Anti-Bullying Policy

Related documents: What We Do & How We Do It Policy, Diversity & Equality Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy, Behaviour Policy

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OUR VISION

Our vision is to provide pupils with the confidence, skills and ambition to achieve a successful and productive life. We aim to ensure they leave the school with a 'new day, new opportunity' ethos and are capable of becoming positive members of their communities. To do this, we have 3 principles that underpin our policies, practices and everything we do:

Everyone can learn, achieve and has the potential to be successful

Positive relationships are key to success and are underpinned by mutual trust, respect and caring for one another

We have high expectations in everything we do

Policy owner	WhiteTrees School	**Last review**	September 2026
Date Created	July 2019	**Next review**	September 2027

Legislation and Statutory Guidance

This policy has been drawn up with regard to:

- The Equality Act 2010, in particular Part 6 (education), which places direct duties on independent schools not to discriminate against, harass or victimise pupils and prospective pupils in relation to admissions, the provision of education, and access to any benefit, facility or service.
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, Schedule Part 3, paragraph 9 (promoting good behaviour) and paragraph 10 (preventing bullying through an effective anti-bullying strategy).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (statutory safeguarding guidance), including its expectation that behaviour policies include measures to prevent bullying, such as cyberbullying and prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, and its recognition that persistent or serious bullying can constitute child-on-child abuse.
- The DfE non-statutory guidance 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' (DFE-00160-2017).
- The DfE statutory guidance 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges', which applies alongside this policy where an incident involves sexual harassment, sexual violence, or harmful sexual behaviour.
- Childnet / UK Safer Internet Centre guidance 'Cyberbullying: Understand, Prevent and Respond', which has replaced the previous DfE cyberbullying advice for schools.
- Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014, under which we have a duty to ensure that pupils with special educational needs engage in the activities of the school together with pupils who do not have special educational needs, so far as reasonably practicable.
- Relevant criminal law, including the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.

This policy should be read alongside our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, and Diversity & Equality Policy.

Introduction

Bullying can be defined as direct, indirect, physical, psychological, or verbal attack against an individual or group of individuals by a person or group of persons, causing physical or psychological harm to the victim. It is usually conscious and wilful and commonly consists of repeated acts of aggression and/or manipulation. It can take a number of forms - both physical and non-physical, either in combination or in isolation. Any bullying, whether physical or non-physical, may result in lasting psychological damage to the individual. For the purpose of this policy, we will use this definition of bullying:

> ***Bullying is a deliberately hurtful act by an individual or group, usually repeated over a period of time. It often involves an abuse of power or use of intimidation and can affect an individual or group. Bullying isn't when children and people of similar age and size find themselves in conflict, without an imbalance of power or use of intimidation.***

WhiteTrees Independent School aims to provide a safe and calm environment that is free from disruption where learning is the primary focus, and where this anti-bullying and respect policy impacts positively. The ethos of WhiteTrees Independent School is based upon respect for self and others; and in developing a respect for difference and diversity and celebrating its contribution to our lives, we aim to reduce incidents of bullying.

Bullying, Child-on-Child Abuse and Safeguarding

Most incidents of bullying will be responded to through this policy and our Behaviour Policy. However, in line with Keeping Children Safe in Education, staff should always consider whether bullying, particularly where it is persistent, severe, involves a significant imbalance of power, or has a sexual, sexist, or discriminatory element, may constitute a form of child-on-child (peer-on-peer) abuse. Where this is the case, the matter will be treated as a safeguarding concern and managed in line with our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, alongside this policy, and not as a bullying incident alone.

Incidents involving sexual harassment, sexual violence, or harmful sexual behaviour between pupils will be managed in line with the DfE's statutory guidance on sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, working alongside our Designated Safeguarding Lead.

Types of Bullying

There are different types of bullying, but the main types are:

1. Physical: kicking, hitting, taking or hiding belongings including money
2. Verbal: name calling, teasing, insulting, writing unkind notes, texting or emailing in an aggressive or unpleasant manner
3. Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding or isolating, tormenting, spreading rumours, running abusive initiation procedures
4. Passive: ignoring others, negative body language/gestures, excluding others, isolating others and the persuasion of others to ignore, exclude and isolate

In addition, we identify additional key sub-categories of bullying when reporting bullying which link in with our use of CPOMS. These are:

5. Cyberbullying
6. Discrimination
7. Homophobic incident
8. Physical bullying
9. Racist Incident
10. Verbal bullying

Forms of Bullying

Bullying can take a number of forms and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, including:

i. Racial, religion or belief, cultural

This is when people are persecuted because of their race, cultural practices, faith or beliefs, or linguistic background. Social and political issues can also be a factor here.

ii. Special educational needs or disability focused

This is when people are persecuted because of their particular educational needs, academic ability, or because of particular mental, emotional or physical disabilities they might have. Young people with SEN and disabilities may not have the levels of social confidence and competence, and the robust friendship bonds that can protect against bullying, so particular monitoring is crucial from staff.

iii. Academic

In addition to special educational needs, this is bullying pertaining often to high academic ability or achievement.

iv. Sporting ability

This is bullying pertaining to sporting ability or that happens on or off the sports pitch. It may include targeted abuse of the rules of the game being played. It also includes persecution because of someone's physical intelligence, coordination skills, fitness level or aptitude for performing or learning new sporting skills.

v. Appearance or health focused

This is when those with health or visible medical conditions, such as eczema, become targets for bullying behaviour. Perceived physical limitations, such as size and weight, and other body image issues, can result in bullying, and obvious signs of affluence (or lack of it) can also be exploited ruthlessly.

vi. Sexual orientation

This is bullying related to sexual orientation (LGBTQ+). Evidence of homophobic bullying suggests that children and young people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender (or perceived to be) face a higher risk of victimisation than their peers. Homophobic bullying is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported, since disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying. The pupil may not want to report bullying if it means 'coming out' to teachers and parents before they are ready to.

vii. Sexist or sexual

This may be characterised by name-calling, comments and overt 'looks' about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty. In addition, uninvited touching, innuendos and propositions, pornographic imagery or graffiti may be used. Pupils identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria may also be targeted. It may also relate to pregnancy or maternity. Where behaviour of this kind meets the threshold of sexual harassment, sexual violence, or harmful sexual behaviour, it will be managed under our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy in line with the DfE's statutory guidance, in addition to being addressed as bullying.

viii. Carers

Where pupils have caring responsibilities, usually for members of their families.

ix. Adopted children

Where pupils have been adopted.

Any behaviour that a reasonable bystander would say was intended to hurt or upset is wrong and could constitute bullying, including complicity that may fall short of participating directly in the bullying. There is no justification in the perpetrator saying or believing that their target is not upset or hurt by their actions or words.

Much bullying is performed in subtle ways which are not easy to detect; the perpetrator can use a simple look, word or gesture to signal an intended threat or insult. Some pupils are adept at changing a bullying situation into an apparently harmless one when an adult approaches. This makes it all the more important for pupils to be able to come forward to report bullying they have experienced or witnessed, and for staff and parents to be alert to symptoms of bullying.

Bullying is always hurtful to the individual(s) being bullied and damaging to the whole school community. Anyone and everyone who is involved in or witnesses bullying is affected by it. It can cause great distress, unhappiness and psychological damage and at its worst lead to suicide. It can also be a criminal offence, for example if the behaviour amounts to harassment or threatening behaviour.

Recognising SEMH-Related Behaviour vs. Bullying

WhiteTrees Independent School is a specialist provision for pupils aged 11 to 18 with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs, and all of our pupils have an Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). Staff recognise that dysregulated, reactive or impulsive behaviour arising from a pupil's SEMH needs is not the same as deliberate, planned bullying, even where the impact on another pupil may look similar on the surface.

When considering whether an incident is bullying, staff will take into account:

- Whether the behaviour was deliberate, planned, and repeated, or a one-off reactive/dysregulated response linked to a pupil's identified needs;
- Whether there is a genuine and sustained imbalance of power between the pupils involved;
- The pupil's EHCP, individual support plan, and any relevant behaviour or risk assessment;
- Advice from the SENCO, clinical team, or other relevant professionals where needed.

This distinction does not lessen our response to the impact on the pupil affected (support, safety and follow-up will always be provided regardless of intent), but it ensures that our response to the pupil whose behaviour caused harm is proportionate, trauma-informed, and addresses the underlying need rather than simply labelling behaviour that stems from a pupil's SEMH profile as bullying. Where there is doubt, incidents will be treated seriously and reviewed with SENCO and pastoral input before a final determination is made.

Cyberbullying: Misuse of ICT

Cyberbullying, or online bullying, is a method of bullying rather than a type. It is the use of ICT to carry out threatening or intentionally hurtful behaviour. It includes sending malicious, threatening or hurtful texts, emails or photos, or using malicious, insulting or other hurtful descriptions or comments on social networking sites or messaging platforms such as Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, TikTok, and Discord. Posting images or videos of others, or spreading them by mobile phone or showing them in person, are types of distribution. Distribution of sexual images is known commonly as 'sexting', and any such incidents will be managed in line with current DfE guidance on responding to sexual imagery involving pupils and our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy. Prolonged campaigns of harassment can occur through cyberbullying.

WhiteTrees Independent School is committed to promoting high standards of behaviour in all areas of pupils' lives, including their use of internet technology, social networking sites and texting and emailing. All pupils read and sign the Pupil Acceptable Use Policy once a year (currently in September).

The school takes very seriously any sign of bullying or hurtful behaviour through use of the network or other technologies, as detailed in the definitions of bullying above.

The school seeks to deter cyberbullying by ensuring that all pupils have clear information and guidance about how to be safe in the digital environment and that they are fully aware of the risks of misuse of social networking sites. This forms a robust and vigorous part of our PSHE education and is an area that we revisit with every year group. E-safety issues are also covered in form times and in other areas of the curriculum. All pupils and staff are required to sign the Pupil or Staff ICT Acceptable Use Policies and sanctions for any infringement are detailed in the policy.

All staff have a duty to be vigilant regarding pupils' behaviour on social networking sites. Any misconduct or any behaviour or communication which brings the school's reputation into disrepute will be treated very seriously and is likely to result in a significant sanction. Sanctions will be in line with the school's Behaviour Policy and guidelines. E-safety and prevention of cyberbullying is a regular focus of staff INSET and is addressed frequently in leadership team meetings. The school also seeks to work with parents/carers in this area and therefore runs regular parent education evenings and Pastoral Evenings, addressing the issue of e-safety.

Any report of this sort of behaviour will be regarded as bullying and treated in the same way as other forms. Pupils are made aware of what steps they can take to protect themselves and others. The Pupil Acceptable Use of ICT Code (in the Parent/Carer Pack) sets out clearly what is safe and acceptable use of the internet and all other electronic digital services. It is the responsibility of every member of the community to report any instances of cyberbullying, abuse and suspicious or dangerous behaviour by other pupils, staff, volunteers or those members of the teaching, pastoral or other staff outside the school. Reports can be made to any member of the teaching staff.

Whilst the school recognises that cyberbullying is most likely to take place outside of school and out of school hours, the school accepts its responsibility to follow up any allegations of persistent bullying, and parents/carers/relevant professionals will invariably be involved in any discussions of this nature with the relevant pupils.

Pupils and families can also be signposted to Report Harmful Content (reportharmfulcontent.com) and, where content involves suspected abuse or exploitation, to CEOP (ceop.police.uk), as additional routes for reporting harmful online content directly to platforms and, where appropriate, to the police.

Legal Framework

The Equality Act 2010 places direct duties on independent schools, including WhiteTrees School, not to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil or prospective pupil in relation to admissions, the way it provides education for pupils, provision of pupil access to any benefit, facility or service, or by excluding a pupil or subjecting them to any other detriment. In carrying out its functions, WhiteTrees School also has regard, as good practice, to the three aims that underpin the Public Sector Equality Duty:

- 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.

In addition to our duties in relation to pupils with disabilities under the Equality Act, we also have a duty under Part 3 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure that, so far as reasonably practicable, pupils with special educational needs engage in the activities of the school together with pupils who do not have special educational needs.

Safeguarding Children & Young People

Bullying incidents 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, or experience significant harm'. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, WhiteTrees Independent School will work towards a resolution using its multi-disciplinary team.

Criminal Law

Although bullying itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, WhiteTrees Independent School understands that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour, or communications, could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986. If the school feels that there has been a crime committed, police assistance will be sought.

Bullying Outside of School Premises

WhiteTrees Independent School has a responsibility to put consequences in place for pupils for poor behaviour outside the school premises. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on the school or public transport, outside local shops, or in the town centre. Where bullying outside the school premises is reported to the school, it will be investigated and acted upon according to the school's protocols. If appropriate, the police or local authority service will be informed of the actions taken by the school. If the behaviour could be considered criminal behaviour or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, we will consult the police.

Preventing Bullying

At WhiteTrees School, we believe that preventing bullying is a key aspect of a positive environment. To do this, we:

- Create an ethos of good behaviour where pupils and staff treat each other with respect because they know that this is the right way to behave

- Have a consulting Educational Psychologist, an in-house wellbeing team and a team of GPs supporting with specific issues, offering systemic interventions and training where needed
- Involve parents and carers to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying, and that they are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. Parents must feel confident that the school will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way that protects the pupil, and reinforces the value of good behaviour at home
- Involve pupils so that all pupils understand the school's approach and are clear about the part they play in preventing bullying, including when they themselves are bystanders
- Regularly evaluate and update the school's approach to take account of developments in technology
- Clearly communicate potential consequences of bullying and ensure they reflect the seriousness of the incident, so that pupils see that bullying is not acceptable
- Openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexuality. The school will also teach pupils that use of prejudice-based language is unacceptable
- Use specific organisations or resources for help with specific problems, drawing on the experience and expertise of the consulting Clinical and Educational Psychologist and/or, where appropriate, anti-bullying organisations, to deal with certain forms of bullying
- Provide effective staff training so that all staff understand the principles and purpose of the school's policy, its legal responsibilities regarding bullying, how to solve problems, and where to seek support
- Work with the wider community such as the police and children's services where bullying is particularly serious or persistent, and where a criminal offence may have been committed. The school will also work with other agencies and the wider community to tackle bullying that is happening outside school
- Make it easier for pupils and staff to report bullying so that they are assured that they will be listened to, and incidents acted on. Pupils at WhiteTrees School will feel that they can report bullying which may have occurred outside school including cyberbullying
- Create an inclusive environment. WhiteTrees Independent School works to create a safe environment where all of our school community can openly discuss the cause of their bullying without fear of further bullying or discrimination
- Ensure that within the school curriculum there are varied opportunities for pupils to develop healthy attitudes towards differences, practise skills of empathy and experience restorative justice. This will be particularly in PSHEE and citizenship, but will underpin all curriculum areas
- Support WhiteTrees Independent School anti-bullying ambassadors in taking the lead in developing this policy further
- Use our school values to teach pupils values that will empower them to be better members of our, and their, communities

School Value	British Value
Self-appreciation & New Beginnings	Individual liberty
Knowledge & Tolerance	Mutual Respect
Ambition & Responsibility	Rule of Law
Perseverance & Resilience	Democracy

School Value	British Value
Curiosity & Independence	Tolerance of different faiths and beliefs
Confidence & Coping with Change	N/A

Being Aware: Possible Signs of Bullying

Changes in behaviour that may indicate a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to go to school or return after a break
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually bad work, work that appears to have been copied, or interfered with or spoilt by others
- Belongings suddenly going missing or being damaged
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, sitting in the library instead of going out at playtime)
- Diminished levels of self-confidence
- Inability to concentrate
- Anxiety, depression, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet
- Repressed body language and poor eye contact
- Frequent absence, erratic attendance, late arrival to class
- Reluctance to leave the classroom at the end of lessons or school day
- Choosing the company of adults
- Frequent visits to the medical centre with symptoms such as stomach pains or headaches, especially at particular times or during particular lessons
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Difficulty in sleeping, nightmares
- Talking of suicide or running away

Although there may be other causes for these symptoms, teachers, parents and fellow pupils should be alert for these possible signs of bullying and contact a member of the pastoral team if they are concerned.

Sadly, some individuals are more vulnerable to bullying, and less likely to speak out, including LGBTQIA+ pupils and those with SEND. Again, staff, parents and peers should bear this in mind in cases of possible or suspected bullying. Further guidance for staff on preventing, identifying and dealing with such types of bullying can be found in the Anti-Bullying Guidance on the staff intranet.

Dealing With Bullying

If you are being bullied:

- Stay calm and try to appear confident. Tell the bully to stop and get away from the situation as quickly as you can
- Do not suffer in silence: talk to a member of staff. This could be your class teacher, tutor or Site Lead, or any other member of staff you trust. If you are unhappy about talking to a member of staff directly, you could talk to someone in your family, or a friend. Telling does not

make you a 'grass' or 'snitch': not telling means that the bullying is likely to continue. Remember you may not be the only one affected

- Be assured that we take every report of bullying seriously and will act upon it, even if it occurred outside the school. We will keep records of what has happened, and consult you and support you in whatever action we take
- Remember being bullied is not your fault: nobody ever deserves to be bullied
- If you feel you are being bullied by a member of staff, you should take the same action as if it were another pupil, that is, report the matter to someone you trust. All forms of bullying are unacceptable and all reports of bullying are investigated and dealt with irrespective of who the person responsible for the bullying incident might be

If you know that someone else is being bullied:

- Talk to a member of staff, or help the person being bullied to talk to a member of staff, so that the school can take steps to help
- Defend the individual and question the bullying behaviour: studies show that one of the most effective ways of stopping bullying is for fellow pupils to show their support for the person being bullied
- Try to defuse the situation: intervene as a group; walk away taking the person being bullied with you; take away the audience; distract the perpetrator or use humour to lighten up a serious situation
- Leave the chat if online
- Be sceptical about rumours concerning other pupils. Don't add to them. Put yourself in their position
- Spend time with the person being bullied and be kind to them
- Don't be a bystander. Many perpetrators will not persist in bullying unless they have an audience to play to, and by not taking action it could be argued you are condoning what is happening

What WhiteTrees Will Do

The exact course of action will vary with each situation. The immediate objective should be that bullying incidents are brought into the open and strategies agreed to help resolve the problem, encouraging all involved to return to responsible, caring behaviour.

- All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated immediately
- Bullying on the basis of protected characteristics is taken particularly seriously
- Where an incident may constitute child-on-child abuse or sexual violence/harassment, it will be escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and managed under our Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy alongside this policy
- It is not possible for any person who receives a report of a bullying incident to promise that it will be kept confidential. However, the action to be taken will be discussed with the person being bullied at every stage
- Everything that happens will be carefully recorded
- The most important thing is to stop the bullying and ensure the person being bullied is safe
- We aim for a peaceful resolution: revenge is not helpful or appropriate
- The person being bullied will be supported throughout the process

- Sanctions may be imposed but guidance and help will also be available for the perpetrator(s) to help change their behaviour, taking account of their EHCP and identified needs where relevant
- Staff will monitor the situation to ensure that the bullying does not continue. If bullying recurs, further action will be taken
- The school will record all bullying incidents, so that we can monitor the effectiveness of our anti-bullying measures and identify any patterns in order to inform preventative work and the future development of policies and procedures

What Should the Role of Parents/Carers Be

Parents have an important part to play in preventing and responding to bullying. We ask parents to look out for unusual behaviour in their child, such as not wanting to attend school, regularly feeling ill, being overly quiet, isolating themselves.

We ask that caregivers always take an active role in their child's education, enquire how their day has gone and who they have spent time with. If a parent or carer feels their child may be a victim of bullying, they must inform the school. This information will be taken seriously, and appropriate action will follow.

If, as a parent or carer, you feel another child has bullied your child, we ask that you do not approach that child or their family. Instead, please inform us immediately and we will ensure that the appropriate steps are taken.

Childline: 0800 11 11

NSPCC: 0808 800 5000

Report Harmful Content: reportharmfulcontent.com

CEOP: ceop.police.uk

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Part of the White Trees group
Building Brighter Futures