that students are able to learn in a safe, supportive and caring environment without fear of being bullied. The strategy gives clear guidance to students, staff, governors and parents on the school's view of bullying and our commitment to supporting victims of bullying, sanctioning perpetrators and reducing incidents of bullying in the school. This document applies to all members of the school community including students, parents, visitors and staff. This document sets out a range of proactive strategies, reactive strategies and intervention systems which are in place to:

- Prevent, de-escalate and/or stop any continuation of harmful behaviour
- React to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way
- Safeguard the student who has experienced bullying and provide support for them
- Apply appropriate consequences to the student/s causing the bullying and ensure they learn from the experience, in some cases through multi-agency support, and using restorative justice techniques where applicable

## **1.3- Definition- what is Bullying**

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, often repeated over a period of time that intentionally hurts or harms. All children have a right to feel safe both in school, and on the way to and from school. Melksham Oak Community School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all its pupils so that they can learn in a secure and relaxed atmosphere. 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.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional – being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, threatening
- Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, jostling or any use of violence
- Racist – racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact and sexually abusive comments
- Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, via email & mobile phone
- Cyber bullying- pupils are being targeted by phone text, instant messenger and by abusive websites and forums

## **2.1- The school's position**

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable in the school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell someone and know such incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

### **In order to support this the school:**

- Acknowledges that bullying does take place
- Promotes the ethos of respect and responsibility for each other
- Has a planned approach to antibullying in the curriculum
- Encourages pupils that it is right to tell if they see or experience bullying
- Takes seriously all reported acts of bullying
- Records all acts of bullying and what action was taken
- Informs and involves parents
- Offers support to those who bully and their victims
- Delivers training to staff & pupil/student volunteers, especially about cyber bullying
- Sanctions persistent bullies who are unable or unwilling to respond to the support and guidance given by the school
- Fully support interventions from other agencies
- Reports incidents of cyber bullying to parents and advises parents to inform police when this takes place outside of school

### **Pupils at the school will:**

- Show respect to everyone in the school
- Avoid saying or doing anything which will hurt others
- Report all incidents of bullying
- Take every opportunity to show they are anti-bullying and not 'follow the crowd' or 'turn a blind eye'
- Support school projects against bullying
- Offer support to anyone they see being bullied
- Advise the school about ideas that they think will help to stop bullying

## **2.2- Cyberbullying**

This differs in several significant ways from other kinds of bullying: the invasion of home and personal space; the difficulty in controlling electronically circulated messages; the size of the audience; perceived anonymity and the profile of the person doing the bullying. New technologies have meant that students are likely at some point to be a target of cyberbullying. This technology includes mobile phones, instant messenger, chatrooms and message boards, email, webcams and social network sites. This can result in intimidation, harassment, vilification, defamation, exclusion, peer rejection, unauthorised publication of private images or information manipulation.

It is important to recognise that cyberbullying can constitute a criminal offence in the UK, if it is considered to be a form of harassment. The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a medium for “virtual” bullying, which can occur in or outside school. The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 have given schools stronger powers to tackle cyberbullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones. The school may wish to hand the phone or contents found over to the police if deemed appropriate.

### **2.3- Sexting and the sharing of inappropriate pictures**

Sexting is the sharing of very personal images to another person and is a growing means of communication and relationship building by young people. When young people take and share images of themselves this could also be an indicator of other underlying vulnerabilities that may place them at risk. At the very least is the fact they have made themselves vulnerable to potential future sharing of these images which often leads to issues in school and potentially by adults who may acquire these images on-line.

As such, we take the sharing of images without consent very seriously as cyberbullying behaviours often follow. The emotional damage that young people who find themselves in this situation suffer is a cause for concern for parents and the school and as such we will investigate any such matter brought to our attention. The sharing of images is illegal and we will always work in partnership with our Community Police Team; however, safeguarding is at the heart of any intervention. This approach is informed by Section 1 (1) of the Children’s Act 1989 and reinforced by Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 which places a duty on key persons to make arrangements to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. Where we are aware that personal images are on a student’s device and have been, or have been alleged to have been shared, designated school staff will use their powers to delete these images for the purpose of safeguarding the victim and liaise with local police if deemed necessary. We have developed a broader range of sanctions that specifically deal with cyberbullying and the sharing of inappropriate images and this includes an Acceptable User Policy for internet within school.

### **2.4- Bullying outside of school premises**

In the modern world, bullying often extends beyond, or begins outside of the school day. Technology has made it harder for victims to escape from bullying behaviour. Sections 90 and 91 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006, states that a school’s disciplinary powers can be used to address pupils’ 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 pupils’ behaviour in those circumstances. This may include bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre. Where such bullying is reported to staff, it will be investigated and acted on where possible/appropriate.

### **2.5- Bullying of staff**

It is equally important that we protect our staff from bullying from parents, carers, colleagues or students. Everyone has rights and responsibilities in relation to cyberbullying and where comments and posts made on social network sites about staff members are known about, which are of a derogatory nature, decisive action will be taken by the Headteacher and the Community Police Team may be informed. All staff at Melksham Oak Community School are

in a position of trust, and there are expectations that they will act in a professional manner at all times. Advice to staff on protecting their online reputation forms part of the schools on-going CPD programme.

### **3.1- Reporting an incidence of bullying**

Students can report an incident of bullying to any member of staff; however, relevant staff include their tutor, or a member of the pastoral or safeguarding teams. They are also able to use the iPads available in the year group social zones and student reception to report any concerns. The “Whisper” button is also available on the school VLE, or text the Whisper number, to anonymously report any concerns to the school’s safeguarding team. Parent/Carers are encouraged to talk to any member of staff if they have concerns regarding their child. Parents can ask for a meeting in school with a member of the Pastoral team. All reported incidents will be fully investigated within a reasonable period of time. It is important to understand that good practice in investigating incidents recognises that time needs to be set aside to ensure that students involved do not have time to collaborate their stories. Any investigation needs to be done in a manner that ensures the target of the bullying feels safe about the process and the outcomes that may result from it. The school may choose to place students in Refocus whilst an incident is being investigated.

Ultimately, we wish to ensure that parents/carers are confident that staff will act promptly, take the concern seriously and not take action that aims to make the situation worse. But investigating incidents in school can be challenging, as it is often based on the perspectives and level of honesty displayed by students. Therefore, school investigations collect evidence objectively, and then make decisions on what is known as the ‘balance of probabilities’. To ensure there are appropriate control checks within that process, those responsible for such investigations will consistently follow the steps outlined below: (as per the school’s behaviour policy/procedures).

#### Step 1: Evidence gathering

All relevant students (victims, perpetrators, observers) are collected to provide statements on formal statement sheets. Statements should be written independently, this process may be completed without discussion with parents. Whilst the investigation is being conducted, all relevant students involved must be kept separate. Investigating staff should ask further clarifying questions on statements, to ensure that a full picture of the incident is obtained. Any screenshots/CCTV should be studied as required.

#### Step 2: Summarising

Investigating staff will read through all statements thoroughly, highlighting key points clearly. An incident overview sheet is completed, and any appropriate actions/consequences recommended by that staff member.

#### Step 3: Presenting & Assessing

The lead investigator will then refer to the schools bullying tracker/CPOMS for further information and analysis. This allows the lead investigator to check if there’s been any historical incidents with the perpetrator or victim/or another. This then helps the lead investigator assess what potential interventions and/or consequences are required.

If the incident requires consequences, the relevant members of the Pastoral team / Pastoral Manager or Senior Leader) will make the final decisions on what actions should be taken. If insufficient evidence is presented, the overseeing member of staff may ask for those investigating to return to steps 1 and 2. A consequence will then be confirmed and actions clearly laid out on the overview sheet.

#### Step 4: In the event of a suspension

All suspensions have to be ratified by the Headteacher or delegated member of staff on the Senior Leadership Team. The relevant members of staff will then complete the RFE form and contacts parents to inform them and agree a time for a readmission meeting.

#### Step 5: Recording

All bullying incidents must then be reported to the DSL and recorded on both CPOMs and the school's bullying analysis tracker. All racially motivated incidents are recorded by the Pastoral Manager and then submitted to the Local Authority.

### **3.2- Strategies to reduce bullying**

The culture and ethos of our school supports students and staff in dealing with bullying. A positive culture that encourages students to "tell" whether they are the target of bullying or the bystanders will help us to achieve our overall objective of reducing incidents of bullying within school and for students to feel safe to be in school and learn. The following proactive strategies are designed to gather intelligence about issues that may lead to bullying and to stop bullying from happening in the first place by raising awareness of bullying and support victims and those displaying bullying behaviour, including:

- HERO – The schools Anti-bullying campaign. The "HERO" anti-bullying acronym is used as a prompt for bystander intervention. It encourages students to become "heroes" by taking positive actions when they witness bullying.
- The idea behind HERO is to empower bystanders and shift school culture so that doing nothing is not the default response. Instead of focusing solely on the negative aspects of bullying, HERO promotes positive, assertive behaviors and social recognition for students who stand up for others.
- All students, staff and visitors are encouraged to be a MOCS 'HERO'. This allows us to promote our anti-bullying policy across the school with the use of consistent language through the curriculum.
  - **H** – Hear it (get involved / offer support))
  - **E** – Expect more (never accept unkindness or rudeness, we're one family)
  - **R** – Report it (tell a teacher / parent / friend)
  - **O** – Offer help (be kind / offer support)
- The consistent promotion of the school's behaviour policy & procedures which requires all pupils to respect the rights of others and treat people how they would wish to be treated
- The reinforcement of the clear message that violence has no place at Melksham Oak Community School.
- Taking part in initiatives such as Anti-Bullying Week
- Training for all members of staff on the anti-bullying strategy
- Providing information to all parents on the symptoms of bullying and the steps to take if they suspect their child is being bullied.
- A clear policy that mobile phones are not permitted to be in use during school hours
- The celebration of all student's backgrounds & cultures through the tutor programme.
- Exploring bullying issues, including cyber bullying and safe internet use through both assemblies, the tutor programme and PSHE learning sessions.
- Screening of all websites accessed in school. This software screens the language used in all documents, emails and websites. Rude or offensive emails, websites, documents are sent to the Headteacher/safeguarding Team. Action will be taken

- and recorded
- Working with multi-agency teams including Police & children's services as appropriate
- Challenging sexual content, especially homophobic or other prejudice language
- Advice and guidance made available to students on the dangers of sharing personal and inappropriate pictures through social media and mobile phones (sexting)
- Adult modelling of positive relationships
- A restorative culture that supports the development of social and emotional skills
- School environment reviews/surveys to assess areas where students feel unsafe and respond
- Daily duty across the school (dining hall, corridors and playground) provided by teams of staff who monitor student behaviour and interaction
- Opportunities to gather student voice used regularly, including for students from vulnerable groups such as SEN, Young Carers, LGBT, ethnic minority groups, travellers and those who are looked after or in foster care. Students from vulnerable groups closely monitored through their additional support in school to ensure that they are not the targets of bullying

### **3.3- Support**

In the event of bullying, victims will be offered the following support:

- Emotional support and reassurance from the appropriate member of staff
- Liaison with parents to ensure a continuous dialogue of support
- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it their parent or a member of staff
- In the event of cyberbullying, advice on aspects of online safety to prevent re-occurrence. Including, where appropriate, discussion with parents to evaluate online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator may be blocked online.

Perpetrators will be required to complete a mandatory reflective meeting with a member of the pastoral team to assist with an underlying emotional wellbeing issues. Any follow up support that they may require to either stop such behaviours continuing, or around wider issues that arise from the intervention, will also be provided.

The progress of both the perpetrator and the victim will be monitored by the Pastoral team, one to one session 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, and the victim will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in school if bullying is repeated.

## **4- Roles and Responsibilities**

We consider that everyone within our school community has a part to play in ensuring that our school is a "telling and talking" school. In order to tackle the issue of bullying we recognise that we need a range of strategies to deal with it. A whole school approach to educate students and staff to ensure that it is not tolerated, and that it is dealt with sensitively and consistently.

### **Students**

All of our students have an important role in ensuring that our strategy is effective by reporting bullying incidents to members of staff. Students should support the Anti-Bullying strategy by not being bystanders when they see and hear incidents of bullying within the school environment. All students must consider the wishes and feelings of other members of the school community in regard to their own behaviour with specific awareness of how bullying behaviour may adversely affect the emotional well-being of others. All students will have an active part to play to ensuring that our school is a safe place to learn. This will involve them in actively learning about all types of bullying, considering the impact of this behaviour on their peers and vulnerable members of their school community, and through participation in surveys and student voice opportunities where their views will be sought on the strategy and its implementation.

## **Staff**

Staff have a crucial part to play in ensuring that students feel safe to learn. Staff will play an active role by addressing any incidents of bullying that are reported to them, following the agreed process for investigating incidents as laid out in the 'reporting' section. Incidents will be recorded and plans for supporting students and monitoring their behaviour implemented, working in partnership with parents and carers at all times. Staff will be involved through the school's national anti-bullying week, in delivering lessons that seek to educate and inform students, develop greater awareness and ensure students are equipped with the skills to deal with bullying if they are a target of it or see it within school.

All staff have a responsibility to ensure that this strategy and the procedures within it are fully implemented. Staff training and induction provide opportunities to reflect on the issues surrounding bullying and have an understanding of how the school strategy is reflected in its practice. Bullying of all forms will be regularly discussed during assemblies throughout each school year. All staff have a responsibility to be alert for the signs and symptoms that a student may be being bullied; this may be either in their classroom environment or in the wider school. Staff receive training on signs of bullying and tackling "bullying or banter" and they are expected to be alert to language use between students, to respond swiftly and decisively to ensure that our classrooms are places of emotional safety and to follow-up any issues individually with students who have been a target of such incidents.

## **Parents/Carers**

Parents/carers have a responsibility to report any incident of bullying behaviour to a member of the school staff and allow the person investigating the incident the time to ensure it is a full and accurate investigation that ensures student safety remains uncompromised. The role of parents/carers in supporting their child to develop the range of social and emotional skills which minimise the chances of their child bullying cannot be underestimated and will significantly support the school in seeking to reducing incidents of bullying or preventing incidents of bullying.

## **5.1- Relationship to other policies**

The Anti-Bullying strategy relates to other policies, including:

- The TWHF Behaviour Policy
- The Behaviour Procedures & Processes
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- The Equality Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Policy

- Relationships and Sex Education Policy

## 5.2- Useful Websites:

- [www.bullying.co.uk](http://www.bullying.co.uk)
- [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
- [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- [www.each.education](http://www.each.education)
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- [www.beyondbullying.com](http://www.beyondbullying.com)
- [www.childnet-int.org](http://www.childnet-int.org)
- [www.cyberbullying.org](http://www.cyberbullying.org)
- [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)

## Appendix 1: HERO

