

Three Counties Academy Trust



Anti-Bullying Policy

#SG19

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Version history

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Policy Abbreviations and Acronyms

BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSCS	Children's Social Care Services
DDSL	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead
DfE	Department for Education
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead
HRA	Human Rights Act
LGBTQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, Queer and others
PSHE	Personal, Social, Emotional and Health Education
RSE	Relationship and Sex Education
RSHE	Relationship, Sex and Health Education
SEMH	Social, Emotional and Mental Health
SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
TCAT	Three Counties Academy Trust

NB. Where the term “parent” or “parents” is used this includes those who act as carers or have parental responsibility.

Statement of intent

Three Counties Academy Trust (TCAT) believes that all pupils are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment; this means being free from all forms of bullying behaviour. This policy outlines how instances of bullying are dealt with, including the procedures to prevent occurrences of bullying.

Our aim is to promote an inclusive, tolerant, and supportive ethos.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 outlines several legal obligations regarding the TCAT and our school's response to bullying. Under section 89, schools must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. These measures are part of each TCAT school's Behaviour Policy, which is communicated to all pupils, staff, and parents.

All staff; parents and pupils work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at our schools. We will not tolerate bullying at our schools, and, where pupils are proven to have repeatedly engaged in bullying behaviours and do not alter their behaviour in line with our expectations, they can expect the most severe of sanctions.

Member, Trustee, Local Governor and Staff Summary

Purpose and Principles

- Ensure all pupils can learn in a safe, supportive and inclusive environment free from bullying
- Promote a culture of respect, tolerance and positive behaviour across all TCAT schools
- Prevent, identify, investigate and respond effectively to all forms of bullying
- Maintain a zero-tolerance approach to repeated bullying behaviours

Governance Responsibilities

- Oversee implementation and effectiveness of the policy
- Monitor bullying trends and challenge leaders on outcomes
- Ensure safeguarding arrangements and anti-bullying procedures remain effective
- Support an inclusive culture that values diversity and equality
- Ensure pupils are taught how to stay safe, including online

Leadership Responsibilities

- CEO reviews and updates the policy in line with legislation and guidance
- School leaders analyse bullying data and arrange appropriate staff training
- Senior leaders maintain records, investigate concerns and liaise with parents
- DSLs and DDSs support safeguarding responses where required

Staff Responsibilities

- Remain alert to signs of bullying and act promptly
- Report concerns using school safeguarding systems
- Support victims and challenge unacceptable behaviour
- Avoid stereotypes and maintain fair, respectful approaches when investigating concerns
- Provide follow-up support and monitor outcomes

Key Risk Areas

- Bullying may be verbal, physical, emotional or online
- Particular attention is required for vulnerable pupils, including those with SEND, health conditions or caring responsibilities
- Bullying may relate to race, disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, appearance or social circumstances
- Child-on-child abuse and sexual harassment are treated seriously and managed through safeguarding procedures

Prevention Strategy

- Anti-bullying education is embedded within the curriculum
- Staff training supports early identification and intervention
- Diversity, equality and respectful relationships are actively promoted
- Additional support is provided for vulnerable and newly admitted pupils
- Schools maintain safe reporting routes for pupils and families

Response to Incidents

- All reports are investigated promptly and fairly
- Victims, alleged perpetrators and witnesses are interviewed separately where appropriate
- Safeguarding considerations are reviewed throughout investigations
- Sanctions are applied proportionately and may extend to suspension or permanent exclusion in the most serious cases
- Parents are informed and involved where appropriate

Cyberbullying

- Cyberbullying is treated with the same seriousness as face-to-face bullying
- Staff receive training to identify online risks and indicators
- Pupils are encouraged to retain evidence and report concerns promptly
- Searching and confiscation powers may be used in accordance with trust policy and legislation

Support and Follow-Up

- Victims receive emotional support, reassurance and practical advice
- Perpetrators are supported to understand and change their behaviour
- Schools monitor affected pupils to ensure bullying has stopped
- Referrals to external agencies may be made when required

Assurance for Governance

- Robust records are maintained for all bullying incidents
- Data is reviewed regularly to identify themes and emerging risks
- Policy effectiveness is monitored through leadership review and governance oversight
- Findings should inform future prevention and safeguarding strategies

Parent and Pupil Summary

Our Commitment

- Every pupil has the right to feel safe, respected and supported at school
- Bullying is not tolerated in any form
- Schools will act quickly when concerns are reported

What Bullying Means

- Bullying is repeated behaviour intended to hurt, upset or intimidate another person
- Bullying can be verbal, physical, emotional or online
- Bullying may target a person because of their differences or personal circumstances

What Pupils Can Expect

- To be listened to and taken seriously
- To be treated fairly and respectfully
- To receive support if they are worried about bullying
- To learn in an environment where kindness and respect are promoted

What Parents Can Expect

- Concerns will be investigated appropriately
- Parents will be kept informed where appropriate
- Support will be offered to help resolve bullying concerns
- Schools will work in partnership with families

Preventing Bullying

- Respectful relationships are taught through the curriculum
- Online safety is regularly promoted

- Staff receive training to identify and respond to bullying
- Diversity and inclusion are actively celebrated

Reporting Concerns

- Pupils should speak to a trusted adult if they experience or witness bullying
- Parents should contact the school if they have concerns
- Evidence of cyberbullying should be kept where possible
- All reports are treated seriously

How Schools Respond

- Incidents are investigated carefully
- Appropriate action is taken to stop bullying
- Safeguarding procedures are followed when necessary
- Sanctions and support may be used together to improve outcomes

Support Available

- Victims receive reassurance and practical support
- Help may include pastoral support, counselling or wellbeing interventions
- Pupils responsible for bullying behaviour are supported to make positive changes
- Follow-up checks take place to ensure concerns have been resolved

Online Safety

- Cyberbullying is treated as seriously as face-to-face bullying
- Pupils are encouraged not to respond to abusive messages
- Staff can help pupils report harmful online content
- Parents are encouraged to discuss safe online behaviour with their children

Working Together

- Parents, pupils and staff all play an important role in preventing bullying
- Respect, kindness and inclusion help create a positive school community
- Everyone should report concerns rather than ignore them

1. Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance and good practice including, but not limited to, the following:

- [Education and Inspections Act 2006](#)
- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Protection from Harassment Act 1997](#)
- [Malicious Communications Act 1988](#)
- [Public Order Act 1986](#)
- [Communications Act 2003](#)
- [Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- [Crime and Disorder Act 1998](#)
- [Education Act 2011](#)
- [DfE 'Preventing and tackling bullying'](#)
- [DfE 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'](#)
- [DfE 'Keeping children safe in education'](#)
- [DfE 'Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff'](#)
- [DCMS, DSIT, and UK Council for Internet Safety 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'](#)
- [DfE 'Supporting children and young people with medical conditions and allergy'](#)

Where legislation has been passed or updated during the shelf life of this policy, we will always apply the latest version available irrespective of the version quoted here.

This policy operates in conjunction with the following policies:

- Behaviour Policy
- Relationships and Health Education Policy (TCAT Primary Settings)
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy (TCAT Secondary Settings)

- Remote Education Policy
- Suspension and Exclusion Policy (GN18)
- Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy (SD3)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures (SG1)
- Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy (SG4)
- Child-on-Child Abuse Policy (SG10)
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy (SG21)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy (SG25)

Central TCAT policies have the policy number identified, e.g. "SG1". Where no policy number is identified this indicates the policy is a school specific policy available from an individual TCAT school's website.

2. Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, "bullying" is defined as persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another person or group. Bullying is generally characterised by:

- Repetition: Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over an extended period of time
- Intent: The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental
- Targeting: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group
- Power imbalance: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations

Vulnerable pupils are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. Vulnerable pupils may include, but are not limited to:

- Pupils who are adopted
- Pupils suffering from a health problem
- Pupils with caring responsibilities
- Pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds

Pupils with certain characteristics are also more likely to be targets of bullying, including, but not limited to:

- Pupils who are LGBTQ+, or perceived to be LGBTQ+
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils
- Pupils with SEND

3. Types of bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Teasing another pupil because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, home life, culture, or SEND are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Online (cyberbullying)

Racist bullying: Bullying another person based on their ethnic background or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.

Homophobic and biphobic bullying: Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Transphobic bullying: Bullying based on another person's gender identity or gender presentation, or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.

Sexist bullying: Bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate, or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.

Sexual bullying: Bullying behaviour that has a physical, psychological, verbal, or non-verbal sexual dimension or dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

Ableist bullying: Bullying behaviour that focusses on another person's disability or support needs; this can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability.

Prejudicial bullying: Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics or experiences, e.g., religion or mental health issues.

Relational bullying: Bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating, and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

Socioeconomic bullying: Bullying based on prejudices against the perceived social status of the victim, including, but not limited to, their economic status, their parents' occupations, their health or nutrition level, or the perceived "quality" of their clothing or belongings.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The Trust Board, and where delegated Local Governing Bodies are responsible for:

- Evaluating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it does not discriminate against any pupils on the basis of their protected characteristics or backgrounds
- The overall implementation and monitoring of this policy
- Ensuring that all Trustees and Local Governors are appropriately trained regarding safeguarding and child protection at induction
- Ensuring that TCAT adopts a tolerant and open-minded policy towards difference
- Ensuring TCAT is inclusive
- Analysing any bullying data to establish patterns and reviewing this policy in light of these
- Ensuring each DSL has the appropriate status and authority within their school to carry out the duties of the role
- Appointing a Safeguarding Link Trustee and Local Governor for each school who will work with their Executive Headteacher, Headteacher and Head of School (as appropriate) and DSL to ensure the policies and practices relating to safeguarding, including the prevention of cyberbullying, are being implemented effectively
- Ensuring that pupils are taught how to keep themselves and others safe, including online

The CEO is responsible for:

- Reviewing and amending this policy, accounting for new legislation and government guidance, and using staff experience of dealing with bullying incidents in previous years to improve procedures

Executive Headteachers, Headteachers and where delegated, Heads of School are responsible for:

- Analysing the data in the bullying record at termly intervals to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members

Senior Leaders with Behaviour and Pastoral responsibilities are responsible for:

- Keeping a Bullying Report Form of all reported incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for proper analysis of the data collected
- Corresponding and meeting with parents where necessary
- Providing a point of contact for pupils and parents when more serious bullying incidents occur

Teachers are responsible for:

- Being alert to social dynamics in their class
- Being available for pupils who wish to report bullying
- Providing follow-up support after bullying incidents
- Being alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups, and informing their SLT of such observations
- Refraining from stereotyping when dealing with bullying
- Understanding the composition of pupil groups, showing sensitivity to those who have been the victims of bullying
- Reporting any instances of bullying once they have been approached by a pupil for support

Parents are responsible for:

- Informing their child's Class Teacher (primary) or Form Tutor (secondary) if they have any concerns that their child is the victim of bullying or involving in bullying in anyway
- Being watchful of their child's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff members of any changes

Pupils are responsible for:

- Informing a member of staff if they witness bullying or are a victim of bullying
- Not making counter-threats if they are victims of bullying
- Walking away from dangerous situations and avoiding involving other pupils in incidents
- Keeping evidence of cyberbullying and informing a member of staff should they fall victim to cyberbullying

5. Statutory requirements

TCAT understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, it has a responsibility to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

TCAT understands that, under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, it could have charges brought against it if it allows the rights of pupils to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously. The CEO will ensure that this policy complies with the HRA; and understands that they cannot do this without fully involving their teaching staff.

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/or communications may be considered criminal offences:

- Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or in a way which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or contains information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender

- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message, or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene, or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information through any media, including internet sites
- Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to the police include violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment, or intimidation, and hate crimes

6. Prevention

TCAT and our schools will clearly communicate a commitment to addressing bullying and have a clear set of values and standards which will be regularly promoted across TCAT.

All members of TCAT will be made aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it. All staff members will receive training on identifying and dealing with the different types of bullying.

For our primary schools, all types of bullying will be discussed as part of the relationships and health education curriculum, in line with the Primary Relationships and Health Education Policy.

For our secondary school, all types of bullying will be discussed as part of the RSE and health education curriculum, in line with the Secondary Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy.

This curriculum will explore and discuss issues at age-appropriate stages such as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships
- Boundaries and consent
- Stereotyping, prejudice, and equality
- Body confidence and self-esteem
- How to recognise abusive relationships and coercive control
- Harmful sexual behaviour, the concepts involved and why they are always unacceptable, and the laws relating to it

Staff will encourage pupil cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work. Diversity, difference, and respect for others will be promoted and celebrated through various lessons. Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills will be provided through participation in special events, e.g., drama productions, sporting activities and cultural groups.

Seating plans will be organised and altered in a way that prevents instances of bullying. Potential victims of bullying will be placed in working groups with other pupils who do not abuse or take advantage of others.

Dependent on each school setting, a safe place, supervised by a teacher, will be available for pupils to go to during free time if they feel threatened or wish to be alone. The teacher supervising the area will speak to pupils to find out the cause of any problems and, ultimately, stop any form of bullying taking place.

Pupils deemed vulnerable, as defined in section two, will meet with their Class Teacher or Form Tutor on a regular basis, where appropriate, to ensure any problems can be actioned quickly. Class Teachers and Form Tutors will also offer an 'open door' policy allowing pupils to discuss any bullying, whether they are victims or have witnessed an incident.

Before a new pupil joins a TCAT school, particularly when this happens in-year, the pupil's Class Teacher or Form Tutor and the DSL or DDSL will implement a strategy to prevent bullying from happening – this will include:

- Ascertaining if bullying was a factor in any move from their previous school and the details in respect of any such bullying experienced
- Ascertaining any potential pupil contacts within the school known to the original bullying parties who could continue the behaviours experienced in a prior setting
- Similarly, ascertaining any potential pupil contacts within the school known to the new pupil who can help form part of an in-school support network
- Reviewing potential strategies to reduce anxiety associated with a school move
- Considering carefully allocation of 'buddies' to be attached for any settling in period
- Proactive observations from staff of interactions between the new pupil and their peers
- Conducting a review with a member of the pastoral team no later than six weeks from transfer to ascertain how the settling in period has gone and make any required adjustments

Where a new pupil is deemed vulnerable, this strategy may involve further observation or intervention on the part of the DSL.

TCAT will be alert to, and address, any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst pupils, as these can be a cause, or a result, of bullying behaviour.

TCAT will ensure potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional, and social development is not negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g., mental health issues.

7. Signs of bullying

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is a victim of bullying:

- Being frightened to travel to or from school
- Unwillingness to attend school
- Repeated or persistent absence from school
- Becoming anxious or lacking confidence
- Saying that they feel ill repeatedly
- Decreased involvement in schoolwork
- Leaving school with torn clothes or damaged possessions
- Missing possessions
- Missing dinner money
- Asking for extra money or stealing
- Cuts or bruises
- Lack of appetite
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices
- Lack of eye contact
- Becoming short tempered
- Change in behaviour and attitude at home

Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional, or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating. Pupils who display a significant number of these signs will be approached by a member of staff to determine the underlying issues causing this behaviour.

Staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a pupil is likely to exhibit bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to them becoming more easily aggravated
- They have been the victim of abuse
- Their academic performance has started to fall, and they are showing signs of stress

If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify the pupil's Class Teacher or Form Tutor, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

8. Staff principles

TCAT and our schools will ensure that prevention is a prominent aspect of our anti-bullying vision, and that an ethos of good behaviour is created where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know that is the right way to behave.

Staff will treat reports of bullying seriously and will not ignore signs of suspected bullying. Staff will act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident. Unpleasantness from one pupil towards another will always be challenged and will never be ignored.

Staff will always respect pupils' privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying is not discussed with others, unless the pupil has given consent, or there is a safeguarding concern. If a member of staff believes a pupil is in danger, e.g., of being hurt, they will inform the DSL or in their absence a DDSL immediately.

Follow-up support will be given to both the victim and perpetrator in the months following an incident to ensure all bullying has stopped.

9. Child-on-child abuse

TCAT and our schools recognise that child-on-child abuse often includes bullying. We have a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

To prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, TCAT schools will educate pupils about abuse, its forms, and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE lessons, in line with the Prevention section of this policy.

All staff will:

- Be aware that pupils of any age and gender are capable of abusing their peers
- Be aware that abuse can occur inside and outside of school settings
- Be aware of the scale of harassment or abuse, and that just because it is not being reported does not mean it is not happening
- Take all instances of child-on-child abuse equally seriously regardless of the characteristics of the perpetrators or victims
- Never tolerate abuse as “banter” or “part of growing up,” and will never justify sexual harassment, e.g., as “boys being boys,” as this can foster a culture of unacceptable behaviours and one that risks normalising abuse
- Be aware that child-on-child abuse can be manifested in many ways, including sexting, sexual harassment, and assault, and hazing or initiation-type violence
- Always challenge any harmful physical behaviour that is sexual in nature, such as inappropriate touching. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them

Sexual harassment in particular can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Telling sexual stories, making sexual remarks, or calling someone sexualised names
- Sexual “jokes” or taunting
- Deliberately brushing against someone
- Displaying images or video of a sexual nature
- Upskirting (this is a criminal offence)
- Online sexual harassment, e.g., creating or sharing sexual imagery, sexual comments on social media, or sexual coercion or threats

Pupils will be made aware of how to raise concerns or make a report and how any reports will be handled – this includes the process for reporting concerns about friends or peers. If a pupil has been harmed, is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral may be made to children’s social care services (CSCS) and potentially the police, where the DSL or in their absence a DDSL deems this appropriate in the circumstances.

All staff will be aware and sensitive towards the fact that pupils may not be ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. Pupils being abused may feel embarrassed, humiliated, scared, or threatened.

TCAT's Child-on-Child Abuse Policy outlines our stance on addressing child-on-child abuse, including sexual abuse, and the procedures in place which will be adhered to if any instances are uncovered or disclosed. More information on TCAT's approach to preventing and managing instances of child-on-child abuse can be found within this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures.

10. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can take many forms and can go even further than face-to-face bullying by invading personal space and home life and can target more than one person. It can also take place across age groups and target pupils, staff, and others, and may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. It can sometimes draw bystanders into being accessories.

Cyberbullying can include the following:

- Threatening, intimidating, or upsetting text messages
- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips
- Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress
- Silent or abusive phone calls
- Using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible
- Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name
- Menacing or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom
- Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging
- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites, and social networking sites, e.g., Facebook

NB. The above list is not exhaustive, and cyberbullying may take other forms.

TCAT and our schools has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying. We view cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in section 12 of this policy if we become aware of any incidents.

All members of staff will receive regular training on the signs of cyberbullying, in order to identify pupils who may be experiencing issues and intervene effectively.

Many of the signs of cyberbullying will be similar to those found in the 'Signs of bullying' section of this policy; however, staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is being cyberbullied:

- Avoiding use of the computer
- Being on their phone routinely
- Becoming agitated when receiving calls or text messages

Staff will also be alert to the following signs which may indicate that a pupil is cyberbullying others:

- Avoiding using the computer or turning off the screen when someone is near
- Acting in a secretive manner when using the computer or mobile phone
- Spending excessive amounts of time on the computer or mobile phone
- Becoming upset or angry when the computer or mobile phone is taken away

Parents will also be invited to attend training sessions in order to educate them on the signs and symptoms of cyberbullying and will be advised to report to the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School if their child displays any of the signs outlined in this section.

All learning at home will follow procedures outlined in the Remote Education Policy set by each TCAT school. During times when remote education is being utilised, the school will frequently be in contact with parents to make them aware of their activities online, but also to reinforce the importance of pupils staying safe online and explaining how filtering and monitoring procedures work.

Staff will be aware that a cyberbullying incident might include features different to other forms of bullying, prompting a particular response. Significant differences may include the following:

- **Possible extensive scale and scope** – pupils may be bullied on multiple platforms and using multiple different methods that are made possible by virtue of the bullying taking place online
- **The anytime and anywhere nature of cyberbullying** – pupils may not have an escape from the torment when they are at home due to the bullying continuing through technology at all times

- **The person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is** – it is easy for individuals to remain anonymous online and on social media, and pupils may be bullied by someone who is concealing their own identity
- **The perpetrator might not realise that their actions are bullying** – sometimes, the culture of social media, and the inability to see the impact that words are having on someone, may lead to pupils crossing boundaries without realising
- **The victim of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened** – pupils may have taken screenshots of bullying, or there may be a digital footprint that can identify the perpetrator

Staff and pupils will be instructed not to respond or retaliate to cyberbullying incidents. Evidence of the incident should be recorded, e.g. taking screenshots. Staff will report incidents to their line manager or their Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School for the incident to be investigated and support to be provided. Pupils will be encouraged to report incidents of cyberbullying in person to a trusted member of staff. Pupils will be informed that, when reporting cyberbullying incidents, they should keep hold of the evidence, e.g. text messages, dates and times, and speak to the school before contacting the police about the incident unless there is a risk of immediate danger to them or someone else.

Where offensive content is posted online targeting a staff member or pupil, the person targeted will be encouraged to use the reporting mechanism on the website or social media platform to request its removal. Where the person who posted is known to TCAT or the school, the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School will request they remove it directly.

TCAT schools will support pupils who have been victims of cyberbullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the pupil about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped, in accordance with this policy.

In accordance with the Education Act 2011, TCAT and our schools have the right to examine and deal with the any material found as appropriate e.g. involving the DSL or police as required. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone provided there is good reason to do so. In these cases, TCAT's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy will be followed.

11. Procedures

Minor incidents will be reported to the victim's Class Teacher or Form Tutor, who will investigate the incident, set appropriate sanctions for the perpetrator, and inform the appropriate member of SLT who will record the incident or direct an appropriate member of staff to record the incident by use of the individual schools safeguarding reporting platform and any outcome as a result.

When investigating a bullying incident, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses are all interviewed separately
- Members of staff ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the pupils being interviewed, including electronic communication
- If a pupil is injured, members of staff take the pupil immediately to the school nurse or first aid provision for a medical opinion on the extent of their injuries
- A room is used that allows for privacy during interviews
- A witness is used for serious incidents
- If appropriate, the alleged perpetrator, the victim and witnesses are asked to write down details of the incident; this may need prompting with questions from the member of staff to obtain the full picture
- The Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School or member of SLT as delegated, will gather evidence of a cyberbullying incident; this may involve text messages, emails, photos, etc. provided by the victim and inform the CEO
- Premature assumptions are not made, as it is important not to be judgemental at this stage
- Members of staff listen carefully to all accounts, being non-confrontational and not assigning blame until the investigation is complete
- All pupils involved are informed that they must not discuss the interview with other pupils

Due to the potential for some specific forms of bullying to be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviour, staff members involved in dealing with the incident are required to consider whether there is a need for safeguarding processes to be implemented.

12. Sanctions

Each TCAT school will appropriately sanction any cases of bullying, take a strong stand against bullying, and tackle bullying at the earliest opportunity to prevent it from escalating. It is the responsibility of the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School to determine the sanctions they use in dealing with such cases.

Sanctions will be determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the severity of the issue. This may include sanctions up to permanent exclusion in the most serious cases.

If the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School or member of SLT as delegated is satisfied that bullying did take place, the perpetrator will be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and warned that there must be no further incidents. The Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School or where delegated a member of their SLT will inform the perpetrator of the type of sanction to be used in this instance, e.g., detentions or service-based activities, and future sanctions if the bullying continues.

If possible, the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School or where delegated a member of their SLT will attempt reconciliation and will obtain an apology from the perpetrator. This will either be in writing to the victim, and/or witnesses if appropriate, or face-to-face, but only with the victim's full consent. Discretion will be used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the perpetrator.

We will work with parents where a case of bullying comes to light which may include communication with parents to update them on strategies put in place to stop the bullying behaviours.

All staff involved in managing instances of bullying will be aware that taking disciplinary action and providing support are not mutually exclusive actions and should be conducted simultaneously to encourage more positive behaviour in future.

TCAT will avoid unnecessarily criminalising pupils for bullying or abusive behaviour where possible, as young people with criminal records face stigma and discrimination in future aspects of their lives. Our focus when handling perpetrators will be supporting them to develop more positive behaviours and to refrain from abusive and bullying behaviours in the future.

The relevant member of SLT informally monitors the pupils involved over the next six weeks at a minimum.

TCAT will remain mindful of the fact that continued access to school can be important for rehabilitation of harmful behaviour and will not suspend or exclude pupils unless as a last resort – where there have been serious or consistent incidents of bullying, each Executive Headteacher, or Headteacher will act in line with the Suspension and Exclusion Policy in consultation with the CEO as appropriate.

13. Support

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

- Emotional support and reassurance from the school counsellor or Thrive practitioner
- Reassurance that it was right to report the incident and that appropriate action will be taken
- Liaison with their parents to ensure a continuous dialogue of support
- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff
- Advice on aspects of online safety, in the event of cyberbullying, to prevent re-occurrence, including, where appropriate, discussion with their parents to evaluate their online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online
- Discussion with their parent on whether police action is required (except in serious cases of child exploitation or abuse where the police may be contacted without discussion with parents)

The Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School will carefully consider in each instance of bullying that is handled whether it is appropriate to split up the victim(s) and perpetrator(s), e.g., preventing them sharing classes or spaces where possible, and will split up other harmful group dynamics to prevent further occurrences where necessary. Victims will be encouraged to broaden their friendship groups by joining lunchtime or after-school clubs or activities.

Staff, particularly the DSL, will work with the victim to build resilience, e.g., by offering emotional therapy.

TCAT and our schools acknowledge that bullying may be an indication of underlying mental health issues. Perpetrators will be required to attend a mandatory counselling session to assist with any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. Failure to attend will be dealt with under the school's Behaviour Policy with appropriate sanctions applied. The individual TCAT school will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.

14. Follow-up support

The progress of both the perpetrator and the victim will be monitored by their Class Teachers or Form Tutors. One-on-one sessions to discuss how the victim and perpetrator are progressing may be appropriate. If appropriate, follow-up correspondence will be arranged with parents no later than one month after the incident.

Pupils who have been bullied will be offered continuous support. The DSL or DDSL will hold a formal meeting, on a regular basis, to check whether the bullying has stopped – these formal meetings will continue to take place until the staff dealing with the bullying and victim are confident the bullying has stopped. The victim will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in school if bullying is repeated.

Pupils who have bullied others will be supported in the following ways:

- Receiving a consequence for their actions
- Being able to discuss what happened
- Being helped to reflect on why they became involved
- Being helped to understand what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour
- Appropriate assistance from parents

Pupils who have been bullied will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the DSL will, if necessary, refer the victim of bullying to CAMHS.

In cases where the effects of bullying are so severe that the pupil cannot successfully reintegrate back into the school, the Executive Headteacher or Headteacher will look to facilitate the transfer of the pupil to another mainstream school with the consent and involvement of the pupil's parents.

Where a pupil who has been the victim of bullying has developed such complex needs that alternative provision is required, the pupil, their parents, the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School, their DSL and the Trust Education Welfare and Safeguarding Support Officer will meet to discuss the use of alternative provision.

15. Bullying outside of school

Staff will remain aware that bullying can happen both in and outside of school and will ensure that they understand how to respond to reports of bullying that occurred outside school in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Procedures and the Child-on-Child Abuse Policy.

The CEO, Executive Headteachers and Headteachers have a specific statutory power to discipline pupils for poor behaviour outside the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives our Executive Headteachers and Headteachers the power to regulate pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises, and therefore, not under the lawful charge of a TCAT staff member.

Teachers have the power to discipline pupils for misbehaving outside school premises. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, e.g., on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

Where bullying outside school is reported to staff, it will be investigated and acted upon. In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying, members of staff can only discipline the pupil on school premises, or elsewhere when the pupil is under the lawful control of the member of staff, e.g., on a school trip.

The Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School is responsible for determining whether it is appropriate to notify the police of the action taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could be of a criminal nature or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police will be informed.

16. Pupils with SEND or health issues

TCAT schools will recognise the additional barriers that can exist for pupils with SEND and health conditions. As a result, all TCAT schools will be aware of the potential for these pupils to be more prone to isolation or bullying than others.

TCAT schools will also recognise that pupils with SEND or certain medical conditions may be disproportionately impacted by behaviour such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs.

TCAT schools will seek to create an environment in which everyone celebrates diversity and will put in place effective arrangements to prevent stigmatising or other bullying relating to medical conditions.

All TCAT schools will follow TCAT's Supporting Pupils with Medical Conditions Policy and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) Policy when ensuring that an inclusive, respectful environment is maintained for all pupils and will ensure pupils are aware that bullying others due to a disability or health condition is never acceptable.

17. Record keeping

The DSL and DDSL's will ensure that robust records are kept with regard to all reported or otherwise uncovered incidents of bullying – this includes recording where decisions have been made, e.g., sanctions, support, escalation of a situation and resolutions.

The Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School and DSL/DDSL will ensure that all decisions and actions recorded are reviewed on a regular basis for the purposes of:

- Identifying patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour on the part of certain pupils that may need to be handled, e.g., with pastoral support
- Reflecting on whether cases could have been handled better and using these reflections to inform future practice
- Considering whether there are wider cultural issues at play within the school, e.g., whether school culture facilitates discriminatory bullying by not adequately addressing instances, and planning to mitigate this
- Considering whether prevention strategies could be strengthened based on any patterns in the cases that arise
- Responding to any complaints about how cases have been handled

Monitoring and review

Lifespan of Policy: 3 Years

At any point this policy is updated or fully reviewed, it will be updated on the main TCAT website and will automatically update on all TCAT school websites simultaneously.

Where an annual check or other check results in minor changes, the Version History will be reviewed and updated with a change in the number following the decimal point, for example, v1.1 ⇒ v1.2. Where the policy is reviewed in full, then the number before the decimal point will change and reset, for example v1.4 ⇒ v2.0.

Any changes made by the CEO in collaboration with the Board Appointed Trustee will be passed to the Trust Board for ratification and subsequently be notified to Clerks to Local Governing Bodies and Headteachers/Heads of School.

The next scheduled full review date for this policy is 31st August 2029.

Date approved by the Board Appointed Trustee: 13th August 2026.

To be ratified and recorded in the minutes at the first Trust Board Meeting after 13th August 2026.

Appendix A: Bullying Report Form



To be sent to the Executive Headteacher, Headteacher or Head of School and DSL upon completion.

Personal details	
Name of person reporting incident:	
Name of pupil being bullied:	
Year group:	
Form group:	
How may we contact you? (please circle)	
At school	At home

Home address:	
Email:	
Telephone:	

Incident details
What happened?
Where did the incident take place?
When did the incident occur?

Who has been suspected of bullying?

Did anyone else see the incident, and were any witnesses identified?

According to the victim, how often does the bullying take place?

According to the victim, how long has the bullying been going on?

Trust Glossary

AA	Admissions Authority	H&S	Health and Safety
AAI	Adrenaline Auto-Injector (Epi Pen)	HoS	Head of School
ACM	Asbestos Containing Materials	HSE	Health and Safety Executive
AHT	Assistant Headteacher	ICO	Information Commissioners Office
AIR	Attendance Intervention Reviews	IDSR	Inspection Data Summary Report
APDR	Assess Plan Do Review Cycle	IHP	Individual Healthcare Plan
APIs	Application Programming Interfaces	IRMS	Information and Records Management Society
ASC	Autistic Spectrum Condition	IWF	Internet Watch Foundation
ASP	Analyse School Performance	KCSIE	Keeping Children Safe in Education
ATH	Academy Trust Handbook	KS1/2/3/4	Key Stage 1/2/3/4
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Backgrounds	LAC	Looked After Child
BAT	Board Appointed Trustee	LADO	Local Authority Designated Officer
BCP	Business Continuity Plan	LGB	Local Governing Body
BFR	Budget Forecast Return	LLC	Low-Level Concerns
CEO	Chief Executive Officer	LSA	Learning Support Assistants
CFO	Chief Financial Officer	MASH	Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub
CIF	Condition Improvement Fund	MAT	Multi-Academy Trust

CIN	Child in Need	MFA	Multi-Factor Authentication
CLA	Children Looked After	MFL	Modern Foreign Language
CMIE	Child Missing in Education	NCSC	National Cyber Security Centre
COO	Chief Operating Officer	NoV	Note of Visit
COSHH	Control of Substances Hazardous to Health	NPQ	National Professional Qualifications
CP	Child Protection	PA	Persistent Absence
CPD	Continuing Professional Development	PAN	Published Admission Number
CPOMS	Child Protection Online Management System	PECR	Privacy and Electronic Communications Regulations
CSCS	Children's Social Care Services	PEP	Personal Education Plan
CSE	Child Sexual Exploitation	PEEP	Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan
CTIRU	Counter-Terrorism Internet Referral Unit	PEx	Permanent Exclusion
CWD	Children with Disabilities	PP	Pupil Premium
CYPMHS	Children and Young People's Mental Health Services	PPG	Pupil Premium Grant
DBS	Disclosure and Barring Service	PSHE	Personal, Social and Health Education
DDSL	Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead	PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
DfE	Department for Education	PTFA	Parent, Teacher and Friends Association
DHT	Deputy Headteacher	QA	Quality Assurance

DSE	Display Screen Equipment	RIDDOR	Reporting of Injuries, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations
DSL	Designated Safeguarding Lead	RHE	Relationships and Health Education
DPO	Data Protection Officer	RPA	Risk Protection Arrangement
EAL	English as an Additional Language	RSHE	Relationships, Sex and Health Education
ECT	Early Career Teacher	SA	Severely Absent
EDIB	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging	SALT	Speech and Language Therapist
EHA	Early Help Assessment	SARC	Sexual Assault Referral Centre
EHENA	Education, Health and Care Needs Assessment	SBM	School Business Manager
EHCP	Education, Health and Care Plan	SCC	Standard Contractual Clause
EHE	Elective Home Education	SCITT	School-Centred Initial Teacher Training
ELSA	Emotional Literacy Support Assistant	SCR	Single Central Record
ESFA	Education and Skills Funding Agency	SDP	School Development Plan
EVC	Educational Visit Coordinator	SDQ	Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire
EWOSSE	Education Welfare and Safeguarding Support Officer	SEF	Self-Evaluation Form
EYFS	Early Years Foundation Stage	SEMH	Social, Emotional, and Mental Health
FBV	Fundamental British Values	SENCO	Special Educational Needs Coordinator
FFT	Fischer Family Trust	SEND	Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

FGM	Female Genital Mutilation	SIP	School Improvement Partner
FGMPO	FGM Protection Order	SLA	Service Level Agreement
FOI	Freedom of Information	SLCN	Speech, Language and Communication Needs
FSM	Free School Meals	SLT	Senior Leadership Team
FTS	Find a Tender Service	SPOC	Single Point of Contact
GAG	General Annual Grant	STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation	TA	Teaching Assistant
GIAS	Get Information about Schools	TAC	Team Around the Child
HASH	Herefordshire Association of Secondary Heads	TCAT	Three Counties Academy Trust
HBA	Honour Based Abuse	TUPE	Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment)
HR	Human Resources	VSH	Virtual School Headteacher