ST. OSWALD'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying Policy

Date reviewed: November 2026
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Approved by Governors: November 2026

Introduction

Catholic belief is that all people are created in the image and likeness of God and as such, should all be treated justly.

"The dignity of the human person is rooted in his or her creation in the image and likeness of God." Catechism of the Catholic Church

At St Oswald's, we strive to ensure that this belief is put into practice so that all are welcome. We work to ensure that each person, in all their uniqueness, is able to thrive in our Catholic school, irrespective of gender, race, religion, ethnicity, socio-economic background, physical appearance, disability or the actual or perceived sexual orientation of themselves or of their parents/carers.

"Because all people are equal in God's sight, every person possesses the same dignity and has a claim to the same human rights. Hence every kind of social, racist, sexist, cultural or religious discrimination against a person is an unacceptable injustice." YOUCAT 330

At St Oswald's, we endeavour to create a safe and stimulating environment where everyone knows that they are valued as God's children. Every person has the right to be treated with respect and each person has the responsibility to treat others in the same way. Our mission statement is lived out so that children are enabled to have the confidence and strategies to speak up and tell of any bullying experiences, knowing that positive and fair action will be taken.

At St Oswald's, we aim to promote a learning community based on the Gospel values of love, trust and respect where the achievements of everyone are recognised and celebrated. Living, Learning and Loving together with Christ.

This policy should be read alongside the school's Behaviour and Relationships Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, SEND Policy, Online Safety Policy and Use of Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force Policy.

The school follows the Department for Education's guidance on Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Behaviour in Schools and Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, alongside its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Aims and objectives

- To provide a secure, safe and positive Christian environment free from threat, harassment or any type of bullying behaviour, where children and adults can grow and develop.
- To create a school ethos in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable.
- To produce a consistent whole school response to any bullying incidents that may occur.
- To work with all members of the school community (staff, children, parents/carers and governors) to foster productive partnerships which help maintain a bullying–free environment.
- To celebrate diversity and the uniqueness of individuals.
- To ensure that all reports of bullying are taken seriously, investigated promptly, recorded appropriately and followed up to establish that the behaviour has stopped.
- To recognise that bullying may constitute a safeguarding concern and respond in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

What is bullying?

Bullying can take many forms and can be experienced in many different ways.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as:

'The intentional repetitive or persistent hurting of one person by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power'

The Department for Education recognises that there is no single legal definition of bullying. Bullying is generally understood as behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another person physically or emotionally. It often involves an imbalance of power, which may arise from physical strength, social status, group size, vulnerability or access to information and technology.

Bullying can include physical assault, threats, name-calling, teasing, deliberate exclusion, spreading rumours and online harassment. Although bullying is usually repeated, a single serious incident may still constitute harmful behaviour or child-on-child abuse and must be addressed appropriately.

The DFE 2014 guidance states that schools should have their own definition of bullying. Bullying is defined by our school community as *"when someone or a group of people deliberately keeps being unkind to someone else. It can happen when someone is hurt, called names, threatened, left out or made to feel upset or frightened. Bullying can also happen online, through messages, games or social media. Even if you can't see the person, your words and actions can still really hurt them. Bullying is not okay because everyone deserves to feel happy, safe and included. At St Oswald's, we believe everyone should be treated with kindness and respect."*

The school recognises that not every disagreement, friendship difficulty or isolated incident constitutes bullying. However, all incidents of unkind, discriminatory or harmful behaviour will be addressed in accordance with the Behaviour and Relationships Policy, whether or not they meet the definition of bullying.

Types of Bullying

Bullying can take many different forms and may be related to:

- Race, religion or culture
- Home circumstances
- Appearance or health conditions
- Special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities
- Gifts and talents
- Sexual orientation
- Gender
- Gender reassignment or perceived gender identity
- Sexual harassment or harmful sexual behaviour

Bullying related to race, religion or culture

Racist, faith-based or cultural bullying is bullying based on a person's background, colour, religion or heritage. This form of bullying has a negative impact on a child's sense of identity, self-worth and self-esteem. It also can be negative about the child's family, and about their ethnic or faith community as a whole.

Bullying related to home circumstances

The home circumstances of children can make them vulnerable to bullying. This may include obvious signs of affluence or lack of it, being a looked after child, being a young carer or having a family member with a disability or special need.

Bullying related to appearance or health conditions

Children with health or visible medical conditions, or perceived physical characteristics, such as size and weight may be vulnerable to bullying.

Bullying related to special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities

Children with SEN and disabilities are vulnerable to bullying. Their differences can be used by bullies to isolate them from friendship groups.

Bullying related to gifts and talents

Children and young people who are gifted and talented can be vulnerable to bullying. Their achievements and abilities can set them apart from their peers. This may lead to resentment and jealousy among their peers which may make them targets for bullying behaviour.

Bullying related to sexual orientation

Homophobic bullying may include derogatory language, name-calling, exclusion, threats or other harmful behaviour directed at someone because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation, or that of a family member. It can be used as an insult or to refer to something or someone as inferior e.g. derogatory use of the word ‘gay’.

Bullying related to gender

Sexist bullying is based on attitudes or stereotypes about boys and girls. It can include name-calling, teasing, exclusion or treating someone unfairly because they are a boy or a girl. Both boys and girls can experience this type of bullying.

Bullying related to gender reassignment or perceived gender identity

This type of bullying involves targeting someone because of their gender identity, perceived gender identity or because they do not conform to traditional expectations of how boys and girls should look or behave. It may include name-calling, teasing, exclusion, threats or deliberately making someone feel different or unwelcome.

Bullying involving sexual harassment or harmful sexual behaviour

This type of bullying may include unwanted sexual comments, inappropriate jokes, sexualised name-calling, gestures or unwanted physical contact. Such behaviour can make children feel uncomfortable,

embarrassed, frightened or unsafe. All incidents will be taken seriously and addressed in an age-appropriate manner, with safeguarding procedures followed where necessary.

A single incident of sexual harassment or harmful sexual behaviour will be taken seriously, even where it does not meet the definition of bullying and will be addressed in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Forms of Bullying

Different forms of bullying can be seen within the identified types of bullying. Forms of bullying include:

Physical

This can include physical harm such as punching or pushing, being made to give money or belongings, or forcing a child to act against their will.

Verbal

Verbal bullying can include being teased in a nasty way, being called 'gay' in a derogatory way, being insulted about race, religion or culture, being called names or being the subject of offensive comments.

Indirect

This can include being deliberately excluded from groups or ignored, or being the subject of tales or rumours.

Electronic /'cyberbullying'

This form of bullying includes verbal or indirect bullying via text message, email, instant messenger services or social network sites or images spread via the internet or mobile phones. Online bullying may also involve group messaging, gaming platforms, sharing or threatening to share images, impersonation, repeated unwanted contact or deliberately excluding others from online groups.

Where online bullying occurs outside school, the school will respond where the behaviour affects pupils' safety, wellbeing or the school environment, in accordance with its Behaviour and Relationships Policy and safeguarding procedures.

Our Approach to Bullying

Our approach to bullying is informed by the Catholic faith.

"Every human being is created in God's image and likeness and therefore is valuable and worthy of respect." *Christ at the Centre*

Key Principles

- The school leadership will work with all in our community to prevent all forms of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, and to fully address incidents of bullying as they arise.
- All bullying in its variety of forms and types will be taken equally seriously and addressed appropriately.
- We will address bullying within the framework of Catholic beliefs and Church teaching and in a way which is age appropriate.

Responding to bullying

When responding to incidents of bullying we aim:

- to make the child who has been bullied feel safe
- to encourage better behaviour from the child who has displayed bullying behaviours

The school will be prepared to:

• Take the problem seriously

• Investigate the incident - who was involved (or alleged to be involved) where and when it happened, what happened.

• Speak separately and sensitively with the pupil who has experienced bullying and the pupil or pupils alleged to have displayed bullying behaviour, using age-appropriate language and avoiding assumptions before the investigation is complete.

• Interview any witnesses

• Keep the parents/carers of the pupil who has experienced bullying informed of the investigation, support provided and relevant outcomes, while respecting the confidentiality of other pupils.

• Share relevant information with staff who need to know in order to safeguard pupils, provide support and prevent further incidents.

• Record reported and confirmed incidents of bullying on CPOMS, including the investigation, actions taken, parental communication, safeguarding considerations and follow-up outcomes.

• Decide on appropriate action, such as (but not limited to):

  - Facilitate an apology or restorative conversation where appropriate, provided this is voluntary, safe and in the best interests of the pupil who has experienced bullying.
  - Apply appropriate and proportionate sanctions in accordance with the Behaviour and Relationships Policy, taking account of individual circumstances and reasonable adjustments.
  - Inform bully/ies' parents
  - Hold lessons / class discussions about bullying
  - Provide a safe haven during school hours for victim
  - Provide support teacher for victim

- Provide appropriate support and intervention to help the pupil who has displayed bullying behaviour understand its impact and make positive changes.

Where bullying involves serious violence, threats, sexual harassment, discriminatory abuse or other potential safeguarding concerns, staff must report the matter promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL). The DSL will consider the need for further safeguarding action, including referrals to children's social care or the police where appropriate.

The school will monitor the situation following an incident, checking with the pupil who has experienced bullying and relevant staff to ensure that the behaviour has stopped and that the pupil feels safe. Further action will be taken where necessary.

Where a bullying incident results in consideration of suspension or permanent exclusion, the school will follow the procedures set out in its Behaviour and Relationships Policy and the Department for Education's statutory exclusions guidance.

Where an incident requires the use of restrictive interventions or reasonable force, staff must follow the school's Use of Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force Policy, including the relevant recording and parental reporting requirements.

It is important that all staff, including lunchtime supervisory staff, pick up on any kind incidents witnessed e.g. pupils being pressurised or teased by their peers, and do not leave them unchallenged. As well as challenging the bullying behaviour support should be given to the pupil and the situation further investigated quietly and calmly. Lunchtime supervisory staff will refer an incident for further action if necessary. Parents are encouraged to contact school if they are worried that their child might be involved in bullying others or being bullied.

Homophobic bullying and using homophobic language

Homophobic language can be used as an insult or to refer to something or someone as inferior such as the derogatory use of the word ‘gay’. The derogatory use of homophobic language in our school will always be challenged even if it appears to be being used without any homophobic intent. The school will also challenge other discriminatory or prejudicial language, including racist, sexist, disablist and transphobic language, whether or not it is directed at a particular individual. Incidents will be addressed in an age-appropriate manner and recorded where appropriate.

Children with SEN or disabilities

Our school is committed to actively promoting the equality of opportunity for all children with SEN or disabilities. Children with SEND or disabilities may be particularly vulnerable to bullying and may experience additional barriers to recognising or reporting incidents. Staff will ensure that appropriate support and reasonable adjustments are provided to enable pupils to communicate concerns and access help.

Where a pupil with SEND or a disability displays bullying behaviour, the school will respond in accordance with the Behaviour and Relationships Policy, taking account of the pupil's individual needs, any relevant support plans and its duties under the Equality Act 2010.

Staff training

All adults working in the school know the anti-bullying policy and the procedures and proformas used for reporting of incidents. Training on anti-bullying is part of the induction of new staff.

All staff receive training about being sensitive to the changes of behaviour that may indicate that a child is being bullied. Those being bullied may demonstrate physical, emotional and behavioural problems or changes.

Staff are expected to take preventative measures. This includes being aware of where and when bullying might take place. The staff training includes equality training to raise awareness among staff of potential prejudicial behaviour and how not to reinforce stereotypes.

Staff will also receive appropriate safeguarding updates relating to child-on-child abuse, discriminatory behaviour, sexual harassment and online bullying, in accordance with Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Curriculum

As a Catholic school Religious Education is the core subject of our curriculum. There are opportunities within RE to make links with other organisations, for example Mini Vinnies, to reinforce the principles of human rights, Catholic social teaching and the uniqueness of the individual, made in God's image and likeness. Our curriculum is planned and delivered to enable children to develop empathy, to understand the effect bullying has on people and to take responsibility for trying to prevent bullying. Through a variety of planned activities across the curriculum such as circle time, role-play, class performances, celebration assemblies, our children gain in self-confidence and develop strategies to speak up for themselves and express their own thoughts and opinions. Children have a wide range of opportunities to develop their knowledge and understanding of diversity and an assortment of strategies to protect themselves from bullying. This is explicitly planned within the PSHE and RHE programmes delivered in school and through the annual celebration of Anti-bullying week.

Through the school's Life to the Full Plus programme, pupils will be taught about respectful relationships, recognising bullying, online safety, seeking help and the importance of treating others with dignity and respect.

Staff are also expected and encouraged to take advantage of unplanned opportunities to celebrate diversity and to reinforce the principles of anti-bullying.

Pastoral structure

Children are elected to the school council each year. The elected school council regularly meets and gives a voice to the pupils in our school.

All children know that they will be listened to and their problems and worries are taken seriously and responded to with sensitivity.

Pupils will be reminded regularly that they can report bullying or worries to any trusted adult in school. Staff will listen sensitively, take concerns seriously and ensure that appropriate action is taken. Pupils will be reassured that they will be supported when reporting bullying.

Collective Worship

In collective worship, themes and values play a part in challenging prejudice and promoting justice for all. The timetable of collective worship includes specific opportunities throughout the year, eg. Statements to Live By, Anti-bullying week, and online safety week, which support work in anti-bullying. The children are encouraged to live the gospel values by following Christ's example.

Reporting and recording of incidents of bullying

Our school has a clear and well publicised system for reporting bullying. Staff, children and parents/carers are explicitly reminded of the school's procedures, especially during anti-bullying week.

All allegations and incidents of bullying will be taken seriously and investigated appropriately. Staff will record concerns and incidents on CPOMS, including the nature of the concern, pupils involved, relevant witness accounts, actions taken and communication with parents/carers.

Records will distinguish between reported concerns, investigated incidents and confirmed bullying, ensuring that conclusions are based on the available evidence.

Where an incident raises a safeguarding concern, the Designated Safeguarding Lead will be informed promptly and the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed.

The Headteacher and senior leaders will monitor bullying records to identify repeated incidents, patterns of behaviour, vulnerable pupils and any further preventative action required.

Parents/carers will be informed and involved as appropriate, while maintaining confidentiality and safeguarding the interests of all pupils concerned.

The Role of the Local Governing Committee (LGC)

The LGC monitors the incidents of bullying that occur and reviews the effectiveness of the school policy regularly. The governors require the headteacher to keep accurate records of all incidents of bullying and to report to the governors on request about the effectiveness of school anti-bullying strategies.

Reports to governors will ordinarily provide anonymised information about the number, nature and patterns of bullying incidents, together with the actions taken to prevent recurrence and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's approach.

Monitoring the Policy

This policy is monitored by the Headteacher, who reports to governors about the effectiveness of the policy. To discover the extent to which bullying exists in school and to monitor the extent to which our anti-bullying policy is effective, the log and strategies will be reviewed alongside the annual pupil questionnaire.

It is the responsibility of the school LGC to review the effectiveness of this policy. This is done by examining the school's CPOMS log, and through the Headteacher's report. Governors will analyse information with regard to the types and forms of bullying.

The policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where changes to statutory guidance, safeguarding requirements or school procedures make this necessary. The Headteacher will ensure that the policy remains consistent with the Behaviour and Relationships Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Use of Restrictive Interventions and Reasonable Force Policy.