

Our Lady Queen of Peace

Catholic High School



Anti-Bullying Policy

Date of Policy	Sept 2026
Date of Review	Sept 2027

'In Christ We Grow'

Striving for excellence through caring, sharing and achieving'.

'I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit' [John 15: 5]

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Purpose and aims

The school is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which every Student can learn, develop and participate without fear of bullying, harassment or discrimination.

Bullying is unacceptable and will be challenged. The school will work proactively to prevent bullying, respond promptly and proportionately to concerns, support Students who have experienced bullying, and help Students who have displayed bullying behaviour to understand the impact of their actions and make positive changes.

The school recognises that an incident does not need to meet the definition of bullying before action is taken. A one-off incident may still constitute a serious behaviour incident, discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, violence, abuse or a safeguarding concern and will be addressed under the appropriate school procedures.

Legal and statutory framework

This policy has due regard to relevant legislation and statutory or departmental guidance, including:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Public Order Act 1986
- Communications Act 2003, where relevant
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Children and Families Act 2014
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- DfE – Preventing and tackling bullying
- DfE – Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff
- DfE – Searching, screening and confiscation in schools
- DfE – Mobile phones in schools
- DfE – Promoting and supporting mental health and wellbeing in schools and colleges
- UKCIS – Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people
- SEND Code of Practice: 0 to 25 years

This policy should be read alongside the school's:

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) Policy
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy

- Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy
- Complaints Policy

Definition of bullying

For the purposes of this policy, bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally. Bullying often involves an imbalance of power, whether real or perceived.

Bullying may be:

Physical – for example hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging possessions or threatening physical harm.

Verbal – for example name-calling, insults, threats, taunting or repeated hurtful comments.

Relational or social – for example deliberate exclusion, spreading rumours, manipulating friendships or encouraging others to isolate a Student.

Prejudice-related or discriminatory – related to an actual or perceived protected characteristic, identity, background or difference.

Sexual or sexist – including unwanted sexual comments, sexualised bullying or conduct that may amount to sexual harassment.

Online / cyberbullying – bullying carried out through digital technology, platforms, devices, messaging, social media or gaming.

Conflict, friendship difficulties and isolated unkind behaviour are not automatically bullying. They will nevertheless be taken seriously and addressed appropriately. Where an incident raises a safeguarding concern, safeguarding procedures take precedence.

Students who may be particularly vulnerable

Any Student can experience bullying. The school recognises that some Students may be more vulnerable because of their circumstances, identity or perceived difference. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Students with SEND or disabilities
- Students with health needs
- Students who are or are perceived to be LGBTQ+
- Students from minority ethnic groups or who experience racist prejudice
- Students with protected characteristics

- Students who are adopted, in care or previously in care
- young carers
- Students experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage
- new Students, including those joining the school in-year
- Students experiencing family difficulties, bereavement or other significant change.
- Staff will avoid assumptions about vulnerability and will consider each Student's individual circumstances, wishes and needs.

Roles and responsibilities

Governing board

- Ensure the school has effective arrangements to prevent and respond to bullying and that the policy reflects safeguarding, equality and behaviour duties.
- Monitor implementation of the policy and review relevant data, trends and patterns.
- Ensure the policy and practice do not discriminate unlawfully and that reasonable adjustments are considered where required.
- Ensure the DSL has appropriate status, authority, time and resources.
- Ensure governors receive appropriate safeguarding and child protection training.
- Promote an inclusive culture in which difference is respected and discriminatory bullying is challenged.

Headteacher and senior leaders

- Ensure this policy is implemented consistently and reviewed in light of legislation, guidance, school data and experience.
- Ensure staff receive appropriate training and understand reporting and safeguarding routes.
- Ensure bullying incidents are recorded and analysed so that patterns, locations, groups or emerging issues can be identified.
- Ensure appropriate action, support and consequences are put in place and reviewed.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Advise on cases where bullying may constitute or indicate abuse, exploitation or another safeguarding concern.
- Ensure safeguarding concerns are recorded and managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.
- Consider early help, children's social care, police or other agency involvement where appropriate.
- Support staff to apply a child-centred approach and consider the needs of all children involved.

Pastoral staff

- Provide a point of contact for Students and parents.
- Coordinate or support investigations as appropriate.
- Maintain communication with parents/carers where appropriate.
- Arrange and review support and monitor whether bullying has stopped.

All staff

- Take all reports and signs of bullying seriously and act promptly.
- Challenge unkind, discriminatory, prejudicial, sexualised or abusive behaviour rather than dismissing it as banter.
- Listen calmly and non-judgementally, reassure Students that reporting is the right thing to do, and avoid promising confidentiality.
- Record and report concerns using the school's agreed systems.
- Refer safeguarding concerns to the DSL or deputy without delay.
- Be alert to social dynamics, exclusion, changes in behaviour and attendance, and online harms.
- Provide appropriate follow-up support and remain alert to retaliation or recurrence.

Parents and carers

- Raise concerns with the Student's Head of Year, form tutor or another appropriate member of staff.
- Encourage their child to report concerns and not retaliate.
- Share relevant information or evidence with the school.
- Work with the school to support agreed actions and monitor wellbeing.

Students

- Treat others with respect and follow the school's behaviour expectations.
- Report bullying they experience or witness to a trusted adult.
- Avoid retaliation, counter-threats or sharing harmful material.
- Preserve relevant online evidence where safe to do so and show it to a trusted adult.
- Seek help immediately if they or another Student are in danger.

Equality, safeguarding and statutory responsibilities

The school will have due regard to its duties under the Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty where applicable. The school will work to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

The school will respect Students' rights under the Human Rights Act 1998 and will take reasonable and proportionate action to protect Students from harm.

Bullying itself is not a specific criminal offence. However, behaviour associated with bullying may constitute a criminal offence, including assault, theft, harassment,

threatening communications, hate crime, sexual offences or offences relating to intimate images. Where behaviour may be criminal or presents a serious risk of harm, the headteacher and/or DSL will consider police or other agency involvement in line with safeguarding procedures.

Where a bullying concern may involve abuse, neglect, exploitation, sexual violence, sexual harassment or another safeguarding concern, the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Keeping Children Safe in Education will be followed.

Prevention

The school will promote a whole-school culture of respect, safety, inclusion and belonging. Prevention will be embedded through the curriculum, pastoral systems, assemblies, staff practice, Student voice and the consistent application of the Behaviour Policy.

All Students will be taught how to recognise bullying, prejudice, harassment and abuse and how to seek help.

RSHE/PSHE will address healthy and respectful relationships, boundaries and consent, equality, stereotypes, prejudice, online safety, harmful sexual behaviour and coercive or controlling behaviour at age-appropriate stages.

Staff will model respectful relationships and challenge discriminatory language and harmful behaviour.

Student voice and bullying data will be used to identify locations, times, groups or issues requiring preventative action.

Supervision, seating plans, social spaces and pastoral arrangements will be reviewed where they can reduce risk.

New and vulnerable Students will receive appropriate induction and pastoral support without being labelled or singled out unnecessarily.

The school will provide clear and accessible ways for Students to report concerns.

Signs and indicators

Staff will remain alert to changes that may indicate bullying or another wellbeing or safeguarding concern. No single sign proves that bullying is taking place.

- fear or reluctance about travelling to or attending school
- changes in attendance or punctuality
- anxiety, withdrawal, loss of confidence or changes in mood
- unexplained injuries or damaged/missing possessions
- changes in friendships, social isolation or avoidance of particular areas
- changes in engagement, attainment or behaviour
- frequent reports of feeling unwell
- changes in eating or sleeping patterns reported to school
- distress connected to phones, messages, social media or gaming

- sudden changes in online behaviour or reluctance to use devices.

Staff will respond with curiosity and professional judgement rather than assuming the cause. Significant concerns will be recorded and referred appropriately.

Child-on-child abuse

Bullying can overlap with child-on-child abuse. All staff will recognise that children can abuse other children and that this can happen inside or outside school and online.

Child-on-child abuse may include bullying (including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying), physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, abuse in intimate personal relationships between children, consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos, upskirting, and initiation or hazing-type violence and rituals.

Reports will never be dismissed as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'boys being boys'.

Staff will act immediately on safeguarding concerns and report them to the DSL or deputy.

The wishes, feelings and safety of the child who has reported harm will be considered throughout.

The school will consider the needs and safeguarding of all children involved, including the child alleged to have caused harm.

Risk assessments and safety plans will be used where appropriate.

Where required, children's social care and/or police will be involved.

Sexual harassment and sexual violence will be managed in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and current statutory safeguarding guidance.

Online bullying and harmful online behaviour

Online bullying can occur at any time and can rapidly reach a wide audience. It may occur on social media, messaging services, group chats, gaming platforms, forums, websites or other digital services.

Examples include:

- threatening, abusive, discriminatory or humiliating messages or posts
- deliberate exclusion from online groups or coordinated harassment
- spreading rumours or sharing private information
- impersonation, fake or anonymous accounts used to target another person
- sharing, editing or threatening to share images or videos to embarrass, intimidate or harm
- sexualised comments, image-based abuse or coercion
- recording an incident and distributing it online

- AI-generated, manipulated or deepfake images, audio or video used to humiliate, sexualise, impersonate or harm another person
- doxxing or sharing personal information without consent
- bullying through gaming, live-streaming or associated chat functions.

Students should not retaliate. Where safe, relevant evidence such as screenshots, URLs, usernames, dates and times should be preserved. Staff must not ask Students to forward illegal or sexual imagery. Concerns involving nude or semi-nude images will be handled in accordance with safeguarding procedures and UKCIS guidance.

The school may address online behaviour that occurs away from school where it affects Students, causes harm, threatens another Student, disrupts the school environment or otherwise falls within the school's lawful behaviour and safeguarding responsibilities.

Where a mobile phone or other device may contain relevant material, staff will follow the school's Searching, Screening and Confiscation Policy and current DfE guidance. Searches of Students, possessions and devices will only be undertaken by authorised staff and within the school's lawful powers. Any safeguarding concern arising from a device will be referred to the DSL.

Reporting bullying

Students may report bullying to any trusted member of staff. Parents/carers should normally contact the Student's Head of Year or form tutor, although safeguarding concerns can be raised directly with the DSL.

Reports may be made verbally or in writing and will be taken seriously. Students will be told what is likely to happen next. Staff will not promise absolute confidentiality but will share information only with those who need it for the purpose of responding to the concern or safeguarding a child.

If a Student is in immediate danger or there is an urgent safeguarding risk, staff will take immediate protective action and contact the DSL/deputy and emergency services where necessary.

Responding to and investigating reports

The response will be proportionate to the nature, seriousness and context of the concern. Safeguarding action takes priority over a routine behaviour investigation.

Where an investigation is appropriate:

- the student reporting bullying will be listened to and reassured
- immediate safety and support needs will be considered first
- the Student alleged to have bullied and relevant witnesses will normally be spoken to separately
- staff will avoid premature conclusions and will record factual accounts carefully

- appropriate evidence, including online evidence, may be gathered and preserved
- staff will consider SEND, communication needs, age, vulnerability and reasonable adjustments
- parents/carers will normally be informed where appropriate, subject to safeguarding considerations
- the DSL will be involved where there is any safeguarding concern
- actions, decisions, rationale and outcomes will be recorded on CPOMS or the school's agreed recording system.
- students will not routinely be instructed never to discuss what has happened. They may be advised not to contact, intimidate, retaliate against or influence others involved while the matter is being considered.

Outcomes and consequences

Where bullying is substantiated, consequences will be applied in line with the Behaviour Policy and will be reasonable and proportionate to the circumstances. These may include restorative or educational work, loss of privileges, detention, removal from lessons or social spaces, suspension, or consideration of permanent exclusion in the most serious or persistent cases.

Disciplinary action and support are not mutually exclusive. A Student who has bullied another Student may require support to understand the impact of their behaviour, address underlying needs and prevent recurrence.

Restorative work or an apology may be considered where appropriate, but will never be used to pressure the Student who has experienced bullying into face-to-face contact. Any restorative meeting will be voluntary for the Student who has been harmed and will only take place where staff judge it safe and beneficial.

The school will consider whether an incident requires action under another policy, including safeguarding, suspension/permanent exclusion, online safety, equality or police referral procedures.

Support

Support for Students who have experienced bullying

- a named trusted adult or pastoral point of contact
- reassurance that reporting was the right action
- regular check-ins until the Student and school are satisfied that the bullying has stopped
- practical safety measures, including changes to supervision, routes, seating or social arrangements where appropriate
- support with online safety and blocking/reporting harmful content
- liaison with parents/carers where appropriate
- pastoral, wellbeing or SEND support based on assessed need

- referral to external services through appropriate local pathways where specialist support is required.
- The school will avoid placing the burden of resolving bullying on the Student who has experienced it. Any change of class, timetable, provision or placement will be considered carefully, with the Student's welfare and education central to the decision.

Support for Students who have bullied others

- Clear consequences and boundaries
- Support to understand the impact of their behaviour
- Reflection and targeted pastoral or educational work
- Assessment of any unmet SEND, wellbeing, safeguarding or contextual needs where appropriate
- Parent/carer involvement where appropriate
- Monitoring and review to reduce the likelihood of recurrence.
- The school will not assume that bullying behaviour is caused by a mental health condition. Where there are concerns about a Student's mental health or wellbeing, these will be considered separately and appropriate support or referral sought.

Follow-up

The Head of Year, Pastoral Support Assistant or another nominated member of staff will monitor Students involved after an incident. The frequency and duration of follow-up will reflect the circumstances of the case.

The Student who experienced bullying will be asked whether the behaviour has stopped and whether they feel safe.

Any retaliation, continued contact or recurrence will be acted upon promptly.

Parents/carers may be updated where appropriate.

Support and safety measures will be reviewed and adjusted.

The behaviour of the Student who bullied will be monitored and further intervention put in place if required.

Cases will remain under review until staff are reasonably satisfied that the risk of recurrence has reduced and appropriate support is in place.

Bullying outside school

The school recognises that bullying and harmful behaviour may occur away from the school premises, including on journeys to and from school, in the local community and online.

Where off-site behaviour is reported, the school will investigate and respond where it is appropriate and lawful to do so, including where the behaviour affects another

Student, poses a threat, impacts the orderly running or reputation of the school, or creates a safeguarding concern.

Consequences for off-site behaviour will be applied in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and relevant legal powers. Where behaviour may be criminal or presents a serious threat to a child or member of the public, the headteacher and/or DSL will consider referral to the police or other agencies.

Record keeping, monitoring and analysis

Bullying concerns and outcomes will be recorded robustly. Records will include, as appropriate:

- a clear summary of the concern or incident
- the Students involved and relevant contextual information
- actions taken
- decisions made and the rationale for those decisions
- support, safety measures and consequences
- safeguarding or external referrals
- outcomes and follow-up.

The headteacher, deputy headteacher, DSL and relevant pastoral leaders will review bullying information at appropriate intervals to identify patterns and evaluate the effectiveness of prevention and response.

Analysis may consider type of bullying, protected characteristics, SEND, year group, location, time, online platforms, repeat incidents and whether particular groups are disproportionately affected. Data will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements.

Findings will be used to strengthen curriculum provision, supervision, staff training, Student support and whole-school culture.

Complaints

Concerns about the way a bullying report has been handled should initially be raised with the appropriate member of school staff. Where a parent/carers remains dissatisfied, the school's Complaints Policy should be followed. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed through safeguarding procedures regardless of any complaint.

Monitoring and review

This policy will be reviewed at least every two years, and earlier where there are significant changes to legislation or statutory guidance, emerging risks, patterns in school data, or learning from incidents.

Changes will be communicated to relevant staff, Students, parents/carers and governors as appropriate.