

Houghton Regis Primary School

Anti-Bullying Policy



Policy Dated: September 2025

Review Date: October 2026

Statement of Intent

Houghton Regis Primary School believes that all pupils are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment; this means being free from all forms of bullying behaviour. This policy outlines how instances of bullying are dealt with, including the procedures to prevent occurrences of bullying. These strategies, such as learning about tolerance and difference as part of the school's curriculum, aim to promote an inclusive, tolerant and supportive ethos at the school. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 outlines several legal obligations regarding the school's response to bullying. Under section 89, schools must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils. These measures are part of the school's Behavioural Policy, which is communicated to all pupils, school staff and parents. All staff, parents and pupils work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at the school. There is a zero-tolerance policy for bullying at the school.

Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance including, but not limited to, the following:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Equality Act 2010
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988
- Public Order Act 1986
- Communications Act 2003
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Crime and Disorder Act 1998
- Education Act 2011
- DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE (2021) 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
- DfE (2024) 'Keeping children safe in education 2024'
- DfE (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, “bullying” is defined as 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:

- Repetition: Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over an extended period of time.
- Intent: The perpetrator means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental.
- Targeting: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.
- Power imbalance: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations.

Vulnerable children are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. Vulnerable children may include, but are not limited to:

- Children who are adopted.
- Children suffering from a health problem.
- Children with caring responsibilities.
- Children from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. Children with certain characteristics are also more likely to be targets of bullying, including, but not limited to:
- Children who are LGBTQ+, or perceived to be LGBTQ+.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) children.
- Children with SEND.

Types of Bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Teasing another child because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, home life, culture, or SEND are some of the types of bullying that can occur. Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Online (cyberbullying)

Racist bullying: Bullying another person based on their ethnic background or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.

Homophobic and biphobic bullying: Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

Transphobic bullying: Bullying based on another person's gender identity or gender presentation, or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.

Sexist bullying: Bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.

Sexual bullying: Bullying behaviour that has a physical, psychological, verbal or non-verbal sexual dimension or dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

Ableist bullying: Bullying behaviour that focusses on another person's disability or support needs; this can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability.

Prejudicial bullying: Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics or experiences, e.g. religion or mental health issues.

Relational bullying: Bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

Socioeconomic bullying: Bullying based on prejudices against the perceived social status of the victim, including, but not limited to, their economic status, their parents' occupations, their health or nutrition level, or the perceived "quality" of their clothing or belongings.

Responsibilities

It is the responsibility of:

- The headteacher to communicate this policy to the school community, to ensure that disciplinary measures are applied fairly, consistently and reasonably, and that a member of the senior leadership team has been identified to take overall responsibility.
- School Governors to take a lead role in monitoring and reviewing this policy.
- All staff, including: governors, senior leadership, teaching and non-teaching staff, to support, uphold and implement this policy accordingly.
- Parents/carers to support their children and work in partnership with the school.
- Pupils to abide by the policy

Prevention

The school will clearly communicate a whole-school commitment to addressing bullying and have a clear set of values and standards which will be regularly promoted across the whole school. All members of the school will be made aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it. All staff members will receive training on identifying and dealing with the different types of bullying. All types of bullying will be discussed as part of the relationships and health education curriculum, in line with the Relationships and Health Education Policy. The curriculum will explore and discuss issues at age-appropriate stages such as:

- Healthy and respectful relationships.
- Boundaries and consent.

- Stereotyping, prejudice and equality.
- Body confidence and self-esteem.
- How to recognise abusive relationships and coercive control.
- Harmful sexual behaviour, the concepts involved and why they are always unacceptable, and the laws relating to it.

Staff will encourage child cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work. Diversity, difference and respect for others will be promoted and celebrated through various lessons. Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills will be provided through participation in special events, e.g. drama productions, sporting activities and cultural groups.

Seating plans will be organised and altered in a way that prevents instances of bullying. Potential victims of bullying will be placed in working groups with other children who do not abuse or take advantage of others.

Children deemed vulnerable may receive mentoring or have a designated staff member to talk to ensure any problems can be actioned quickly. Class Teachers will also offer an 'open door' policy allowing children to discuss any bullying, whether they are victims or have witnessed an incident.

The school will be alert to, and address, any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst children, as these can be a cause, or a result, of bullying behaviour.

The school will ensure potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional and social development is not negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g. mental health issues.

Signs of Bullying

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a child is a victim of bullying:

- Being frightened to travel to or from school
- Unwillingness to attend school
- Repeated or persistent absence from school
- Becoming anxious or lacking confidence
- Saying that they feel ill repeatedly
- Decreased involvement in school work
- Leaving school with torn clothes or damaged possessions
- Missing possessions
- Missing dinner money
- Asking for extra money or stealing
- Cuts or bruises

- Lack of appetite
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices
- Lack of eye contact
- Becoming short tempered
- Change in behaviour and attitude at home

Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating. Children who display a significant number of these signs will be approached by a member of staff to determine the underlying issues causing this behaviour.

Staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a child is likely to exhibit bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to them becoming more easily aggravated
- They have been the victim of abuse
- Their academic performance has started to fall and they are showing signs of stress

If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify Senior Leaders, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

Staff Principles

The school will ensure that prevention is a prominent aspect of its anti-bullying vision.

Staff will treat reports of bullying seriously and will not ignore signs of suspected bullying. Staff will act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident. Unpleasantness from one child towards another will always be challenged and will never be ignored.

Staff will always respect children's privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying is not discussed with others, unless the child has given consent, or there is a safeguarding concern. If a member of staff believes a child is in danger, e.g. of being hurt, they will inform the DSLs immediately.

Follow-up support will be given to both the victim and perpetrator in the months following an incident to ensure all bullying has stopped.

Child-on-child Abuse

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence. To prevent child-on-child abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the school will educate children about abuse, its forms, and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE lessons.

All staff will:

- Be aware that children of any age and gender are capable of abusing their peers.
- Be aware that abuse can occur inside and outside of school settings.

- Be aware of the scale of harassment or abuse, and that just because it is not being reported does not mean it is not happening.
- Take all instances of child-on-child abuse equally seriously regardless of the characteristics of the perpetrators or victims.
- Never tolerate abuse as “banter” or “part of growing up”, and will never justify sexual harassment, e.g. as “boys being boys”, as this can foster a culture of unacceptable behaviours and one that risks normalising abuse.
- Be aware that child-on-child abuse can be manifested in many ways, including sexting, sexual harassment and assault, and hazing or initiation-type violence.
- Always challenge any harmful physical behaviour that is sexual in nature, such as inappropriate touching. Dismissing or tolerating such behaviours risks normalising them.

Sexual harassment in particular can take many forms, including but not limited to:

- Telling sexual stories, making sexual remarks, or calling someone sexualised names.
- Sexual “jokes” or taunting.
- Deliberately brushing against someone.
- Displaying images or video of a sexual nature.
- Upskirting (this is a criminal offence).
- Online sexual harassment, e.g. creating or sharing sexual imagery, sexual comments on social media, or sexual coercion or threats.

Children will be made aware of how to raise concerns or make a report and how any reports will be handled – this includes the process for reporting concerns about friends or peers. If a child has been harmed, is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral may be made to children’s social care services (CSCS) and potentially the police, where the DSLs deem this appropriate in the circumstances.

All staff will be aware and sensitive towards the fact that children may not be ready or know how to tell someone that they are being abused. Children being abused may feel embarrassed, humiliated, scared, or threatened.

The school’s Child-on-child Abuse Policy outlines the school’s stance on addressing child-on-child abuse, including sexual abuse, and the procedures in place will be adhered to if any instances are uncovered or disclosed.

Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can take many forms and can go even further than face-to-face bullying by invading personal space and home life, and can target more than one person. It can also take place across age groups and target children, staff and others, and may take place inside school, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. It can sometimes draw bystanders into being accessories.

Cyberbullying can include the following:

- Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages

- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips
- Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress
- Silent or abusive phone calls
- Using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible
- Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name
- Menacing or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom
- Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging
- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites and social networking sites, e.g. Facebook

NB. The above list is not exhaustive, and cyberbullying may take other forms.

The school has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying. The school views cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in this policy if they become aware of any incidents. All members of staff will receive training on a regular basis on the signs of cyberbullying, in order to identify children who may be experiencing issues and intervene effectively.

Parents will have information shared with them in order to educate them on the signs and symptoms of cyberbullying, and will be advised to report to the Headteacher if their child displays any of the signs outlined in this section.

Procedures

Incidents will be reported to the child's Class Teacher who will investigate the incident, set appropriate sanctions for the perpetrator, and inform the Headteacher regarding the outcome. This will be recorded on CPOMs.

When investigating a bullying incident, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses are all interviewed separately
- Members of staff ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the children being interviewed, including electronic communication
- If a child is injured, members of staff take the child immediately to a first aider for a medical opinion on the extent of their injuries
- A room is used that allows for privacy during interviews
- If appropriate, the alleged perpetrator, the victim and witnesses are asked to write down details of the incident; this may need prompting with questions from the member of staff to obtain the full picture
- The Headteacher will gather evidence of a cyberbullying incident; this may involve text messages, emails, photos, etc. provided by the victim
- Premature assumptions are not made, as it is important not to be judgemental at this stage
- Members of staff listen carefully to all accounts, being non-confrontational and not assigning blame until the investigation is complete

- All children involved are informed that they must not discuss the interview with other children

Due to the potential for some specific forms of bullying to be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviour, staff members involved in dealing with the incident are required to consider whether there is a need for safeguarding processes to be implemented.

Sanctions

If the Headteacher is satisfied that bullying did take place, the perpetrator will be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and warned that there must be no further incidents. The Headteacher will inform the perpetrator of the type of sanction to be used in this instance, e.g. in school or external exclusion. Along with future sanctions if the bullying continues.

If possible, the Headteacher will attempt reconciliation and will obtain an apology from the perpetrator. This will either be in writing to the victim, and/or witnesses if appropriate, or face-to-face, but only with the victim's full consent. Discretion will be used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the perpetrator.

Parents are informed of bullying incidents and what action is being taken.

The school will avoid unnecessarily criminalising children for bullying or abusive behaviour where possible, as young people with criminal records face stigma and discrimination in future aspects of their lives.

The school's focus when handling perpetrators will be supporting them to develop more positive behaviours and to refrain from abusive and bullying behaviours in the future. The school will remain aware of the fact that continued access to school can be important for rehabilitation of harmful behaviour, and will not exclude children unless as a last resort.

Support

In the event of bullying, victims will be offered the following support:

- Emotional support and reassurance from the school's mentors
- Reassurance that it was right to report the incident and that appropriate action will be taken
- Liaison with their parents to ensure a continuous dialogue of support
- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff
- Advice on aspects of online safety, in the event of cyberbullying, to prevent re-occurrence, including, where appropriate, discussion with their parents to evaluate their online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online
- Discussion with their parent on whether police action is required (except in serious cases of child exploitation or abuse where the police may be contacted without discussion with parents)

The Headteacher will carefully consider in each instance of bullying that is handled whether it is appropriate to split up the victim(s) and perpetrator(s), e.g. preventing them sharing classes or spaces where possible, and will split up other harmful group dynamics to prevent

further occurrences where necessary. Victims will be encouraged to broaden their friendship groups by joining lunchtime or afterschool clubs or activities

Staff, particularly the DSLs, will work with the victim to build resilience, e.g. by offering emotional therapy.

The school will acknowledge that bullying may be an indication of underlying mental health issues. Perpetrators will be required to attend a mandatory counselling session to assist with any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. The school will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.

Record Keeping

Staff will ensure that records are kept with regard to all reported or otherwise uncovered incidents of bullying – this includes recording where decisions have been made, e.g. sanctions, support, escalation of a situation and resolutions.