



## **Whole School Anti Bullying Policy**

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## **Rationale**

Liberty Woodland School supports and promotes the diversity and individuality of each child through respect of children's rights as laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). We build a safe and stimulating environment for play and learning where each child feels safe from harm, including bullying.

Liberty Woodland School will not accept bullying of any member of the school community in any of its forms. This policy exists to help prevent and combat bullying, to promote welfare of all staff and pupils and allow all members of the school community to be happy and reach their full potential. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent bullying from happening and to intervene and act promptly and effectively when it does occur.

We work hard to eliminate all forms of bullying through our approach to building positive relationships within our school community, to promoting wellbeing and mental health as well as through explicit teaching within our curriculum.

We keep records of all incidents of bullying that occur at Liberty Woodland School. We acknowledge that if bullying is left unaddressed it can have a devastating effect on individuals. Bullying can be a barrier to learning as well as having serious consequences on mental health.

As the school expands to include students up to Year 10 from September 2025, we acknowledge the increasing complexity of social interactions, identity development, and digital behaviours. Our anti-bullying policy reflects these additional needs.

## **Policy Aims**

To ensure all stakeholders have a good understanding of what is meant by bullying. To create a safe and secure environment that prevents bullying from occurring where students are able to learn and fulfil their potential. To create a safe and secure working environment in line with the Staff Code of Conduct. To prevent and/or deal with any behaviour that might constitute bullying. To promote an awareness of the need to ensure everyone is entitled to live in the school community free from intimidation. To respond to any incident of bullying in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent manner. To safeguard and provide appropriate support to any pupil who has been the victim of bullying. To apply measures to any pupil who is found to be responsible for bullying, in addition to providing them with appropriate help and guidance on how they can take steps to repair the harm caused. While each case must be considered on its own terms, it should be noted that strong sanctions, including exclusion, may be appropriate in cases of severe and persistent bullying.

### **1. What is meant by bullying?**

The Department for Education recognises there is no legal definition of bullying however, it is usually defined as behaviour that is:

- repeated, or has the potential to be repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation

It takes many forms and can include:

- physical assault
- teasing
- making threats
- name calling
- cyberbullying - bullying via mobile phone or online (for example email, social networks and instant messenger)

The Anti-Bullying Alliance and its members have an agreed shared definition of bullying based on research from across the world over the last 30 years. The Anti-Bullying Alliance definition of bullying is:

The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online’.

Bullying behaviour can be:

- Physical – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.
- Verbal - name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling.
- Emotional – isolating others, tormenting, hiding books, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation and coercion.
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.
- Online /cyber – posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, social exclusion
- Indirect - Can include the exploitation of individuals.

Bullying may focus on differences or perceived differences, for example, special educational needs, homophobia or gender identity.

Not all situations in which children and young people are involved in conflict or relationship difficulties can be understood as bullying. ‘Relational conflict’ is one way of describing such non-bullying situations. The Anti-bullying Alliance recognises that ‘relational conflict’ usually involves individuals and groups who are relatively similar in power and status. It is generally behaviour which happens occasionally, and offence might be accidental. In cases of relational conflict, there is also generally a

willingness to make things right, to reflect on what went wrong and to try and plot a way forward. They also note that unresolved bad feelings or relationship problems left unaddressed can be the start of a pattern of behaviour in which the intention is to cause distress and can create an imbalance of power.

The imbalance of power is critical in understanding bullying. Here are just some examples of where there may be an imbalance of power. This is where the people who are the target of the behaviour may be:

- part of a minority group e.g. minority gender, race or faith group
- smaller stature or physical strength
- younger
- deemed to be 'lesser' by the perpetrator
- have communication difficulties or a disability

Bullying in any form will not be tolerated between students, teachers and staff.

## **2. Preventing bullying**

A strong culture of positive and supportive relationships where staff all hold the highest expectations of students underpins everything we do at Liberty Woodland School. We build this strong culture by:

- Promoting a climate of openness in which we encourage students to speak out- both if they witness bullying or if they feel they are the victim of bullying.
- Ensuring all new staff read and understand our anti-bullying policy as part of our induction process. We also further develop (through CPD) staff understanding of bullying, their roles and responsibilities and our anti-bullying policy and procedures throughout the academic year.
- Teaching students about what bullying is, why it is wrong and how it can be prevented as part of our PSHE curriculum. We focus on the themes of friendship, bullying, inclusion and belonging. Our curriculum promotes equality and students' understanding of the protected characteristics, for example through whole school morning meeting themes, diversity within literature and educational resources.
- Teaching students the language of 'upstander' and 'bystander' and encouraging pupils to stand up and speak out if they witness a behaviour towards another student that is unkind.
- Dedicating time to building trusted and strong relationships with all students; during free play, lesson times, lunch times and morning meetings.. All students can identify adults in the school whom they trust and know they can talk to in confidence and at any time.
- Ensuring that free-play is well supervised and teachers effectively support as well as monitor relationships throughout the school day. Opportunities for mixed-age play develop respect for one another, regardless of age.

- Building in regular opportunities for pupils voice, for example, our school 'I wish my teacher knew' box which is opened daily and responded to in a timely manner by the DSL, annual student questionnaire and the CEM wellbeing assessment for Y2 upwards.
- Welcoming new students to the school by buddying them up with a peer who supports them in settling in at the school; learning the expectations, routines and helping them to make friends. SLAs then take the lead role in ensuring new students continue to feel settled and welcomed and check-in with parents regularly where needed.
- Sending a very clear message to students and families that bullying is wrong and will not be tolerated.
- Providing a clear and effective reporting system for dealing with bullying and suspected bullying.
- Making students aware of the standards and expectations set by the School's Online Safety Policy.
- Making students aware of the National Anti Bullying Helpline: 0845 22 55 78. The number is prominently displayed in and around the School.

Additionally, as part of our provision for secondary age students, we:

- Promote understanding of key adolescent issues such as identity, neurodiversity, gender, sexual orientation, body image, and mental health within the PSHE curriculum.
- Address harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), including sexist or inappropriate comments, non-consensual touching, and the sharing of sexualised content, through age-appropriate discussions and resources.
- Deliver digital literacy lessons that cover online safety, privacy settings, digital footprint awareness, and consequences of online actions.

### **3. Responding to bullying**

If bullying is suspected or has been alleged by any member of the school community, a member of staff (as designated by the head/DSL) will speak to the children (and/or adults) involved to find out the cause of the issue. This process will involve discussions about what happened and why. Children will be encouraged to understand what has gone wrong, reflect and confront the impact of what they have done. All serious reported incidents are recorded on Isams Wellbeing Manager which are reviewed every term by the senior management team.

We follow up every incident of bullying sensitively and effectively. The investigation will usually be led by the class teacher and/ or the DSL. The investigation and response will:

- Ensure that the alleged victim feels protected and reassured
- Establish the facts, assessing the seriousness of the situation and deciding how best to proceed with the findings. In cases where the behaviour is not deemed to be bullying there is still likely to be next steps to take in following up the relational conflict.

- o Decide if there are safeguarding concerns
- o Decide whether parents need to be contacted and at what stage
- o Provide support for the victim and perpetrators where bullying has taken place (for example, through restorative justice conversations, additional support during play times etc.)
- o Decide if a sanction is necessary and if so, what sanction should be imposed. This will always be proportionate and not oppressive.
- o Ensure that false allegations are identified as such and dealt with appropriately
- o Help prevent any recurrence of bullying where it has occurred (for example further focused support, developing understanding through whole school meetings, policy reviews and extended monitoring by staff)
- o If there are repeated issues involving the same child, then the school will respond according to the need e.g. increase playground supervision, consider the child joining a social skills groups or establish a buddy system.

If an incident of bullying outside the school premises or online is reported to the school, it is important that it is investigated and appropriate action is taken.

For students in Year 7 and above, all reported bullying incidents will be assessed with consideration of increased safeguarding risk, including possible peer-on-peer abuse. The DSL will evaluate whether any reported behaviour constitutes harmful sexual behaviour and will refer to external agencies such as CAMHS, Early Help, or the police as necessary.

Where incidents involve the non-consensual sharing of intimate images ("sexting"), the school will follow statutory safeguarding guidance and ensure the victim is fully supported while ensuring appropriate consequences for the perpetrator.

Restorative justice processes may be used to repair harm and rebuild trust between individuals, where appropriate and safe to do so.

#### **4. Reporting bullying**

All staff across the school have a responsibility to take steps to contribute to an environment in which everyone feels safe.

Administrative and ancillary staff who receive a report of suspected bullying from a pupil or a parent must inform a member of SLT.

A bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Where this is the case, staff will deal with the concern in line with the school Safeguarding Policy.

Examples of sanctions applied fairly, consistently and reasonably in order of seriousness include (as identified within the Behaviour Policy:

- A discussion with the pupils concerned about the issue
- Discussions with parents
- Removal from a class, group or privileges
- Being sent home early
- Suspension for a day
- Suspension for a week
- Permanent exclusion

If the victim (or perpetrator) needs further support, a decision will be made regarding:

- What advice or support will be appropriate
- What, if any, follow-up work is required, and by whom it will be undertaken.
- If necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this may include involvement from the Police or referrals to Early Help, Specialist Children's Services, or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Written records are kept in the pupils' Wellbeing Manager file on iSAMS.

For older students, particularly in secondary years, the process for reporting is reiterated during morning meetings and PSHE. We emphasise the importance of speaking up about any harmful behaviours, including those that occur online, and provide channels for confidential disclosures.

In cases of suspected peer-on-peer abuse or harmful sexual behaviour, the DSL will follow the latest guidance in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) and consider whether the incident meets a threshold for a child protection response.

## **5. Cyberbullying**

Cyber-bullying takes place online, such as through social networking sites, messaging apps or gaming sites. To help prevent cyber-bullying, we will ensure that pupils understand what it is and what to do if they become aware of it happening to them or others. We will ensure that pupils know how they can report any incidents and are encouraged to do so, including where they are a witness rather than the victim.

The school will actively discuss cyber-bullying with pupils, explaining the reasons why it occurs, the forms it may take and what the consequences can be. Cyber-bullying is addressed through the PSHE Association curriculum and in response if the situation arises. Before children start to use Google Classrooms in upper primary, they are explicitly taught about the expectations for safe use. They then sign an agreement form to acknowledge they will follow the expected outlined behaviours.

In relation to a specific incident of cyber-bullying, the school will follow the processes set out in the school behaviour policy. Where illegal, inappropriate or harmful material has been spread among pupils, the school will use all reasonable endeavours to ensure the incident is contained.

The DSL will consider whether the incident should be reported to the police if it involves illegal material and will work with external services if it is deemed necessary to do so.

When responding to cyberbullying concerns, the School will:

- Act as soon as an incident has been reported or identified.
- Provide appropriate support for the person who has been cyberbullied and work with the person who has carried out the bullying to ensure that it does not happen again.
- Encourage the person being bullied to keep any evidence (screenshots) of the bullying activity to assist in the investigation.
- Take all available steps where possible to identify the person responsible. This may include: looking at use of the School systems; identifying and interviewing possible witnesses; contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary.
- Work with the individuals and online service providers to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation.

The senior leadership team has the right to:

- Request a service provider remove content if those involved are unable to be identified or if those involved refuse to or are unable to delete content.
- Confiscate and/ or search electronic devices from students, (such as mobile phones or school email accounts) in accordance with the law and also the Behaviour Policy.
- Request content posted online is deleted.
- Ensure that sanctions are applied to the person responsible for the cyberbullying.

The School will take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully, as well as ensuring access to any additional help they may need. The school will inform the police if a criminal offence has been committed and provide information to staff and students regarding steps they can take to protect themselves online.

Guidance for staying safe online may include:

- advising those targeted not to retaliate or reply.



- providing advice on blocking or removing people from contact lists.
- helping those involved to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain.

Students in Years 7 to 10 receive specific guidance on the legal and personal consequences of actions such as sending or forwarding explicit content, engaging in hate speech, or targeted harassment via social media platforms.

Cyberbullying guidance also includes:

- Understanding of laws such as the Malicious Communications Act and Communications Act 2003.
- Digital resilience strategies to protect their identity and wellbeing online.

## **6. Working alongside parents and carers**

We advise parent and carers to:

- Try to keep perspective, remain calm and work alongside the school. As children are growing and learning social skills they can fall out and have arguments. This does not always equate to bullying and both sides of a story need to be heard before anything can be assumed. Relationship difficulties which are not identified as cases of bullying are referred to as 'relational conflict'- in which individuals or groups are relatively similar in power and status and where there is a willingness to reflect on what has happened and consider ways to move forward to improve the relationship.
- Follow the school procedures for dealing with incidents and don't try to deal with them yourself. This poses the risk of being accused of bullying yourself and any parent/ carer who approaches other children or parents about issues very often make the situation much worse.
- Don't give permission for bullying by encouraging children to hit back, or take matters into their own hands.

Parents of students in the secondary phase are encouraged to:

- Discuss appropriate online behaviour, boundaries, and privacy settings at home.
- Monitor social media use where appropriate and communicate concerns with the school.
- Model respectful communication and avoid involvement in disputes between children or families directly.

## **7. Register for recording bullying:**

The DSL keeps a central log of allegations and/or incidents of bullying to help any patterns to be identified and for internal review purposes and inspection, as required

by the Governors. Records may include details of the protected characteristics which gives a clear picture of patterns of behaviour over each term / academic year.

The staff member receiving the report of alleged bullying completes a standard referral on iSams Wellbeing manager and this is flagged to the safeguarding lead. DSL then investigates and follows up on the allegation and records this on iSams, including decisions and any action taken. Communication with parents is also key throughout this process. The DSL will lead on this communication process.

Data recorded for secondary students will include indicators of protected characteristics where appropriate, patterns of digital abuse, and emerging safeguarding themes such as image-based abuse or hate-related bullying.

## **8. Monitoring the effectiveness of the policy**

- To review and evaluate our practice to take into account the developments of technology, updating (as necessary) this policy and its procedures annually and to circulate a copy of any updated version of it to staff.
- To involve parents and guardians by making a copy of this policy available via the School's website.
- To seek feedback from children on the effectiveness of the policy via annual student surveys
- To seek feedback from parents on the effectiveness of the policy through PT meetings and parent surveys (and other feedback opportunities)
- Any issues identified will be incorporated into the School's action planning.
- Seek to learn from good anti-bullying practice elsewhere, utilising support from the Local Authority and other relevant organisations when appropriate.
- The Head will be informed of bullying concerns, as appropriate.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead will report on a regular basis to the Board of Governors on incidents of bullying, including outcomes.

The DSL and leadership team will review data by age phase to inform strategic action planning.

The school will continue to evaluate national trends and local safeguarding data to adapt our practices and ensure they meet the developmental needs of our student body as it grows into the secondary phase.

## APPENDIX A:

- Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for school leaders and staff including regarding reported bullying using personal mobile phones inc. our right to search and delete images (Page 8 of [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1069688/Preventing\\_and\\_tackling\\_bullying\\_advice.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1069688/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf))

### Useful links and supporting organisations

- Anti-Bullying Alliance: [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
- Childline: [www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)
- Family Lives: [www.familylives.org.uk](http://www.familylives.org.uk)
- Kidscape: [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- MindEd: [www.minded.org.uk](http://www.minded.org.uk)
- NSPCC: [www.nspcc.org.uk](http://www.nspcc.org.uk)
- The BIG Award: [www.bullyinginterventiongroup.co.uk/index.php](http://www.bullyinginterventiongroup.co.uk/index.php)
- PSHE Association: [www.pshe-association.org.uk](http://www.pshe-association.org.uk)
- Restorative Justice Council: [www.restorativejustice.org.uk](http://www.restorativejustice.org.uk)
- Victim Support: [www.victimsupport.org.uk](http://www.victimsupport.org.uk)
- Young Minds: [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- Young Carers: [www.youngcarers.net](http://www.youngcarers.net)
- Changing Faces: [www.changingfaces.org.uk](http://www.changingfaces.org.uk)
- Cyberbullying
- Childnet International: [www.childnet.com](http://www.childnet.com)
- Digizen: [www.digizen.org](http://www.digizen.org)
- Internet Watch Foundation: [www.iwf.org.uk](http://www.iwf.org.uk)
- Think U Know: [www.thinkuknow.co.uk](http://www.thinkuknow.co.uk)
- UK Safer Internet Centre: [www.saferinternet.org.uk](http://www.saferinternet.org.uk)
- The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS)

### Race, religion and nationality

- Kick it Out: [www.kickitout.org](http://www.kickitout.org)
- Report it: [www.report-it.org.uk](http://www.report-it.org.uk)
- Stop Hate: [www.stophateuk.org](http://www.stophateuk.org)
- Educate against Hate: [www.educateagainsthate.com/](http://www.educateagainsthate.com/)
- Show Racism the Red Card: [www.srtrc.org/educational](http://www.srtrc.org/educational)

### LGBTQIA+

- Barnardos LGBT Hub:  
[www.barnardos.org.uk/what\\_we\\_do/our\\_work/lgbtq.htm](http://www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/lgbtq.htm)
- Metro Charity: [www.metrocentreonline.org](http://www.metrocentreonline.org)
- EACH: [www.eachaction.org.uk](http://www.eachaction.org.uk)
- Proud Trust: [www.theproudtrust.org](http://www.theproudtrust.org)
- Schools Out: [www.schools-out.org.uk](http://www.schools-out.org.uk)
- Stonewall: [www.stonewall.org.uk](http://www.stonewall.org.uk)

### Sexual harassment and sexual bullying

- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW)  
[www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk](http://www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk)
- Disrespect No Body:  
[www.gov.uk/government/publications/disrespect-nobody-campaign-posters](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disrespect-nobody-campaign-posters)

#### Further statutory guidance

'A key provision in The Equality Act 2010 is the Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on 5 April 2011 and covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. The Duty requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, 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.'

NB. Although bullying itself is not a specific criminal offence, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour can amount to a criminal offence. For instance, under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003 and the Public Order Act 1986. The School may seek assistance from the police in appropriate circumstances or other local services including Early Help of children's social care (if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm).