



The Acorns School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Statement of Intent

The staff and Management of Acorns are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. When bullying occurs, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a *TELLING* school. This means that *anyone* who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is unwanted behaviour that can be repeated, or a one-off incident that causes harm, intimidation or offence. It often involves a power imbalance, although this is not always the case. Bullying can be physical, psychological or emotional and can include threats, harassment or exclusion. Bullying can take place in school, online, on school transport, outside school or in the wider community where it affects the safety or wellbeing of pupils.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional or psychological bullying – being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, humiliating, manipulating or deliberately isolating another pupil.
- Coercion, grooming or initiation/hazing – pressure, threats, rituals or violence used to make someone take part in activities or behaviours.
- Physical bullying – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any other use of violence or physical intimidation.
- Racist or religious bullying – racial taunts, racist language, graffiti, gestures, stereotyping or abuse linked to religion or belief.
- Sexual harassment or sexualised bullying – unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures, messages, touching, sexual rumours or other unwanted sexual behaviour. Sexual harassment will never be dismissed as “banter” or “just a joke”.
- Abuse in intimate personal relationships between children (also known as teenage relationship abuse).
- Upskirting and other image-based abuse – including taking or sharing intimate images without consent.
- Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying – bullying because of, or focusing on, sexual orientation or gender identity/reassignment.
- Verbal bullying – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, threats or repeated offensive comments.

- Cyberbullying – bullying using social media, messaging, gaming, email, websites, mobile phones, images, videos or other digital technology. This can happen inside or outside school.
- Prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying – bullying linked to disability or SEND, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or other protected or personal characteristics.
- Child-on-child abuse – children can abuse other children in person, online or outside school. This can include bullying, physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, sharing of nude or semi-nude/self-generated intimate images, including AI-generated images or deepfakes, and coercive or controlling behaviour.

Child-on-child abuse will be dealt with in accordance with The Acorns School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Policy. Any safeguarding concern must be reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay.

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.

Schools have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Objectives of this Policy

- All members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
- All members of SLT and teaching and non-teaching staff should know what the school policy is on bullying, and follow it when bullying is reported.
- All pupils and parents should know what the school policy is on bullying, and what they should do if bullying arises.
- As a school we take bullying seriously. Pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.
- Bullying will not be tolerated.

The school recognises that some pupils, including pupils with SEND or disabilities and pupils with other vulnerabilities, may be particularly susceptible to bullying or may face additional barriers to reporting concerns. Staff will remain alert to this and provide appropriate support and accessible ways to report.

The school will also use pupil voice, Personal Development/RSHE, safeguarding education, online-safety education and staff training to prevent bullying and to help pupils understand healthy relationships, consent, respect, discrimination and how to seek help.

The school will monitor bullying concerns to identify patterns, locations, groups or protected characteristics that may require additional preventative action.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of /anxious when due to leave for school
- doesn't want to go on the school transport
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in schoolwork
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home hungry (dinner taken)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated

Procedures

1. Report bullying concerns to a member of staff. Pupils can tell any trusted adult in school.
2. All concerns will be recorded in accordance with school procedures, including the concern raised, actions taken, decisions and outcomes.
3. Any concern involving child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment or sexual violence, discriminatory abuse, significant threats, serious harm or another safeguarding concern must be reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay.

4. The school will investigate concerns promptly and proportionately, while taking care not to compromise any safeguarding or police investigation.
5. Parents/carers will be informed where appropriate and in accordance with safeguarding considerations. In serious cases, a meeting may be arranged to discuss the concern and support required.
6. If necessary and appropriate, the police, children's social care or other relevant agencies will be consulted or involved.
7. The school will take reasonable and proportionate steps to prevent further bullying and will consider the safety and wellbeing of all pupils involved, including the pupil who has experienced bullying and the pupil responsible for the behaviour.

All efforts will be made to help the pupil responsible for bullying understand the impact of their behaviour and change it. The pupil's key worker will be an important facilitator in supporting the strategies employed.

Outcomes

The pupil responsible for bullying may be asked to make a genuine apology where this is appropriate and safe. Other consequences may also apply in line with the Behaviour Policy.

In serious cases, a risk assessment or safety plan may be required, and suspension/exclusion may be considered in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and statutory guidance.

Restorative approaches may be used where appropriate, safe and agreed by those involved. Restorative Justice remains a cornerstone within policies and procedures at The Acorns, but reconciliation will not be required where it would place a pupil at further risk or is not in their best interests.

After the incident or incidents have been investigated and dealt with, the case will be monitored to ensure that bullying does not continue and that the pupil affected remains supported.

Prevention

Maintaining and developing the strong ethos at The Acorns School of mutual respect and support is the foundation for the prevention of bullying. This ethos is supported by:

- The consistent implementation of our Behaviour Code/Policy and Reward system.

Bullying or harassment of staff, governors or other members of the school community will be addressed through the appropriate school procedures, including the Behaviour Policy, Staff Behaviour/Code of Conduct, complaints or grievance procedures, as appropriate. The school will not tolerate bullying or harassment of staff online or offline.

- Involvement of the pupils in implementing and reviewing the Behaviour Code/Policy.
- Addressing a range of issues relating to bullying through the curriculum, particularly through the Personal Development Programme.
- The high level of individual support for all pupils through the allocation of key workers, provision of counselling for pupils, personalised programmes and individual behavioural and learning targets.

Other Information

HELP ORGANISATIONS:

Childline – free, confidential support for children and young people: 0800 1111 – www.childline.org.uk

CEOP Education / CEOP Safety Centre – for reporting online sexual abuse or grooming: www.ceopeducation.co.uk

NSPCC – support and advice for children, families and professionals: 0808 800 5000 – www.nspcc.org.uk

Internet Watch Foundation – reporting and support relating to online child sexual abuse material: www.iwf.org.uk

Report Remove – support for young people to report and remove nude images shared online: available through Childline/Internet Watch Foundation.

UK Safer Internet Centre – online safety advice and resources: www.saferinternet.org.uk

Childnet – online safety advice and resources for children, parents and schools: www.childnet.com

In an emergency or where someone is in immediate danger, call 999. School safeguarding concerns should be reported through the school's DSL/Deputy DSL arrangements.

Appendix 1 - Cyber-bullying

Key Safety Advice

For Children & Young People

1. Tell someone – speak to a trusted adult in school or at home if something online is upsetting, threatening or makes you feel unsafe.
2. Do not retaliate – avoid responding to abusive or threatening messages where possible. Do not forward or share harmful content.
3. Block and report – use the platform's reporting and blocking tools and ask an adult for help if you are unsure what to do.
4. Keep evidence – where it is safe to do so, keep a record of messages, usernames, dates and links. Do not deliberately download, screenshot or forward illegal sexual images of children.
5. Protect your accounts – use strong, unique passwords, privacy settings and two-step verification where available. Never share passwords with friends.
6. Remember that online bullying can happen outside school – the school may still need to respond where online behaviour affects the safety or wellbeing of pupils or the wider school community.
7. If an intimate image has been shared, or someone is threatening to share one, tell a trusted adult and seek help immediately. Young people can use Childline's Report Remove service to seek help with removing nude images.

8. AI-generated images and deepfakes – creating or sharing sexualised or intimate images of children using AI is a serious safeguarding concern. Do not create, save, download or share such material. Report concerns immediately to a trusted adult/DSL and follow safeguarding procedures.

The school will respond to online bullying and abuse in line with this policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety arrangements and relevant statutory guidance.

Safer Internet Links

DfE – Preventing and tackling bullying: www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-bullying

Childline – Bullying and cyberbullying: www.childline.org.uk/info-advice/bullying-abuse-safety/types-bullying/bullying-cyberbullying/

CEOP Education – online safety and reporting online sexual abuse: www.ceopeducation.co.uk

Childnet – online safety advice: www.childnet.com

UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk

Internet Watch Foundation: www.iwf.org.uk

Report Remove – support to remove nude images shared online: www.childline.org.uk

DfE – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026: www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2

DfE – Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff: www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying-and-harassment-of-school-staff

Policy and Guidance References

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026).

Department for Education: Preventing and tackling bullying (updated July 2026).

Department for Education: Preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff (published July 2026).

The Equality Act 2010 and associated duties relating to discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

The Acorns School Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy and Online Safety arrangements.

Reviewed September 2022 H Cutts

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