



Anti-bullying Policy

19 October 2026

About This Document

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History

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0.1	7 Sep - 2018	René Esterhuizen, Clerk to Trustees	First release. DRAFT
1.0	7 Sep - 2018	School Governors	Approved and adopted.
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1.8	19 Oct - 2026	René Esterhuizen, Headteacher	Reviewed, changes made to come in-line with new KCSIE guidelines.

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Aims.....	4
3. Definition of Bullying	4
4. Bullying, Child-On-Child Abuse and Safeguarding	5
5. Prejudice-Based and Discriminatory Bullying	5
6. Responsibilities	6
7. Prevention.....	6
8. Reporting Bullying.....	7
9. Responding to An Incident.....	7
10. Cyberbullying	7
11. Support.....	8
12. Recording and Monitoring.....	8
13. Complaints	8
14. Monitoring and Review.....	8
Appendix I: Hate.....	9

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Vine Christian School is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which pupils can learn and flourish. Bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. The school will take reports seriously, respond promptly and proportionately, support the child who has been bullied and address the behaviour and needs of the child or children responsible.
- 1.2. This policy should be read alongside the school's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Online Safety Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, Searching and Confiscation Policy, Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes Policy and Complaints Procedure.
- 1.3. This policy has regard to Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE 2026), the Independent School Standards, the Equality Act 2010 and the Department for Education guidance Preventing and tackling bullying. Paragraph 10 of the Independent School Standards requires an effective anti-bullying strategy to be drawn up and implemented.

2. Aims

- 2.1. To:
 - i. prevent bullying as far as reasonably possible through a whole-school culture of respect and vigilance
 - ii. make clear to pupils, staff and parents what bullying is and how concerns can be reported
 - iii. respond promptly and consistently to reported or observed bullying
 - iv. safeguard and support pupils who are bullied, including where bullying forms part of child-on-child abuse
 - v. address the behaviour, motivation and support needs of pupils who bully others
 - vi. record and review incidents so that patterns, repeat concerns and vulnerable groups can be identified
 - vii. prevent and respond to cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying, whether it occurs on or off the school site where it affects pupils or the school community.

3. Definition of Bullying

- 3.1. Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally and commonly involves an imbalance of power. The imbalance may be physical, psychological, social or technological, and may be real or perceived.
- 3.2. A single serious incident may not meet the usual definition of bullying because it is not repeated. It may nevertheless constitute harassment, discrimination, violence, sexual harassment, child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern and must be dealt with under the appropriate school procedures.
- 3.3. Forms of Bullying:

- i. physical bullying – hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting, damaging or taking property, or other physical intimidation
 - ii. verbal bullying – name-calling, insults, threats, taunts, offensive remarks, sexualised language or repeated teasing
 - iii. relational or social bullying – deliberate exclusion, isolation, spreading rumours, manipulation of friendships or public humiliation
 - iv. cyberbullying – bullying through social media, messaging services, gaming platforms, email, images, videos, group chats, AI-generated or digitally altered content, or other digital technology
 - v. prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying – behaviour related to a protected characteristic, perceived characteristic, association with another person, or another aspect of identity or vulnerability, including racist, faith-targeted, misogynistic, misandrist, homophobic, biphobic or other prejudicial behaviour
 - vi. sexual bullying or harassment – unwanted sexual comments, jokes, gestures, rumours, pressure, touching, image-based abuse or other sexualised behaviour.
- 3.4. Bullying can take place face to face or online, inside or outside school. The school may respond to conduct outside school, including online conduct, where it affects the welfare of a pupil, the orderly running of the school or the school community.

4. Bullying, Child-On-Child Abuse and Safeguarding

- 4.1. Bullying can be a form of child-on-child abuse. Staff must be alert to the possibility that bullying may involve abuse, exploitation, coercion, sexual harassment, sexual violence, sharing of nudes and semi-nudes, racism, faith-targeted abuse, prejudice-based or discriminatory behaviour, criminal behaviour or a risk of significant harm.
- 4.2. Abusive or sexualised behaviour must never be dismissed as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or similar. Where there is a safeguarding concern, staff must report it without delay to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Deputy DSL and follow the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.
- 4.3. If a pupil is in immediate danger, or there is reason to suspect a crime or serious risk, the school will seek advice from or refer to the police, children’s social care or other relevant agencies as appropriate.

5. Prejudice-Based and Discriminatory Bullying

- 5.1. The school will not tolerate bullying, harassment or victimisation related to race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or any other protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, nor bullying based on a perceived characteristic or association with another person. The school will also address bullying connected with special educational needs, health needs, appearance, family circumstances, social background or any other difference or vulnerability.

- 5.2. Schools may teach and uphold their religious ethos while ensuring that pupils are treated with dignity and are protected from bullying, harassment and unlawful discrimination.
- 5.3. Prejudice-related incidents will be recorded and considered carefully even where they do not meet the definition of repeated bullying. Where conduct may amount to a hate crime or another criminal offence, the school will consider referral to the police and will take safeguarding advice where required.

6. Responsibilities

6.1. Staff will:

- i. model respectful behaviour and challenge bullying, discriminatory language and harmful behaviour consistently
- ii. be alert to changes in behaviour, attendance, friendships, wellbeing or online activity that may indicate bullying
- iii. listen to pupils, take concerns seriously and avoid blaming or shaming
- iv. record and report bullying in accordance with school procedures and report safeguarding concerns to the DSL or Deputy DSL
- v. take account of pupils' age, development, SEND, communication needs, vulnerabilities and any reasonable adjustments required
- vi. provide appropriate support to all pupils involved and monitor whether the behaviour has stopped.
- vii.

6.2. Parents and carers will be encouraged to:

- i. report concerns promptly and provide relevant information or evidence
- ii. support their child without encouraging retaliation
- iii. work with the school to resolve concerns and reinforce respectful behaviour
- iv. raise concerns through the school's Complaints Procedure if they remain dissatisfied after the anti-bullying process has been followed.

6.3. Pupils will be encouraged to:

- i. treat others with respect and not participate in, encourage or share bullying behaviour
- ii. report bullying affecting themselves or others to a trusted adult
- iii. preserve relevant online evidence where safe to do so and not forward harmful material
- iv. seek adult help rather than intervening physically or placing themselves at risk.

7. Prevention

- 7.1. The school will use a whole-school approach to prevent bullying. This will include clear behaviour expectations, appropriate supervision, staff training, age-appropriate teaching through the

curriculum and RSHE/PSHE where applicable, online-safety education, opportunities for pupils to report concerns, and work with parents and carers.

- 7.2. The school will identify times, places and groups where pupils may be at increased risk and will adjust supervision, pastoral support or other arrangements where needed. Particular consideration will be given to pupils with SEND, pupils who are or have been known to children's social care, and pupils who may be targeted because of a protected characteristic or other vulnerability.

8. Reporting Bullying

- 8.1. Pupils may report bullying to any member of staff. Staff should report concerns to: Mrs René Esterhuizen, Headteacher. Where the concern may be a safeguarding matter, it must also be reported to the DSL or Deputy DSL without delay.
- 8.2. The school will make clear to pupils how they can report concerns, including where they do not feel able to report face to face.

9. Responding to An Incident

- 9.1. When bullying is reported or suspected, the school will respond according to the circumstances.
- 9.2. The response will normally include:
- i. ensuring the immediate safety and wellbeing of the pupil or pupils involved
 - ii. listening to the pupils involved separately where appropriate and recording relevant information
 - iii. considering whether the matter is bullying, a safeguarding concern, discrimination/harassment, a criminal matter or a combination of these
 - iv. involving the DSL or Deputy DSL where safeguarding concerns arise
 - v. informing parents/carers at an appropriate stage unless doing so would place a child at risk or prejudice a safeguarding or police response
 - vi. applying proportionate behaviour measures or sanctions in accordance with the Behaviour Policy
 - vii. providing support, education and where appropriate restorative work for the child who has bullied as well as support for the child who has been bullied
 - viii. agreeing follow-up arrangements and checking that the bullying has stopped and that there has been no retaliation.

10. Cyberbullying

- 10.1. Cyberbullying will be treated as seriously as bullying in person. Staff should preserve relevant evidence where possible without unnecessarily viewing, copying or circulating harmful material. Where an electronic device may need to be searched or confiscated, staff must follow the Searching

and Confiscation Policy. Where nude or semi-nude images are involved, staff must follow the Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes Policy and safeguarding procedures.

- 10.2. The school may take action in relation to online bullying outside school where it affects a pupil's welfare, causes disruption within school or otherwise has a connection with the school community.

11. Support

- 11.1. Support will be tailored to the needs of the pupils involved. This may include a trusted adult, pastoral support, safety planning, counselling, reasonable adjustments, work with parents, online-safety support, timetable or supervision changes, or referral to external services. The school will avoid arrangements that unnecessarily isolate or disadvantage the pupil who has been bullied.

12. Recording and Monitoring

- 12.1. The school will keep a record of reported bullying incidents and the action taken. Records should distinguish, where appropriate, bullying, discriminatory/prejudice-related incidents, safeguarding concerns and behaviour incidents, while avoiding unnecessary duplication.
- 12.2. The record should normally include the date, pupils involved, nature and location of the incident, any online element, protected-characteristic or prejudice-related factor where relevant, action taken, parent communication, safeguarding referrals and follow-up.
- 12.3. The Headteacher, Governors and Trustees will monitor bullying information at appropriate intervals to identify patterns, repeated incidents, vulnerable groups, locations or times of increased risk and the effectiveness of the school's preventative measures. Reports for governance purposes should not unnecessarily identify individual pupils.

13. Complaints

- 13.1. Where a parent or pupil remains dissatisfied with the school's handling of a bullying concern, the school's Complaints Procedure should be followed. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed under the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy irrespective of any complaint.

14. Monitoring and Review

- 14.1. This policy and the school's anti-bullying strategy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a significant incident, a pattern of concerns, a change in guidance or evidence that arrangements are not effective. Pupil, staff and parent views should be considered where appropriate.

Appendix I: Hate

Hate Incident and Hate Crime

Definitions:

Hate. Hate is a strong word, used to reflect the way that hate motivated incidents can contain a message that communicates to entire groups of people that they are unwelcome and unworthy of social respect. Children and young people should understand the impact hate motivated incidents can have upon both individuals and the broader community.

A hate incident is legally defined as:

“any incident, which may or may not constitute a criminal offence, which is perceived by the victim or any person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate.”

Hate incidents may be based upon homophobic/sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion/belief, disability/SEN, gender reassignment or transphobic prejudice. Hate incidents can consist of verbal abuse or insults for example, detrimental comments, abusive language and “jokes” relating to race, religion, disability/learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender reassignment or transphobic prejudice, , insulting gestures, abusive telephone calls, offensive messages.

A hate crime is legally defined as:

“any hate incident, which constitutes a criminal offence, perceived by the victim or any other person, as being motivated by prejudice or hate.” (ACPO 2005 definition).

Hate incidents and bullying

Bullying is defined as:

“the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person by another(s), where the relationship involves an imbalance of power.”

Bullying can be carried out physically, verbally, emotionally or through cyberspace. This behaviour can include verbal bullying for example name calling, teasing, threatening; physical for example hitting, punching, kicking, inappropriate touching; relational bullying for example ignoring, leaving out, spreading rumours; indirect bullying, for example stealing, damaging belongings, targeted graffiti; cyber bullying for example sending abusive texts or emails.

Hate incident categories

Ethnicity/race:

Any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person based on ethnic origin, skin colour, nationality, culture, language, real or perceived racism.

Religion/belief:

Any incident which is perceived to be based on prejudice towards or hatred of the religion/belief of the victim or so perceived by the victim or any other person. For example, beliefs, faith, lack of faith real or perceived.

Homophobic/sexual orientation:

Any incident that is perceived by the victim, or any other person, to be motivated by a prejudice based on another person's sexuality, or perceived sexuality. For example, related to sexual orientation, or perceived orientation of target or target's family and/or homophobic/biphobic abuse and language used.

Disability/SEN:

Any incident perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by the offender's prejudice against people because of their disability or so perceived by the victim or any other person. For example, real or perceived disability, special needs, gifted or talented or health conditions or association with someone in those categories.

Gender reassignment/gender-questioning/transphobic Incidents

Any incident perceived by the victim or any other person to be motivated by prejudice relating to gender reassignment, being transgender or perceived to be transgender, gender-questioning, or not conforming to sex-based stereotypes. Gender reassignment is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. Such incidents should be addressed in accordance with the school's safeguarding, anti-bullying and equality duties, taking account of the individual child's circumstances.

Reporting

Where an incident may constitute a hate crime or another criminal offence, the school will follow its safeguarding procedures, involve the DSL as appropriate and consider referral to the police. Immediate threats or emergencies should be reported to the police without delay. The underpinning rationale behind any hate incident is perception. It is the perception of the victim or any other person (e.g. a witness) that is the determining factor.

You will need to have the following information:

- Incident date
- Where: in school, out of school?
- Incident type: ethnicity/race, sexual orientation, religion/belief, gender reassignment/gender questioning, disability/SEN, other?
- Incident category: cyber bullying, physical assault, damage, behaviour designed to exclude, verbal abuse?
- What happened: A brief description is fine, try to keep within one paragraph.
- Is this a persistent incident: yes or no?
- Action taken in support of victim(s): DSL, involve parent, restorative conversation, involve police, targeted behaviour support worker, targeted provision, involve cluster targeted services, other?
- Action taken in support of perpetrator(s): DSL, involve parent, restorative conversation, involve police, targeted behaviour support worker, targeted provision, involve cluster targeted services, other?
- Reported by: staff member, member of the public, police, peer, parent, and carer other?
- Staff member responsible: who is the member of staff who is responsible for resolving this incident?
- **DfE and Home Office advice - Government website:** <https://educateagainsthate.com>