

Southlands School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Date: September 2026

Review date: September 2027 or earlier where legislation, statutory guidance or school practice changes

Responsible: Headteacher / Senior Leadership Team

1. Statement of Intent

Southlands School is committed to providing a safe, supportive and respectful environment in which every pupil feels valued, secure and able to learn. Bullying is not accepted as part of school life and will always be taken seriously.

Southlands have a zero-tolerance approach to bullying. This means that reports and signs of bullying will always be taken seriously, addressed and followed up. It does not mean that every incident will receive an identical response. The school's response will be proportionate and will take account of the circumstances, context and individual needs of the pupils involved.

Our approach is consistent with the school's wider commitment to positive relationships, regulation, safeguarding and inclusion. We recognise that behaviour communicates something about a pupil's experience and that pupils may require support to understand the impact of their behaviour, develop safer ways of responding and repair relationships.

The school will therefore respond to bullying through a combination of prevention, early identification, appropriate consequences, support and follow-up. Where bullying is identified, the school will work to protect the pupil experiencing bullying while also addressing the behaviour and needs of the pupil or pupils responsible.

2. Purpose of the Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that:

- bullying is recognised and addressed consistently;
- pupils know what bullying is and how they can report concerns;
- staff understand their responsibilities when bullying is suspected or reported;
- pupils experiencing bullying receive appropriate support;
- pupils who bully others are helped to understand the impact of their behaviour and develop safer and more appropriate behaviours;
- incidents are recorded and monitored so that patterns and wider concerns can be identified;

- safeguarding concerns are recognised and escalated appropriately; and
- the school community works together to promote kindness, respect, empathy and inclusion.

3. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically or emotionally harming another person or group.

Bullying is generally characterised by a combination of repetition, intent, targeting and a real or perceived imbalance of power. The imbalance may relate to physical strength, social status, popularity, age, confidence, communication, SEND, vulnerability or another characteristic or circumstance.

A single incident is not normally considered bullying simply because it has caused significant upset. However, a single incident may still represent harmful behaviour, child-on-child abuse, harassment, discrimination, intimidation or another safeguarding or behaviour concern and will be responded to appropriately.

Similarly, the absence of a long history of incidents does not mean that a concern should be dismissed. Staff should consider the full context, including whether there is evidence of previous incidents, patterns of behaviour, targeting or a pupil feeling unable to report what has happened.

4. Forms of Bullying

Bullying can take many forms and may be direct or indirect. It may occur between individual pupils or involve groups of pupils.

Examples include:

- verbal bullying, including name-calling, insults, threats or humiliating comments;
- physical bullying, including hitting, pushing, kicking, damaging possessions or physically intimidating another pupil;
- emotional or relational bullying, including exclusion, manipulation, humiliation, spreading rumours or deliberately damaging friendships;
- online or cyberbullying, including harmful messages, images, posts, group chats or other online activity;
- racist or prejudicial bullying;
- homophobic, bi-phobic or transphobic bullying;
- sexist or sexual bullying;
- ableist bullying or bullying connected to SEND, disability or additional needs;
- bullying connected to appearance, family circumstances, socioeconomic background or other personal characteristics; and

- behaviour intended to isolate, control, intimidate or undermine another pupil.

Bullying can occur through technology and social media even where the pupils are not together physically. Online behaviour may also continue outside school hours and may still affect the safety and wellbeing of pupils within school.

5. Vulnerability and Additional Needs

Southlands recognise that some pupils may be particularly vulnerable to bullying. This may include pupils with SEND, communication difficulties, health needs, social or emotional vulnerabilities, differences in appearance or behaviour, or pupils who have difficulty recognising, reporting or responding to bullying.

Staff will remain alert to the possibility that a pupil's presentation may change when they are experiencing difficulties. Some pupils may not use the word "bullying" or may be unable to provide a clear account of what has happened.

The school will take reasonable steps to ensure that pupils are not stigmatised because of their individual needs and that reasonable adjustments are made where necessary to support communication, reporting and participation in any investigation or restorative process.

6. Prevention

Preventing bullying is a whole-school responsibility. Southlands promote a culture in which pupils are encouraged to treat others with respect, empathy and compassion and to recognise that everyone has a right to feel safe.

The school's curriculum, pastoral provision and daily routines provide opportunities for pupils to develop understanding of relationships, emotions, communication, difference, online safety and appropriate ways of resolving disagreement.

Staff model respectful relationships and respond to concerns consistently. Positive behaviour is recognised and reinforced through the school's wider behaviour approach, including recognition of resilience, kindness and compassion, communication, courage and independence.

Transitions and changes in circumstances are also considered as part of prevention. Where appropriate, staff will share relevant information and put additional support or monitoring in place for pupils who may be particularly vulnerable at times of change.

7. Recognising Possible Signs of Bullying

Staff should remain alert to changes in behaviour, presentation or engagement that may indicate that a pupil is experiencing difficulties. Possible signs may include withdrawal, increased anxiety, reluctance to attend school, changes in friendships, unexplained damage or loss of belongings, changes in sleep or mood, reduced engagement in learning, or a change in online behaviour.

These signs do not, on their own, demonstrate that bullying has occurred. They should prompt appropriate curiosity and support rather than assumptions. Staff should consider the wider context and speak with the pupil in a safe and supportive manner.

8. Responding to a Report or Concern

All reports of bullying must be taken seriously. Staff should listen carefully, remain calm and avoid making promises about the outcome of an investigation.

Where a pupil reports bullying, the immediate priority is to ensure their safety and wellbeing. Staff should establish enough information to understand the concern and identify any immediate risks. Where necessary, further information will then be gathered through appropriate conversations with those involved.

Where several pupils are involved, conversations should normally take place separately so that pupils can speak freely and so that accounts are not influenced by one another.

The school will establish what has happened, consider the available evidence and determine whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying or represents another form of harmful or unacceptable behaviour. Regardless of the terminology used, concerns will be addressed appropriately.

9. Child-on-Child Abuse and Safeguarding

Some behaviours described as bullying may also constitute child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern. This may include sexual harassment, sexual violence, discriminatory abuse, coercive or controlling behaviour, exploitation, threats or other harmful behaviour.

Where a safeguarding concern is identified, the school's safeguarding procedures will be followed. Staff must not attempt to manage a safeguarding concern solely as a behaviour matter.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead, or an appropriate deputy, will be involved where required. Information will be shared appropriately in accordance with safeguarding procedures and the school's responsibilities to protect pupils from harm.

10. Sexual Harassment and Sexualised Behaviour

Sexual harassment, sexualised comments, unwanted sexual attention, sharing sexual images or other inappropriate sexual behaviour will not be dismissed as "banter" or treated as acceptable peer behaviour.

Such concerns will be considered in the context of the individual pupils involved and may require safeguarding action in addition to the school's behaviour response.

The school will consider the impact on the pupil experiencing the behaviour, any pattern of behaviour, the age and developmental needs of those involved and any wider safeguarding concerns.

11. Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying may include harmful messages, comments, images, videos, group-chat behaviour, exclusion from online groups, impersonation, sharing information without consent or deliberately encouraging others to target an individual.

Pupils should be encouraged to report online bullying rather than retaliate. Where possible, relevant evidence such as screenshots or messages should be retained.

The school will investigate concerns that affect pupils or the school community, including concerns arising outside school where the school has lawful authority or where the behaviour has an impact on pupils' safety, wellbeing or education.

12. Investigation and Establishing Facts

The school will seek to establish the facts of a concern fairly and proportionately. The response will take account of the age and developmental stage of the pupils involved, their communication needs, SEND, vulnerabilities, the nature of the behaviour, the evidence available and any relevant contextual factors.

The school will avoid approaches that shame or humiliate pupils. At the same time, pupils are expected to take responsibility for their behaviour and understand the impact of their actions.

Where appropriate, restorative approaches may be used to help pupils understand the impact of their behaviour, repair relationships and develop safer ways of interacting. Restorative work will not be used where it would place a pupil at further risk or where safeguarding considerations make it inappropriate.

13. Response and Consequences

Where bullying is established, the school will take appropriate action in line with the Behaviour Policy. The response will be proportionate and will consider the circumstances of the incident, the impact on the pupil affected, the level and persistence of the behaviour, previous concerns and the needs of those involved.

Consequences may be accompanied by direct teaching, support, restorative work or other interventions. Consequences alone may not address the reasons underlying a pupil's behaviour, particularly where there are unmet communication, regulation, developmental or safeguarding needs.

Southlands do not operate an approach in which every incident automatically receives the same sanction. Consistency means that concerns are taken seriously and responded to appropriately, rather than that every situation is treated identically.

14. Supporting Pupils Experiencing Bullying

Pupils who experience bullying will be offered appropriate support. This may include a trusted adult, increased pastoral support, support with communication or regulation, practical

safety planning, monitoring of situations or help to rebuild confidence and positive peer relationships.

Support will be tailored to the pupil's individual needs. The school will avoid placing responsibility on the pupil experiencing bullying to resolve the situation themselves.

Where appropriate, parents or carers will be involved and kept informed about the actions being taken.

15. Supporting Pupils Who Have Bullied Others

Pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be supported to understand the impact of their actions and develop alternative ways of communicating, managing conflict and responding to difficult emotions.

The school will consider whether there are underlying factors that need to be addressed, including communication difficulties, social understanding, regulation needs, peer dynamics, vulnerability, exploitation or other safeguarding concerns.

This support does not remove accountability. Pupils remain responsible for their behaviour and may receive consequences in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

16. Working with Parents and Carers

The school recognises the importance of working constructively with parents and carers. Where appropriate, parents or carers will be informed when a significant concern is identified and will be given information about the steps being taken.

The school will protect the confidentiality of pupils and will not share personal information about another child beyond what is lawful and appropriate.

Parents and carers are encouraged to raise concerns promptly with the school rather than attempting to resolve incidents directly with other pupils or families.

17. Bullying Outside School

The school will consider concerns about bullying occurring outside school where the behaviour affects pupils, school life or the safety and wellbeing of members of the school community.

Where appropriate and lawful, the school may take action in relation to behaviour outside school. Serious threats, criminal behaviour or matters requiring police involvement will be referred to the appropriate authorities.

18. Safeguarding and Contextual Factors

Bullying may be connected to wider contextual safeguarding concerns. These may include exploitation, peer-group dynamics, community concerns, online activity, discrimination or other risks outside school.

Southlands will consider the wider context rather than treating incidents in isolation. Where necessary, the school will work with parents, the Designated Safeguarding Lead and relevant external agencies.

The school follows the safeguarding arrangements of the North Tyneside Safeguarding Children Partnership and will make referrals where the threshold for safeguarding intervention is met.

19. Recording

Concerns, investigations, actions and outcomes will be recorded appropriately. Southlands use Tracker system and CPOMS to record relevant information.

Records should provide a clear account of the concern, the actions taken, decisions made, support provided and any further action required. Where relevant, records should also identify patterns, repeated concerns, escalation or unresolved issues.

Information will be recorded and shared in accordance with safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection requirements.

20. Monitoring and Review

The Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead will review bullying concerns and relevant records regularly. Monitoring will consider whether there are patterns involving pupils, groups, locations, times, types of behaviour or protected characteristics.

Monitoring will also be used to identify opportunities to strengthen prevention, improve the consistency of staff responses and address wider cultural or environmental factors.

The effectiveness of this policy will be reviewed annually and following any significant change in legislation, statutory guidance or school practice.

21. Complaints

Where a parent, carer or pupil believes that a concern has not been addressed appropriately, they should raise this with the school in accordance with the school's Complaints Policy.

A complaint will be considered separately from the original behaviour or safeguarding concern, although information from both processes may be relevant.

22. Staff Training and Professional Learning

Staff will receive appropriate information and training to support them in recognising, preventing and responding to bullying. This will include awareness of safeguarding, child-on-child abuse, discrimination, online behaviour and the needs of pupils with SEND.

Staff are expected to seek advice from the Designated Safeguarding Lead or senior colleagues where they are unsure how to respond to a concern.