Aspire Schools
Anti-Bullying Policy

This policy was adopted	September 2026
Policy reviewed by	Executive Lead for Safeguarding To be ratified by Trustees: Autumn 2026
Updates since last version	Addition of section 8 – preventative measures and section 10 – statutory and national guidance Rewrite of sections 3, 5, 7 Substantial updates throughout each section of the policy
Review date	July 2027

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1. Purpose and context

Aspire Schools is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which all children and young people can learn and develop free from bullying, harassment, discrimination and abuse. Bullying in any form is unacceptable and will be challenged and addressed. Every child and young person has the right to be safe and feel safe and to work in an environment of mutual trust and respect.

All staff share responsibility for safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and our approach will be child-centred, taking account of what is in the best interests of the child.

Concerns about bullying will be considered alongside safeguarding responsibilities. Where behaviour may constitute abuse, including child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence or other harm, it will be responded to in accordance with the Aspire Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

We are vigilant in identifying children and young people who are suffering or likely to suffer significant harm and take appropriate action with the aim of making sure they are kept safe, both at home and in the education setting in line, with the Aspire Schools Risk Assessment for Student Wellbeing Policy.

We believe that:

- everyone has the right to feel safe and be treated with respect
- all children and young people have an equal right to protection from harm, abuse and exploitation
- bullying must be identified, challenged and responded to appropriately
- everyone within the Aspire Schools community has a responsibility to help prevent bullying
- students and parents/carers should feel confident that concerns will be taken seriously and appropriate support provided

2. Scope of the policy

The policy applies to:

- Bullying of students by students within Aspire Schools
- Bullying of staff by students within or outside of Aspire Schools
- Bullying of and /or by students outside of Aspire Schools, where Aspire Schools is aware of it.
- Bullying when travelling to or from a school site
- Bullying occurring online or through electronic communications
- Bullying occurring outside the trust's premises where there is a clear connection to the trust's community or where the behaviour may affect the welfare of a student, the orderly running of a school site or the safety of members of the trust's community

Where bullying behaviour outside the Trust is reported to school staff, it will be investigated and acted upon. This may include:

- Notifying the police where behaviour is believed to be criminal

- Notifying children's social care, Local Authority Designated officer (LADO) or other relevant agencies/partners (see Aspire Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy)
- Notifying the home school if a student is dual registered
- Calling a multi-agency meeting to further investigate the initial incident as well as gain an understanding of contextual and social circumstances.
- Disciplinary actions and sanctions in accordance with the Aspire Schools Behaviour Regulation and Relationships Policy.

Parents/carers and students should be aware that Aspire Schools may take appropriate action in response to all non-criminal bad behaviour and bullying which occurs anywhere off the school premises, which is witnessed by a member of staff or is reported to the school.

This may include:

- Any misbehaviour when the child is:
  - Taking part in any school-organised or school-related activity
  - Travelling to or from school
  - Wearing school uniform
  - In some way identifiable as a student at the school.

- Misbehaviour at any time, whether or not the conditions above apply, that:
  - Could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school
  - Poses a threat to another student or member of the public
  - Could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

All allegations about bullying of students by staff will be dealt with in accordance with our procedures for reporting allegations – Complaints procedure and contacting Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

This Anti-bullying Policy is linked with the following policies:

- Behaviour Regulation and Relationships Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- E-safety and Acceptable Use Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy

3. Definitions

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to hurt another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. It is often repeated over time and may involve an imbalance of power**,** which can be physical, psychological, social or technological.

Bullying may take place face-to-face or online and may be physical, verbal, emotional, relational, prejudice-based or discriminatory.

Not every disagreement, friendship difficulty or isolated incident of unkind or harmful behaviour will constitute bullying. However, all such behaviour will be taken seriously and responded to appropriately**.**

Where behaviour raises a safeguarding concern, including concerns about child-on-child abuse, safeguarding procedures will be followed regardless of whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying**.**

TYPE OF BULLYING	**DEFINITION**
Emotional	Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting
Physical	Hitting, kicking, pushing, taking another's belongings, any use of violence
Prejudice-based and discriminatory, including: • Racial • Faith-based • Gendered (sexist) • Homophobic/Biphobic • Transphobic • Disability-based	Taunts, gestures, graffiti or physical abuse focused on a particular characteristic (e.g., gender, race, sexuality)
Direct or indirect verbal	Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Cyber-bullying including online and technology-enabled bullying	Bullying that takes place online, such as through social networking sites, messaging apps or gaming sites Bullying through AI tools – this may include the creation, manipulation or sharing of images, videos, audio or other content, including content created or altered using artificial intelligence (AI), where this is used to bully, humiliate, intimidate or cause harm to another person.

Behaviour that may constitute abuse or a safeguarding concern
Some behaviour may constitute abuse or raise a safeguarding concern rather than, or in addition to, bullying. Such concerns must be addressed under Aspire Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and must **not** be treated solely as a behaviour matter.

They include:

- Harmful sexual behaviour: such as explicit sexual remarks, display of sexual material, sexual gestures, jokes or taunting, unwanted physical attention, comments about sexual reputation or performance, inappropriate touching or interfering with clothes
- Sexual violence, such as rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault (intentional sexual touching without consent)
- Racist, sexist, homophobic or transphobic discrimination.
- Online sexual harassment, such as unwanted sexual comments and messages (including on social media), sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos, or sharing of unwanted explicit content.
- Theft

Bullying may form part of a wider pattern of child-on-child abuse. Aspire Schools recognises that child-on-child abuse can occur inside or outside school as well as online and maintains an attitude of 'it could happen here'. Concerns will not be dismissed as 'banter' or 'just growing up' and will be reported and responded to in accordance with the Aspire Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Children who report concerns will be taken seriously, supported and kept safe. Aspire Schools will use appropriate education and interventions, including reactive PSHE where appropriate, to challenge harmful behaviour and prevent harassment and abuse from becoming normalised.

4. Roles and responsibilities

The Headteacher/CEO will:

- be responsible for implementing the policy and will be the link person with the Local Authority
- present an annual report to the Trustees, with information regarding, reported concerns, students involved, actions taken and outcomes
- review the Policy annually.

Heads of School will:

- be responsible for the implementation of this policy with their school
- take all reports and concerns seriously
- ensure concerns are appropriately investigated
- ensure students affected by bullying receive appropriate support
- ensure appropriate action is taken in relation to students displaying bullying behaviour
- investigate and follow up on any concerns raised by staff
- liaise with the DSL where there are safeguarding concerns
- ensure incidents and actions are appropriately recorded and monitored

Teaching and behaviour staff will:

- discuss "What is Bullying" with students and make sure that they know what to do if they are victims of bullying
- encourage students to share strategies to prevent bullying, e.g., a buddy system
- be alert to signs of bullying
- take all concerns seriously and report to the Head of School to investigate
- have strategies to help students who are bullying to understand and change their behaviour

Parents/carers will:

- be encouraged to report concerns regarding bullying and will be given procedures prior to the admission of their child.

5. Steps for reporting bullying

Any student, parent/carer, member of staff or other person may report a concern about bullying. Students should be encouraged to speak to any trusted member of staff.

When a concern is raised or bullying is observed, staff should:

- reassure the child or young person, listen carefully and take the concern seriously
- consider their immediate safety and any safeguarding concerns
- avoid leading questions `and not promise confidentiality, explaining that information may need to be shared to keep them safe
- explain what will happen next and, where appropriate, take account of the student's views

- make an accurate record of the concern/s on CPOMS and alert the Head of School and/or DSL, as appropriate
- speak directly to a member of the DSL team where an immediate safeguarding response is required
- avoid labelling children as a “victim” or “perpetrator”, recognising that individual circumstances and experiences may be more complex

The subsequent response should be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the concern and may include:

- speaking separately with those involved
- gathering relevant information
- considering whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying
- considering whether a safeguarding response is required
- assessing any immediate or ongoing risks
- agreeing appropriate support
- informing parents/carers where appropriate
- determining appropriate behaviour interventions or sanctions
- making appropriate referrals to external agencies
- reviewing whether the actions taken have stopped the behaviour.

Recording and monitoring

All reported bullying concerns and the actions taken in response should be appropriately recorded. Records should distinguish, where possible, between bullying, behaviour incidents and safeguarding concerns while recognising that an incident may fall into more than one category.

Leaders will monitor reported incidents to identify patterns, repeated behaviour, locations or circumstances of concern and any disproportionate impact on particular groups of students.

6. Support

Students and staff who have experienced bullying will be offered appropriate, individualised support. This may include:

- opportunities to talk with a trusted adult
- reassurance and appropriate safety planning
- pastoral support where appropriate
- reasonable adjustments or additional support where required
- referral to specialist or external services where appropriate
- regular review to ensure that the bullying has stopped and the student feels safe.

Students who have displayed bullying behaviour will be supported to understand the impact of their behaviour and make sustainable changes. Support may include:

- individual discussion and reflection
- targeted or reactive PSHE
- restorative approaches **where appropriate and safe**
- behaviour support or intervention
- work with parents/carers
- specialist intervention or referral to external agencies.

7. Sanctions

Responses to bullying behaviour will be proportionate, consistent and considered on a case-by-case basis in accordance with the Aspire Schools Behaviour Regulation and Relationships Policy. Appropriate interventions and sanctions may include:

- warnings and restorative or educational interventions
- targeted behaviour support
- restrictions to particular activities or areas where appropriate
- changes designed to protect students and prevent recurrence
- suspension
- permanent exclusion, where the statutory threshold is met

Safeguarding separation
Where students need to be temporarily separated for safeguarding purposes following an allegation or concern, this will be managed in accordance with the Aspire Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Trust's suspension/exclusion procedures. Safeguarding separation is not a disciplinary sanction or suspension.

Parents who are concerned about bullying should:

- raise them promptly through discussion with the Head of School
- if a parent is still unhappy after discussion, they may follow the Aspire Schools formal complaints procedure (details can be found on our website)
- where the bullying takes place outside of Aspire Schools, parents will be asked to work together with staff in addressing their child's behaviour
- referral of the family to external support agencies will be made where appropriate.

8. Preventative measures

Aspire Schools will work proactively to prevent bullying through:

- a clear and consistently implemented Anti-Bullying Policy
- a positive culture of respect, inclusion and safeguarding
- teaching through PSHE and the wider curriculum
- education about respectful relationships, discrimination and online safety
- opportunities for student voice
- staff vigilance and early intervention
- challenge to discriminatory, prejudicial and harmful language and behaviour
- appropriate staff training
- monitoring bullying incidents for patterns and trends
- targeted intervention where emerging concerns are identified
- participation, where appropriate, in national and local anti-bullying initiatives
- Students actively being involved in producing 'Aspire Schools Behaviour Expectations'
- Displaying 'Aspire Schools Behaviour Expectations' in classrooms and corridors
- Incidents treated seriously and dealt with immediately

9. School policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the:

- Aspire Schools Behaviour Regulation and Relationships Policy
- Aspire Schools Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy

- Aspire Schools Risk Assessment for Student Wellbeing Policy

10. Statutory and national guidance

This policy has regard to relevant legislation and national guidance, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Working together to Safeguard Children
- DfE guidance on Preventing and Tackling Bullying
- Behaviour in Schools
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion from maintained schools, academies and pupil referral units in England, including pupil movement
- Equality Act 2010

11. Help organisations

Advisory Centre for Education (ACE)	https://www.ace-ed.org.uk/ 0300 0115 142
Childline	https://www.childline.org.uk/ 0800 1111
KIDSCAPE Parents helpline	https://www.kidscape.org.uk/ 07496 682785
Youth Access	https://www.youthaccess.org.uk/
Anti-bullying Alliance	https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools-information/advice-and-support