



Bracken Hill School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Author: Mrs Brown

Policy Type: Whole School

This policy is reviewed annually to ensure compliance with current regulations

The Governors of the school recognise that all staff play a vital role in the achievement of high standards and in providing our pupils with the best opportunities matched to their needs.

Introduction

At Bracken Hill School we aim to provide a supportive, caring, and friendly environment which allows all our pupils to learn in an atmosphere which is focussed on improving their life chances and helping them to maximise their potential. We expect our pupils to act safely, and feel safe, in and outside of school – we do not tolerate any form of bullying and we are committed to preventing and tackling it. We recognise that as children learn and grow together, they may experience fallouts with their peers, but we are committed to supporting our pupils to resolve these ‘relational conflicts’ and stop them from progressing to bullying behaviours. If an incident of bullying does occur, we believe our pupils, parents/carers and staff should feel confident in reporting it and know that that all incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Bullying will never be tolerated at our school.

At Bracken Hill School we encourage open discussions around differences between people, we actively challenge prejudice, and we celebrate diversity. We adopt a contextual safeguarding, trauma-informed and strengths-based approach to bullying and child-on-child abuse, and we are committed to working with families and outside agencies where appropriate.

This policy has been developed in line with statutory guidance, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DfE, 2017)
- Behaviour in Schools (DfE, 2024)
- Equality Act (2010)
- Education and Inspections Act (2006)
- Children and Families Act (2014)

This policy is applied fairly and consistently to all pupils in line with the Equality Act 2010. We recognise that some pupils, including those with SEND or additional vulnerabilities, may require additional support.

Policy Development

This policy has been developed in consultation with the whole school community and is reviewed every two years, with interim evaluations to assess impact. It is available:

- On the school website
- From the school office
- In child-friendly versions in pupil welcome packs

Links to Behaviour Management Policy

This Anti-Bullying Policy is closely linked to the Behaviour Management Policy, ensuring a consistent and unified approach to maintaining positive relationships and preventing harm. Key areas of alignment include:

- **School Values:** Bullying prevention is guided by the school's core values of Determination, Courage, Kindness, Respect, Honesty, and Empathy. These values underpin all expectations of behaviour.
- **Restorative Practice:** As part of our conflict resolution strategy, we use restorative approaches to help rebuild relationships and ensure accountability.
- **Early Intervention & Prevention:** Our proactive approach includes emotion coaching, Team Teach strategies, and positive behaviour reinforcement to reduce the likelihood of bullying incidents.
- **Reporting & Recording:** All incidents of bullying are recorded on Behaviour Watch, in line with our behaviour monitoring system.
- **Sanctions & Consequences:** Responses to bullying align with the hierarchy of sanctions outlined in the Behaviour Management Policy, ensuring consistency and fairness.
- **Support for SEND Pupils:** All interventions take into account the individual needs of pupils, ensuring that appropriate reasonable adjustments are made for both victims and perpetrators.
- **Post-Incident Support:** Pupils involved in bullying incidents receive structured follow-up support, including debriefing sessions and targeted interventions.

Roles and Responsibilities

- **Head of school** – Overall responsibility for anti-bullying strategy and liaising with governors, parents, and external agencies.
- **Anti-Bullying Coordinator** – Leads policy development, training, and reporting mechanisms.
- **Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) Team** – Monitors safeguarding concerns related to bullying.
- **All Staff** – Actively prevent and address bullying through vigilance and intervention.
- **Governing Body** – Oversees policy implementation and holds school leaders accountable.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and their Deputies in our school are: Mrs Austin, Mr Jackson and Mrs Brown. Safeguarding is the responsibility of all, however all staff, parents/carers and pupils need to be aware of who to report to and how to report any safeguarding concerns.

The nominated Governor with responsibility for Anti-Bullying and Behaviour is Mr Machalski.

Definition of Bullying

What is bullying and how does it differ to relational conflict?

At Bracken Hill we have adopted the definition of bullying provided by the Anti-Bullying Alliance:

“Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.”

We recognise that bullying can take many forms and can affect any child. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups (for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs, or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities). Bullying can be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.

However, we also recognise that incidents may occur between pupils, which may not be deemed as ‘bullying’ but still require support or intervention from trusted adults. These incidents may be referred to as ‘relational conflicts’ or falling out. Relational conflict differs to bullying in the fact that it is usually between individuals or groups who are relatively similar in power and status (a power balance), and the behaviours or incidents occur occasionally (not repetitive) or occur by accident (not intentional). Usually, following a relational conflict incident, pupils show remorse and there is a general willingness to make things right or to resolve the conflict.

Not all relational conflict or falling out leads to bullying, but our school is aware occasionally some can, and we are mindful that unresolved bad feelings or relationship problems left unaddressed can be the start of a pattern of behaviour in which the intention becomes to cause harm or distress.

Although bullying and relational conflicts can take place between individuals, we recognise that it often takes place in front of others (either physically or virtually), pupils who witness these incidents/behaviours are often referred to as ‘bystanders’.

Regardless of whether an incident or situation is deemed as ‘relational conflict’ or ‘bullying’, our school will address the situation and support the pupils to resolve any negative feelings. Our school will monitor children following a relational conflict to ensure that the situation has been resolved and does not escalate to bullying. Our school will challenge, address, and monitor any incidents of bullying, to ensure that it does not continue and that all pupils feel supported (this will include the target, the alleged perpetrator, any bystanders, and the wider school community).

What does bullying behaviour look like?

At Bracken Hill we consider the context within which incidents and/or behaviours of concern occur. We will consider the motivations behind the behaviours and will take into account the age and stage of development of the pupils involved. Our focus will always be the safety and welfare of all children involved.

Bullying behaviour may include, but is not limited to:

- Physical – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching etc.
- Verbal – name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, teasing, belittling
- Emotional – isolating others, tormenting, hiding books/belongings, threatening gestures, ridicule, humiliation, intimidating, excluding, manipulation, and coercion
- Sexual – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate films etc.

- Online / Cyber – posting on social media, sharing photos, sending nasty text messages, social exclusion etc.
- Indirect – can include the exploitation of individuals such as ‘false friendships’, criminal exploitation, sexual exploitation, and radicalisation
- Prejudice-related – derogatory and discriminatory language and behaviour including that which is racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic and disablist in nature. This language and behaviour may be directed towards people because of their race/ethnicity/nationality; because they are lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans, or are perceived to be, or have a parent/carer, sibling, or friend who is, because they have a learning or physical disability. Such language and behaviour are generally used to refer to something or someone as inferior.

There is no hierarchy of bullying, all forms of bullying are taken equally seriously and will be dealt with appropriately.

Our school understands that banter is an increasingly relevant part of discussions relating to bullying; however, it is important to acknowledge that banter is not inherently bullying, and it can be an important part of social bonding and friendships. At the same time, we know that some bullying in society is passed off as ‘just banter’, and we know that banter can quickly escalate to inappropriate or harmful exchanges and bullying.

Our school defines ‘prosocial banter’ as ‘playful, typically funny, teasing between friends’. Prosocial banter can occur both online and offline and includes a range of behaviours that may be verbal, physical, or information/message sharing (online). Banter can include some of bullying behaviours set out in this policy document, so it is important to distinguish between shared positive social bonding and inappropriate banter and bullying. School staff will distinguish between banter and bullying by taking careful consideration of the *intention, content and topic* of reported incidents.

Where does bullying take place?

At Bracken Hill we understand that bullying is not confined to the school premises. Bullying can take place outside of school, on the journey to and from school and in the local community. Bullying may also take place online (this is sometimes referred to as cyberbullying).

We will offer support and guidance to pupils, parents/carers and families who have experienced any type of bullying whether this has taken place inside school, outside of school or online. We are committed to working with outside agencies where appropriate to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying.

Preventative Strategies

We proactively create an anti-bullying culture through:

- Whole-school assemblies, RSE/PSHE lessons, and themed events (e.g., Anti-Bullying Week, Safer Internet Day).
- Staff training in approaches that support positive relationships, including Team Teach, Restorative Practice, Emotion Coaching, and Zones of Regulation.
- Pupil involvement via pupil voice, Picture News discussion and feedback.

- Parental engagement, including guidance on online safety and cyberbullying.
- Monitoring trends through behaviour data analysis.

Cyberbullying and Parental Guidance

Cyberbullying presents unique challenges as it can occur outside of school hours and in personal spaces. To support parents in monitoring and addressing cyberbullying, we recommend:

- Keeping electronic devices in a public area at home.
- Discussing appropriate internet behaviour and privacy settings with children.
- Encouraging children to report any online abuse to a trusted adult.
- Saving evidence of cyberbullying (screenshots, messages) before deleting content.
- Reporting incidents to school staff and online platforms when necessary.

Artificial Intelligence (AI), Deepfakes and Online Abuse

The school recognises the increasing risks associated with the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and emerging technologies. These tools can be misused to create or share harmful content, including:

- Deepfake images or videos (digitally altered or generated content that appears real)
- Manipulated images or videos designed to humiliate, harm, or threaten others
- Impersonation of pupils or staff online
- The creation or sharing of false or misleading content to damage reputations
- The use of AI tools to generate abusive messages, images, or content

These behaviours are treated as serious forms of bullying and may also constitute safeguarding concerns.

All incidents involving AI-generated or manipulated content will be:

- Taken seriously and addressed promptly
- Investigated in line with this policy and the school's safeguarding procedures
- Reported to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) where appropriate
- Referred to external agencies (e.g. police or children's social care) if necessary

The school will also educate pupils about:

- The safe and responsible use of technology
- How to identify manipulated or misleading content

- The impact of sharing harmful material
- How to report concerns about online or AI-related abuse

We work with parents and carers to support safe technology use at home and encourage open communication about online behaviour.

How to report bullying concerns

At Bracken Hill we want pupils, parents/carers, staff, and visitors to confidently report bullying and know that their concerns will be taken seriously. We remain committed to supporting and safeguarding all children involved including the target, the alleged perpetrator, any bystanders/witnesses to the bullying behaviour and the wider school community.

We have clear reporting systems for each group of our school community, the effectiveness of these reporting systems is reviewed throughout the academic year and may be expanded to meet the needs of all members of our community.

Pupils, including bystanders/witnesses

We ask that all pupils report concerns of bullying or bullying behaviour to a member of school staff – this can be any member of teaching or non-teaching staff, including a class teacher, a TA, the Head teacher, a lunchtime supervisor, or a member of the office team. We talk about trusted adults regularly in class and in assemblies to remind our pupils of who they can report concerns to.

The member of staff will listen to the pupil and make an initial note of their concerns, they will then discuss next steps with them and reassure them that they will be supported. The member of staff will make a formal record of the bullying report on the school's recording system Behaviour Watch and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk and record the incident on My Concern (school's safeguarding platform).

We understand that some pupils may find it difficult to tell a member of staff about their concerns verbally, we therefore have additional reporting mechanisms in place. Our school has a worry box in each classroom where the pupil can put their name/a brief note about their concerns/draw a picture of their concern – these worry boxes are introduced to the pupils at the start of the year and pupils are reminded of them regularly.

Even if the behaviour/incident which has been reported is deemed 'not bullying' and is thought to be 'relational conflict', school staff will still support the pupils involved and help them to resolve any concerns.

Parents/carers

We understand that it can be very difficult for a parent/carer to be concerned or hear that their child has been the target of bullying, has experienced bullying behaviour or is an alleged perpetrator of bullying.

We ask that if parents/carers have concerns about their child experiencing or perpetrating bullying, that they contact a member of school staff. Initially we ask parents/carers to contact their child's class teacher/form leader (in person/via telephone call/via email/via learning platform) to explain their concerns. The class teacher/form leader will take an initial note of the concerns but may ask to schedule a meeting to allow for more time to discuss the concerns in detail. Following the report and/or the meeting, the teacher/form leader will make a formal record of the bullying report on the school's recording system (My Concern) and other relevant members of staff will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

We ask that parents/carers come directly to the school with their concerns rather than discussing them with other members of the school community in person or online.

Our school remains committed to supporting pupils and their families in all instances of bullying and relational conflict and will respond to reports promptly. Even if the behaviour/incident which has been reported is deemed 'not bullying' and is thought to be 'relational conflict', school staff will still support the pupils involved and help them to resolve any concerns.

We will endeavour to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress and any developments, but we will also need to show due regard to GDPR. This may mean, at times, that we are not able to provide or share information or updates.

School staff

Our staff work closely with our pupils and therefore may notice a change in a pupil's behaviour or attitude that might indicate that something is wrong before receiving a report from a pupil or a member of the school community. If staff have any concerns about a pupil's welfare or are concerned that a pupil is displaying behaviours that may show they are the target of bullying or perhaps perpetrating bullying, they should act on them immediately rather than wait to be told.

We ask that staff report their concerns to a Designated Safeguarding Lead/directly to the Head teacher/to the Anti-Bullying Coordinator. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the bullying report on the school's recording system (My Concern) and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The member of staff must directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

Visitors

We ensure that all visitors to our school are aware of our Child Protection and Safeguarding procedures and which staff member they should report any concerns to (the member of staff may differ depending on the purpose of the visit e.g., supply teacher, governor, external agency etc.).

We ask that if a visitor to our school has any concerns about bullying behaviour that they have witnessed, or been told about, that they report their concerns at the earliest opportunity in person to the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead/the Head teacher/a member of the Senior Leadership Team. We ask that visitors report their concerns in person by the end of the school day. For example,

it would not be appropriate to wait until the following day or leave a written note with concerns. The member of staff receiving the report will take an initial note of the concerns and will then make a formal record of the bullying report on the school's recording system (My Concern) and other relevant staff members will be alerted. The member of staff will directly alert the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead if the report is deemed urgent or if a pupil is considered at risk.

Reporting and Response Procedures

- **Pupils:** Can report bullying to any trusted adult or use classroom worry boxes.
- **Parents/Carers:** Encouraged to report concerns directly to the class teacher, who will escalate issues as needed.
- **Staff:** Must record concerns on Behaviour Watch and alert the DSL for safeguarding matters.

How our school will respond to reports of bullying

At Bracken Hill all reports of bullying or reported concerns of bullying behaviours will be taken seriously and investigated. Even if an incident is deemed 'not bullying' or a 'relational conflict', our school remains committed to supporting all pupils who have been involved and effected.

Our school keeps records of all reports of bullying, this information is stored on our school's recording system Behaviour Watch. These records are used to identify trends and inform our school's preventative work. Information from these records is discussed regularly at staff meetings to ensure that all staff are kept up-to-date and are alert to any ongoing concerns.

Our staff use a contextual approach to safeguarding and each incident will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. Some of our school's responses may include, but may not be limited to:

- Talk to all pupils involved in the reported incident – this may include the target, the alleged perpetrator, and any bystanders/witnesses
- Talk to the parents (of the target and/or the alleged perpetrator)
- Implement appropriate sanctions in accordance with our school's behaviour policy. These sanctions will be graded according to the seriousness of the incident, but will send out a message that bullying is unacceptable
- Discuss the report/incident/case with other agencies and organisations when appropriate and make referrals to those organisations when appropriate
- Liaise with the wider community if the bullying is taking place off the school premises (e.g., the Police, District Council etc.)
- Keep in touch with the person who reported the incident/behaviour to inform them that action has been taken – this may include a pupil, a parent/carer/guardian, a member of staff or visitor, or another member of the school community. We will endeavour to ensure that all parties are kept informed of progress and any developments, but we will also need to show due regard to GDPR. This may mean, at times, that we are not able to provide or share information or updates.
- Implement a range of follow-up support/interventions appropriate to the situation (this may include informal or formal restorative work with the target and alleged perpetrator, solution-focused meetings, individual or group work with the target, individual or group work with the

alleged perpetrator, individual or group work with any witnesses/bystanders, group work with the wider-school community etc.)

- Monitor the effectiveness of actions taken and reassess/take more actions if appropriate
- Liaise with the Designated Safeguarding Lead if there are safeguarding issues or concerns – a DSL may then refer to the Nottinghamshire MASH
- Refer to the Nottinghamshire County Council 'Pathways to Provision' document and complete an EHAF if appropriate

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with our school's actions, we ask that they follow our school's complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our school website and on request from the school office.

This policy should be read alongside our Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and reflects Part 5 of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025, which outlines expectations regarding child-on-child abuse.

Strategies for preventing bullying

At Bracken Hill we are committed to the safety and welfare of our pupils, and therefore we have developed the following strategies to promote friendly and positive behaviours and discourage bullying behaviours. Throughout the academic year, the effectiveness of these strategies is reviewed, and the variety of strategies may be expanded to address specific concerns or meet the needs of all members of our community.

The strategies we use include, but are not limited to:

- Taking part in Anti-Bullying week annually (November)
- Taking part in Safer Internet Day annually (February)
- Robust R(S)HE curriculum for all year groups
- Specific curriculum inputs for online safety and cyberbullying
- Drop down days / themed days to promote equality and tackle prejudice
- End of term / end of academic year celebration events
- Opportunities for pupils to share their voice and opinions – through surveys etc.
- Inclusive displays throughout the school with a diverse range of work, photographs etc.
- Inclusive toys and books throughout the school raising awareness of and celebrating differences
- Positive Play / ELSA support / Lego therapy / counselling for identified students
- Specific initiatives for identified individuals or groups
- Parent information board and area on the school website
- Parent events
- Regular staff training and development for all staff (including lunchtime supervisors and staff who support our before and after-school clubs)
- All staff model expected behaviour

Breaches / Complaints

Breaches to this policy will be dealt with in the same way that breaches of other school policies are dealt with, as determined by the Head teacher and Governing Body.

If a parent/carer is not satisfied with our school's actions, we ask that they follow our school's complaint policy and procedures. This is available online from our school website, and on request from the school office.

Actions Taken Following Reports

Each report is investigated thoroughly. Responses may include:

- **Support for the Target** – Emotional support, restorative meetings, peer mentoring.
- **Intervention with the Perpetrator** – Consequences in line with the Behaviour Policy, restorative work, targeted intervention.
- **Parental Involvement** – Meetings to discuss concerns and actions.
- **External Agency Support** – Referral to counselling services, social care, or police if necessary.

Sanctions and Consequences

Sanctions are applied progressively based on the severity of the behaviour:

1. Restorative conversation and verbal warning.
2. Loss of privileges (e.g., breaktime restrictions).
3. Parental meeting and behaviour support plan.
4. Formal warning and internal suspension.
5. Fixed-term exclusion (if necessary, in extreme cases, following DfE Behaviour in Schools guidance).

Monitoring and Review

- Data from Behaviour Watch is analysed bi-annually to track trends and evaluate interventions.
- The policy is formally reviewed every two years, with interim evaluations to assess effectiveness.

For concerns about how a bullying case has been handled, parents should follow the Complaints Policy available on the school website.

This policy is available on the school website and can be provided in alternative formats upon request.