

The Willows School Academy Trust



Anti-Bullying Policy

Reviewed: March 2026

Next Review: March 2027

Legal Status

This policy is based on the following legislation and guidance:

Statutory guidance:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 (KCSIE), particularly paragraphs 52 and 57 which recognise bullying as a form of child-on-child abuse
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies (DfE, July 2024)
- Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE, November 2014)
- Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying (DfE, November 2014)

Legislation:

- Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (December 2023)
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Communications Act 2003
- Public Order Act 1986

This policy applies to:

- All pupils at The Willows School Academy Trust
- All school activities, both during and outside normal school hours
- All staff (teaching and support staff), governors, trustees and volunteers working in the school
- Behaviour on and off the school site where it affects the safety and wellbeing of pupils or could bring the school into disrepute

Related Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with our:

- Behaviour Policy (including sanctions, rewards and exclusions)
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Online Safety Policy (including acceptable use)
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHE) Policy

Availability

This policy is available to parents, carers, staff and pupils:

- On the school website
- From the school office upon request
- In the staff handbook

Equality Impact Assessment

We have carefully considered and analysed the impact of this policy on equality and the possible implications for pupils with protected characteristics.

This is part of our commitment to meet the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advance equality of opportunity
- Foster good relations between different groups

We recognise that pupils with protected characteristics may be more vulnerable to bullying and we are committed to ensuring this policy protects all pupils equally.

Safeguarding and Child Protection Links

We recognise that bullying can be a safeguarding issue and may be an indicator that a child is suffering or at risk of suffering significant harm.

All staff have access to this policy and sign to the effect that they understand that:

- Bullying is a safeguarding issue: All forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, are safeguarding concerns that must be taken seriously
- Reporting is mandatory: Staff must report all bullying concerns through our safeguarding procedures.
- The DSL must be informed immediately of:
 - All serious bullying incidents
 - Persistent bullying
 - Any bullying that may constitute a child protection concern
- Links to abuse must be considered: We will always consider whether bullying behaviour may be linked to a child experiencing abuse or other safeguarding concerns, either as a victim or perpetrator
- Reporting to external agencies: We will report bullying incidents to the relevant agency if:
 - We have reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm
 - The incident could constitute a criminal offence
 - The incident poses a serious threat to a member of the public

Aims & Objectives

Our Commitment

At The Willows School Academy Trust, we are committed to creating a culture where bullying of any kind is not tolerated. We recognise that bullying can have a serious impact on pupils' mental health, wellbeing and educational progress.

Our aims are to:

- **Prevent bullying:** Create an environment where bullying is less likely to occur through promoting positive relationships, mutual respect and understanding of differences
- **Identify bullying early:** Ensure all members of our school community can recognise the signs of bullying and know how to respond
- **Respond effectively:** Deal with all incidents of bullying promptly, consistently and sensitively, with appropriate support for both victims and perpetrators
- **Support all involved:** Provide support for pupils who experience bullying, those who exhibit bullying behaviour, and witnesses/bystanders
- **Monitor and evaluate:** Keep accurate records to identify patterns, evaluate our approach and inform our prevention strategies

Our Principles

Every pupil has the right to:

- Learn in a safe, supportive and secure environment
- Be free from physical threats, verbal abuse and any form of harassment
- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Have their concerns listened to and taken seriously

We will achieve this by:

- Making it clear to pupils, staff, parents and carers that bullying is completely unacceptable
- Providing a clear framework for preventing, identifying and responding to bullying
- Ensuring straightforward procedures for reporting bullying, whether it occurs face-to-face, online, on or off the school site
- Promoting transparency in relationships so pupils understand the impact of their behaviour on others
- Knowing our pupils well so we can detect signs of distress or changes in behaviour
- Ensuring pupils have accessible routes to speak to trusted adults, including the headteacher and other staff
- Educating our whole school community about what constitutes bullying and how to respond

We Are a 'Telling School'

We actively encourage everyone in our school community to report bullying. This means:

- **Pupils** should tell a trusted adult if they are being bullied, witness bullying, or are worried about someone else
- **Staff** must report all bullying concerns and incidents through our safeguarding procedures
- **Parents and carers** should inform the school immediately if they suspect their child is being bullied or is bullying others
- **Volunteers and visitors** should report any concerns to a member of staff

We make it clear that reporting bullying is not 'telling tales' – it is the right and responsible thing to do. Silence allows bullying to continue.

Bullying Involving Staff

Staff-to-staff bullying: Any member of staff who believes they are experiencing bullying from a colleague should report this to the headteacher. The headteacher will investigate in line with the school's employment policies and procedures. If the allegation involves the headteacher, it should be reported to the Chair of Governors.

Staff-to-pupil bullying: Any allegation that a member of staff is bullying a pupil will be investigated thoroughly in line with our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and staff disciplinary procedures. Such allegations will be treated as a potential safeguarding concern.

Our Response to Disclosures

All disclosures of bullying, whether from a pupil, parent, carer, member of staff or volunteer, will be:

- Taken seriously: Every report will be investigated and appropriate action taken
- Treated sensitively: We will handle all disclosures with care and discretion
- Acted upon promptly: We will respond without delay to ensure the safety of those involved
- Recorded appropriately: All incidents will be recorded on CPOMS to enable monitoring and pattern identification

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour that is:

- Deliberate and intentional – meant to cause harm or distress
- Repeated over time – persistent behaviour, not a one-off incident
- Involves an imbalance of power – the victim feels they cannot defend themselves

Bullying is behaviour that intentionally hurts, humiliates, threatens or frightens another person or group, either physically or emotionally.

Bullying vs. Other Behaviour

One-off incidents of unkind behaviour, while unacceptable, are not usually classified as bullying. However, we take all incidents seriously and will investigate to determine whether:

- It is part of a pattern of behaviour
- There is an imbalance of power
- It requires intervention to prevent escalation

Types of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms. We recognise and will respond to the following types:

Physical Bullying

Physical harm or the threat of it, including:

- Hitting, kicking, punching, pushing or jostling
- Taking, hiding or damaging belongings or work
- Deliberately destroying or defacing personal property

- Use of weapons or threatening use of any object as a weapon
- Intimidation through physical gestures and actions

Verbal Bullying

Spoken words intended to hurt, including:

- Name-calling and offensive remarks
- Sarcasm and belittling comments
- Teasing and humiliation
- Threats and intimidation
- Inciting others to humiliate or threaten someone

Emotional/Indirect Bullying

Behaviour designed to isolate or exclude, including:

- Being deliberately unfriendly or excluding someone
- Refusing to cooperate, sit next to, talk to or work with someone
- Refusing to follow staff instructions to include others
- Deliberately excluding someone from social groups or activities
- Spreading malicious rumours
- Tormenting (e.g., hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Excluding someone from play or discussions with their friendship group

Cyberbullying

Bullying that takes place through electronic means, including:

- Social networking sites and online platforms
- Email and instant messaging
- Text messages and phone calls
- Sharing or manipulating photographs or videos
- Online gaming platforms
- Any other digital communication

Written Bullying

Bullying in written form, including:

- Writing or printing unkind or malicious content
- Spreading rumours in written form
- Graffiti or defacing property with hurtful messages

Prejudice-Based and Discriminatory Bullying

We recognise specific forms of bullying based on protected characteristics and other factors:

Racist Bullying

- Bullying directed at individuals based on race, ethnicity, culture, language, faith, nationality or national origin
- The victim is often targeted as a representative of their family, community or group
- We are required to keep records and statistics of racist incidents

Religious Bullying

- Attacking or mocking someone's faith, beliefs, religious practices or customs

Cultural Bullying

- Focusing on or exploiting perceived cultural differences

Sexist Bullying

- Behaviour based on gender stereotypes
- Use of sexualised language or negative stereotyping based on gender
- Includes name-calling and inappropriate "banter"

Sexual Bullying

- Unwanted or inappropriate physical contact
- Sexual innuendo or comments
- Sharing of sexual images or content

Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying

- Bullying directed towards people who are, or are perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender
- Can also affect heterosexual young people who are perceived to be LGBT+
- Victims may be reluctant to report this type of bullying due to fear of reinforcing stereotypes
- **Requires particular sensitivity and positive support**

Disability and SEN-Related Bullying

- Remarking upon, drawing attention to, or discriminating against people with:
 - Physical disabilities
 - Learning difficulties
 - Social, emotional and mental health needs
 - Specific Learning Difficulties (e.g., dyslexia, dyscalculia, dyspraxia)
 - Any other special educational need or disability

Recognising the Signs of Bullying

All staff must be alert to the signs that a child may be being bullied. Because bullying often goes undetected, staff vigilance is essential. Changes in behaviour or demeanour may be the first indication that a child is experiencing bullying.

Possible Signs and Indicators

While the signs below may have other causes, a repetition of, or combination of, these indicators should be investigated by staff and discussed with parents/carers:

Behavioural and Emotional Changes:

- Unwillingness or reluctance to come to school
- Displays of excessive anxiety or fear
- Becoming withdrawn, unusually quiet or isolated
- Signs of distress, low self-esteem or loss of confidence
- Unexplained tearfulness or mood changes
- Change in established habits (e.g., giving up activities, changes to speech patterns)
- Choosing to stay near adults rather than peers
- Sitting alone or being left out of activities during lessons or play
- Giving improbable excuses for any of the above

Academic Changes:

- Failure to produce work or produce work of an unusually poor standard
- Work that appears to have been copied, interfered with or spoilt by others
- Frequent excuses for incomplete work
- Books, bags or belongings that suddenly go missing or are damaged

Physical Signs:

- Frequent complaints of feeling unwell (e.g., stomach aches, headaches)
- Pattern of minor illnesses and health problems
- Unexplained cuts, bruises or injuries
- Difficulty sleeping or experiencing nightmares
- Signs of self-harm or talking about self-harm or suicide (immediate safeguarding concern)

Attendance and Punctuality:

- Frequent absences or erratic attendance
- Late arrivals to class
- Running away from school or home (immediate safeguarding concern)

Online/Technology-Related Signs:

- Being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Appearing nervous or jumpy when receiving messages
- Becoming secretive about online activity

Other Indicators:

- Missing property or possessions
- Asking for extra money or stealing money (potentially to pay a bully)
- Displaying closed body language, poor eye contact or appearing fearful
- Evidence of verbal taunting from peers

Staff must report any concerns immediately through our safeguarding procedures.

Prevention Strategies

We work to prevent bullying through a comprehensive, whole-school approach that creates a positive culture where bullying is less likely to occur.

Our prevention strategies include:

1. Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships

- Establishing clear expectations for behaviour based on mutual respect
- Making pupils fully aware of our anti-bullying policy and expectations
- Celebrating kind and respectful behaviour
- Modelling positive relationships between all members of our school community
- Displaying and reinforcing school rules in all classes

2. Education and Awareness

We teach pupils about bullying through:

- PSHE (Personal, Social, Health and Economic) education – including specific lessons on bullying, relationships and respect
- Assemblies – regular anti-bullying themes and messages
- Circle time – opportunities to discuss feelings, friendships and conflicts
- The curriculum – using stories, literature, drama and projects to explore bullying themes
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) – developing emotional literacy and empathy
- Anti-Bullying Week – annual focus on raising awareness
- Social stories and visual resources – particularly for pupils with SEND

3. Empowering Pupils to Report and Respond

- Ensuring pupils understand that if they are bullied or witness bullying, they must tell a trusted adult
- Reinforcing that reporting bullying is the right thing to do, not "telling tales"
- Teaching pupils how to be an upstander, not a bystander
- Providing multiple routes for reporting
- Using pupil voice through questionnaires to gather views on bullying

4. Creating a Safe Environment

- Appropriate supervision in all areas of the school
- Staff vigilance in recognising early signs of bullying
- Ensuring pupils know which adults they can talk to
- Creating opportunities for pupils to discuss friendships and relationships
- Teaching pupils what healthy friendships look like

5. Staff Training and Development

- Regular training on the anti-bullying policy to ensure consistent application
- Professional development on recognising and responding to bullying
- Training on specific types of bullying (e.g. cyberbullying, prejudice-based bullying)
- Annual e-safety training for all staff
- Staff modelling respectful behaviour at all times

6. Parental Partnership

- Communicating our anti-bullying policy clearly to parents/carers
- Annual e-safety awareness sessions for parents
- Encouraging parents to support the policy and report concerns
- Working with parents when incidents occur
- Providing guidance on recognising signs of bullying at home

7. Monitoring and Review

- Recording all bullying incidents
 - Analysing patterns and trends to inform prevention strategies
 - Regular review of the effectiveness of our approach
 - Sharing information with staff to raise awareness of problem areas
 - Reporting to governors on bullying incidents and actions taken
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The Role of Staff

All staff at The Willows School Academy Trust have a responsibility to:

- **Promote respect:** Actively support pupils to respect each other and others' property
- **Model positive behaviour:** Set an example through their own conduct and relationships
- **Acknowledge kind behaviour:** Regularly recognise and reward polite and kind behaviour
- **Be vigilant:** Watch for any obvious or subtle hurtful conduct during lessons, breaks and all school activities
- **Supervise appropriately:** Ensure pupils are properly supervised at all times
- **Take all bullying seriously:** Treat every report or concern with appropriate seriousness
- **Act immediately:** Respond to any bullying behaviour as soon as it occurs, wherever it takes place
- **Report and record:** Record all bullying incidents on CPOMS without delay
- **Consult senior staff:** Inform the headteacher or senior staff of bullying incidents, knowing their response will be supportive and appropriate
- **Involve pupils:** Actively involve children in the prevention of bullying
- **Follow procedures:** Adhere to the procedures set out in this policy and the Behaviour Policy

Staff must understand that they can significantly affect the incidence of bullying through their vigilance, responses and the culture they create.

Responding to Bullying

All staff must be alert to early signs of distress or changes in pupils. If a member of staff witnesses a bullying incident or is approached by a pupil (or parent) about bullying, they must investigate without delay.

Step-by-Step Procedure:

1. Immediate Response

- Stop the bullying behaviour immediately if witnessed
- Ensure the safety and wellbeing of the individual
- Remind pupils of expected standards of behaviour
- Provide immediate reassurance to the individual

2. Investigation

- Interview the individual, alleged perpetrator(s) and witnesses separately
- Ask each person to write an independent account of what happened (age-appropriate)
- Gather all relevant information without making premature judgements
- Check safeguarding records for any previous incidents involving the same pupils
- Determine whether this is an isolated incident or part of a pattern

3. Recording

- Record the incident immediately

4. Informing Key People

- Inform the headteacher of all bullying incidents
- Inform the headteacher immediately if the incident is:
 - Serious in nature
 - Recurrent or persistent
 - Potentially a safeguarding concern

- Potentially a criminal offence
- Inform the Designated Safeguarding Lead if there are safeguarding concerns

5. Parental Involvement

- Parents/carers will always be informed if their child has been involved in a bullying incident, either as a victim or perpetrator
- Parents may be asked to attend a meeting to discuss the situation
- We will work in partnership with parents to resolve the issue
- We do not require parental consent to investigate and address bullying – the school has a duty of care to keep all children safe

6. Support and Sanctions

For the affected individual:

- Provide immediate support and reassurance
- Offer counselling or mentoring support
- Monitor wellbeing through regular check-ins
- Ensure they know how to report any further incidents

For the perpetrator:

- Apply appropriate sanctions in line with our Behaviour Policy, which may include:
 - Apology (verbal or written)
 - Loss of privileges
 - Time out or reflection time
 - Internal exclusion
 - Fixed-term exclusion
 - Permanent exclusion (in extreme cases of severe and persistent bullying)
- Investigate underlying causes of the bullying behaviour
- Provide support to change behaviour, which may include:
 - Restorative conversations with the victim
 - Mentoring or counselling
 - Referral to external agencies
 - Targeted work on empathy and social skills
- Help the child understand why their behaviour is unacceptable
- Monitor behaviour through regular check-ins

For witnesses/bystanders:

- Recognise and praise those who reported the bullying
- Provide support if they have been affected by witnessing the incident
- Reinforce expectations about being an upstander

Sanctions will be:

- Proportionate to the seriousness of the incident
- Appropriate to the age and understanding of the child
- Designed to help the child understand the impact of their behaviour
- A deterrent to repeat behaviour
- A clear signal that bullying is not tolerated

7. Ongoing Monitoring

- Continue to monitor the wellbeing of the victim
- Continue to monitor the behaviour of the perpetrator
- Schedule a review meeting with the victim to check whether the bullying has stopped
- If bullying has stopped, provide positive feedback to the perpetrator
- If bullying continues, escalate to the headteacher for further action
- Keep all staff informed of the situation (on a need-to-know basis)

Complex Cases: On rare occasions, pupils may present themselves as victims when the situation is more complex. We will report incidents to the Local Authority when:

- There is a serious safeguarding concern
- A racist incident has occurred (as required)
- The incident may constitute a criminal offence

We will involve the police when:

- We believe a criminal offence may have been committed
- The safety of pupils or staff is at serious risk

Online Safety & Cyberbullying

In accordance with legislative requirements, we have a whole-school approach to online safety, which includes:

- Annual e-safety training for all staff
- Annual e-safety awareness sessions for parents
- Teaching pupils about safe and responsible use of technology through our computing curriculum and PSHE education
- Clear expectations set out in our Online Safety Policy and Acceptable Use agreements
- Regular review and updating of our online safety procedures

All pupils are expected to adhere to safe use of the internet and technology. See our Online Safety Policy for full details.

Responding to Cyberbullying

We recognise that cyberbullying:

- Can occur 24 hours a day, 7 days a week
- Can invade a child's home and personal space
- Can involve a wide audience very quickly
- Provides a permanent record that can be difficult to remove
- Can be anonymous, making it harder to identify perpetrators
- May involve platforms and technologies outside our direct control

Our Approach Includes:

Prevention:

- Teaching pupils about responsible and safe use of technology
- Educating pupils about the impact and consequences of cyberbullying
- Teaching pupils how to protect themselves online
- Encouraging pupils to think before they post or share

Clear Expectations:

- Pupils understand that cyberbullying is completely unacceptable
- This applies whether it occurs on or off school premises
- This applies to school-provided devices and personal devices
- Pupils who engage in cyberbullying will face sanctions

Reporting Mechanisms:

- Pupils and parents know how to report cyberbullying to the school
- Multiple routes for reporting are available
- Reports will be taken seriously and investigated promptly

Parental Partnership:

- We work with parents to address cyberbullying
- This includes incidents that occur outside school hours
- Parents are advised to monitor their child's online activity
- Parents should keep records of offensive messages (dates, times, content)

External Support:

- Where appropriate, we will involve police (for potential criminal offences)
- We may contact social media platforms to report content or request removal
- We will signpost families to external support services

Pupils typically respond to witnessing bullying behaviour in one of four ways:

1. **Actively encouraging** the bullying behaviour (joining in)
2. **Passively supporting** the bullying behaviour (watching, laughing, not intervening)
3. **Passively rejecting** the bullying behaviour (feeling uncomfortable but not acting)
4. **Actively challenging** the bullying behaviour (standing up to it, reporting it, supporting the victim)

We aim to empower all pupils to actively challenge bullying by being upstanders, not bystanders.

For Pupils Who Are Being Bullied

- **Tell someone** – speak to a trusted adult (teacher, teaching assistant, parent, family member)
- **Keep telling** – if the bullying continues, keep reporting it
- **Write it down** – if you can, record what has been said or done to hurt you. Only write down things that have actually happened
- **Keep evidence** – if it's cyberbullying, don't delete messages. Take screenshots and save them
- **Don't blame yourself** – bullying is never your fault
- **Stay safe** – stay near other people, friends, or staff members
- **At break time** – if you're worried, stay near a teaching assistant or teacher
- **Keep valuables safe** – consider leaving personal belongings at home or handing them to the office for safekeeping
- **Don't retaliate** – stay calm and walk away to safety. Retaliating can make the situation worse
- **Be a friend** – try to stay with friends or make new friends

For Pupils Who Witness Bullying

- **Tell an adult immediately** – report what you've seen to a teacher, teaching assistant or other trusted adult
- **Be a friend** – try to be friendly to the person being bullied. Let them know you care
- **Encourage them to talk** – ask if they feel able to talk to someone about what's happening
- **Get help if they won't talk** – if they won't speak to anyone and you're worried, tell a trusted adult yourself
- **Never join in** – never join in with bullying, whether physically, verbally or by excluding someone
- **Stand up for what's right** – you can make a difference by being an upstander, not a bystander

For Pupils Who Are Using Bullying Behaviour

It's important to understand that bullying is wrong and can have serious, long-lasting effects on others.

- **Recognise your behaviour** – understand that what you're doing is bullying (physically, verbally or by excluding others) and that it's wrong
- **Understand the impact** – even if you think it's "just a laugh," the person being bullied and those who care about them feel scared, hurt and upset
- **Talk about your feelings** – if you're angry or upset about something, talk to a trusted friend or adult instead of taking it out on someone else
- **Think about friendships** – bullying doesn't lead to true friendships
- **Change your behaviour** – stop the bullying immediately. You can become a "hero" by changing your behaviour
- **Speak to an adult** – talk to a teacher or other trusted adult about your behaviour. We can help you change

In the Classroom

Teachers create an anti-bullying culture through:

- **Positive ethos:** Emphasising the dignity of each pupil, using praise and reward rather than punishment
- **Clear expectations:** Ensuring pupils understand behaviour expectations and the Behaviour Policy
- **Safe relationships:** Being a trusted adult pupils can talk to in confidence
- **Open discussion:** Providing opportunities to discuss bullying, friendships and relationships
- **Teaching respect:** Helping pupils understand what friendship means and how to treat everyone with dignity
- **Developing empathy:** Using PSHE, circle time and the curriculum to develop emotional literacy
- **Early intervention:** Teaching self-discipline and conflict resolution skills
- **Vigilance:** Being aware that their approach can significantly affect the incidence of bullying

All pupils will know that their teacher (or other trusted adult) is someone they can talk to in confidence.

In the Playground and Outdoor Areas

Staff on duty create an anti-bullying culture through:

- **Active supervision:** Patrolling playground areas and constantly monitoring pupil behaviour
- **Vigilance:** Watching for signs of bullying or distress
- **Immediate intervention:** Addressing minor misbehaviour before it escalates
- **Restorative approaches:** Giving pupils opportunities to apologise and make amends for minor incidents
- **Clear reporting:** Reporting all bullying incidents to the headteacher
- **Consistent response:** Acting in accordance with this policy and the Behaviour Policy
- **Awareness:** Understanding that their vigilance and responses can significantly affect the incidence of bullying

Recording Bullying Incidents

All bullying incidents must be recorded on CPOMS and include:

- Date, time and location of incident
- Names of those involved (victim, perpetrator, witnesses)
- Nature of the bullying (type and protected characteristic if relevant)
- Action taken
- Follow-up actions and review dates
- Whether parents were informed
- Whether the incident was reported to the Local Authority (for serious incidents)

Monitoring and Analysis

The Behaviour Lead and SLT will review bullying records termly to identify patterns and trends, including breakdowns by type and protected characteristic. This data will be used to inform prevention strategies, staff training needs and targeted interventions. The Headteacher will report annually to governors on bullying incidents, actions taken, and the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy.

Review

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Governing Body, or earlier if significant changes to systems, legislation, or best practice guidelines require it.

Signed: Malcolm Shaw,
Headteacher

Bal Grant
Safeguarding Governor

