



St Matthew's Catholic Primary School

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

October 2026

Approved by	Governing Body
Approval date	October 2026
Review cycle	Annual, or sooner following statutory/guidance change
Next review	October 2027

Our mission: Welcome to our happy school, where everyone is valued and given the opportunity to 'let their light shine.' With Jesus in our hearts, we encourage love and respect for all. We strive to reach our goals, as we learn and grow, in a safe and enjoyable environment.

1. Purpose and Catholic ethos

At St Matthew's Catholic Primary School, every person is created in the image and likeness of God and has inherent dignity. Bullying is contrary to our mission, Gospel values and commitment to a safe, inclusive and respectful community. This policy explains how we prevent, identify, report, record and respond to bullying involving pupils, including bullying that occurs online or beyond the school site where it affects pupils in school.

2. Legislative and statutory framework

This policy should be read alongside the school Behaviour Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy, SEND Policy, Equality Information and Objectives, and Relationships and Health Education/RSE provision. It has been updated with regard to the following current framework in England:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including the duty on maintained schools to have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying among pupils.
- Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and protections relating to protected characteristics.
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004 safeguarding duties.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026), including its requirements concerning child-on-child abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, sexual harassment/violence and online safety.
- DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying guidance, GOV.UK page updated 9 July 2026.
- DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance and the school's statutory behaviour arrangements.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years, including the need to consider SEND and reasonable adjustments.

Where bullying behaviour may also constitute a safeguarding concern, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy takes priority and the concern must be referred promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy.

3. Aims

- Prevent bullying through a strong culture of kindness, respect, equality and high expectations.
- Ensure pupils know how to seek help and are confident that concerns will be listened to and acted upon.
- Respond consistently, proportionately and promptly to reported bullying.
- Support the pupil who has experienced bullying and address the behaviour, needs and accountability of the pupil who has displayed bullying behaviour.
- Work in partnership with parents/carers and, where appropriate, outside agencies.
- Monitor patterns, including prejudice-related and online incidents, and use evidence to improve prevention.

4. What we mean by bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group that is usually repeated over time, intentionally hurts another person physically or emotionally, and commonly involves an imbalance of power. The imbalance may be physical, social, psychological, related to status or popularity, or reinforced through technology and the ability to reach a wide audience.

Important distinction: A single conflict, falling-out or unkind act is not automatically bullying. However, a one-off incident may still be serious, may breach the Behaviour Policy, and may be a safeguarding matter. It will therefore be addressed rather than dismissed simply because it has not been repeated.

5. Types and forms of bullying

Bullying may be physical, verbal, relational/indirect or online. It can include hitting or pushing; threats; name-calling; humiliation; deliberate exclusion; spreading rumours; coercion; damage to or taking belongings; and harmful use of messaging, gaming, images, videos or social-media functions.

Bullying may be prejudice-related or discriminatory, including behaviour connected to a pupil or family member's actual or perceived protected characteristic or other vulnerability. This includes racism; religion or belief; disability or SEND; sex; sexual orientation; gender reassignment; and pregnancy/maternity where relevant. The school will also address bullying connected to appearance, health, family circumstances, socio-economic disadvantage, care experience or young caring responsibilities.

6. Child-on-child abuse and harmful sexual behaviour

Some behaviour described as bullying may also be child-on-child abuse. Sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, coercion, discriminatory abuse or serious online abuse must not be treated merely as "banter" or ordinary bullying. Staff must follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and refer concerns to the DSL/deputy without delay. The school adopts a child-centred approach and will consider the needs and safety of all children involved.

7. Online bullying

Online bullying can occur at any time and can rapidly reach a large audience. It may include abusive or threatening messages, impersonation, exclusion from online groups, sharing humiliating content or images, or repeated harassment through digital platforms. School will respond to online behaviour when it has an impact on pupils, school relationships, safety or the orderly running of the school. Evidence should be preserved where safe to do so, but reporting must not be delayed in order to gather evidence.

8. Prevention

- A clear behaviour culture, consistently modelled by adults.

- Age-appropriate teaching through RE, Relationships/Health Education, PSHE, computing/online safety and the wider curriculum about respectful relationships, discrimination, consent, personal boundaries, safe reporting and responsible online behaviour.
- Catholic Social Teaching, liturgical prayer and opportunities to celebrate the dignity and uniqueness of each person.
- Supervision and staff awareness of locations, times and online contexts where difficulties may arise.
- Pupil voice, including School Council, to identify concerns and evaluate how safe pupils feel.
- Annual Anti-Bullying Week and ongoing work throughout the year, rather than relying on a single event.
- Staff induction and regular training so that all adults recognise signs, understand reporting routes and respond consistently.

9. How pupils and parents/carers can report concerns

Pupils may report a concern to any trusted adult in school. Parents/carers should contact the class teacher in the first instance, or a member of the senior leadership team where the concern is serious, ongoing or involves safeguarding. A pupil will never be expected to resolve bullying alone.

Anonymous or indirect information will be considered carefully. Lack of a direct disclosure will not prevent the school from making appropriate enquiries where there are reasonable concerns.

10. Staff response and procedure

1. Listen and reassure: Listen calmly, take the concern seriously, avoid promising confidentiality, and establish whether anyone is at immediate risk.

2. Safeguard: If there is a safeguarding concern, report immediately to the DSL/deputy and follow safeguarding procedures. Contact emergency services where there is immediate danger.

3. Record: Create an accurate, factual record on CPOMS in the appropriate category, including what was reported/observed, actions, decisions, rationale and outcomes.

4. Establish the facts: Speak separately with relevant pupils and adults. Avoid leading questions. Consider repetition, intent, impact, power imbalance, context, SEND, communication needs and whether prejudice or discrimination is involved.

5. Act: Apply proportionate action in line with the Behaviour Policy. Consequences may be accompanied by restorative or educational work where appropriate and safe. Reasonable adjustments will be considered for pupils with SEND, without minimising the impact on others.

6. Support: Agree appropriate support for the pupil who experienced the behaviour. Consider support and intervention for the pupil who displayed the behaviour and any witnesses.

7. Inform: Keep parents/carers appropriately informed, subject to safeguarding, confidentiality and data-protection considerations.

8. Review: Set a proportionate follow-up point, check that the behaviour has stopped, review pupil safety and record the outcome. Escalate if concerns continue.

11. SEND, vulnerability and reasonable adjustments

Pupils with SEND or disabilities can face additional barriers to recognising, reporting or being believed about bullying. Staff will consider communication needs, sensory or social understanding, vulnerability and reasonable adjustments. Expectations remain high, but responses will be individualised and lawful. The school will also consider whether a pupil displaying bullying behaviour has unmet needs requiring additional support.

12. Prejudice-related and discriminatory incidents

Prejudice-related language and conduct will be challenged and recorded even where the speaker says harm was not intended. School leaders will consider whether the conduct is bullying, discriminatory behaviour, harassment, a safeguarding concern or potentially a criminal matter, and will respond under the relevant policies. Patterns will be monitored to inform curriculum, supervision, staff development and equality work.

13. When external agencies or the police may be involved

Bullying itself does not have a single legal definition, but behaviour associated with bullying can in some circumstances constitute a criminal offence or safeguarding risk. The headteacher/DSL will consider advice or referral to children's social care, police or other agencies where the threshold is met. School action will not be unnecessarily delayed while another agency considers its response.

14. Roles and responsibilities

Governing Body: holds leaders to account for a safe culture, compliance with relevant duties and effective implementation and review of this policy.

Headteacher: ensures the policy is implemented consistently, staff are trained, records are maintained and patterns are monitored and reported appropriately.

DSL and deputies: lead the safeguarding response where bullying overlaps with child-on-child abuse, exploitation, harmful sexual behaviour or other safeguarding concerns.

All staff: model respectful behaviour, intervene appropriately, report and record concerns, and follow agreed procedures.

Pupils: are encouraged to act with respect, report concerns and avoid joining in, forwarding or amplifying harmful content.

Parents/carers: are encouraged to raise concerns promptly, support respectful behaviour and work constructively with school.

15. Recording, confidentiality and information sharing

Bullying concerns and actions are recorded on CPOMS in line with school procedures. Records should distinguish allegation, evidence, decision and outcome. Information is shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding and data-protection requirements. Data protection law is not a barrier to necessary and proportionate safeguarding information sharing.

16. Monitoring and evaluation

The Headteacher will monitor recorded incidents and report appropriately to governors. Monitoring should consider recurrence, locations/times, online factors, prejudice-related themes, vulnerable groups, actions taken and whether interventions were effective. Governors will use this information to evaluate the impact of the policy while maintaining pupil confidentiality.

17. Complaints

If a parent/carers is dissatisfied with how a bullying concern has been handled, they may use the school Complaints Policy. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed under safeguarding procedures regardless of any complaint.

18. Related policies and guidance

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Online Safety Policy / Acceptable Use arrangements
- SEND Policy and Accessibility Plan
- Equality Information and Objectives
- Relationships and Health Education / RSE policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct

19. Key national references

- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, in force from 1 September 2026.
- Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying / Preventing Bullying, GOV.UK page updated 9 July 2026.
- Department for Education, Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff.

- Equality Act 2010 and Equality Act 2010: advice for schools.
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Policy review

This policy will be reviewed annually and sooner where there is a significant change to legislation, statutory guidance, local arrangements or school practice.