Antibullying Policy



Oxlow Bridge School

Approved by: Full Governing Body
Reviewed and evaluated: October 2026
Ratified by Governors: November 2026
Next Review date: November 2027

1. Statement of Intent

At Oxlow Bridge School, we are committed to providing a safe, nurturing, and inclusive environment where every pupil is valued, respected, and protected from harm.

As a school for pupils with Profound and Multiple Learning Difficulties (PMLD) and complex needs, we do not routinely experience bullying behaviours in the way that might be seen in mainstream settings. Due to our pupils' cognitive, communication, social, and developmental needs, deliberate and sustained bullying is uncommon. However, we recognise our statutory responsibility to take all reasonable steps to prevent, identify, investigate, and respond to any behaviour that may constitute bullying or place a pupil at risk of harm. This policy forms part of our wider safeguarding and behaviour framework.

We are committed to ensuring that all pupils:

- Feel safe, secure, and valued.
- Are treated with dignity and respect.
- Are protected from discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and bullying.
- Have access to support and advocacy appropriate to their communication needs.
- Learn within an environment that promotes kindness, tolerance, and positive relationships.

2. Definition of Bullying

The Department for Education defines bullying as:

"Behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group."

Bullying can include:

- Physical bullying
- Verbal bullying
- Emotional or relational bullying
- Discriminatory bullying
- Cyberbullying
- Prejudice-based bullying linked to protected characteristics such as disability, race, religion, sex, or sexual orientation.

3. Bullying in a PMLD Context

Due to the needs of our pupils, staff must carefully distinguish between:

Bullying

Behaviour that is:

- Deliberate
- Repeated over time
- Intended to cause distress, discomfort, or harm

Behaviours That May Not Constitute Bullying
Many of our pupils:

- Have limited understanding of social relationships.
- Communicate through behaviour.
- May display behaviours associated with sensory regulation, anxiety, frustration, pain, or medical needs.
- May accidentally hurt others through impulsive actions or physical responses.
- May not understand the impact of their actions on others.

In such cases, incidents would normally be managed through behaviour support, communication strategies, curriculum teaching, therapeutic interventions, risk assessments, and safeguarding procedures rather than being categorised as bullying.
Nevertheless, all incidents causing distress to another pupil will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately.

4. Prevention

Although bullying is unlikely within our setting, we believe prevention is essential.
We promote a positive culture through:

Positive Relationships

- High staff-to-pupil ratios.
- Strong communication between home and school.
- Consistent key adults supporting pupils.
- Close monitoring of pupil wellbeing.

Curriculum

- Teaching kindness, respect, friendship, and empathy at an appropriate developmental level.
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education.
- Relationships and Health Education.
- Communication and interaction programmes.
- Intensive interaction approaches.
- Social stories and personalised learning resources.

Safeguarding Culture

- A vigilant safeguarding culture where concerns are shared promptly.
- Encouraging all staff to report concerns, however small.
- Close supervision throughout the school day.

Staff Training
Staff receive ongoing training in:

- Safeguarding and child protection.
- Behaviour support.
- Positive behaviour approaches.
- Understanding communication through behaviour.
- Equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- Recognising signs of abuse, neglect, harassment, and bullying.

5. Recognising Possible Signs of Bullying

Some pupils may be unable to verbally report concerns. Staff therefore remain alert to:

- Changes in behaviour.
- Increased anxiety or distress.
- Avoidance of particular peers or environments.
- Withdrawal from activities.
- Changes in communication.
- Unexplained injuries.
- Deterioration in emotional wellbeing.
- Increased behaviours that challenge.

Any concerns will be discussed with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where appropriate.

6. Reporting Concerns

Concerns may be raised by:

- Pupils
- Parents and carers
- Staff
- Visitors
- External professionals

All concerns will be:

- Taken seriously.
- Recorded appropriately.
- Investigated proportionately.
- Shared with safeguarding personnel where necessary.

No concern will be considered too small to report.

7. Responding to Allegations of Bullying

When a concern is raised, the school will:

1. Gather information from all relevant parties.
2. Consider the developmental and communication needs of those involved.
3. Determine whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying.
4. Assess any safeguarding implications.
5. Put appropriate support in place.
6. Inform parents/carers as appropriate.
7. Monitor the situation to ensure concerns have been resolved.

Responses may include:

- Increased supervision.
- Behaviour support plans.
- Environmental adaptations.
- Communication support.

- Social learning opportunities.
- Risk assessments.
- Meetings with parents and professionals.
- Safeguarding referrals where required.

8. Bullying and Safeguarding

Any incident that suggests a pupil may be at risk of significant harm will be treated as a safeguarding concern and managed in accordance with the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Examples may include:

- Persistent targeting of a vulnerable pupil.
- Discriminatory abuse.
- Sexual harassment or sexualised behaviour.
- Online abuse.
- Physical assault.
- Hate-related incidents.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will determine whether further action is required, including referral to external agencies.

9. Cyberbullying

Whilst many pupils have limited access to online communication, we recognise that some pupils may access digital devices both at school and at home.

Any concerns relating to:

- Social media
- Messaging platforms
- Online gaming
- Image sharing
- Electronic communication

will be addressed promptly and in partnership with parents and carers.

10. Roles and Responsibilities

Governing Body

The Governing Body is responsible for:

- Ensuring the school has effective anti-bullying procedures.
- Monitoring safeguarding arrangements.
- Promoting a culture of safety and inclusion.

Headteacher

The Headteacher is responsible for:

- Implementing this policy.
- Ensuring staff understand their responsibilities.
- Monitoring incidents and trends.

Staff
All staff are responsible for:

- Maintaining a safe environment.
- Reporting concerns promptly.
- Challenging inappropriate behaviour.
- Supporting pupils' wellbeing.

Parents and Carers
Parents and carers are encouraged to:

- Share concerns promptly.
- Work collaboratively with the school.
- Support positive relationships and respectful behaviour.

11. Monitoring and Review

The school will:

- Record and monitor any bullying concerns.
- Review patterns and emerging trends.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of preventative measures.
- Review this policy annually or sooner if legislation or guidance changes.

Linked Policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Equality Policy
- Relationships and Health Education Policy

At Oxlow Bridge School, we believe that every pupil has the right to learn, communicate, develop, and thrive within an environment where they feel safe, respected, and valued at all times.