Anti-Bullying Policy

Approved by:	SLT
Last reviewed on:	September 2026
Next review due by:	September 2027

Key Safeguarding Contacts:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)	Adam Young – Headteacher
Deputy DSLs	Jill Cox – Year 3 Teacher Steve Torrie – Year 6 Teacher
Senior Leadership Team	Adam Young – Headteacher Jill Cox – Deputy Headteacher Teleri Pitts – SENCo Liz Chadwick – School Business Manager
Safeguarding Governor	Sarah Collier

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following a significant incident, safeguarding concern, change in legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding arrangements or school practice.

Purpose and principles

Hermitage Primary School is committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful environment in which every child feels that they belong, is listened to and can learn without fear of bullying, harassment, discrimination or victimisation.

Bullying is never acceptable. We take all reports seriously, respond promptly and proportionately, support children who have experienced harm, and work with children whose behaviour has caused harm so that behaviour changes and recurrence is prevented.

- Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility and our response will always be child centred.
- We maintain high expectations for respectful behaviour and explicitly teach pupils what healthy, respectful relationships look like.
- We recognise that bullying may be a safeguarding concern and may constitute child-on-child abuse.
- We recognise that some pupils may be more vulnerable to bullying because of SEND, disability, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, family circumstances, care experience, health needs or other differences.
- We listen to pupils, act on concerns and monitor patterns so that pupils have confidence in the school's response.

Statutory and guidance framework

This policy should be read alongside current legislation, statutory guidance and school procedures. In particular, it reflects:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (DfE).
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DfE, current guidance; GOV.UK page updated July 2026).
- Behaviour in Schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (DfE).
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation: guidance for schools (DfE).
- Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools (DfE, effective from 1 April 2026), where relevant.
- DfE filtering and monitoring standards for schools and colleges, updated September 2026.
- The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty.
- The Education and Inspections Act 2006 and relevant provisions concerning school behaviour and conduct outside school.
- The Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004.
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Public Order Act 1986 and relevant communications legislation where behaviour may constitute a criminal offence.

- The state-funded school inspection toolkit for use from September 2026, particularly expectations relating to safeguarding, inclusion, attendance and behaviour, pupils' sense of belonging, and leaders' response to bullying and discriminatory behaviour.

Links with other school policies

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Child-on-Child Abuse and Harmful Sexual Behaviour procedures/policy
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use policies
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education / PSHE policy and curriculum
- SEND Policy and SEN Information Report
- Equality information and objectives
- Attendance Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct and staff grievance/harassment procedures
- Mobile phone and social media policies
- Searching, screening and confiscation procedures

What we mean by bullying

The DfE describes bullying as behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying often involves an imbalance of power, which may be physical, psychological, social or arise through technology.

At Hermitage, pupils may use the child-friendly reminder STOP – 'Several Times On Purpose' – to help recognise repeated bullying. Staff will not rely on this acronym as a threshold for action: a single serious incident can still cause significant harm and may require a safeguarding response.

Bullying can include:

- physical behaviour, including hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging or taking belongings;
- verbal behaviour, including name-calling, threats, taunting, mocking or offensive comments;
- social or relational behaviour, including deliberate exclusion, spreading rumours, coercion or humiliation;
- prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying;
- sexualised or sexist bullying, sexual harassment or harmful sexual behaviour;
- online bullying, including messages, group chats, gaming, social media, images, videos, impersonation, exclusion, doxxing or misuse of AI-generated or manipulated content.

Not every disagreement, friendship difficulty or one-off unkind act is bullying. These behaviours will still be addressed in line with the Behaviour Policy and safeguarding procedures. Staff will consider the context, impact, repetition, intent, power imbalance and the child's voice.

Forms of bullying and discriminatory behaviour

Bullying can happen to any child. We pay particular attention to bullying connected with actual or perceived difference, including:

- race, ethnicity, nationality, culture, language, religion or belief;
- SEND, disability, health needs, neurodivergence or appearance;
- sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, sexist or LGBTQ+-phobic language or behaviour;
- care experience, adoption, being a young carer, family circumstances, poverty or disadvantage;
- mental health, medical needs or other personal characteristics.

Prejudice-based and discriminatory incidents will be recorded and monitored even where they do not meet the definition of repeated bullying. The school will consider its duties under the Equality

Act 2010 and take action to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation.

Bullying as a safeguarding concern and child-on-child abuse

Bullying, including online, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, can be a form of child-on-child abuse. All staff must recognise that children can abuse other children and that this can happen inside or outside school and online.

Where a report indicates possible abuse, significant harm, sexual violence or harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, coercion, threats, hate crime, exploitation, serious violence or another safeguarding risk, staff must follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy immediately and report to the DSL. The anti-bullying process does not replace safeguarding procedures.

The school will not dismiss harmful behaviour as 'banter', 'part of growing up' or 'just having a laugh'. The wishes and feelings of the child who has experienced harm will be considered, while recognising that the school may need to take safeguarding action even where a child does not want this.

Responsibilities

The governing body will provide strategic oversight, seek assurance that the policy is effective, consider trends and ensure that safeguarding and equality duties are met.

The headteacher will ensure that the policy is communicated and implemented consistently; staff are trained; concerns are acted upon; and behaviour consequences are lawful, reasonable and proportionate.

The DSL will lead on safeguarding aspects of bullying, including online safety; consider referrals to children's social care, early help, police or other agencies; and use safeguarding records to identify patterns and risk.

All staff will model respectful behaviour, challenge bullying and discriminatory language, listen to pupils, record concerns accurately and report safeguarding concerns without delay.

Pupils are expected to treat others with respect, report concerns, avoid retaliation and seek help for themselves or others.

Parents and carers are expected to work constructively with the school, report concerns promptly and model respectful behaviour online and offline.

Reporting bullying

Children can report bullying to any trusted adult in school. They may speak to their class teacher, teaching assistant, pastoral staff, DSL/deputy DSL, headteacher or another member of staff they trust. Children may also use any pupil reporting systems available in school.

A child who witnesses bullying is encouraged to report it. Reporting is not 'telling tales'; it is helping to keep someone safe.

Parents/carers should contact the class teacher in the first instance unless the concern is serious or safeguarding-related, in which case they may contact the DSL or headteacher directly.

Complaints about the school's handling of a concern may be raised through the school Complaints Policy.

Responding to a report of bullying

The response will be proportionate to the circumstances and will normally include the following steps:

1. Listen carefully and reassure the child that they have done the right thing by reporting the concern.
2. Check immediate safety and take action to prevent further harm, including appropriate supervision or safety planning.
3. Record the concern promptly and factually on CPOMS, including the child's own words where appropriate.

4. Inform the DSL promptly where there is any safeguarding element. Serious safeguarding concerns are escalated immediately.
5. Establish the facts fairly by speaking separately with those involved and relevant witnesses. Children will not be required to meet face-to-face or take part in restorative work where this would be unsafe, inappropriate or unwanted.
6. Consider whether the behaviour is bullying, a one-off behaviour incident, prejudice/discrimination, child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern. More than one pathway may apply.
7. Inform parents/carers as appropriate, taking account of safeguarding, confidentiality and the child's best interests.
8. Provide support to the child who has experienced bullying and appropriate intervention, education and consequences for the child whose behaviour caused harm.
9. Agree how the situation will be monitored and review whether the bullying has stopped and the child feels safe.
10. Record decisions, actions, outcomes and follow-up. Patterns across pupils, groups, locations and online contexts will be monitored.

Supporting children who experience bullying

- a trusted adult and regular check-ins;
- a clear plan for keeping safe, including unstructured times where necessary;
- support to rebuild confidence, relationships, attendance and engagement with learning;
- reasonable adjustments and SEND support where appropriate;
- pastoral or targeted support and, where necessary, early help or specialist services;
- support with reporting/blocking online content and preserving relevant evidence;
- ongoing review with the child and parents/carers.

Support will not place responsibility on the child who has been bullied to change their routine or behaviour unless this is genuinely in their best interests and agreed as part of a supportive plan.

Supporting children whose behaviour has caused harm

Consequences will be applied in line with the Behaviour Policy. The school will also seek to understand and address the reasons for the behaviour without excusing it.

- clear explanation of the harm caused and the behaviour that must change;
- proportionate consequences and increased supervision where appropriate;
- teaching or re-teaching of respectful relationships, empathy, online conduct and boundaries;
- assessment of SEND, communication, mental health, trauma or other needs that may require support or reasonable adjustment;
- parent/carer involvement;
- targeted pastoral, early help or specialist support where needed;
- restorative approaches only where safe, appropriate and freely agreed by the child who experienced harm.

Where behaviour is severe or persistent, the school may use suspension or permanent exclusion in accordance with statutory guidance and the Behaviour Policy.

Online bullying and technology

Online bullying can occur at any time and may rapidly reach a wide audience. It may involve content created or shared through social media, messaging, gaming, livestreaming, group chats, image-sharing, impersonation, AI-generated content or manipulated images.

- The school will respond to online behaviour where it affects pupils, staff, the orderly running of the school or the safety and wellbeing of members of the school community, including behaviour occurring away from the school site.
- Pupils will be taught not to retaliate, to block/report where appropriate, to seek adult help and to preserve relevant evidence without repeatedly sharing harmful material.
- Staff will not routinely ask children to download or forward harmful or intimate material. Where intimate images are involved, safeguarding procedures and current UKCIS/DfE guidance will be followed.
- Searching and confiscation of devices will only take place in accordance with current DfE guidance, school policy and the law.
- The DSL leads on safeguarding and online safety. The school's filtering and monitoring arrangements will be reviewed at least annually with SLT, IT support and the responsible governor, and concerns identified through monitoring will be acted upon and recorded.
- The school will consider the safeguarding risks of generative AI, including AI-generated or manipulated abusive content, when reviewing online safety arrangements.

Sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour

Sexual harassment, sexual violence and harmful sexual behaviour are safeguarding matters and are not treated simply as bullying. Any report of sexualised behaviour, unwanted sexual comments, touching, sexual coercion, sharing of intimate images, upskirting or AI-generated sexualised imagery will be responded to under the school's safeguarding and child-on-child abuse procedures and KCSIE 2026.

Staff will challenge sexist and sexualised language and behaviour and will not normalise it as banter or an inevitable part of childhood.

Bullying outside school

Where bullying or other misbehaviour occurs away from the school premises or online, the school may respond where there is a clear link to pupils, the school community, safety, wellbeing or the orderly running of the school. This may include behaviour on journeys to and from school, school transport, educational visits and online activity.

Safeguarding concerns will be referred to the DSL irrespective of where the behaviour occurred. The school may work with parents/carers, other schools, the local authority, social care, online providers or police where appropriate.

Prevention: creating a culture where pupils belong

Prevention is a whole-school responsibility. Hermitage will build an inclusive culture in which pupils understand that difference is respected and bullying is challenged.

- explicit teaching through PSHE/Relationships Education about respectful relationships, consent and boundaries, friendship, discrimination, online behaviour, reporting concerns and seeking help;
- age-appropriate teaching about protected characteristics and different families and communities;
- assemblies, Anti-Bullying Week, Children's Mental Health Week, pupil leadership and Anti-Bullying Ambassadors;
- a child-friendly anti-bullying policy/poster designed with pupils and displayed around school;
- staff training so that all adults recognise bullying, prejudice-based incidents, child-on-child abuse and online risks and know how to record and escalate concerns;
- active supervision and review of higher-risk locations and times, informed by incident data and pupil voice;
- reasonable adjustments and inclusive practice for pupils with SEND and other additional needs;

- regular pupil voice, including asking whether pupils feel safe, belong and trust adults to act on concerns;
- work with parents/carers to promote respectful behaviour and safe technology use.

Pupil voice and involvement

- Pupils will be involved in reviewing child-friendly anti-bullying messages and prevention work.
- The school will regularly seek pupils' views about safety, bullying, discriminatory behaviour and confidence in reporting.
- Leaders will pay particular attention to the views of pupils who may be more vulnerable or less likely to report concerns.
- Pupils will know who they can talk to, what will happen after a report and how the school will help keep them safe.

Working with parents and carers

The school will communicate openly with parents/carers while respecting safeguarding and confidentiality. Parents/carers will be informed of significant concerns involving their child where appropriate and will be told what support and follow-up are planned.
The school cannot normally share confidential information about consequences or support provided to another child. This does not mean that no action has been taken.
Where a parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the school's response, they should use the school Complaints Policy.

Bullying and harassment involving adults

Bullying or harassment of staff by pupils, parents/carers, colleagues or others is unacceptable. Concerns involving staff will be managed through the appropriate staff code of conduct, grievance, disciplinary, complaints, safeguarding and health and safety procedures, with reference to the DfE's 2026 guidance on preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff.
Where staff safety is at risk, leaders will act promptly to reduce risk, provide support, preserve evidence where appropriate and consider escalation to the academy trust, local authority, police or other agencies as relevant.

19. Recording, monitoring and evaluation

Bullying and relevant prejudice/discriminatory incidents will be recorded so that leaders can identify patterns and evaluate the impact of actions taken.

- CPOMS records will include factual details, actions, decisions, safeguarding referrals, parent/carer communication and follow-up.
- Leaders will review patterns by type of incident, protected characteristic or prejudice factor, pupil group, location, time and online context where appropriate.
- Leaders will consider whether particular pupils or groups, including pupils with SEND or disadvantaged pupils, are experiencing disproportionate harm or barriers to reporting.
- The headteacher/DSL will report appropriate anonymised themes, trends and assurance information to governors, including whether actions have been effective.
- Pupil voice, parent feedback, attendance, behaviour and safeguarding information will be considered together where this helps identify emerging concerns.
- Actions arising from monitoring will feed into school improvement, curriculum, supervision, staff training and safeguarding planning.

This approach supports the September 2026 Ofsted expectation that leaders act promptly on pupils' concerns, tackle bullying and discriminatory behaviour effectively, and build pupils' confidence that adults will keep them safe.

20. Confidentiality and information sharing

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis in accordance with safeguarding guidance and

data protection law. Staff will never promise a child absolute confidentiality. Where information must be shared to keep a child safe, this will be explained sensitively wherever possible.

Review

The headteacher and governing body will keep this policy and its implementation under review. It will be formally reviewed at least annually and sooner where national guidance, legislation, local safeguarding procedures, technology risks or school circumstances change.

Appendix 1 – Quick staff response

1. LISTEN	Take the child seriously. Do not minimise, blame or promise secrecy.
2. SAFE	Check immediate safety and take action to prevent further harm.
3. RECORD	Record promptly and factually on CPOMS, including the child's voice.
4. REPORT	Inform the DSL immediately if there is any safeguarding concern.
5. RESPOND	Investigate fairly; support the child harmed; address the behaviour that caused harm.
6. REVIEW	Follow up. Check that the behaviour has stopped and the child feels safe.

Appendix 2 – Key National Sources

- Department for Education – Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- Department for Education – Preventing and Tackling Bullying.
- Department for Education – Behaviour in Schools.
- Department for Education – Searching, Screening and Confiscation.
- Department for Education – Restrictive interventions, including the use of reasonable force, in schools.
- Department for Education – Filtering and monitoring core standard.
- Ofsted – State-funded school inspection toolkit for use from September 2026.
- Anti-Bullying Alliance, Childline, NSPCC, Childnet and UK Safer Internet Centre – supplementary advice and resources.

Useful Links and Supporting Organisations

Anti-Bullying Alliance:
www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
Childline:
www.childline.org.uk
Family Lives:
www.familylives.org.uk
Kidscape:
www.kidscape.org.uk
MindEd:
www.minded.org.uk
NSPCC: www.nspcc.org.uk
The BIG Award:
www.bullyinginterventiongroup.co.uk/index.php
PSHE Association:

www.pshe-association.org.uk
Restorative Justice Council:
www.restorativejustice.org.uk

The Diana Award:
www.diana-award.org.uk
Victim Support:
www.victimsupport.org.uk
Young Minds: www.youngminds.org.uk
Young Carers: www.youngcarers.net
The Restorative Justice Council:
www.restorativejustice.org.uk/restorative-practice-schools

SEND
Changing Faces:
www.changingfaces.org.uk
Mencap:
www.mencap.org.uk
Anti-Bullying Alliance Cyberbullying and children and young people with SEN and disabilities: www.cafamily.org.uk/media/750755/cyberbullying_and_send_-module_final.pdf
DfE: SEND code of practice:
www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0- to-25

Cyberbullying
Childnet International:
www.childnet.com
Digizen:
www.digizen.org
Internet Watch Foundation:
www.iwf.org.uk
Think U Know: www.thinkuknow.co.uk
UK Safer Internet Centre:
www.saferinternet.org.uk

- The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS) www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis

Race, religion and nationality

Anne Frank Trust: www.annefrank.org.uk Kick it Out: www.kickitout.org
Report it: www.report-it.org.uk Stop Hate: www.stophateuk.org Tell Mama:www.tellmamauk.org
Educate against Hate: www.educateagainsthate.com/ Show Racism the Red Card: www.srtrc.org/educational

LGBTQ

Barnardos LGBT Hub: www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/lgbtq.htm Metro Charity: www.metrocentreonline.org
EACH: www.eachaction.org.uk Proud Trust: www.theproudtrust.org Schools Out: www.schools-out.org.uk Stonewall: www.stonewall.org.uk

Sexual harrassment and sexual bullying

Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW) www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk

A Guide for Schools:

www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk/data/files/resources/71/EVAW-Coalition-Schools-Guide.pdf

Disrespect No Body:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/disrespect-nobody-campaign- posters

Anti-bullying Alliance: advice for school staff and professionals about developing effective anti-bullying practice in relation to sexual bullying:

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/tools- information/all-about-bullying/sexual-and-gender-related

Additional links can be found in 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' (July 2017)
www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying