



SUSI EARNSHAW

School of Academics & Performing Arts

Date: July 2026	Next review: July 2027
Ratified by: Susi Earnshaw (proprietor)	

Anti Bullying and Cyber-Bullying Policy

1. Policy Statement

Susi Earnshaw Theatre School is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which every pupil is able to learn, develop and participate without fear of bullying, intimidation, harassment or discrimination. Every pupil has the right to feel safe to learn.

Bullying in any form is unacceptable. The School will take reports seriously, respond promptly and proportionately, support those affected, address the behavior of pupils who bully others, and take appropriate action to reduce the risk of recurrence.

The School recognises that bullying may occur face-to-face or online, inside or outside school, and that incidents outside school may have a significant impact on pupils' welfare, relationships and ability to learn in school.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils and to bullying or cyberbullying that occurs:

- on the school premises;
- during lessons, rehearsals, performances, trips, visits, clubs and other school activities;
- while travelling to or from school where the behaviour affects the school community;
- online, including through social media, messaging services, group chats, gaming platforms, email, shared documents or other digital services;
- outside school where there is a clear impact on a pupil's welfare, safety, education or relationships within the School.

Concerns involving staff are dealt with under the School's staff conduct, complaints, safeguarding, grievance or other relevant procedures. Where pupil behaviour towards staff constitutes bullying, harassment, abuse or a safeguarding concern, the School will respond under the appropriate behaviour and safeguarding procedures.

3. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy should be read alongside the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety/Acceptable Use arrangements, SEND Policy, Equality arrangements and Complaints Policy.

The School has regard, as applicable, to current legislation and statutory or Department for Education guidance, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE);
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;
- Department for Education guidance, Preventing and Tackling Bullying;
- Behaviour in Schools guidance;
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance;
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance;
- the Equality Act 2010;
- the Education and Inspections Act 2006, where applicable;
- the Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004;
- relevant criminal law, including where conduct may constitute harassment, threats, assault, malicious communications or other offences.

Nothing in this policy prevents the School from treating a bullying incident as a safeguarding matter. Where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm, safeguarding procedures will be followed immediately.

4. What is Bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group that intentionally hurts another individual or group, physically or emotionally. It is commonly repeated over time and may involve an imbalance of power, whether real or perceived.

Bullying is not limited to obvious physical aggression. It can be subtle, relational, discriminatory, sexualised or digital, and the impact on the child is central to the School's response.

A single disagreement, falling-out or unkind act will not automatically meet the definition of bullying. However, one-off incidents may still be serious, may breach the Behaviour Policy, and may constitute harassment, discrimination, child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern. They will therefore not be dismissed simply because they are not repeated.

5. Forms of Bullying

- Physical – hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting, damaging property, taking or hiding belongings or money, threatening physical harm or deliberately invading personal space.
- Verbal – name-calling, insulting, mocking, threatening, humiliating comments, taunting or repeated unkind remarks.
- Relational/social – deliberately excluding someone, manipulating friendships, encouraging others to isolate a pupil, spreading rumours, malicious gossip or public humiliation.

- Psychological/emotional – intimidation, coercion, threatening looks or gestures, deliberate embarrassment, controlling behaviour or conduct intended to make another pupil feel frightened, powerless or worthless.
- Prejudice-based or discriminatory – behaviour connected to race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability or another protected characteristic, or perceived characteristic.
- SEND-related – targeting a pupil because of disability, special educational need, learning difference, communication need, neurodivergence, medical need or perceived ability.
- Sexist, sexual or sexualised bullying – sexual comments, jokes, rumours, unwanted sexual attention, sexual harassment, image-based abuse, sexualised name-calling or behaviour based on sex, sexuality or gender.
- Cyberbullying – bullying using digital technology or online communication.

6. Cyberbullying and Online Behaviour

Cyberbullying may occur at any time and can reach a large audience rapidly. Online material can be copied, altered, forwarded or redistributed, meaning that the impact may continue even after the original post or message has been removed.

Examples may include:

- abusive, threatening, humiliating or discriminatory messages or posts;
- deliberate exclusion from online groups or group chats as a means of humiliation or control;
- spreading rumours or sharing private information online;
- creating fake accounts or impersonating another person;
- posting, editing or sharing photographs, recordings or videos to embarrass or harm someone;
- sharing intimate or sexual images without consent;
- coordinated harassment, pile-ons or encouraging others to target a pupil;
- bullying through games, livestreams, social media, messaging apps or collaborative platforms;
- using AI-generated or manipulated content, including synthetic images, audio, video or 'deepfakes', to humiliate, sexualise, impersonate, threaten or harm another person.

Pupils should preserve relevant evidence where safe to do so, for example screenshots, messages, usernames, dates and times, and report the matter to a trusted adult. Pupils must not redistribute harmful content in an attempt to provide evidence; staff will advise on safe preservation and reporting.

Any search, examination, confiscation or deletion of material on an electronic device will only be undertaken where lawful and in accordance with current Department for Education guidance and the School's relevant policies.

7. Vulnerability and Protected Characteristics

The School recognises that any child can experience bullying. Some pupils may be more vulnerable because of actual or perceived difference, including SEND, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, family circumstances, appearance, health needs, caring responsibilities, adoption or being new to the School.

Staff must remain alert to the possibility that a pupil may be reluctant to report bullying because of fear, shame, communication needs, previous experiences, concern about retaliation or a belief that nothing will change. Reasonable adjustments will be made to enable pupils with SEND or communication needs to report concerns and participate in investigations.

8. Bullying as a Safeguarding Concern

Bullying can be a safeguarding issue and may form part of child-on-child abuse. All staff must maintain an attitude that harmful behaviour between children is not simply 'banter', 'part of growing up' or something that children should be expected to tolerate.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or a Deputy DSL, must be informed without delay where an incident raises a safeguarding concern. This includes, but is not limited to, concerns involving significant harm, serious violence, sexual violence or harassment, coercion, exploitation, threats, discriminatory abuse, harmful sexual behaviour, image-based abuse, serious online abuse or a pattern of escalating behaviour.

Where necessary, the School will consider referral to Children's Social Care, the police or another appropriate agency in accordance with safeguarding procedures and local thresholds.

9. Aims of this Policy

- to ensure that pupils understand what bullying is and know that it is unacceptable;
- to create a culture in which pupils feel safe to report concerns;
- to ensure that staff recognise signs of bullying and respond consistently;
- to prevent bullying through education, relationships, supervision and a strong school culture;
- to protect pupils from prejudice-based, discriminatory and online bullying;
- to ensure parents and carers understand how concerns will be addressed;
- to support pupils who experience bullying and address the needs and behaviour of pupils who bully others;
- to identify patterns, repeat incidents and vulnerable pupils through effective recording and monitoring.

10. Prevention and Education

Prevention is a whole-school responsibility. The School will promote respectful relationships and pro-social behaviour through everyday school life and through appropriate curriculum and pastoral opportunities.

- PSHE/RSE and Life Skills education;
- assemblies, tutor time and pupil voice;
- curriculum opportunities that promote empathy, respect, teamwork and responsible citizenship;
- online safety and digital citizenship education;
- Anti-Bullying Week and other appropriate national initiatives;
- staff training and safeguarding updates;
- clear expectations in the Behaviour Policy and School Rules;

- appropriate supervision and awareness of locations, times or online contexts where concerns may arise;
- work with parents and carers where appropriate.

The School's existing principle of treating others as we would wish to be treated remains central to its culture, alongside an expectation that differences between people are understood and respected.

11. Reporting Bullying

All pupils, parents, carers, staff and witnesses are encouraged to report bullying or suspected bullying. A pupil may speak to any member of staff with whom they feel comfortable, including a Form Tutor, teacher, Headteacher or DSL.

A pupil does not have to be the person being targeted in order to report a concern. Bystanders and witnesses are encouraged to speak up rather than reinforce harmful behaviour through silence, laughter, sharing content or participation.

Parents and carers should contact the School as soon as possible where they believe their child is being bullied or is involved in bullying behaviour. Reports will be taken seriously and handled sensitively.

12. Staff Response to a Report

When bullying or suspected bullying is reported, staff should:

- listen calmly and take the pupil seriously;
- reassure the pupil that reporting was the right thing to do;
- establish whether there is any immediate risk and take action to secure safety;
- avoid promising absolute confidentiality;
- record the concern accurately, including the pupil's own words where relevant;
- preserve relevant evidence and avoid unnecessary circulation of harmful digital material;
- inform the appropriate senior member of staff and, where safeguarding is indicated, the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay;
- ensure appropriate support is available while the matter is investigated.

13. Investigation Procedure

The School will investigate reports fairly, sensitively and proportionately. Depending on the nature of the concern, this may include:

- speaking separately with the pupil who has reported or experienced the behaviour;
- speaking separately with the pupil or pupils alleged to have displayed the behaviour;
- speaking with witnesses or relevant staff;
- reviewing written, digital or other available evidence;
- considering previous incidents, patterns, friendship dynamics, vulnerabilities and any power imbalance;
- considering whether the matter is a behaviour concern, bullying, discrimination, child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern;
- informing parents/carers where appropriate and safe to do so;

- recording findings, decisions, actions and follow-up arrangements.

Pupils will not ordinarily be required to confront one another or participate in restorative work where this would be unsafe, unwanted or inappropriate. Reconciliation may be considered only where it is judged suitable and does not minimise the impact of the behaviour.

14. When Bullying is Substantiated

Where bullying is substantiated, the School will agree a proportionate response. This may include:

- clear instruction that the behaviour must stop;
- appropriate sanctions under the Behaviour Policy;
- parent/carer involvement;
- increased supervision or changes to arrangements where necessary;
- pastoral support, mentoring or targeted education;
- restorative work where appropriate and agreed;
- a safety or support plan;
- monitoring and scheduled follow-up;
- referral to safeguarding or external agencies where thresholds are met.

Serious or persistent bullying may result in significant disciplinary action, including suspension or permanent exclusion where the relevant legal and policy requirements are met. Sanctions will be considered alongside safeguarding, SEND, equality and contextual information and will not replace support or risk management.

15. Support for the Pupil Experiencing Bullying

The School will seek to restore the pupil's sense of safety and belonging. Support will be tailored to the individual and may include:

- a trusted member of staff and regular check-ins;
- adjustments to reduce immediate risk or anxiety;
- pastoral or wellbeing support;
- support to rebuild peer relationships where appropriate;
- online safety advice and assistance with reporting harmful content;
- reasonable adjustments for SEND;
- liaison with parents/carers and external services where appropriate.

Pupils will be advised not to retaliate. They will be encouraged to report any recurrence promptly.

16. Support and Intervention for the Pupil Displaying Bullying Behaviour

Bullying behaviour will be challenged clearly. The School will also seek to understand what is driving the behaviour and what intervention may reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

- clear boundaries and proportionate consequences;
- reflection and education about impact, prejudice, consent, relationships or online conduct;
- pastoral support or mentoring;

- SEND or communication assessment/adjustment where relevant;
- work with parents/carers;
- safeguarding assessment where the pupil's behaviour may indicate that they are themselves at risk or have experienced harm.

17. Bystanders

Bystanders can either reinforce bullying or help stop it. Pupils are taught that forwarding content, laughing, encouraging, 'liking', commenting on or remaining part of a coordinated attack can contribute to harm.

Pupils who witness bullying should seek help from an adult, support the pupil being targeted where safe to do so, and avoid retaliatory or escalating behaviour.

18. Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are asked to:

- report concerns promptly and provide relevant information or evidence;
- encourage their child to report concerns rather than retaliate;
- avoid contacting or confronting another pupil directly;
- work constructively with the School while concerns are investigated;
- support safe and responsible use of technology at home;
- inform the School of relevant online incidents where they affect a pupil's safety or school life.

The School will communicate with parents proportionately while respecting confidentiality and data protection. This means that the School may not be able to disclose detailed information about sanctions or support relating to another child.

19. Recording, Monitoring and Follow-Up

Reports and confirmed incidents will be recorded in accordance with the School's safeguarding, behaviour and data-protection arrangements. Records should be sufficient to show the concern raised, evidence considered, decisions made, actions taken and follow-up.

Senior leaders and/or the DSL will monitor relevant records for patterns, including repeated involvement of particular pupils, locations, groups, protected characteristics, online platforms or times of day.

Follow-up is essential. The School will check, at an appropriate interval, whether the behaviour has stopped, whether the pupil feels safe and whether further action is required.

20. Confidentiality and Information Sharing

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis and in accordance with safeguarding and data-protection requirements. Safeguarding information may be shared without consent where this is necessary and lawful to protect a child.

Pupils and families should understand that the School cannot promise secrecy where information indicates that a child may be at risk of harm.

21. Off-Site and Online Incidents

The School may respond to bullying that occurs outside the school premises or online where it has consequences for pupils in school, affects the orderly running of the School, threatens another pupil or member of the school community, or raises safeguarding concerns.

The School will work with parents, online services, police or other agencies where appropriate. The School will not require pupils or staff to undertake unsafe investigations themselves.

22. Malicious or Unsubstantiated Allegations

A report that is not substantiated is not automatically a malicious allegation. Pupils must be able to raise concerns in good faith without fear of punishment simply because evidence is inconclusive.

Where there is clear evidence that a pupil has deliberately fabricated an allegation to harm another person, the matter may be addressed under the Behaviour Policy, while considering any underlying safeguarding or pastoral needs.

23. Staff Training and Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for promoting a culture in which bullying is challenged. Staff will receive appropriate safeguarding and behaviour training and must know how to report concerns.

Staff should remain professionally curious where there are changes in attendance, engagement, friendships, mood, behaviour, achievement or online behaviour that may indicate bullying or another safeguarding concern.

24. Responsibilities

The Headteacher and Leadership Team will:

- ensure this policy is implemented consistently;
- promote a respectful whole-school culture;
- ensure staff understand reporting and response procedures;
- review patterns and the effectiveness of preventative measures;
- ensure disciplinary responses are consistent with the Behaviour Policy.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead will:

- advise on safeguarding aspects of bullying incidents;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are recorded and managed appropriately;
- consider referrals, multi-agency working and risk-management arrangements;
- support staff in recognising child-on-child abuse and online harm.

All staff will:

- model respectful behaviour;
- intervene appropriately and safely;
- take reports seriously;
- record and report concerns in accordance with school procedures;

- avoid minimising harmful behaviour as banter or normal peer conflict.

Pupils will:

- treat others with respect;
- not participate in, encourage or share bullying behaviour;
- report concerns and seek adult help;
- use technology responsibly and follow school rules.

25. Links to Other School Policies

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Procedure
- SEND Policy
- Equal Opportunities/Equality Policy
- Acceptable Use of ICT / Online Safety arrangements
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Attendance Policy

26. Monitoring and Review

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

The Leadership Team will consider incident data and emerging patterns when reviewing the effectiveness of the policy. The School will also take account of pupil, parent and staff voice where appropriate.

27. Key National Guidance

At the date of this policy, key national guidance includes Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026, Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Behaviour in Schools, statutory RSE and Health Education guidance, and Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance. Current versions should always be consulted where an incident requires detailed procedural or legal consideration.