Anti-Bullying Policy

With regard to DfE advice and guidance, 'Preventing and tackling bullying', 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' and 'Working Together to Safeguard Children

Approved by:	Rachel Edwards (Head Teacher) Penny Harris (Director) Jane Cox (Director)
Last reviewed on:	1st September 2025
Next review due by:	1st September 2026

All policies are generated and reviewed with an awareness of equality and diversity in relation to pupils, staff and visitors. All policies are generated and reviewed placing safeguarding and wellbeing at the heart of all that we do.

Related policies
Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
Online OnlinOnlinOnlinOnlinOnline Safety
Policy
Behaviour Management Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy
Incident Recording, Reporting and Retention Policy
PSHE Policy
Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) development Policy
Special Educational Needs, Disability and Inclusion Policy
Pupil Complaints Policy
Pupil Voice Policy

What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, messenger apps, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender identity, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a first priority, but emotional bullying can cause more long term damage than physical bullying.

Bullying often involves an imbalance of power, which could make it particularly difficult for a victim to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways, it may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to the support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online.

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Cyber-bullying

The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more easily accessed as people forward on content at a click. It is particularly damaging as it is much more difficult for the victim to ignore as it can intrude on all aspects of their internet use throughout the day.

Access to support for staff and pupils relating to cyber-bullying and all other aspects of bullying can be found in the 'further resources' section of 'Preventing and tackling bullying' (2017), which can be found on the resources gateway.

Cyberbullying is bullying by electronic means. This could be via a smartphone, computer, laptop, tablet or online gaming platform and it can take place on a range of online or mobile services, such as text, email, social networking sites, messenger apps, photo sharing services, chat, webcams, visual learning environments and online games.

Cyberbullying can be an extension of bullying already happening e.g. in the community, or it can be between people who have never met. It can take a wide range of forms, threats, intimidation, name calling, harassment, exclusion, gaining access to unauthorised information on line (hacking), impersonation, posting personal information, sharing of nudes, semi-nudes or manipulation.

Young people are always connected so the target of cyberbullying can be reached 24/7, wherever they are. It is inescapable and the victim may not always know who is bullying them, which adds to their distress

Young people often find it hard to know whether something is cyberbullying or not, as online there are fewer cues to understand the intention of the person communicating with you and words can be interpreted indifferent ways

Many of these issues are more of a problem to pupils with Communication or Learning Difficulties.

On a positive note, evidence of cyberbullying can be collected and retained e.g. a text or a screenshot. This can be empowering to a victim trying to get support from adults.

If authorised by the Head Teacher, school staff have the power to confiscate electronic devices such as mobile phones and when that has occurred, files and data can be examined and deleted where there is good reason to do so. Should this occur, any material found that contains evidence of an offence, extreme pornography or a pornographic image relating to a child, should be handed to the police rather than deleted. There is no need to have parental consent in these circumstances. Having said that, many staff may feel that this could be seen as very damaging to relationships and Head Teachers may wish to take different steps to protect pupils from cyber-bullying.

Safeguarding

When there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer significant harm' a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern and recorded on the OTW My Concern reporting system. Such concerns should be followed up in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. An IFD referral may also be appropriate in some circumstances that come to light in investigation of a bullying incident; in such cases the local authority procedures will be followed.

Child on Child Abuse

All staff should be aware that safeguarding issues can manifest themselves via child on child abuse. This is most likely to include, but may not be limited to, bullying (including cyberbullying), gender based violence/sexual assaults, upskirting, sharing of nudes, semi-nudes and other youth produced sexual imagery. Any concerns that child on child abuse may be an issue should be reported in line with the Safeguarding and Child Protection policy.

Staff should be mindful of teenage relationship abuse. If the allegation:
- Is made against an older pupil and refers to their behaviour towards a younger or more vulnerable pupil
- Is of a serious nature, possibly including a criminal offence
- Raises risk factors for other pupils or indicates that other pupils may have been affected
- Indicates that young people outside the school may have been affected by this pupil

Examples of safeguarding issues against a pupil could include:
- Physical abuse – violence, especially pre-planned, forcing others to use drugs or alcohol or join a gang
- Emotional abuse – blackmail or extortion, threats or intimidation
- Sexual abuse – indecent exposure, indecent touching, sexual assault, forcing others to watch pornography or take part in sharing nudes or semi-nudes
- Sexual exploitation – encouraging others to take part in inappropriate sexual behaviour, photographing or videoing other children performing indecent acts

Criminal aspects to consider

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threat or communication can be. For example, sending an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender, is guilty of an offense if their purpose in sending it was to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient. (Malicious Communications Act 1988)

Bullying which occurs outside the school premises

The Head teacher does have the power to sanction for incidents that occur away from the school, but only if it would be reasonable for the school to regulate pupils' behaviour in those circumstances. As many of the On Track schools are not within the community where the pupil lives, care should be taken in exercising this option.

Vulnerable pupils

Pupils perceived by others to be in some way different are particularly vulnerable to bullying. On Track pupils have special educational needs, but may still target those with a different need or disability, those who are adopted, those suffering from a health problem or those with caring responsibilities.
Each of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act may give rise to bullying (age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation).

Those going through a personal or family crisis may be not only vulnerable to bullying, but need intensive support to deal with the impact of bullying.

Pupils with special educational needs or disabilities can lack the social or communication skills to report incidents and may not even recognise incidents of bullying, meaning that staff will need to be particularly aware and proactive.

Prevention

A whole school approach has been devised, with reference to the following:
- At an individual level all school staff work to address issues between pupils before they escalate into incidents, particularly if an imbalance of power exists.
- All pupils have an open door key worker to talk though any concerns or issues, and positives, of how they have behaved and dealt with issues from each and every day.
- All pupils have a THRIVE plan which supports optimal social and emotional development on a targeted individual basis.
- Curriculum delivery of personal, social and health education and within this programme, across all year groups, there is work undertaken on relationships and building positive relationships with others.
- A good range of supported activities arranged at break times because of the awareness of the impact of bullying which can occur at unstructured times during the school day.
- Robust reporting and action procedures when an incident of bullying occurs which includes timely information sharing across the whole staff team and keyworker/tutorial support for the victim and perpetrator.
- Restorative meetings are carefully planned and conducted where bullying between peers occurs. These meetings are underpinned by a foundation of trust and compassion and the pupils' tutor/s ensure that both parties are listened to and are part of the process of drawing up an action plan to move forward and work together.
- Robust monitoring and analysis of all incidents of bullying using My Concern system.
- Pupils have access to the 'Tell Me' box in which they can leave anonymous messages relating to issues and concerns.
- Online Safety programme delivered and revisited regularly in ICT and PSHE lessons and in light of any new incident or information relating to cyber bullying. Online Safety information clearly displayed around the school.
- Evaluation and updating of the school's approach to take account of developments in technology and ensuring that every pupil has signed the acceptable use policy and are encouraged to be involved in the Online Safety policy review.
- The consequences of bullying should reflect the seriousness of the incident so that all can see that bullying is unacceptable.
- Open discussion of differences between people that could motivate bullying and ensure that any prejudice based language is known by all to be unacceptable.
- Use of specific organisations or resources for help with particular problems.
- Provision of staff training. All staff are encouraged to access the range of training related to the understanding of bullying available on the National College online platform. Other more specific training programmes is sought as required, depending on the specific needs, and trends, within the school.
- Working alongside other professionals where bullying is particularly serious or persistent or where a criminal offence may have occurred.
- Making it easy for pupils to report bullying so they know they will be listened to and action will be taken
- Creation of an inclusive environment, where pupils can openly discuss the cause of their bullying without fear of further bullying or discrimination.
- Involvement of parents to ensure they feel confident that the school will take complaints relating to bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way that protects all involved. It is to be hoped that they will reinforce the value of mutual respect at home.

Review

In order to ensure that this policy is relevant, if you have any comments or suggestions please email directors@ontrackeducation.com

Appendix

ICT Acceptable Use Policy for students at On Track Education (as part of Online Safety & Anti-Bullying Policies)

On Track provides computers and internet access to help our learning. These rules will keep us safe and help us to be fair to others:

- I will only use ICT in school in ways that are allowed
- I understand that I should not use my own personal mobile phone on the school site
- I will ask permission from a member of staff before using the internet and will only be online when an adult is in the room
- I will only use my log in and password and never share these with other people
- I will only open and delete my own files
- I will only send messages that are polite, kind, sensible and respectful
- I will never give out my own or other people's name address or phone number online
- I will never upload any images of school activities to any social networking site
- I will not deliberately look for, save or send anything that is unpleasant or inappropriate
- If I see anything that I am unhappy with on the computers, I will turn the screen off and tell an adult straight away
- I understand that staff can check my computer use and that my parents/carers can be contacted if staff are concerned about my online safety.

Student signed: Date:

I have read, understood and accept the above online safety expectations for my child.   I agree that my child can use the school's ICT systems and internet when appropriately supervised by a member of school staff, including but not limited to, use of Google Workspace for Education.

Parent signed: Date: