

St. Matthew's Catholic Primary School

Anti-Bullying Policy



Reviewed: September 2026
Next Reviewed: September 2027

Leaders: Mrs Evans

1 Purpose and commitment

St Matthew's Catholic Primary School is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which every child can learn, participate and flourish. Bullying is unacceptable and every report will be taken seriously, considered carefully and addressed promptly.

This policy explains how the school prevents bullying, how pupils and parents can report concerns, how staff distinguish bullying from other forms of conflict or unkind behaviour, and how concerns will be investigated, recorded, supported and monitored.

The school recognises that bullying can have a serious impact on attendance, attainment, relationships, mental health and safeguarding. Our approach is consistent with the school's Relationships and Behaviour Policy and its Regulate, Relate, Reason and Restore principles. Restorative work will be used only where it is safe, appropriate and does not minimise harm.

2 Legal and statutory framework

This policy has regard to the following legislation and guidance, as amended:

the Education and Inspections Act 2006, particularly section 89;

the Education Act 2002, particularly section 175;

the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty;

the Children Acts 1989 and 2004;

Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026;

Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026;

DfE guidance, Preventing and Tackling Bullying;

DfE guidance, Behaviour in Schools;

DfE guidance, Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools;

statutory guidance on mobile phones in schools; and

statutory Relationships Education and Health Education requirements.

Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires maintained schools to have measures to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. These measures must be communicated to pupils, staff and parents.

3 Related school policies

Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy

Relationships and Behaviour Policy

Online Safety Policy

Mobile Phone Policy

SEND Policy and School Offer

Equality Information and Objectives

Staff Code of Conduct

Parent and Carer Code of Conduct

Complaints Policy

Searching and Confiscation procedures

Suspension and Permanent Exclusion Policy

4 Definition of bullying

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It may happen face to face or online and may be physical, verbal, emotional, sexual, prejudicial or discriminatory.

An imbalance of power may be physical, psychological, social or technological. It may arise from age, strength, numbers, popularity, access to information, anonymity, SEND, language, family circumstances or a child's ability to report or explain what has happened.

Bullying may be obvious or subtle. It may involve one child, a group, repeated changes of people acting together, or behaviour encouraged by an audience. Online bullying can be repeated through continued viewing, sharing or commenting even when the original post was created only once.

5 What bullying is not

The word bullying is sometimes used to describe any upsetting or unacceptable interaction. It is important that the school applies the definition fairly and does not label every disagreement as bullying.

The following would not normally meet the definition of bullying unless they form part of a repeated pattern involving an imbalance of power:

- a single disagreement, argument or falling out between children of broadly equal power;

- an isolated unkind comment, insult or act;

- a friendship ending or children choosing to spend time with different friends;

- a child not being invited to a private event outside school, unless this is being used repeatedly to humiliate, control or exclude;

- an accidental injury or accidental damage;

- a difference of opinion or a conflict in which both children have participated;

- a child setting a reasonable personal boundary or choosing not to play with someone;

- a teacher applying the school rules, a proportionate consequence or a reasonable safety instruction; or

- a one-off incident where there is no evidence of repetition or a power imbalance.

This does not mean that these behaviours are acceptable or will be ignored. A single incident may still be unkind, harmful, discriminatory, violent or a safeguarding concern. It will be addressed under the appropriate school policy, recorded where necessary and monitored in case a pattern develops.

A serious one-off incident may require an immediate safeguarding, behaviour or police response even though it does not meet the repeated-behaviour definition of bullying.

6 Forms of bullying

Physical - hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging belongings, taking property or using physical intimidation.

Verbal - name-calling, threats, taunting, humiliating comments or repeated teasing.

Emotional or relational - deliberately isolating someone, manipulating friendships, repeated exclusion, spreading rumours or encouraging others to reject a child.

Online - harmful messages, posts, images, videos, impersonation, group exclusion, gaming abuse, anonymous accounts or repeated sharing of harmful material.

Prejudice-related or discriminatory - behaviour connected to an actual or perceived protected characteristic, identity, background or association.

Sexual or sexist - sexualised comments, rumours, harassment, unwanted conduct, pressure, image sharing or harmful sexual behaviour.

Property or financial - repeated taking, hiding, damaging or coercing another child to hand over possessions or money.

7 Prejudice related and discriminatory bullying

The school will take particularly seriously behaviour related to disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, or any perceived or associated

protected characteristic. Prejudice-related incidents will be recorded and monitored even where they do not meet the repeated-behaviour definition of bullying.

The school will also respond to bullying related to SEND, speech and language, physical or mental health, care experience, kinship care, family composition, caring responsibilities, poverty or perceived economic circumstances, EAL, refugee or asylum-seeking status, appearance or academic ability.

In carrying out its Public Sector Equality Duty, the school will have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and harassment, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations.

8 Child on child abuse and safeguarding

Bullying may be a form of child-on-child abuse. Children can abuse other children inside school, outside school and online. Staff must not dismiss harmful behaviour as banter, part of growing up or just having a laugh.

Any concern that may involve significant harm, exploitation, coercion, sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, serious physical violence, hate crime, threats, self-harm or criminal behaviour must be referred immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy DSL and managed under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

The school will not use mediation, restorative meetings or a face-to-face apology where this would be unsafe, inappropriate, coercive or place responsibility on the child who has experienced harm.

9 Pupils who may be more vulnerable

Any child may experience bullying. Some children may face additional risk or may find it harder to recognise, explain or report what has happened. This includes children with SEND, communication needs, care experience, mental health needs, EAL, attendance difficulties or previous experiences of trauma or abuse.

Staff will make appropriate adjustments to communication, investigation, support and consequences. SEND or other additional needs will be considered carefully but will not be used to excuse harmful behaviour or leave another child unsafe.

10 Responsibilities

10.1 Governing Body

ensure that effective measures to prevent bullying are in place;
approve and review this policy;
scrutinise anonymised information about patterns, protected characteristics, outcomes and the effectiveness of action; and
hold leaders to account for providing a safe and inclusive culture.

10.2 Headteacher and Anti Bullying Lead

communicate the school's expectations to pupils, staff and families;
ensure consistent recording, investigation, support, consequences and follow-up;
ensure staff receive appropriate training;
review patterns and coordinate preventative action;
liaise with the DSL, SENDCo, pastoral staff and external agencies; and
report anonymised information to governors.

10.3 Designated Safeguarding Lead

review concerns that may constitute child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding risk;
coordinate referrals and multi-agency action where required;

ensure safeguarding records are complete; and
advise on safe parental communication and support for children.

10.4 All staff

model respectful behaviour and challenge harmful language;
notice and report emerging patterns;
listen to children and take reports seriously;
record concerns accurately and promptly;
follow agreed supervision, safeguarding and behaviour procedures; and
avoid promising confidentiality or conducting an unsafe informal mediation.

10.5 Pupils

treat others with respect;
report bullying or harmful behaviour to a trusted adult;
avoid joining in, sharing harmful content or encouraging an audience;
support others safely and seek adult help; and
engage honestly with support and restorative work where appropriate.

10.6 Parents and carers

report concerns to school promptly and provide relevant information;
work constructively with the school while concerns are investigated;
avoid approaching or confronting another child or family;
monitor children's online activity in an age-appropriate way;
preserve ordinary evidence safely without forwarding harmful or sexual content; and
reinforce respectful behaviour and the safe use of technology.

11 Reporting concerns

A pupil may report a concern to any trusted adult in school, including their class teacher, support staff, the pastoral team, Anti-Bullying Lead, SENDCo, DSL or a senior leader. Pupils may also use class reporting arrangements or worry boxes where available.

Parents and carers should normally report a concern to the class teacher. Serious, repeated or safeguarding concerns may be reported directly to a senior leader through the school office. Parents and carers must not approach or confront another child or family.

Staff must report possible bullying to the appropriate leader and must refer any possible safeguarding concern to the DSL without delay. No child or adult will be disadvantaged for reporting a concern in good faith.

12 Responding to a report

1. Ensure the immediate safety and wellbeing of everyone involved.
2. Listen calmly to each child separately and record their words and relevant factual observations.
3. Do not promise confidentiality; explain that information will be shared only with people who need to help.
4. Refer immediately to the DSL where the behaviour may involve child-on-child abuse, discrimination, sexual behaviour, exploitation, significant harm or another safeguarding concern.
5. Gather proportionate information from children, staff, records and available evidence without repeatedly interviewing a child or conducting an unsafe investigation.
6. Consider repetition, intent, impact, power imbalance, vulnerability, protected characteristics, SEND, online reach and whether there is a wider pattern.

7. Inform parents or carers unless this would increase risk or conflict with safeguarding or police advice.
8. Decide whether the concern is substantiated as bullying, another form of harmful behaviour, a safeguarding matter or is not substantiated on the available evidence.
9. Agree immediate and longer-term support, proportionate consequences, supervision and preventative action.
10. Monitor the situation and check back with the children and families to establish whether the behaviour has stopped.
11. Record the report, investigation, decision, action and follow-up.

13 Recording and confidentiality

All reported or suspected bullying incidents will be recorded, not only those eventually substantiated. Records will include the allegation, relevant evidence, decisions, actions, parental communication, support and follow-up. Safeguarding information will be recorded on CPOMS in accordance with school procedures.

Records will be reviewed for repeated incidents, locations, times, online trends, vulnerable pupils and prejudice-related or discriminatory behaviour. Information will be stored and shared in accordance with safeguarding and data-protection requirements.

Parents and carers will be informed about concerns involving their child. The school cannot disclose confidential information, personal information or specific consequences relating to another child.

14 Supporting children

14.1 The child who has experienced harm

a named trusted adult and regular check-ins;
a safety and supervision plan where needed;
pastoral, SEND or mental-health support;
help to restore access to learning, play and attendance;
support to report or block online content; and
continued monitoring after the immediate concern appears resolved.

14.2 The child who has displayed bullying behaviour

clear boundaries and proportionate consequences under the Relationships and Behaviour Policy;
work to understand impact and take responsibility;
teaching and practice of alternative behaviour;
pastoral, SEND or external support where underlying needs are identified;
increased supervision or an individual behaviour plan; and
carefully planned restorative work only where safe and appropriate.
The school will avoid routinely labelling children as bullies, victims or perpetrators. Records and communication will describe the reported behaviour and its impact while recognising that children can learn and change.

15 Consequences and reasonable adjustments

Consequences will be fair, proportionate and consistent with the Relationships and Behaviour Policy. They may include loss of privileges, changes to activities or supervision, educational or restorative work, internal removal, suspension or, in the most serious circumstances, permanent exclusion.

The school will consider SEND, disability and other individual circumstances and will make reasonable adjustments where required. This does not prevent the school from applying a proportionate consequence or taking action necessary to safeguard other children.

16 Online bullying

Online bullying can take place through messaging, social media, gaming, group chats, websites, images, video, audio or other digital services. A single post can have a repeated impact when it is shared, viewed, commented upon or remains available online.

The school may respond to online behaviour outside school where it threatens or harms a pupil, affects wellbeing or attendance, disrupts the school environment or adversely affects the reputation or orderly operation of the school.

When responding, the school may support the reporting and removal of content, apply school consequences where lawful and reasonable, involve another school, seek platform assistance, refer to Children's Services or contact the police.

17 Preserving online evidence

Children and parents may be advised to retain ordinary evidence such as usernames, dates, web addresses and non-sexual messages. They should not engage, retaliate or redistribute harmful content unnecessarily.

Nobody should be asked to screenshot, save, print, copy or forward a nude or sexual image of a child. Staff must not view, copy or circulate such material. Concerns involving sexual images must be reported to the DSL immediately and managed under the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and current national guidance.

18 Generative AI deepfakes and impersonation

Online bullying may involve content created or altered using generative artificial intelligence, including fake images, sexualised deepfakes, voice cloning, impersonation, fabricated conversations or humiliating material.

Creating, requesting, possessing or sharing AI-generated content intended to humiliate, sexualise, threaten or impersonate a child will be treated as a serious safeguarding and behaviour concern. Staff must not copy or circulate the material and must report it immediately to the DSL.

19 Searching and confiscation

Any search of a pupil or electronic device will be undertaken only by the Headteacher or an authorised member of staff and in accordance with the school's Behaviour Policy and current DfE guidance on searching, screening and confiscation. Staff must not routinely search through a child's device, messages or accounts.

The school's statutory mobile-phone arrangements apply throughout the school day. Devices brought into school under an authorised exception must be handed in and managed in accordance with the Mobile Phone Policy.

20 Behaviour outside school

The Headteacher may respond to and, where lawful and reasonable, sanction behaviour outside school where it threatens another person, causes harm, affects pupils' safety or wellbeing, disrupts the school environment or adversely affects the school community. Safeguarding responsibilities apply whether harmful behaviour occurs in school, outside school or online.

21 Preventing bullying

teach the Behaviour Curriculum, Relationships Education, PSHE, online safety, equality and respectful relationships;
promote the mission, Catholic social teaching, pupil voice and a culture of dignity and belonging;
teach children the difference between conflict, unkind behaviour and bullying;
challenge discriminatory and prejudicial language consistently;
provide appropriate playground, lunchtime, transition and online-safety supervision;
use assemblies, Anti-Bullying Week, stories, discussion and curriculum opportunities;
teach children how to report concerns, support others safely and avoid becoming an audience;
make reasonable adjustments and provide targeted support for vulnerable pupils;
review patterns and adapt staffing, supervision, curriculum or environments; and
work with parents, the local authority, police, health services and specialist organisations where appropriate.

22 Bullying or harassment involving adults

Bullying or harassment involving staff will be managed under the Staff Code of Conduct, Grievance, Dignity at Work and Disciplinary procedures. Concerns about the Headteacher should be reported to the Chair of Governors.

Whistleblowing procedures apply where a concern involves wrongdoing in the public interest, rather than solely a personal employment grievance.

Bullying, abuse, threats or harassment of staff by parents, carers or members of the public will be addressed through the Parent and Carer Code of Conduct and the school's procedures for managing aggressive or disruptive behaviour.

23 Complaints

Parents and carers who are dissatisfied with the school's handling of a concern should first raise the matter with the class teacher or relevant leader. If the matter remains unresolved, the school's Complaints Policy should be followed. A complaint about the Headteacher should be directed to the Chair of Governors.

The complaints process will not prevent the school from taking immediate safeguarding or behaviour action while a complaint is considered.

24 Monitoring and governing body oversight

The Anti-Bullying Lead will review information at least termly, including:

the number and type of reports;
substantiated and unsubstantiated concerns;
repeated incidents or patterns;
locations, times and online contexts;
prejudice-related and discriminatory incidents;
the involvement of pupils with SEND or other vulnerabilities;
actions, support and consequences;
whether the behaviour stopped; and
relevant pupil and parent feedback.

An anonymised report will be provided to governors. Governors will consider patterns, the effectiveness of action and whether further training, curriculum work, staffing or supervision changes are required.

25 Training and communication

This policy will be shared with staff and made available to parents and carers. The main expectations will be taught to pupils in age-appropriate language. Staff induction and safeguarding updates will cover recognising, recording and responding to bullying, child-on-child abuse, discriminatory behaviour and online harm.

26 Review

The Governing Body will review this policy annually and sooner where there is a significant incident, a change in legislation or guidance, evidence that procedures are not effective, or advice from safeguarding partners.

27 Approval

Approved by	Governing Body
Chair of Governors	Mrs Cathie Sergeant
Headteacher	Mrs Claire Sime
Signature and date	
Next review	September 2027

Reference documents

Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
Department for Education, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying.
Department for Education, Behaviour in Schools.
Department for Education, Searching, Screening and Confiscation in Schools.
Department for Education, Mobile Phones in Schools 2026.
Equality Act 2010 and Department for Education advice for schools.

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