

WHITWORTH COMMUNITY HIGH SCHOOL



Anti-Bullying Policy

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1 INTRODUCTION

Whitworth Community High School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and inclusive environment in which all students can learn and thrive. We operate a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. Bullying in any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. All reports and concerns about bullying will be taken seriously and responded to promptly, proportionately and appropriately. Our approach is underpinned by our school values of being Ready, Responsible and Respectful, and we expect every member of our school community to contribute to a culture in which bullying is challenged and students feel safe to report concerns.

Students are encouraged to report bullying or concerns about bullying as soon as possible. They can speak directly to any member of staff, including their form tutor, Progress Leader or a member of the pastoral team. Where a student does not feel comfortable speaking directly to a member of staff, or wishes to report a concern when they are at home, they can use the school's Speak Up button to alert the school. Reports made through Speak Up will be taken seriously and followed up by an appropriate member of staff.

This policy has been reviewed with regard to current Department for Education guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, Behaviour in Schools and Preventing and Tackling Bullying. It should be read alongside the school's Behaviour for Learning Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Online Safety Policy, Equality information/objectives and Complaints Policy.

2 AIMS

The aims of this policy are to:

- promote a school culture in which bullying is not tolerated and positive relationships are actively developed;
- ensure students, staff and parents/carers understand what bullying is and how it differs from ordinary disagreement or conflict;
- provide clear and accessible routes for reporting bullying concerns;
- ensure reports are recorded, investigated and responded to consistently;
- protect and support students who experience bullying and reduce the likelihood of recurrence;
- challenge and change bullying behaviour through appropriate education, support and sanctions;
- identify patterns, vulnerable groups, locations and emerging issues through effective monitoring;
- ensure bullying which is also a safeguarding concern is managed through the school's safeguarding procedures;
- promote the school's expectations of being Ready, Responsible and Respectful.

3 LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE

This policy has regard to relevant legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance, including:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including the duty on maintained schools to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying among students;
- Education Act 2002 and the school's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children;
- Children Acts 1989 and 2004;
- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty;
- Human Rights Act 1998;
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;
- Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff; and
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying: advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies.

Where bullying involves behaviour that may constitute a criminal offence, a safeguarding concern or significant harm, the school may seek advice from or make a referral to the police, children's social care or other appropriate agencies.

4 DEFINITION OF BULLYING

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally. It often involves a real or perceived imbalance of power which makes it difficult for the person experiencing the behaviour to defend themselves or make it stop.

Bullying can take place face-to-face or online. It can be direct or indirect, obvious or subtle, and can occur within friendship groups as well as between students who are not friends.

Behaviour does not have to meet the school's definition of bullying before action is taken. A one-off incident may still be serious misconduct, harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment, violence or a safeguarding concern and will be dealt with under the appropriate school policy and procedures.

Examples of situations which would not normally be described as bullying include an accidental incident, a one-off disagreement between students of broadly equal power, or a temporary friendship fall-out. However, staff will consider the context, impact, intent, power imbalance and any previous incidents before deciding how behaviour should be categorised and addressed.

5 FORMS OF BULLYING

Bullying may include, but is not limited to:

- Physical bullying - hitting, kicking, pushing, taking or damaging property, threatening physical harm or other unwanted physical behaviour.
- Verbal bullying - name-calling, insults, threats, mocking, humiliating comments or repeated teasing.
- Indirect or relational bullying - deliberate exclusion, damaging friendships, spreading rumours, encouraging others to isolate someone, or manipulating social groups.
- Online/cyberbullying - bullying through social media, messaging services, group chats, gaming platforms, email, images, video or other digital technology.
- Prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying - behaviour connected to a protected characteristic or perceived difference, including race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy/maternity, or other aspects of identity or background.
- Sexual or sexist bullying - unwanted sexualised comments, jokes, rumours, gestures, images, harassment or behaviour based on sex or gender.
- Bullying related to SEND, appearance, health needs, family circumstances, home circumstances, poverty, caring responsibilities or other vulnerabilities.

6 PREJUDICE-BASED AND DISCRIMINATORY BULLYING

Whitworth Community High School will not tolerate prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying. Derogatory language, slurs, stereotypes, discriminatory jokes and targeted exclusion will be challenged whether or not the person targeted is known to have the characteristic being referenced. Incidents will be recorded on CPOMS which allows the school to identify patterns and take appropriate action. Where conduct may amount to unlawful discrimination, harassment or victimisation, the school will respond in line with its Equality Act duties and relevant policies.

7 ONLINE AND CYBERBULLYING

Online bullying will be treated as seriously as bullying that occurs face-to-face. It can include abusive or threatening messages, exclusion from online groups, impersonation, sharing private information, posting or forwarding humiliating content, targeted pile-ons, malicious rumours, altered images, or the use of artificial intelligence to create or manipulate harmful content.

Where online behaviour takes place outside school but affects the welfare of a student, relationships within school, or the orderly running of the school, the school may investigate and respond. Staff will preserve relevant evidence where appropriate and may ask students or parents/carers to retain screenshots, messages or other records.

Where online content includes sexual images, suspected criminal behaviour, threats of serious harm or other safeguarding concerns, staff must follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and refer the matter to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

8 CHILD-ON-CHILD ABUSE AND SAFEGUARDING

The school recognises that children can abuse other children. Child-on-child abuse can include bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying, as well as physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, abuse in intimate personal relationships, sharing of intimate images, upskirting and initiation or hazing-type behaviour.

All child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously. It will never be dismissed as “banter”, “part of growing up” or “just having a laugh”. If a report of bullying indicates that a child may be at risk of harm, safeguarding procedures take precedence. The DSL or a deputy DSL will be informed and the school will consider whether external agencies should be involved.

The school will take a child-centred approach, consider the needs and safety of all children involved, and ensure that support and risk management arrangements are reviewed as circumstances change.

9 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

9.1 Governing Body

The Governing Body will ensure that the school has effective arrangements to prevent and respond to bullying, fulfils its statutory duties and reviews the effectiveness of this policy.

9.2 Headteacher and Senior Leadership Team

The Headteacher and senior leaders are responsible for ensuring that this policy is implemented consistently, that staff understand their responsibilities, and that appropriate systems are in place for recording, monitoring and responding to bullying.

9.3 Staff

All staff must model respectful behaviour, remain alert to signs of bullying, challenge inappropriate behaviour and language, respond to disclosures, record concerns as required and refer safeguarding concerns promptly. Staff should not promise confidentiality to a student where information may need to be shared to keep someone safe.

9.4 Students

Students are expected to behave in accordance with the school's 3 R's - Ready, Responsible and Respectful. Students should not participate in bullying, encourage it, share harmful content or deliberately exclude others. Students are encouraged to be upstanders rather than bystanders by reporting concerns and seeking help for themselves or others.

9.5 Parents and Carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to report concerns promptly, provide relevant information, reinforce respectful behaviour and work constructively with the school while concerns are investigated and addressed.

10 REPORTING BULLYING

Students are encouraged to report bullying or concerns about bullying as soon as possible. They can speak directly to any member of staff. If a student does not feel comfortable speaking directly to a member of staff, or wishes to report a concern when they are at home, they can use the school's Speak Up button to alert the school. Reports made through Speak Up will be taken seriously and followed up by an appropriate member of staff.

Students may also report concerns on behalf of another student. The school encourages students to be upstanders rather than bystanders and to report behaviour that may be causing harm to others. All reports of bullying will be handled sensitively. Information will be shared only with those who need to know in order to investigate the concern, safeguard students and take appropriate action.

11 RECORDING AND INVESTIGATING REPORTS

Reports of suspected or confirmed bullying will be recorded on the school's electronic systems, CPOMS where appropriate.

The member of staff leading the investigation will normally:

- listen separately to the student who has reported or experienced the behaviour;
- speak to the student or students alleged to have displayed the behaviour;
- speak to witnesses and review relevant information or online evidence where available;
- consider whether there is a pattern, repetition or power imbalance;
- consider protected characteristics, SEND, vulnerability and safeguarding factors;
- decide whether the behaviour is bullying and/or whether another policy or safeguarding procedure applies;
- agree immediate safety measures and longer-term support where required; and
- record the outcome and arrange appropriate follow-up.

Investigations will be proportionate to the nature of the concern. The school will not require a student who has experienced bullying to meet face-to-face with another student as a condition of the issue being resolved.

12 RESPONDING TO BULLYING

The school's response will be determined by the individual circumstances. The priority will be to make the behaviour stop, safeguard the student affected, establish what has happened and reduce the risk of recurrence.

Parents/carers of students directly involved will normally be informed when bullying is confirmed or where the concern is sufficiently serious to warrant parental/carer involvement. There may be safeguarding circumstances in which information-sharing is managed differently; decisions will be made in the best interests of the child and in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

The school may use educational, pastoral, restorative and disciplinary approaches. Restorative work will only be used where it is appropriate, safe and likely to be helpful. It will not replace safeguarding action or appropriate sanctions.

13 SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WHO EXPERIENCE BULLYING

Support will be tailored to the needs and wishes of the student and may include:

- a named trusted adult or regular pastoral check-ins;
- immediate safety arrangements and supervision where required;
- support from pastoral staff and teaching staff;
- adjustments to seating, movement, social times or other arrangements where proportionate and appropriate;
- support to rebuild confidence, friendships and participation in school life;
- help to manage online concerns and preserve/report harmful content;
- communication with parents/carers;
- referral to internal or external support services where appropriate.

Students will be told what action can reasonably be shared with them. The school may not be able to disclose confidential information about sanctions or support provided to another student.

14 RESPONDING TO STUDENTS WHO DISPLAY BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Bullying behaviour will be challenged clearly. The school will also seek to understand why the behaviour occurred and what needs to change. Intervention may include explicit teaching about impact and

expectations, pastoral work, parental/carers involvement, restorative work where appropriate, behaviour support, mentoring or referral to other services.

Support for a student who has displayed bullying behaviour does not remove accountability. Appropriate sanctions will be applied in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy and the seriousness, frequency and circumstances of the behaviour.

15 SANCTIONS AND CONSEQUENCES

Consequences will be proportionate and will take account of the nature and seriousness of the incident, previous behaviour, impact on others, any aggravating factors and the individual circumstances of the students involved. Repeated bullying or serious incidents are likely to result in more significant consequences.

Consequences may include, Reflect, off-site directions, suspension or, in the most serious or persistent cases, permanent exclusion. Police involvement may be considered where behaviour may constitute a criminal offence. Any decision on suspension or permanent exclusion will be made in accordance with statutory guidance and the school's Behaviour for Learning Policy.

16 PREVENTING BULLYING

Prevention is central to the school's approach. The school seeks to build a culture in which students feel safe, valued and confident that concerns will be heard. The 3 R's provide a clear behavioural framework: students are expected to be Ready to learn and participate positively, Responsible for their choices and impact on others, and Respectful in their words, actions and online behaviour.

Preventative work may include:

- assemblies, form time, curriculum work and targeted education about healthy relationships, prejudice, online behaviour and reporting concerns;
- active supervision of social times and attention to areas where students may feel less safe;
- work by the Student Council, prefects and student leaders to promote inclusion and respectful relationships;
- restorative and relationship-building work where appropriate;
- staff training and information-sharing about emerging concerns and vulnerable students;
- education and early intervention where inappropriate language or behaviour emerges; and
- promotion of an upstander culture in which students are confident to report concerns rather than reinforce bullying through silence, laughter, sharing or forwarding content.

17 BULLYING OUTSIDE SCHOOL

The school may respond to bullying or other misconduct that occurs outside the school premises, including on the journey to or from school, on educational visits, on school transport, in the community or online, where the behaviour has a connection with school, poses a threat to another student, could adversely affect the reputation of the school, or affects the orderly running of the school.

The school will work with parents/carers and, where appropriate, the police, local authority or other agencies when behaviour outside school creates a safeguarding or community safety concern.

18 SEND AND OTHER VULNERABILITIES

The school recognises that some students may be more vulnerable to bullying or may face additional barriers to recognising, describing or reporting what has happened. This may include students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, communication needs, social care involvement, young carers and other students experiencing vulnerability.

Staff will make reasonable adjustments to reporting, investigation and support processes where necessary. Behaviour linked to a student's disability or other protected characteristic will be considered carefully, and the school will take its duties under the Equality Act 2010 into account.

19 WORKING WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The school aims to work in partnership with parents and carers. Concerns will be listened to and considered carefully. Parents/carers should provide the school with relevant information and allow the school an appropriate opportunity to investigate, while reporting immediately any new information indicating that a child may be unsafe.

Where bullying is substantiated, the school will explain the steps being taken to address the behaviour and support the student affected. Confidentiality means that details about another student's individual sanctions, safeguarding information or personal circumstances may not be shared.

20 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Bullying incidents and concerns will be monitored by pastoral staff, Heads of Year and senior leaders. Monitoring will consider frequency, type of behaviour, location, year group, repeated involvement, online trends, prejudice-related incidents and any patterns affecting particular groups of students.

Relevant information from students, parents/carers, staff and governors will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and intervention. Leaders will use emerging themes to inform supervision, curriculum work, staff development and targeted interventions.

Information will be handled sensitively and in accordance with data protection and safeguarding requirements. The policy will be reviewed annually, or earlier if there is a significant change in legislation, statutory guidance or school practice.

21 COMPLAINTS

Concerns about the way the school has handled a bullying matter should normally first be raised with the relevant member of pastoral staff or senior leader so that the issue can be reviewed. If a parent/carer remains dissatisfied, they may use the school's Complaints Policy. Safeguarding concerns should not be delayed while a complaint is being considered.

22 AVAILABILITY AND LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES

This policy will be available on the school website. Paper copies can be requested from the school. Key information about reporting bullying will also be communicated to students in an age-appropriate and accessible form.

This policy should be read alongside the following school policies and procedures:

- Behaviour for Learning Policy;
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy;
- Online Safety Policy;
- SEND Policy / SEND Information Report;
- Equality information and objectives;
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion procedures;
- Complaints Policy.

Bullying or harassment involving members of staff is addressed through the school's relevant staff policies and procedures, with regard to Department for Education guidance on preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff.