

MERTON COURT SCHOOL



ANTI BULLYING POLICY

To be reviewed by: Headmaster/Proprietor, DSL ,LT and Advisory Board by October 2027

Signed by the Headmaster/Proprietor: 
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Shared with staff: 22/9/26

Put on Website: 22/9/26

This policy applies to the whole school including Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS), Breakfast Club, After School Club, Holiday Playscheme, Educational Trips/Visits and all other activities provided by the school, inclusive of those outside of the normal school hours.

This policy is based on DfE guidance "Preventing and Tackling Bullying. Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies" (July 2017).

Preventing and Tackling Bullying (2017)
Prevent Duty Guidance (March 2015) (Updated March 2024)
Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026)
Working Together to Safeguard Children (March 2026)

It is recommended that schools read this guidance and share content with staff and parents/carers: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying>

Links to other policies

This Policy links with several other school policies, practices and procedures including:

- Behaviour and Exclusion Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Online Safety Policy
- Curriculum Policies such as PSE, RHE, SMSC ('Learning Skills for Life') and Computing

- Use of social media policy
- All Electronic Devices Capable of Taking and Storing Images Policy
- Data Protection
- Low Level Concerns Policy

STATEMENT OF INTENT

The School ensures that an effective anti-bullying strategy is drawn up and implemented which applies to all children in the school including those in the EYFS. We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all children so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school including low-level concerns. The school has a culture of 'zero tolerance'. If bullying does occur, all children should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. We are a **TELLING** school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell a member of staff or an older child mentor.

Any member of the community may bully or be a victim of bullying: we take all incidences of bullying equally seriously and in turn expect all staff, children and parents to play their part in preventing and tackling bullying for the wellbeing of children at our School.

Aims of Policy

This policy aims to:

- Try and prevent bullying, as far as possible, and help staff, children and parents deal with bullying when it occurs.

What do we mean by bullying?

The Department for Education defines bullying as 'behaviour by an individual or group that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally'. This can include:

- Physically hurting, harming or humiliating another person or damaging their property;
- Verbal abuse and harassment such as name-calling or writing unkind notes;
- Bullying related to SEND (Special Educational Needs or Disability);
- Emotional manipulation such as excluding someone or spreading malicious rumours about them, building negative alliances based on gossip, or deliberately betraying former confidences to humiliate or isolate another child, coercive behaviour towards other children;
- Online-bullying, i.e. via social networking websites, phone calls, text messages, sending or sharing non-consensual nudes or semi-nudes, photographs, emails and the use of AI;
- Gang initiation and other ceremonies.

Unpleasant remarks or actions related to any of the following:

- Ethnicity, religion, belief-based or culture;
- Sexual harassment (i.e. talking to or touching someone in a sexually inappropriate way);
- Gender;
- Sexual orientation/gender questioning (e.g. homophobic/lesbian/transphobic bullying);
- Special Educational Needs & Disability;
- 'Looked after' children;
- Social position, Intellectual or other abilities;
- Family Structure;
- Being adopted or a young carer.

Any behaviour that a reasonable bystander would say was intended to hurt or upset the victim is wrong and could constitute bullying, including complicity that may fall short of participating directly in the bullying. It is no justification that the alleged perpetrator says or believes that the victim is not upset or hurt by their actions or words.

Bullying may be performed in subtle ways, which are not easy to detect; a bully may use a simple look, word or gesture to a victim to signal an intended threat or insult. Some children are adept at changing a bullying situation into an apparently harmless one when approached by an adult.

This makes it even more important for the victim or another child to be able to come forward to report bullying, and for staff and parents to be alert to symptoms of bullying. Any concerns about a child's welfare must be acted on immediately.

Bullying is always hurtful to the victim and damaging to the whole school community. Anyone and everyone who is involved in or witnesses bullying is affected by it. It can cause great distress, unhappiness and psychological damage and at its worst lead to mental health issues with a possible risk of self-harm or taking of their own life. It can also be a criminal offence if the behaviour amounts to harassment, sexual harassment or threatening/coercive behaviour.

How does bullying differ from friendship difficulties?

School staff are ready to help and support children who have fallen out with friends, but such situations will not be treated in the same way as a case of bullying. Merton Court School staff have adopted the 'Girls on Board' approach developed by Andrew Hampton. This is an excellent pragmatic approach to empowering girls to resolve friendship issues for themselves when turbulence occurs. School also uses Andrew Hampton's 'Working with Boys' programme which highlights expected behaviour for boys too.

However, the strategies we use are the same as we acknowledge that over a period of time the impact on the child may be the same, and the situation could become bullying if it escalates.

Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that they are being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school or doesn't want to go on the public bus;
- begs to be driven to school/ changes their usual routine;
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic);
- begins to truant or have unexplained or persistent absences from school;
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence;
- starts stammering /attempts or threatens self-harm or taking their own life or runs away;
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares;
- feels ill in the morning / begins to do poorly in school work;
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged;
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing";
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully);
- has monies continually "lost";
- has unexplained cuts or bruises;
- comes home hungry (money / snack has been stolen);
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable;
- is bullying other children or siblings;
- stops eating;
- is frightened to say what's wrong;
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above;
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone;
- is nervous & jumpy when a text or online-message is received.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated urgently. Teachers, parents and children should be alert for these possible signs of bullying and contact a member of staff /or their teacher if they are concerned.

Preventing Bullying

We aim to prevent bullying by:

- Fostering a whole school ethos of good behaviour, mutual respect, and consideration. We aim to create a safe, happy, and inclusive environment for learning, and encourage children to value diversity and difference, protect the vulnerable, and appreciate how their actions might affect others
- Our staff and older children setting a good example of how to behave towards each other
- Raising awareness about bullying through opportunities in the curriculum, our SMSC programme including RHE and PSE, assemblies, and national events such as Anti Bullying Week, amongst others:

- a) Developing children's' social skills, confidence, resilience and self-esteem; b) defining the value of assertiveness in relationships as opposed to aggression, whether direct or indirect;
- Making it clear to all that there are effective procedures for reporting, investigating and tackling bullying;
- Making it clear to everyone that incidents of online-bullying or bullying of any kind that occur off the school premises will be pursued with the same seriousness as bullying occurring within school;
- Making it as easy as possible for children who are being bullied to talk to someone they trust and get help confidentially;
- Having a strong pastoral team dedicated to child welfare and experienced in dealing with bullying issues. All our staff are trained in recognising and responding to bullying and staff awareness is raised through regular discussion of child issues in pastoral meetings and staff briefings;
- Action is taken to reduce the risk of bullying where and when it is known to be most likely to occur. The member of staff with overall responsibility for anti-bullying in school is **Mrs Langton (DSL)**;
- Taking children's views into account through the school council, and developing the roles that children can play in anti-bullying work, for example buddying of all new children to the school, child involvement in anti-bullying assemblies, holding regular one-to one conversations with children;
- Ensuring our 'Helping Hand' resource is discussed individually and in class, to remind children of Five people who are able to help them.
- Ensuring all children sign up to the school's Acceptable Use Agreements, which make it clear that online bullying is unacceptable. This message is regularly reinforced in lessons, Circle Time and pastoral sessions. The school also makes more detailed information on how to deal with online-bullying available to children and parents (e.g. via emails to parents, parents' information sessions on online safety, 'tooled up' is a resource for parents that they may go to for help).

Dealing with Bullying

If you are worried a child is being bullied – encourage the child to:

- Stay calm and try to appear confident. Tell the bully to stop and to get away from the situation as quickly as they can;
- Do not suffer in silence: talk to any member of staff or another child. This could be their form teacher or any other member of staff they trust. If they are unhappy about talking to a member of staff directly, they could talk to someone in their family or a friend;
- Telling is vital: not telling means that the bullying is likely to continue. Remember that they may not be the only person this is happening to;
- Assure them that School takes every report of bullying seriously and will act upon it, even if it occurred outside the school. We will keep records of

what has happened, and consult parents and support the child in whatever action we take;

- All children will be taken seriously, kept safe and never be made to feel like they are creating a problem for reporting bullying.

Steps to take if you know that a child is being bullied.

Talk to a member of staff, so that the school can take steps to help that person;

What the school will do!

RESPONDING TO BULLYING/BULLYING ALLEGATIONS

Bullying allegations can come in from several different sources including from the child, child's friend, parent/carer or staff member and all will be taken seriously and acted upon. Allegations may be reported in a variety of ways:

- **Direct** – through face-to-face contact with school staff.
- **Indirect** – through form teacher, Head of Pastoral or other staff

All reports of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated immediately.
Dealing with incidents:

- Everything that happens will be carefully recorded;
 - a) The most important thing is to stop the bullying and ensure the child is safe;
- We aim for a peaceful resolution:
 - a) revenge is not helpful for the victim or appropriate;
- Children will be supported throughout the process;
- Guidance and help will be available for the person responsible for the bullying to help change their behaviour;
- Staff will monitor the situation to ensure that the bullying does not continue. If bullying recurs, further action will be taken;
- In any serious case of bullying the Headmaster will be informed and the school will work with the parents of all the children involved. The school will remain in regular contact with parents until the situation is resolved;
- A bullying incident will be regarded as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' (Children Act 1989). Where this is the case, after the Headmaster has been involved, it may be necessary to make a report to the Social Services and in certain cases the police;
- We take very seriously that both parties involved will be offered support and if necessary outside help will be sourced for them;
- The school will keep details of all bullying incidents on CPoms which is monitored to identify trends and inform preventative work in the school and future development of policies and procedures.
- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached;
- A clear and precise account of the incident will be recorded and given to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Deputy DSL;

- The DSL or DDSL will interview all concerned and will record this on CPoms;
- Form Teachers will be kept informed;
- When responding to online bullying concerns the school will take all available steps to identify the child/children involved, including looking at the school systems, identifying and interviewing possible witnesses, and contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary. The police may need to be involved to enable the service provider to investigate the data of another user;
- If content posted online is offensive or inappropriate, and the person or people responsible are known, then the school will ensure that they understand why the material is unacceptable or offensive and will request that they remove it;
- Where the bullying takes place outside of the school site then the school will ensure that the concern is investigated and that appropriate action is taken in accordance with the school's behaviour and discipline policy;
- Parents/carers will be kept informed;
- Sanctions will be used as appropriate and in consultation with all parties concerned;
- If necessary and appropriate, the police or other local services will be consulted.

Sanctions

Where children do not respond to the measures put in place to resolve the issue it will be necessary to use the sanctions outlined in the school's Behaviour Policy. Any sanctions imposed will be fair, proportionate and reasonable, take account of any special educational needs or disabilities that children may have, and consider the needs of vulnerable children.

We take bullying behaviour very seriously and will adopt a supportive, restorative, pragmatic problem-solving approach to enable children responsible behave in a more acceptable way. School does not believe that the use of punishment is helpful in managing this problem, but where necessary sanctions will be applied consistently and fairly and in a proportionate way.

Cases of severe or persistent bullying may lead to fixed term or permanent exclusion.

Partnership with Parents

We believe that working with parents/guardians is essential to establishing the school's anti-bullying ethos and resolving any issues that arise;

- Parents are encouraged to reinforce the principles of the Anti-Bullying Policy at home;
- Parents are asked, in the first instance, to speak to their child's form teacher or Head of Key Stage directly if they have cause for concern, either on behalf of their own children or because of rumours about others. Head of Pastoral Care will be informed by the KS Coordinator if the concern cannot be resolved by them. In any serious case of bullying

parents will be informed by the school and will be invited in to discuss the matter. We will keep in regular contact with parents until the best outcomes for the child and the issue is resolved;

- Bullying or harassment of staff (face-to-face, online or through social media), other parents and other children by parents will not be tolerated at any time.

Monitoring and evaluation

The effectiveness of this policy and the school's anti bullying strategies will be evaluated annually through a review of the bullying log and consultation with the school council, LT, Proprietors and the Advisory Board.

This policy will be reviewed by the Leadership Team and the Advisory Board.

Key Contacts are **Mrs T Langton (DSL) and Head of Pastoral Care**

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: t.langton@mertoncourtprep.co.uk

Mr L Barley (DDSL)

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: l.barley@mertoncourtprep.co.uk

Mrs C Jahaj (DDSL)

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: c.jahaj@mertoncourtprep.co.uk

Mrs R Harding (DDSL)

Direct Line: 0208 300 2112

Email: r.harding@mertoncourtprep.co.uk

This policy is available via the staff shared drive or on request a hardcopy from the School Office.

Additional Content

Dealing with Incidents

Supporting Children

Children who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their teacher or a member of staff of their choice
- Being advised to keep a record of the bullying as evidence and discuss how to respond to concerns and build resilience as appropriate.
- Reassuring the child and providing continuous support
- Restoring self-esteem and confidence
- Working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance

USEFUL CONTACTS

A list of useful contact numbers, websites etc for bullying issues, which may include:

Phone numbers

- Childline – 0800 1111 – A free, confidential helpline for children and young people offering advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day.
- EACH - 0808 1000 143 - a free phone helpline for children experiencing homophobic bullying. Open Monday to Friday 10am-5pm
- Parentline Plus – 0808 8002222 – a free 24hr phone helpline for anyone caring for children or textphone 0800 783 6783 for the deaf or hard of hearing.

Websites

- Anti-Bullying alliance – www.Anti-Bullyingalliance.org.uk – information, resources and advice relating to bullying.
- Beatbullying – www.beatbullying.org – resources and lesson plans looking at the issue of bullying for primary and secondary aged children.
- Cybermentors – www.cybermentors.org.uk – a safe social networking site providing information and support for young people affected by bullying.
- Kidscape – www.kidscape.org.uk - Bullying advice, helpline, information, Anti-Bullying resources and training.
- Need2Know – www.need2know.co.uk – youth friendly site featuring tips on how to stop bullying, what to do if you bully others etc.
- NSPCC – www.nspcc.org.uk - advice on what to do if you are being bullied or see someone who is.
- Think U Know – www.thinkuknow.co.uk - Website for online-bullying and e-safety information. This has separate areas for parent/carers, staff and children aged 5-7, 8-10 and 11-16.

