



The Link School Anti-Bullying Policy

<i>Written by:</i>	Nic Andrews & Liam Keane
<i>Agreed by Governors</i>	March 23
<i>Date of last review:</i>	February 23
<i>Date of next review:</i>	February 24

Our school commitment

The Link School is fully committed to preventing and tackling bullying. Bullying is a deliberate, harmful and divisive act or set of behaviours which can have serious and far-reaching effects on those who experience it, whether 'victim' or 'perpetrator'. At The Link School we work proactively with pupils/students, staff and families to educate our young people about bullying, to address and rectify bullying or concerns about bullying wherever we find them, and to support all members of the school community to feel safe, valued and respected.

Ethos and values

At The Link School we are committed to safeguarding and nurturing our pupils/students so that they are able to achieve ambitious academic outcomes and build healthy and fulfilling lives.

The Link School values all our learners equally, recognising their individual strengths, barriers, and aspirations. As a school team we are driven by our school vision "**digging deep to aim high**" wanting our learners to overcome their barriers and reach their potential. This means that the team around the children and young people work together to ensure every learner is understood. We seek to overcome barriers today so that young people and parents can look forward to a bright future tomorrow.

Generalising learning into community settings, work, and leisure opportunities as well as quality relationships is seen as a priority as we help our young people develop positive self-esteem and greater independence. The four key strands of our vision for all learners is to achieve optimum:

- **Communication**
- **Wellbeing – physical, emotional, and social**
- **Independence**
- **Achievement**

Our shared ethos and vision enable us to think about and plan for the future of our children and young people with imagination and wisdom and support them in developing their understanding and confidence of preventing bullying as well as supporting them in tackling any bullying that they encounter.

Our definition of bullying

Bullying is a particular type of unacceptable behaviour. It is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either

physically or emotionally. We acknowledge that bullying has no time limit and can be short term or can happen over long periods of time.

We acknowledge that at times our pupils/students will have incidents where their regulation needs and actions can cause harm emotionally and physically to others and work to develop a clear understanding of the root cause of behaviours displayed and if any part of the incident(s) can be deemed as bullying behaviour.

We work with our pupils/students to understand that bullying is **Several Times On Purpose**. We use the acronym **STOP**.

The Link School views bullying as anti-social behaviour which is never acceptable. **No person has the right to deliberately make another feel uncomfortable or unhappy.**

Bullying can be:

<i>Emotional</i>	Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
<i>Physical</i>	Pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence; invasive, hurtful or threatening physical contact
<i>Verbal</i>	Teasing, name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours
<i>Written</i>	Letters, notes, texts, graffiti
<i>Cyber</i>	All areas of online life, such as email and chat room misuse Harassment, shaming, threats or persecution via social media Mobile threats by text messaging and calls Misuse of associated technology e.g. camera and video facilities, iPad, games consoles Making and/or sharing images with the intent to threaten or harm – this includes the non-consensual making/sharing of sexually explicit imagery

Bullying can happen to anyone, but can often be specifically:

- Racist – ethnicity, skin colour, language, religious or cultural practices.
- Homophobic/transphobic – discrimination based on actual or perceived sexuality and/or gender identity.
- Sexual – unwelcome sexual advances or remarks that causes offence, humiliation or intimidation, including pressure to send images of a sexual nature; unwanted physical contact, intimation, coercion; sexually abusive language, imagery or graffiti.
- Disablist – discrimination based on actual or perceived special educational needs and/or disabilities.
- ‘Difference’ – discrimination based on any real or perceived difference e.g. dress, hobbies and interests, family set up, social behaviour.
- Faith-based – discrimination based on matters relating to religious ideology, belief or creed.

Bullying can also form part of, or turn into, child on child abuse. The Link School staff are trained to understand how to recognise and respond to both bullying and child on child abuse and are vigilant in observing the dynamics between pupils/students and reporting any concerns immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

Understanding bullying behaviour

Bullying takes place where there is an imbalance of power of bully over victim. This can be achieved by:

- Size and/or strength
- The numbers or group size involved
- Anonymity – through the use of cyber bullying (using email, social networking sites, texts etc.)
- The level of cognition, confidence, or emotional maturity of students
- SEND needs of pupils/students
- Hierarchy of staff

At The Link School we are vigilant about bullying and approach this in the same way as any other category of safeguarding. We do not wait to be told before raising concerns or dealing directly with the matter.

Pupils/students may not recognise, or not be able to articulate, that they are being bullied, or that their own behaviour may be seen by someone else as bullying. Our staff know our pupils/students well and are able to identify those who may be at risk of being bullied. We also monitor behaviour logs to ensure we track patterns of behaviour which can cause concern. We are also alert to the dynamics within and between groups of peers and will take action if harmful imbalances of power are developing.

Bullying and keeping children safe

The Link School is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment. We ensure that consistent and effective safeguarding procedures and policies are in place to support pupils/students and staff at school and follow the guidance of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/keeping-children-safe-in-education--2>

This anti-bullying policy should be read in conjunction with our Child Protection Adult Protection and Safeguarding Policy, as well as our Safeguarding & Wellbeing Offer which details the specific work, both proactive and reactive, that we undertake to ensure that our pupils/students are able to learn and thrive in a safe and supportive environment. These documents can be found on our website:

[Safeguarding Statement - The Link School | Quality education for children and young people](#)

Any incidents of bullying will be recorded upon our SOLAR behaviour incident system which is monitored by the wellbeing lead (member of SLT) upon each site. These leads can then assess and identify any patterns of behaviours, hotspots for bullying behaviour and any interventions needed to be implemented. The wellbeing lead will determine if any relevant additional reporting is necessary such as Sheassure (Accident reporting) and Safeguard Record software. The wellbeing lead will support pupil/student and parental welfare following incidents.

Bullying data is reported to Local Governing Board and upon the data dashboard termly. During reporting the school report upon patterns that may have been seen and interventions that have been put in place.

Bullying and discrimination

The Link School is an all through special school for pupils/students whose Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) have identified Speech and Language Communication Need (SLCN) as their primary area of need. As such, we work closely to the guidelines laid out in the Equalities Act 2010 to ensure that all of our pupils/students are treated fairly and in accordance to their individual learning needs.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>

Inclusions and diversity is promoted throughout our curriculums through the RHE curriculum at the primary site and PSHE curriculum at the secondary and satellite sites. Students will experience discussion and teaching when developmentally and emotionally ready about discriminatory behaviours such as disablism, racism, faith targeted discrimination, and homophobic/transphobic discrimination. These discussions will take place in appropriate student groups which may be tutor time, whole class teaching or in 1:1 wellbeing sessions dependent upon the students' needs.

Stopping bullying wherever it takes place

Bullying can take place in the classroom, playground, toilets, corridors, on the journey to and from school, and in online forums. It can take place during school time, out of school while on residential visits, day visits, in group activities, and between families in the local community.

At The Link School we consult with pupils/students via lesson time, 1:1 wellbeing sessions and student surveys to understand where and when they feel safe/unsafe, in order to ensure that there are robust and responsive processes in place. Appropriate levels of staffing are maintained at break/lunch and transition times in order for staff to maintain consistent supervision and spot any hotspots for bullying incidents. A member of SLT will be at the school gates at arrival and departure times to supervise and allow students an appropriate approachable adult.

The Link School offers an extensive range of clubs which are run and organised by staff during breaks, allowing students safe places to be present at.

Preventing bullying

The Link School uses a number strategies to prevent bullying:

- Staff training
- Student voice
- Curriculum – PSHE, e-safety
- Staff/student discussions – assemblies, themed days/weeks
- School values
- Reflective/restorative approach
- Parent engagement
- Zero tolerance for abusive or offensive language

The Link School pupils/students are encouraged to think about and understand bullying through such opportunities as Student Council, e-safety sessions, assemblies, PSHE lessons, Anti-Bullying Week, additional responsibilities and school policy writing.

Our school's ethos and working philosophy means that all staff actively encourage students to have respect for themselves, each other and their environment. Behaviour which, for example, 'shows how others are feeling', or 'cares for others' is consistently acknowledged and rewarded through celebration assemblies.

Pupils/students are involved in the prevention of bullying as and when appropriate.

- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters that bullying is dealt with quickly
- Discussions at Student Council meetings
- Restorative, reparation, and empathy developing work with pupils/students, e.g. using comic strip conversations to develop understanding
- Assemblies around our school values
- Engagement in PSHE curriculum

Staff regularly discuss bullying, creating an atmosphere of openness and building confidence among pupils/students to discuss bullying.

Expectations around behaviour are regularly reinforced by staff, as is the school's ethos of mutual respect and tolerance.

Reporting bullying

It is our aim to create a safe, caring and friendly environment, where students and parents will not hesitate in reporting any incidents of bullying behaviour they experience or that they see.

The school will always respond to incidents of bullying. It is important that students who are bullied feel happy that we are taking their problem seriously and that we will always act on their behalf to prevent or overcome future problems.

If a student is being bullied, they are encouraged to not retaliate but to tell someone they trust about it such as a friend, family member or trusted adult. They are also encouraged to report any bullying incidents in school:

- Report to their tutor
- Report to a member of the senior management
- Report to a Special Support Assistant
- Report to a therapist
- Call Childline – 0800 1111
- Refer to posters behind toilet doors for extra support (Secondary site)

Students can access 'Worries and Concerns' page via the school's website at:

[Students-Complaints-and-Concerns-Procedure-1.pdf \(thelinkschool.co.uk\)](#)

Parents can access the complaints procedure via the link.

[Complaints - The Link School | Quality education for children and young people](#)

If a student or parent has a concern they should contact the school immediately.

Safeguarding Team:

Designated Safeguarding Lead: Nic Andrews (Satellite Site)

nandrews@thelinkschool.co.uk, Sue Denman (Primary Site)

sdenman@thelinkschool.co.uk, Liam Keane (Secondary Site)

lkeane@thelinkschool.co.uk

Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead: Sandy Tuner, Principal for all sites

Please see our Child Protection, Adult Protection and Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding and Wellbeing Offer for further details. These can be found on the Safeguarding page of our website.

[SAFEGUARDING POLICY.docx \(thelinkschool.co.uk\)](#)

Responding to bullying

At The Link School we are vigilant for signs of bullying and always take reports of incidents seriously. Students are told that they must report any incidence of bullying to an adult within school, and that when another pupil tells them that they are being bullied or if they see bullying taking place. It is their responsibility to report their knowledge to a member of staff.

All reported incidents of bullying are investigated and taken seriously by staff members. Upon discovery of an alleged incident of bullying the following procedures are carried out:

- Ensuring all involved are safe, victim is interviewed by a member of staff
- List of witnesses compiled and independent accounts taken, if possible
- Alleged perpetrator interviewed to record their view of events
- Liaising with families
- Sanctions/restorative approaches, in line with behaviour policy and other relevant policies/procedures
- Possible involvement of external agencies (police, child protection etc.)
- Support for both 'victim' and 'perpetrator' – understanding the behaviour and its impact, building self-esteem, therapeutic input
- Whole school actions where specific issues are identified e.g. initiatives to educate about hate crime, further staff training where necessary

Where bullying is identified, our primary aim is to ensure that all pupils/students are safe. The Link School staff will take a twofold approach to resolving the issue: addressing the behaviour which has already taken place and deploying strategies to change the behaviour so that bullying does not recur. This work will be completed with both sets of parents/carers' knowledge and support.

Measures to address the behaviour that has already taken place will be in line with the Positive Behaviour Policy and Behaviour Procedures and proportionate to the behaviour. They will always include some form of restorative approach. Depending on the situation, sanctions such as removal of privileges or exclusion may be deployed as part of the overall approach. Any exclusions will be determined in line with the Exclusions Policy.

Where criminal behaviour is suspected or confirmed to have occurred as part of the bullying incident, the Police/Safer School's Police Officer will be informed.

The Link School may deploy a range of strategies to help the so-called bully or bullies understand and change their behaviour and make amends to those being bullied. Strategies may include:

- Restorative justice
- Counselling/mediation
- Input from our therapy teams

Any reports of bullying behaviour by The Link School pupils/students outside of school will be investigated by school staff. If appropriate, action may be taken as above.

All policies are available from the Policies page of our website:

[Policies - The Link School | Quality education for children and young people](#)

Measuring progress

Relevant staff will revisit students who have participated in the above procedures to check that all is well and that the incidents have been effectively addressed. It is essential that students are proactive in this and do not hesitate to report any continuing incidents of concern.

Appropriate records are kept of incidents and investigations as outlined above. Senior School Leaders monitor incidents of bullying recorded on SOLAR. This is to enable the school to evaluate both the nature and seriousness of any incidents, to identify any trends and to ensure that preventative work is effectively targeted.

The Link School measures progress and impact of these by utilising the following:

- Pupil/student voice – surveys, student council
- Parent/carer surveys
- Reviewing data – trends, actions, effective follow up
- Reporting to governors, termly safeguarding audit

Communicating the policy

- Opportunities in Assemblies, senior members of staff should remind students of procedures.
- Form Tutors should use tutor time as an opportunity to revisit the Anti-Bullying Policy with their students on a regular basis.
- Student Voice should have the review of the Anti-Bullying Policy as a regular agenda item.
- New staff/supply staff/new parents and new students should have the Anti-Bullying Policy Procedures explained to them.
- A review of the Anti-Bullying Policy should be a part of the PSHCE curriculum.
- Anti-bullying policy should be available on the school website for parents and student to access.

Student responsibilities:

- Do not put up with bullying of any kind, whether it is against you or someone else.
- Work together to prevent bullying and condemn the actions of bullies.
- Always tell an adult if someone is being bullied. Watching and doing nothing can suggest support for bullying.
- Do not put up with bullies in your circle of friends: bullies will soon stop if they feel left out.

Remember: Silence is the Bully's Best Friend