Matthew Arnold Primary School

Anti - Bullying Policy

Date: September 2026

Context

Our School Values

At Matthew Arnold we want pupils to flourish both academically and socially. We aim to foster a healthy and safe community where individuals take responsibility for their own behaviour and show respect for others, emphasising the importance of positive relationships amongst all members and groups of the school community.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell someone and know incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Our core values are:

- Ready
- Respectful
- Safe

Purpose of the anti-bullying policy:

This policy aims to:

- Ensure the whole school community has a shared understanding of what bullying is and the detrimental impact it can have on wellbeing and achievement
- Ensure staff, parents, carers, and pupils work together to ensure a safe learning environment for all and to safeguard pupils who experience bullying
- Prevent, de-escalate and or stop any continuation of harmful behaviour
- Ensure all bullying behaviours and prejudiced based incidents are taken seriously, recorded and responded to in a proportionate and consistent way
- Encourage shared solutions so that those reporting bullying have an appropriate say in what happens next
- Ensure those using bullying behaviour are supported to change their behaviour
- Outline the consequences for those who show bullying behaviour
- Ensure everyone is mutually valued and respected and that in line with the Equality Act 2010 we aim to eliminate discrimination based on sex, gender identity, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion and belief
- Encourage pupils to adopt agreed standards of behaviour and values in order to develop a sense of right and wrong and the ability to take responsibility for their own actions

Our stated commitment is that when a pupil or parent or carer speaks out about bullying:

- they will be listened to
- their concerns will be taken seriously
- the matters will be investigated
- together we will find a way to tackle it
- someone will be there to help and support them.

Definitions

Bullying

Bullying is defined as the *repetitive*, intentional harming of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying is, therefore:

- Deliberately hurtful
- Repeated, often over a period of time
- Difficult to defend against

Bullying can include:

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)
Sexual	Explicit sexual remarks, display of sexual material, sexual gestures, unwanted physical attention, comments about sexual reputation or performance, sharing of nude or semi-nude images and/or videos (including pseudo-images, which are computer-generated images that otherwise appear to be a photograph or video), or inappropriate touching
Direct or indirect verbal	Name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
Cyber-bullying	Bullying that takes place online, such as through social networking sites, messaging apps, gaming sites, devices or via images, audio, video, or written content generated by artificial intelligence (AI)

Bullying is not one-off acts of aggression or nastiness, such behaviours if repeated, however, may be viewed as bullying.

Generative artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access.

We recognise that AI has many uses to help pupils learn, but may also have the potential to be used to bully others. For example, in the form of 'deepfakes', where AI is used to create images, audio or video hoaxes that look real.

Matthew Arnold will treat any use of AI to bully pupils in line with our anti-bullying policy.

Friendship issues, relational conflict and bullying behaviour

We acknowledge that friendship problems and bullying behaviour can be upsetting for both pupils and parents and carers, but it is important to distinguish between the two, as the responses to friendship problems will be different to the strategies used to address bullying behaviour.

Pupils will fall in and out with each other, have arguments, stop talking to each other and have disagreements. This relational conflict can be a normal part of growing up.

During a relational conflict or friendship problem groups of pupils may disagree, be very upset and find it difficult to resolve the disagreement without adult help. It is unlikely however, to be repeated behaviour and may even be accidental, but pupils will make an effort to resolve the problem and will want to resolve the problem.
However, we recognise that repeated friendship problems or relational conflict can sometimes lead to bullying behaviour particularly when there is an imbalance of power [when a group acts against an individual for example].

Bullying takes place where there is an imbalance of power of one person or persons over another. This can relate to:

- the size of the individual
- the strength of the individual
- the numbers or group size involved
- being from a majority rather than a minority group
- anonymity – through the use of cyber bullying or using email, social networking sites, texts etc.

Bullying can take place in the classroom, playground, toilets, on the journey to and from school, on residential trips and cyberspace. It can take place in group activities and between families in the local community.

Prejudice-based bullying

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, on the grounds of ethnicity, religion and belief, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation or disability. It might be motivated by actual differences, perceived differences or as a result of association with someone else. We record these forms of prejudiced based bullying by their type on CPOMS and report on them to the Governing Body. This is in recognition that these groups are protected by the Equality Act 2010 because of the prejudice experienced by some groups in the wider society.

We also recognise that there are others groups of children and young people who may be vulnerable to bullying including children in care, young carers or those with mental health issues. We recognise therefore that we sometimes have to look at specific work or practice to prevent bullying of groups of pupils.

Prejudiced based / hate incident

This is a one-off incident which is perceived by the victim or any other person, to be motivated by hostility, prejudice or ignorance, based on a person's perceived or actual ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, beliefs, sexual orientation or gender identity or their association with someone from one of these groups. These can also include indirect prejudice driven behaviour that is not targeted at one individual. The impact of this expression of prejudice against an equality group whether intentional or not can be damaging and must therefore be responded to as a prejudice based or hate incident.

One-off incidents are not bullying, however we separately record prejudiced based incidents identified using the above definition as we recognise the impact they can have and that they could be an indicator of bullying.

Bullying outside of school

We understand that bullying behaviour can take place on the way to and from school or in the wider community and can have a significant impact on a pupils' wellbeing and their ability to learn. We recognise that cyber bullying in particular can mean that a child or young person can experience bullying behaviour throughout their day and including when they are at home. Therefore, we act to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour outside of school as far as we are able to.

We may seek support from the Police and or Community Services to help us to do this effectively.

Being proactive

Bullying can seriously damage a child's confidence, sense of self-worth and future mental health, and they will often feel that they are at fault in some way. Pupils may not realise they are being bullied because of their age or special educational need. Pupils who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness or taking unusual absences. There may be evidence in learning patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school.

These signs and symptoms may indicate other problems, but bullying is considered a possibility and will be investigated. Therefore, like other safeguarding issues, staff aim not to wait to be told of bullying behaviour to raise their concerns.

We are also aware that some groups of pupils may find it harder to report bullying behaviour than others.

Prevention of bullying

We use a range of strategies to prevent bullying behaviour:

- Our school values of *ready, respectful and safe* are promoted across the school day and the curriculum
- Diversity and equality are taught across the curriculum
- PSHE education and other curriculum subjects are used to promote social and emotional skills including those needed to work together, show empathy, build friendships, get support and help others
- Small group work interventions are used to support those who need extra help to develop their social and emotional aspects of learning
- PSHE education lessons are used to develop understanding of safety and how to stay safe
- E-safety is taught across the curriculum and through assemblies and visual reminders around the school.
- PSHE education lessons are used to develop understanding of bullying, its impact and ways to respond to bullying situations. PSHE education is also used to develop understanding of similarity and differences and the unacceptability of all forms of prejudice and bullying
- Regular whole school assemblies are also used to develop understanding of bullying, its impact and encourage reporting
- The whole school participates in annual activities for anti-bullying week and a rolling programme of other events such as Black History Month, International Women's Day, Refugee Awareness Week etc.

- The Pupil Leadership Team provides a forum for discussing any bullying issues and for the pupils to decide ways of preventing it and supporting those who are bullied.
- Staff / Mentors are used to enable pupils to resolve friendship problems and low level behaviour without adult intervention

Staff training

All staff new to the school receive a copy of this policy. There is regular training for all school staff on aspects of bullying and we take care to ensure all staff are trained to understand the different forms bullying behaviour [including cyber-bullying] and are trained to identify, record and challenge prejudiced based bullying and incidents.

Strategies for responding to bullying behaviour – a whole school approach

Reporting bullying

Early identification of bullying is the most effective way of minimising bullying behaviour and the effects on the person being bullied. We acknowledge that the pupil doing the bullying behaviour needs to understand that their behaviour is unacceptable and will need support to change their behaviour and explore the underlying reasons for bullying.

Pupils are encouraged to report any harmful or hurtful behaviour, even if they are not sure whether it is bullying. They are encouraged to report for themselves or for their friends. They can do this through:

- Speaking to their class teacher
- Speaking to another trusted adult in the school community
- Speaking to a parent/other adult who may then contact the school in any of the ways listed
- Speaking to a friend and asking the friend to help tell an adult
- Calling a confidential helpline such as ChildLine.

In our school, we teach children to stand up for ourselves and each other (be an up stander) and not stand by (be a bystander).
Parents and carers must inform us if they think or know there is a problem for their own child or for another child. They can do this by calling the office and asking to speak to a member of SLT.

Recording bullying

All incidents of bullying behaviour must be recorded. All incidents are recorded according to type and these are recorded on CPOMS by staff so that the school can monitor the individual incidents, but also monitor incidents across the school.

This monitoring will inform the PSHE education curriculum and assemblies. The school also records prejudiced based incidents using the same system, but codes them differently so that they can be reported on clearly.

Responding to bullying

All pupils have a role to play to intervene to support their peers (if it is safe to do so) and to report bullying:

- Alert an adult in school to any concerns
- Talk to your friends about the situation
- Above all always tell someone.
- Adults will usually need to intervene to stop bullying behaviour
- All of us have a responsibility to avoid encouraging or inciting bullying behaviour and to not stand by and let someone else be harmed.

Pupils (if you have been bullied)

- If you feel able to and it is safe to do so, ask the child showing bullying behaviour to stop, ignore it, say no and walk away
- Try not show you are upset or angry, but remember this is not your fault
- Tell a friend what is happening and ask for their support
- Tell a trusted adult in or out of school (ask a friend to go with you if it helps)
- Do not delete evidence of online bullying as it can be used as evidence
- It is possible the situation will take time to resolve, but unless you tell someone, we cannot help you – and we can make sure you are safe

Parents and carers

- Listen and talk to your child about the situation and discuss and agree next steps
- Contact a member of SLT if you are worried or concerned
- Monitor social networks/computer use
- Reinforce the value of good behaviour

School Staff

- Take seriously any report of bullying behaviour
- Record it and report it to a member of SLT
- An appropriate member of staff will then investigate the bullying case and will: -
- Speak with the person targeted for bullying behaviour and involve them in what they would like to happen next
- Speak to the pupil carrying out the bullying behaviour and find out their perspectives
- Find witnesses to explain what they saw
- Contact and involve the parents and carers of those targeted and the parents and carers of those doing the bullying behaviour
- We will (age appropriately) challenge the behaviour and ideas of the person doing the bullying and help them to understand that what they said or did was hurtful and not in line with the school's values, ethos or policies
- We will consider the intentions of the perpetrator before helping him or her develop a repair plan
- We will let other pupils that have witnessed the incident know that the behaviour was unacceptable and that it is being dealt with
- We will keep the target of bullying behaviour and their parents and carers informed about progress and any actions taken and a review date
- We will record on CPOMS whether the incident has been resolved and whether the target and their parents or carers are satisfied with the outcome

- We will identify clear times to ‘check in’ with those involved (and including parents and carers) to ensure issues have been resolved. Where bullying behaviour is denied and evidence is hard to find, those involved will be closely observed and monitored. Any pupils who feel they are being bullied will be checked in with regularly by a designated adult. Head teacher and governors
- Reports of bullying and prejudiced based incidents will be made by the Head teacher /Deputy Head Teacher to the governing body
- The Head teacher and the governing body will monitor the effectiveness of this policy in discussion with the Pupil Leadership Team and the staff in school and will be involved in any unresolved concerns raised by pupils or parents and carers about bullying in the school community.

Interventions to support responses to bullying

As a school we are committed to ensure that those who have used bullying behaviours understand the impact of this and the unacceptability of bullying inside school and wider. We often use our learning mentor to provide this educational input. When appropriate and with the agreement of all parties, we also run restorative sessions to encourage those involved to take responsibility for and make amends for their actions.

Consequences

Sanctions by themselves are unlikely to change bullying behaviour but we may need to make decisions to keep the target of bullying behaviour safe (e.g. preventing a child who has used bullying behaviour from playing outside) or to help the child who has shown bullying behaviour learn some skills. These will be case and child-specific:

- Parents and carers of those involved will be informed of actions taken
- Records will be kept on pupils’ files

At Matthew Arnold, we do not believe that children should be excluded from school and that school is the best place for children to learn positive behaviours and the consequences of negative behaviour. We do have legal powers to exclude children and while we don’t intend to use these powers, it remains our right to do so.

The school is able to administer:

- Fixed – term suspension
- Permanent exclusion

See Positive Behaviour and Relationships Policy

Complaints

If a parent or carer thinks the school has not resolved a complaint effectively then they should follow the school’s complaints policy. This can be found on the school website.

Monitoring and Evaluation

This document will be monitored and evaluated regularly and updated to take account of new Government and local guidance, and the views of the whole school community.