

Author	Encarna Aparicio	Target group	All employees, consultants and volunteers
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Anti-bullying Policy

Scope and publication

This Anti-bullying Policy applies to all students, staff and volunteers at all Anthem Schools, irrespective of age and whether or not a student is in the care of the school when or if bullying occurs, including bullying incidents that occur online or off the school premises, such as (but not limited to) on school transport, outside the local shops or in the town centre.

This policy is available on each school's website and is provided to all parents/carers, students, staff and volunteers. This policy can be made available in large print or other accessible formats if required.

Legislation and statutory requirements

- This policy has been drafted in line with the Department for Education (DfE) guidance Preventing and tackling bullying (July 2017): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/623895/Preventing_and_tackling_bullying_advice.pdf
- Schedule 1 of the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014; paragraph 7 outlines a school's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, paragraph 9 requires the school to have a written behaviour policy and paragraph 10 requires the school to have an anti-bullying strategy.
- Equality Act 2010 <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/equality-act-2010-advice-for-schools>

Policy statement

Bullying behaviour is always unacceptable and will not be tolerated at this school because:

- It is harmful to the person who is bullied as well as to those who engage in bullying behaviour and those who support them and can in some cases lead to lasting psychological damage, including suicide.
- It interferes with a student's right to enjoy their learning and leisure time.
- It is contrary to the school's aims and values.

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

Aims

It is recognised that all schools are likely to encounter problems with bullying at some time. Our schools regard bullying as particularly serious and firm action will always be taken against it. The aims of this policy are to:

- Maintain and promote a positive and inclusive culture among all students and staff by setting out positive action to help prevent incidents of bullying from occurring.

- Deter bullying behaviour by detecting it when it occurs and responding appropriately on a case-by-case basis which may lead to disciplinary sanctions and if necessary, permanent exclusion.
- Produce a consistent response by the school to any bullying incidents that may take place.
- To support and protect victims of bullying and ensure they are listened to.
- To enable parents/carers to feel confident that bullying will be firmly dealt with by the school.
- To inform all members of the school community that bullying behaviour will not be tolerated.
- To comply with the school's duties under equality legislation.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of:

- the **Headteacher** to communicate this policy to the school community and to ensure that sufficient support is in place for students who may be impacted by bullying in school and that where appropriate disciplinary and support measures are applied fairly, consistently and reasonably, as well as ensuring that all school staff, both teaching and non-teaching receive training.
- **all staff and volunteers** to support, uphold and implement this policy accordingly.
- **parents/carers** to support their children, work in partnership with the school, and promote good behaviour, and respect for others, at home.
- **students** to abide by the policy.

Everyone should help ensure that no one becomes a victim of bullying and report any suspected incidents of bullying behaviour. We expect all members of our school communities to comply with this policy and work towards an inclusive, kind school culture with positive attitudes towards all members of our community. Discriminatory words and behaviour should always be treated as unacceptable. We are particularly supportive of people with disabilities and encourage students to be sensitive to those whose ethnic, cultural and linguistic groups are different from their own, within and outside the school.

Definition of 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

Type of bullying	Definition
Prejudice-based and discriminatory, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, 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 or gaming sites

Low-level disruption

Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can itself have a significant impact on its target. If left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay, it can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. Early intervention can help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and is not acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.

Non-intended hurt

Any behaviour which a reasonable bystander would say was calculated or intended to hurt or upset the victim is wrong and may well constitute bullying. However, not all bullying is deliberate or intended to hurt. These forms of bullying are equally unacceptable, and it is not a justification for a bully to say that he does not believe the victim is upset or hurt by their actions. It may however be that the bullying behaviour is not malicious and can be corrected with advice without the need to for disciplinary sanctions.

Generative Artificial intelligence (AI)

Artificial intelligence (AI) tools are now widespread and easy to access. Staff, volunteers, students and parents/carers may be familiar with generative chatbots such as ChatGPT and Google Bard.

Anthem Schools Trust and its schools recognises that AI has many uses to help students 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.

Anthem Schools Trust and its schools will treat any use of AI to bully students in line with this policy and our Behaviour & Ethos Policy.

Safeguarding and child-on-child abuse

Children and young people may be harmful to one another in a number of ways which would be classified as child-on-child abuse. In most instances, the conduct of students towards each other will be covered by the School Behaviour & Ethos Policy. However, some allegations might be of such a serious nature that they become safeguarding concerns.

Under the Children Act 1989 a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is *'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'*. Where this is the case, the school staff should discuss with the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead and report their concerns to their local authority children's social care and work with them to take appropriate action. Even where safeguarding is not considered to be an issue, schools may need to draw on a range of external services to support the student who is experiencing bullying, or to tackle any underlying issue which has contributed to a student engaging in bullying. Please refer to the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy for further information.

Criminal law

Although bullying in itself is not a specific criminal offence in the UK, it is important to bear in mind that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour – or communications – could be a criminal offence, for example under the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Public Order Act 1986.

If school staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police. For example, under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, any person who sends an electronic communication which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender, is guilty of an offence if their purpose in sending it was to cause distress or anxiety to the recipient.

Preventing bullying

"A school's response to bullying should not start at the point at which a child has been bullied. The best schools develop a more sophisticated approach in which school staff proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place." (Department for Education - Preventing and tackling bullying, July 2017)

The school is committed to promoting positive values of mutual respect and concern and to taking action to prevent bullying in a wide range of contexts. Preventing and raising awareness of bullying is essential in keeping incidents in our school to a minimum.

Our School Behaviour & Ethos Policy sets clear expectations about acceptable behaviour and how members of the school community should treat one another.

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 students (child-on-child abuse).
- recognise the potential for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to be disproportionately impacted by bullying and will implement additional pastoral support as required.

- recognise that bullying may be affected and influenced by gender, age, ability and culture of those involved.
- openly discuss differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as students 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 positively and responsibly.
- work with staff, the wider community and outside agencies to prevent and tackle concerns including all forms of prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying.
- actively create "safe spaces" for vulnerable students and young people.

Staff vigilance

Members of staff are vigilant at all times. They are expected to promote an anti-bullying culture and prevent bullying in various ways including:

- anticipating problems and providing support
- celebrating achievement and positive attitudes
- disciplining fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account any disability or special educational need of the student and the needs of vulnerable students
- making opportunities to listen to students
- acting as advocates of students
- discussing behaviour and concerns in meetings.

Staff training

The school ensures that all members of staff receive appropriate training on preventing and tackling bullying behaviour, especially awareness of the risk and indications of bullying and child abuse, and how to deal with cases.

Anti-bullying education

The school ensures that a variety of measures are taken throughout the year to educate students about bullying and this policy. Students are taught that bullying will not be tolerated at the school and how to promote positive attitudes as well as how to share problems and raise concerns. Through assemblies, the curriculum and classwork, themed days, display of posters around the school, etc. students are given regular opportunities to discuss what bullying is, as well as incidents we would not describe as bullying.

Reporting bullying concerns

At the school we want students, parents/carers, staff, volunteers, Anthem Community Council (ACC) members and visitors to confidently report bullying and know that their concerns will be taken seriously.

Students

A student who is being bullied, or who is worried about another student being bullied should inform a suitable person straight away and can do so in several ways. They can:

- tell their class teacher, tutor, Head of Year or any other member of staff
- tell their parents/carers and ask them to pass on the information to the school

- tell a responsible older student
- write a note and hand it out to a member of staff
- contact the School Counsellor or pastoral support (as relevant) for advice
- contact Childline on 0800 1111.

Some students are more likely to be the target of bullying because of the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves.

Our staff will be alert to the potential bullying students may face who may struggle to communicate bullying and will help our mechanisms for reporting to be accessible to all.

Parents/carers

Parents/carers are asked to let any staff member (normally the class teacher, tutor or Head of Year) know directly if they have any cause for concern, either on behalf of their own children or because of rumours about others.

Staff

Any member of staff who becomes aware of any bullying behaviour should inform a member of the senior leadership team without delay, in accordance with the procedures set out below.

This policy focuses on the bullying of students by students although it is recognised that a staff member could be a victim and on occasion may be perceived to be guilty of bullying. Staff members who are concerned about bullying or harassment at work should refer to the Dignity at Work Policy.

Responding to Bullying Concerns

The following steps will be taken when dealing with any 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, even if this is to report to a more senior member of staff. No reports of bullying will be ignored.
- The school will provide appropriate support for the person being bullied – making sure that they are not at risk of immediate harm and will involve them in any decision-making, as appropriate.
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) will be informed of all bullying concerns, especially where there may be safeguarding issues.
- The Headteacher, DSL or another appropriate member of leadership team will investigate the concern, speaking to the alleged perpetrator(s), victim(s) and adult witnesses, as well as parents/carers and student witnesses, if necessary and appropriate.
- Once investigated, if an allegation is upheld the school will make every effort to resolve the problem and prevent any further occurrences. The school will seek to use a restorative approach with the perpetrator(s) and victim(s) together. The consequences of their actions on the victim(s) should fully explained to the perpetrator(s). Both parties should be clear that a repeat of these behaviours will not be acceptable. Appropriate sanctions and support, for example, as identified within the School Behaviour & Ethos Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, will be implemented.

- Disciplinary measures will be applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities that the students may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable students.

It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the student engaging in bullying may need support themselves.

- A clear and precise account of bullying incidents will be recorded by the school on CPOMS. This will include recording appropriate details regarding decisions and action taken. Sanctions will be recorded on Bromcom.
- 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.
- Regular CPOMS checks and Deep Dives carried out in schools will help identify any patterns or concerns.
- If necessary, other agencies may be consulted or involved, for example the police (if a criminal offence has been committed) or social services (if it is thought the incident constitutes a child protection concern), the Trust, etc.
- Where the bullying of or by students takes place off school site or outside of normal school hours (including cyberbullying), the school will ensure that the concern is fully investigated and responded to in line with this policy, our Online Policy and the School Behaviour & Ethos Policy.

Complaints

All complaints regarding the implementation of this policy must be submitted and will be dealt with according to the school's Concerns and Complaints Policy. This is available online from our school website, and on request from the school office.

Linked policies

Other policies which should be referred to include:

- School Behaviour & Ethos Policy
- Exclusions Policy
- Whole -School Equality Policy
- Online Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy