

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

This section should be completed following ratification of the Policy.

Audience	Trust Leaders, DSL's & all Safeguarding Staff, all staff & all Parents
Ratified	November 2025
Other Related Policies	Behaviour & Fundamental Values Policy, Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Searching & Confiscation Policy, Online Safety Policy and General Data Protection Policy
Policy Owner	Executive Team & Performance Committee
Review Frequency	Annually in November

Ownership

Preston Hedges Trust is responsible for the production and maintenance of this document. It is issued by the Clerk, clerk@prestonhedges.org to whom any change requests or queries should be directed.

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1. Aim & Introduction

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

Bullying is action taken by one or more children with the deliberate intention of hurting another child either physically or emotionally.

The Preston Hedges Trust is committed to providing a safe and secure environment

where all can learn in a positive climate. Every child has a right to reach their full potential in a safe and positive environment.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our schools. If it does occur, all children know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. All children are taught respect for themselves and for each other so that incidents involving bullying are rare, however, we remain constantly vigilant.

This policy applies to everyone at Preston Hedges Trust.

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Public Order Act 1986
- Communications Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Education Act 2011
- DfE ('Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
- DfE (2025) 'Keeping children safe in education 2025'
- DCMS, DSIT, and UK Council for Internet Safety 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'

2. What is bullying?

For this policy, “bullying” is defined as persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another person or group. Bullying is generally characterised by:

- Repetition: Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over an extended period.
- Intent: The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental.
- Targeting: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.
- Power imbalance: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations.

Vulnerable pupils are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. Vulnerable pupils may include, but are not limited to:

- Pupils who are adopted.
- Pupils suffering from health problems.
- Pupils with caring responsibilities.
- Pupils from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Pupils with certain characteristics are also more likely to be targets of bullying, including, but not limited to:

- Pupils who are LGBTQ+ or perceived to be LGBTQ+.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) pupils.
- Pupils with SEND.

3. Types of bullying

Bullying can occur in the following ways:

- ✓ Emotional. Excluding children from groups or friendships, tormenting a child, or ganging up on another child. Deliberate actions which are proven and impact on another child’s mental health, well-being and emotional state
- ✓ Physical: Punching, kicking, hitting, biting or any use of violence

- ✓ Racist: Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures, remarks or any name calling of a racist nature
- ✓ Sexist: Emotional or physical abuse as a result of their sex or gender
- ✓ Sexual: Inappropriate or unwanted physical contact or abusive comments
- ✓ Verbal: Name-calling, sarcasm, teasing, spreading rumours
- ✓ Homophobic: Motivated by the issue of sexuality. Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying is unacceptable
- ✓ Cyber: All areas of the internet, such as e-mail, app & internet chat room misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging and calls. Misuse of associated technology, ie. Camera and video facilities.
- ✓ Prejudicial bullying: Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics or experiences, e.g. religion or mental health issues.
- ✓

Bullying is a behaviour that involves the abuse of power. Bullying may not be just confined to children as adults can also display bullying behaviour towards each other and children. Bullying is something which happens "several times on purpose."

Bullying is not:

- ✓ Responding to nastiness from another person.
- ✓ When children with the same power, numbers, and strength fight or argue.
- ✓ Friendship falling outs

Bullying can sometimes be unintentional, or the effects of the bully's actions are greater than they expect but the issue is the same.

4. Cyber bullying

Definition:

Cyber-bullying takes place online, such as through social networking sites, messaging apps or gaming sites. Like other forms of bullying, it is the repetitive,

intentional harming of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. (See also the Behaviour & Fundamental Values policy.)

Most adults and young people find using the internet and mobile technology a positive and creative part of everyday life. Sadly, such technologies can also be used in a very negative way. Young people who are the target of bullying via mobile phones, gaming, social media, apps and chat rooms can often feel isolated and alone. Therefore, it is pivotal that children, staff, parents and carers understand how destructive cyberbullying can be, and how it differs from other forms of bullying. Therefore, the school actively uses assembly, and other Online Safety sessions to promote a culture of confident users who support online safety. The school also sends information/leaflets on cyber-bullying to parents so that they are aware of the signs, how to report it and how they can support children who may be affected.

Cyber bullying may take place outside of the school gates but will often be reported in school. If this occurs, it must be acted upon. The DFE guidance on 'Preventing & Tackling Bullying' 2017, states that teachers have the power to discipline children for misbehaving outside school premises: '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. This will send a strong signal to children that bullying will not be tolerated, and perpetrators will be held to account.'. Furthermore, The Education Act 2011 gives wider search powers to tackle cyberbullying by providing a specific power to search for, and if necessary, delete inappropriate images or files on electronic devices.

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

The school will support pupils who have been victims of cyberbullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the pupil about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped, in accordance with this policy.

5. Child on child abuse

Children can abuse other children. This is generally referred to as child-on-child abuse and can take many forms. This can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.

Staff should be aware of KCSIE 2025 referencing “upskirting,” which typically involves taking a picture under a person’s clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm. This is a criminal offence.

We recognise that child-on-child abuse can happen and we would deal with issues in line with child protection actions if a child came to harm (additionally, use associated guidance and policies including the anti-bullying policy and behaviour policy). Child-on-child abuse can also be sex specific issues – for example, girls being sexually touched or boys being subject to an initiation/ violence. As such, any adult with any concern around child-on-child abuse must refer the concern to the DSL/ DDSL as well as the Principal. Any allegations of sexual harassment must be reported to the Principal and recorded on the sexual harassment log.

We believe that abuse is abuse and should never be tolerated or passed off as “banter”, “just having a laugh” or “part of growing up.” We operate a zero-tolerance policy and once the issue is deemed to be child-on-child abuse, we will ensure that a DSL/DDSL is present during investigations that are made by the Principal. Where the Principal is a DSL, another member of the safeguarding team or member of the SLT must be present. The victim will be treated with respect and dignity with due consideration to their wishes. We will ensure that immediate provisions are put in place to protect the individual and will work with partner agencies and the pupil’s parents to ensure that the correct actions are taken for the specific circumstances. We recognise the following from KCSIE 2025:

recognition of the sex of the child of child-on-child abuse (i.e. that it is more likely that girls will be victims and boys perpetrators), but that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and will be taken seriously;

The different forms child-on-child abuse can take, such as:

- sexual violence and sexual harassment
- physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm;
- sexting (also known as youth produced sexual imagery)

The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) Education Group has published guidance [on sharing nudes and semi nudes; advice for education settings working with children and young people \(2020\)](#).

Our school insists on high standards of behaviour, including appropriateness, and all staff are consistent and vigilant.

The school have a duty to provide adequate support for both victims and perpetrators of child-on-child abuse, and any other children that may have been affected. This will include age appropriate discussions around the behaviours, partnership work with parents (including sharing information to help support their child such as Pantasaurus) and external agencies if needed.

6. Sexual violence

It is important that school staff are aware of sexual violence and the fact children can, and sometimes do, abuse their peers in this way. When referring to sexual violence we are referring to sexual offences under the Sexual Offences Act 2003.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment can occur between two children of any age and sex. It can also occur through a group of children sexually assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children who are victims of sexual violence and sexual harassment will likely find the experience stressful and distressing. This will, in all likelihood, adversely affect their educational attainment.

Sexual violence and sexual harassment exist on a continuum and may overlap, they can occur online and offline (both physical and verbal) and are never acceptable. It is important that all victims are taken seriously and offered appropriate support.

Staff should be aware that some groups are potentially more at risk. Please refer to the Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy sections 27 and 27.1

7. Prevention

Preston Hedges Trust is a caring Trust where every school has a positive ethos where all children and staff are valued. Our priority is that children are safe and feel safe. Children and staff are encouraged to look after themselves and each other. To prevent incidents of bullying, we:

- Have whole school values that enable the highest standards of behaviour and conduct.
- Praise and reward good social behaviour.
- Have an ethos that constantly promotes self-esteem, friendship, and feelings, dealing with bullying and reporting bullies.
- Have a curriculum designed to educate children on their rights and responsibilities, including promotion assemblies to remind them what to do if bullying does occur.
- Help parents and children understand the difference between disagreements and bullying.
- Teach assertive strategies that are non-aggressive as part of our day to day work.
- Devise sets of classroom expectations to promote positive social behaviour in line with school expectations.
- Have appropriate levels of supervision and easy access to a range of approachable adults.
- Have senior staff responsible for pastoral support for the children. These staff are also readily available to support and advise staff and parents.
- Specific members of staff identified to support all children who may be LGBT.
- Easy access to key leaders, including the Principal so that concerns can be reported by any member of the school community.
- Ensure that all staff are approachable and well informed to deal with issues of disclosure around bullying.
- Ensure that staff remain vigilant and observe relationships amongst children in their care.
- Have outstanding safeguarding procedures

8. Signs and symptoms

We listen carefully and respond promptly to children's concerns. However, our staff are also highly vigilant and know all our children well. We are aware that they may

display other symptoms that can be indicators of bullying and staff know how to action these concerns. These could include:

- Being frightened of walking to or from school
- Change (child's) usual routine
- Not wanting to come to school
- Becoming anxious and withdrawn
- Truancing
- Beginning to do less well at school
- Having possessions go missing
- Asking for or stealing money
- Unexplained cuts and bruises
- Becoming withdrawn / lacking in confidence
- Becoming aggressive and unreasonable
- Anger
- Bullying other children or siblings
- Giving improbable excuses to any of the above

We also note that parents may identify different symptoms such as bed wetting or wanting to be driven to school. Therefore, working in partnership is vital for identifying any problems.

9. Procedures when bullying occurs

Incidents of bullying, when either seen by staff or reported to them, will be dealt with in accordance with our Anti-bullying Policy, however, persistent or serious bullying incidents will be dealt with in line with the Trust Behaviour and Fundamental Values Policy. We will:

- ✓ Provide an opportunity for children to disclose/report bullying.
- ✓ Report all incidents of bullying to the Senior Leadership Team who will follow up the report by talking to the victim, the bully, and any witnesses. All incidents will be recorded and retained.
- ✓ Fully investigate the concerns from each perspective and respond appropriately depending on whether the concerns are founded, misunderstood or unfounded
- ✓ Make sure that if the bullying issue is founded, the identified bully/ will be helped to change their behaviour.
- ✓ Support and guidance will be given to the victim. (See section 10)
- ✓ Consider any safeguarding concerns and the use of outside agencies
- ✓ The bully will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the impact of their actions on another person at an age appropriate level.

- ✓ If, and when appropriate, affected parties will come together to talk through the issue, remove feelings of awkwardness and agree a route forwards.
- ✓ Monitoring to the appropriate degree following the intervention/ action and victims aware of how/ the need to re-report new concerns.
- ✓ If the problem persists, as in line with the Behaviour and Fundamental Values Policy, the bully may be excluded from school for a fixed term or even permanently.
- ✓ If necessary and appropriate, the police will be consulted.

Guidance states that “Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities that the children may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable children. It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case the child engaging in bullying may need support themselves.”

Preventing and Tackling Bullying Dfe July 2017

10. Supporting victims of bullying

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

- Emotional support and reassurance from the appropriate pastoral leader in school.
- 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)

The Principal 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 after-school clubs or activities.

Staff, particularly the Pastoral Lead or DSL, will work with the victim to build resilience, e.g. by offering emotional support

The progress of both the perpetrator and the victim will be monitored by Senior Leaders. One-on-one sessions to discuss how the victim and perpetrator are progressing may be appropriate. If appropriate, follow-up correspondence will be arranged with parents one month after the incident.

Pupils who have been bullied will be offered continuous support. The Pastoral Lead will hold a formal meeting, on a monthly basis, to check whether the bullying has stopped – these formal meetings will continue to take place once a month until the Principal and victim are confident the bullying has stopped. The victim will be encouraged to tell a trusted adult in school if bullying is repeated.

Pupils who have bullied others will be supported in the following ways:

- Receiving a consequence for their actions
- Being able to discuss what happened
- Being helped to reflect on why they became involved
- Being helped to understand what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour
- Appropriate assistance from parents

Pupils who have been bullied will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the DSL will, if necessary, refer the victim of bullying to CAMHS.

11. Supporting pupils with SEN and those with disabilities or Physical Health Issues

Children with special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain physical health conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges both online and offline.

We acknowledge additional barriers can exist in this group of children. These can include:

- Assumptions that indicators of possible abuse such as behaviour, mood and injury relate to the child's condition without further exploration
- These children being more prone to peer group isolation or bullying (including prejudice-based bullying) than other children
- The potential for children with SEND or certain medical conditions being disproportionately impacted by behaviours such as bullying, without outwardly showing any signs; and
- Communication barriers and difficulties in managing or reporting these challenges
- Cognitive understanding – being able to understand the difference between fact and fiction in online content and then repeating the content/behaviours in schools or colleges or the consequences of doing so

12. Bullying outside the school premises

Parents and children should be aware that teachers have the power to discipline children for misbehaving outside the school premises “to such an extent as is reasonable”.

This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

School staff will gain the facts of the allegations and make decisions based upon individual scenarios. It could result in parents being contacted, the children being spoken to, or the Police being informed.

School will also aim to provide sign posting to agencies that can provide support. We have an expectation that parents of children involved will also take appropriate action.

In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying the teacher can only discipline the pupil on school premises or elsewhere when the pupil is under the lawful control of the staff member.

13. Training

Staff receive training and support from school leaders through safeguarding and online-safety training. There is a culture of supporting the whole child embedded in all our schools and Trust and adults know how to report concerns

14. Responsibilities

The Trust Performance Committee are responsible for monitoring incidents of bullying that occur and reviewing the effectiveness of this policy. They review all significant behaviour incidents at each committee meeting.

Each school should maintain a bullying log within Arbor which is checked by the CEO or Executive Principal termly. Complaints about bullying will be dealt with in accordance with the Trust Complaints Procedure

The Principal is responsible for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring that procedures outlined are followed. They will ensure that all children know that bullying is wrong, and that it is unacceptable at their school.

The Principal will ensure that all staff receive sufficient training to be equipped to deal with incidents of bullying.

Staff are responsible for the well being of children in their care and for following up incidents of bullying and recording and reporting to Senior leadership. Staff must support all children in their care, establishing a climate of trust and respect for all. By praising, rewarding, and celebrating the success of all children, we aim to prevent incidents of bullying.

Children and parents are responsible for reporting incidents of bullying to staff immediately in the knowledge that they will be listened to carefully. Parents have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy and to actively encourage their children to be positive members of Preston Hedges Trust.

We ask that parents help their children to understand the difference between disagreements and bullying.

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