

Anti-bullying policy



BEDFORD
FREE SCHOOL

Version / Last Reviewed on:	V1 – November 2019 V2 – March 2023	Next Review:	March 2026
------------------------------------	---------------------------------------	---------------------	------------

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied, and that staff are free from fear of bullying by pupils.
- 1.2. Bedford Free School is committed to developing an anti-bullying culture where the bullying of adults, children or young people is not tolerated in any form.
- 1.3 This policy is aligned with the DfE's guidance "Preventing and tackling bullying". It also considers the latest DfE statutory guidance "Keeping Children Safe in Education" and the DfE's guidance 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'.

2. Policy

2.1. Definition of bullying

Bullying can be defined as "behaviour by an individual or a group, repeated over time that intentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally". (DfE "Preventing and Tackling Bullying").

Bullying can include name calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments; kicking; hitting; taking belongings; producing offensive graffiti; gossiping; excluding people from groups and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours.

This includes the same unacceptable behaviours expressed online, sometimes called online or cyberbullying. This can include: sending offensive, upsetting and inappropriate messages by phone, text, instant messenger, through gaming, websites, social media sites and apps, and sending offensive or degrading photos or videos.

Bullying is recognised by the school as being a form of child on child abuse. It can be emotionally abusive and can cause severe and adverse effects on children's emotional development

2.2. Forms and types of bullying

Bullying can happen to anyone. This policy covers all types of bullying including:

- Bullying related to physical appearance
- Bullying of young carers, children in care or otherwise related to home circumstances
- Bullying related to physical/mental health conditions
- Physical bullying
- Emotional bullying
- Sexual bullying
- Bullying via technology, known as online or cyberbullying
- Prejudicial bullying (against people/pupils with protected characteristics):
- Bullying related to race, religion, faith and belief and for those without faith
 - ✓ Bullying related to ethnicity, nationality or culture
 - ✓ Bullying related to Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND)

- ✓ Bullying related to sexual orientation (homophobic/biphobic bullying)
- ✓ Gender based bullying, including transphobic bullying
- ✓ Bullying against teenage parents (pregnancy and maternity under the Equality Act)

2.3 Responding to bullying

Bedford Free School recognises that all forms of bullying, especially if left unaddressed, can have a devastating effect on individuals. It can create a barrier to learning and have serious consequences for mental wellbeing.

By effectively preventing and tackling bullying our school can help to create a safe and disciplined environment, where pupils are able to learn and fulfil their potential.

The following steps may be taken when dealing with all incidents of bullying reported to the school:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached or witnessed the concern.
- The school will provide appropriate support for the person being bullied – making sure they are not at risk of immediate harm and will involve them in any decision making, as appropriate.
- A pastoral lead, behaviour mentor or member of leadership staff will interview all involved parties.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed of all bullying issues where there are safeguarding concerns.
- The school will speak with and inform other staff members, where appropriate.
- The school will ensure parents/carers are kept informed about the concern and action taken, as appropriate and in line with child protection and confidentiality policies.
- Sanctions, as identified within the school behaviour policy, and support will be implemented in consultation with all parties concerned.
- If necessary, other agencies may be consulted or involved, such as the police, if a criminal offence has been committed, or other local services including early help or children’s social care, if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm.
- Where the bullying of or by pupils takes place off school site or outside of normal school hours (including cyberbullying), the school will ensure that the concern is fully investigated. If required, the DSL will collaborate with other schools. Appropriate action will be taken, including providing support and implementing sanctions in school in accordance with this policy and the school’s behaviour policy.
- A clear and precise account of bullying incidents will be recorded by the school in accordance with existing procedures. This will include recording appropriate details regarding decisions and action taken.

2.4 Responding to cyberbullying

When responding to cyberbullying concerns, the school will:

- Act as soon as an incident has been reported or identified.

- Provide appropriate support for the person who has been cyberbullied and work with the person who has carried out the bullying to ensure that it does not happen again.
- Encourage the person being bullied to keep any evidence (screenshots) of the bullying activity to assist any investigation.
- Take all available steps where possible to identify the person responsible. This may include:
 - ✓ Looking at use of the school systems.
 - ✓ Identifying and interviewing possible witnesses.
 - ✓ Contacting the service provider and the police, if necessary.
 - ✓ Work with the individuals and online service providers to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation. This may include:
 - Support reports to a service provider to remove content if those involved are unable to be identified or if those involved refuse to or are unable to delete content.
 - Confiscating and searching pupils' electronic devices, such as mobile phones, in accordance with the law and the school searching and confiscation policy.
 - Requesting the deletion of locally-held content and content posted online if they contravene school behavioural policies.
- Ensure that sanctions are applied to the person responsible for the cyberbullying; the school will take steps to change the attitude and behaviour of the bully, as well as ensuring access to any additional help that they may need.
- Inform the police if a criminal offence has been committed.
- Provide information to staff and pupils regarding steps they can take to protect themselves online. This may include:
 - ✓ advising those targeted not to retaliate or reply;
 - ✓ providing advice on blocking or removing people from contact lists;
 - ✓ helping those involved to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain.
- Work with staff, parents and outside agencies to identify all forms of prejudice driven bullying.
- Actively provide systematic opportunities to develop pupils' social and emotional skills, including their resilience.
- Consider all opportunities for addressing bullying including through the curriculum and peer support.
- Train all staff to identify bullying and follow school policy and procedures on bullying.
- Actively create 'safe spaces' for vulnerable children.

2.5 Supporting pupils

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Reassuring the pupil and providing continuous pastoral support.
- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with their teacher, the DSL, 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.
- Working towards restoring self-esteem and confidence.
- Providing ongoing support; this may include:

- ✓ working and speaking with staff;
- ✓ offering formal counselling;
- ✓ engaging with parents and carers.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this could include:
 - ✓ support through Early Help or Children Social Work Service;
 - ✓ support through the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Pupils who have perpetrated bullying will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened, establishing the concern and the need to change.
- Informing parents/carers to help change the attitude and behaviour of the child.
- Providing appropriate education and support regarding their behaviour or actions.
- If online, requesting that content be removed and reporting accounts/content to service provider.
- Sanctioning, in line with school behaviour/discipline policy; this may include
 - ✓ official warnings;
 - ✓ detentions;
 - ✓ removal of privileges (including online access when encountering cyberbullying concerns);
 - ✓ fixed-term or permanent exclusions.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this may include:
 - ✓ involvement from the Police;
 - ✓ referrals to Early Help, Children Social Work Service;
 - ✓ referrals to Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

2.6 Supporting adults

Our school takes measures to prevent and tackle bullying among pupils; however, it is equally important to recognise that bullying of adults, including staff and parents, whether by pupils, parents or other staff members, is unacceptable.

Adults who have been bullied or affected will be supported by:

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the concern with the DSL, a senior member of staff and/or the Principal.
- Advising them to keep a record of the bullying as evidence and discuss how to respond to concerns and build resilience, as appropriate.
- Where the bullying takes place off school site or outside of normal school hours (including online), the school will still investigate the concern and ensure that appropriate action is taken in accordance with the school's behaviour and discipline policy.
- Reporting offensive or upsetting content and/or accounts to the service provider, where the bullying has occurred online.
- Reassuring and offering appropriate support.
- Working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance.

Adults who have perpetrated the bullying will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened with a senior member of staff and/or the Principal to establish the concern.
- Establishing whether a legitimate grievance or concern has been raised and signposting to the school's official complaints procedures.
- If online, requesting that content be removed.
- Instigating disciplinary, civil or legal action as appropriate or required.

2.7 Prevention of bullying

The whole school community will:

- Create and support an inclusive environment which promotes a culture of mutual respect, consideration and care for others, which will be upheld by all.
- Recognise that bullying can be perpetrated or experienced by any member of the community, including adults and children (peer on peer abuse).
- Recognises the potential for children with SEN and disabilities to be disproportionately impacted by bullying and will implement additional pastoral support as required.
- Openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as: children with different family situations, such as looked after children or those with caring responsibilities, religion, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexuality or appearance related difference.
- Challenge practice and language (including 'banter') which does not uphold the school values of tolerance, non-discrimination and respect towards others.
- Be encouraged to use technology, especially mobile phones and social media, positively and responsibly.
- Work with staff, the wider community and outside agencies to prevent and tackle concerns including all forms of prejudice-driven bullying.
- Actively create "safe spaces" for vulnerable children and young people.
- Celebrate success and achievements to promote and build a positive school ethos.

2.8 Involvement of pupils

Bedford Free School will actively involve pupils to:

- Regularly canvas their views on the extent and nature of bullying.
- Ensure pupils know how to express worries and anxieties about bullying.
- Ensure pupils are aware of the range of sanctions which may be applied against those engaged in bullying.
- Publicise the details of internal support, as well as external helplines and websites.
- Offer support to pupils who have been bullied.
- Work with pupils who have been bullying in order to address the problems they have.

2.9 Involvement and liaison with parents and carers

Bedford Free School will liaise with parents and carers to:

- Ensure parents/carers are aware that the school does not tolerate any form of bullying.
- Ensure parents/carers know whom to contact if they are worried about bullying.
- Ensure parents/carers know about our complaints procedure and how to use it effectively.

- Ensure parents/carers know where to access independent advice about bullying.
- Work with the local community to address issues beyond the school gates that give rise to bullying.

3. Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of all staff including Trustees, Governors, Principal, Senior Leaders, Teaching and Non-Teaching staff to be aware of this policy and implement it accordingly.

It is the responsibility of the senior member of school staff, identified to lead on the implementation of this policy, to ensure it is communicated to the school community.

It is the responsibility of pupils to abide by this policy.

4. Related Documents

- Behaviour Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Preventing and tackling bullying - DfE guidance
- Keeping Children Safe in Education – DfE statutory guidance
- Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges guidance - DfE guidance
- Searching, screening and confiscation – DfE guidance
- Cyberbullying Understand, Prevent and Respond – Childnet guidance

5. Links to legislation

Links to legislation There are a number of pieces of legislation which set out measures and actions for schools in response to bullying, as well as criminal and civil law. These may include (but are not limited to):

- The Education and Inspection Act 2006
- The Education Act 2002
- The Education Act 2011
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Families Act 2004
- The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- The Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Public Order Act 1986

6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

Governors are responsible for ensuring the school adheres to this policy and that this policy is periodically monitored and reviewed at least every three years.