



The  
**Birkenhead Park**  
School

# Anti-Bullying Policy

## 2023 - 2025

---

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The Birkenhead Park School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at The Birkenhead Park School. If bullying does occur, all students should be able to ask for help and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. ANYONE who knows or suspects that bullying is happening is expected to report it. The Birkenhead Park School aims to develop mutually caring relationships between all members of the school community.

### The school aims to:

- To ensure a secure and happy environment free from threat, harassment, discrimination or any type of bullying behaviour.
- To create an environment where all are treated with dignity and respect and where all members of the school community understand that bullying is not acceptable.
- To ensure a consistent approach to preventing, challenging and responding to incidents of bullying that occur.
- To inform students and parents of the school's expectations and to foster a productive partnership which helps to maintain a bullying-free environment.
- To outline our commitment to continuously improving our approach to tackling bullying by regularly monitoring and reviewing the impact of our preventative measures.

The school will work towards these aims in partnership with parents and carers. The aim of the Anti-Bullying Policy is to clarify the system of dealing with a bullying incident and outline the content and manner in which anti-bullying education will be delivered.

Other school policies have relevance to the Anti-Bullying Policy such as the Safeguarding Policy, particularly with reference to child-on-child abuse, and the Equality and Diversity Policy.

### What is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim.

The DfE states that bullying is "repeated behaviour that is intended to hurt someone physically or emotionally."

While there is no single definition of bullying, the DfE identifies three characteristics that are included in most definitions:

- The behaviour is intended to cause distress
- The behaviour is repeated
- There is an imbalance of power between the perpetrator(s) and victim(s)

Bullying can be:

- **Emotional** - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, use of threatening gestures)
- **Physical** - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- **Racist** - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures

- **Sexual** - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- **Homophobic** - bullying comments regarding sexual orientation
- **Sexist** – discrimination on the basis of gender because of, or focussing on, the issue of sexuality
- **Transphobic** – any transgender bullying
- **Verbal** – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- **Cyber** – all areas of internet, such as e-mail and internet chat room misuse, mobile threats by text messaging and calls, misuse of associated technology, e.g. camera and video facilities
- **Religious Beliefs** – because of, or focussing on the issue of religion and belief

### Anti-bullying Procedures

All students are encouraged to feel it is right to tell someone if they are being bullied or if someone they know is being bullied. Incidents of bullying will be referred to the pastoral team and be dealt with quickly and appropriately.

All staff receive training to recognise the signs and symptoms of bullying, and are expected to be vigilant and proactive in order to support students. Whilst it is the responsibility of all staff within the school to reinforce the anti-bullying strategy and support the victims of bullying, it is recognised that not all staff have the capacity to carry out a swift and thorough investigation. Therefore incidents of bullying should be referred to the appropriate year team as quickly as possible. Year Leaders have training, experience and the capacity to respond swiftly and effectively to incidents as they occur.

The governing body is responsible for:

- Evaluating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it does not discriminate against any students on the basis of their protected characteristics or backgrounds.
- The overall implementation and monitoring of this policy.
- Ensuring that all governors are appropriately trained regarding safeguarding and child protection at induction.
- Ensuring that the school adopts a tolerant and open-minded policy towards difference. Ensuring the school is inclusive.
- Analysing any bullying data to establish patterns and reviewing this policy in light of these.
- Ensuring the DSL has the appropriate status and authority within the school to carry out the duties of the role.
- Appointing a safeguarding link governor who will work with the DSL to ensure the policies and practices relating to safeguarding, including the prevention of cyberbullying, are being implemented effectively. Ensuring that students are taught how to keep themselves and others safe, including online.

The Head of School 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.
- Ensuring records are maintained (via CPOMS) of all reported incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for proper analysis of the data collected.
- Analysing the data in bullying records at termly intervals to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members.

Staff suspecting an incident of bullying should:

- Reassure the young person that their concerns are being taken seriously and will be investigated.
- Contact the relevant Year Leader as soon as possible with details of the incident.

Year Leaders will investigate all reported incidents of bullying using the following procedure:

- The victim and perpetrator will be initially interviewed separately by the Year Leader and an assessment will be made in conjunction with the victim as to the appropriate level and course of response.
- If this discussion confirms a bullying incident has taken place, an investigation will be conducted and the Year Leader will take statements from students outlining details of the event, gather evidence and clearly outline the initial response. The response will include support for the victim, details of contact with parents, and support and sanctions for the perpetrator.
- Record the incident details on the school's bullying log.
- The victim and perpetrator will be monitored by the Pastoral team and a follow up meeting will take place as arranged (timing appropriate to individual situations).
- Appropriate staff (including external agencies) will be kept informed of the individual student needs and support mechanisms. Students have been encouraged to self-refer to their pastoral team, the safeguarding team or any staff in Student Services at any time.

### **Route of Referral**

NB: It is recognised that in some cases a student may have a particularly good relationship with a member of staff other than those mentioned above and these staff may be more appropriate to work with them at the discretion of the Pastoral Leader, if that member of staff feels suitably trained and has the capacity to do so.

### **Parents' Responsibilities**

It is the responsibility of parents to:

- Monitor changes in their child's behaviour that may indicate s/he is being bullied;
- Inform the school of any suspected bullying even if it does not concern their child;
- Co-operate with the school and work together to prevent any repercussions of this type of behaviour and long term damage to the victim;
- Be sympathetic and supportive towards their child;
- Work in cooperation with the school and accept the sanctions and support given if their child has been accused of bullying others;
- Always check their child's use of social media;
- Refrain from involving themselves with other parties.

Students 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 students in incidents.
- Keeping evidence of cyberbullying and informing a parent or member of staff should they fall victim to cyberbullying.

### **Anti-bullying Education Programme**

The anti-bullying education programme will:

- provide information that is relevant and appropriate to the age and developmental stage of the students and develop skills around the school values of positivity, ambition, resilience, and thoughtfulness
- encourage the exploration and clarification of values and attitudes, rights and responsibilities foster self-esteem, positive self-image and confidence

Delivery will be through:

- topics within the SMSC programme, including the PSHE and RE curriculum, form-time and assemblies

- targeted pastoral interventions and mentoring by the pastoral team
- alongside outside agencies such as kooth.com, Brook and Action for Children

### **Signs of bullying**

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a student 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 school work
- 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. Students 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 student 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 student's Year Leader.

### **Child on child abuse**

The school has 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, the school will educate students 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 students 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.

Students 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 student has been harmed, is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral may be made to children’s social care services through the Integrated Front Door (IFD) and potentially the police, where the DSL deems this appropriate in the circumstances. All staff will be aware and sensitive towards the fact that students may not be ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. Students being abused may feel embarrassed, humiliated, scared, or threatened.

More information on the school’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.

## **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 students, staff and others, and may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. 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

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

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying. The school views cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in this policy if they become aware of any incidents.

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

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a student 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 student 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 given regular updates in order to educate them on the signs and symptoms of cyberbullying, and will be advised to report to the Head of School if their child displays any of the signs outlined in this section.

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 – Students 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 – students 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 students 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 students crossing boundaries without realising
- The victim of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened – students may have taken screenshots of bullying, or there may be a digital footprint that can identify the perpetrator

The school will support students who have been victims of cyberbullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the student about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped. In accordance with the Education Act 2011, the school has the right to examine and delete files from students' personal devices, e.g. mobiles phones, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. In these cases, school policies will be followed at all times and the school will endeavour to work positively with parents.

## **Sanctions**

If senior leaders are 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. Senior leaders will inform the perpetrator (and their parents) of the type of sanction to be used in this instance, in line with the Behaviour Policy.

All parents are informed of bullying incidents and what action is being taken. 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 and enable more positive

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

### **Outline of Monitoring Procedures**

School leaders will ensure that robust records will be kept of all reported bullying incidents reported to the Senior Leadership Team / Governors who will provide support to students and liaise with parents. Any patterns identified will be discussed and appropriate strategies identified.

Senior leaders 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 students 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.

### **Support**

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

- Emotional support and reassurance from members of staff
- 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)

Senior leaders 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 afterschool clubs or activities.

Staff, particularly the DSL and pastoral staff will work with the victim to build resilience. The perpetrator will have support to assist with any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing issues.

### **Incidents outside the School**

The procedures laid out in this policy equally apply to any incidents outside school premises. Incidents outside the school may be communicated to the Police.

### **Dissemination of the Policy**

This policy is universally accessible on the school website, including to students, parents, staff members and Governors.



