



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Reviewed policy agreed by GB on:	Autumn 2026
Reviewed policy shared with staff on:	Autumn 2026
Policy to be reviewed again on:	Autumn 2029
Committee responsible for review:	Policy Committee

Introduction

Willow Dene School is committed to promoting equality, diversity and an inclusive and supportive environment for its CYP and staff, affirming the rights of individuals to be treated fairly and with respect. We recognise that the most effective way of minimising bullying is to provide a positive culture of caring, respect and friendship, through the ethos of the school. Every child and young person (CYP) and member of staff at Willow Dene School should be valued and be able to learn and work without anxiety or fear from bullying. This policy is linked to Willow Dene's Safeguarding including CP Policy 2026-27 as any form of child-on-child abuse is likely to involve bullying.

Aims

Bullying is unacceptable at Willow Dene School and as such we aim to:

- develop a school ethos in which bullying is regarded as unacceptable and that everyone has a responsibility to be proactive in ensuring that bullying is challenged and reported
- provide a safe and secure environment where all can learn and work without anxiety, humiliation, harassment, oppression or abuse
- respond effectively to any bullying or child-on-child abuse incidents that may occur
- ensure the school community are aware of our opposition to bullying and know that appropriate action will be taken if bullying or child-on-child abuse occurs
- ensure that everyone takes responsibility for the prevention and elimination of bullying or child-on-child abuse in our school

What is bullying?

Bullying (or child-on-child abuse) is rarely a single incident and tends to be an accumulation of many small incidents, each of which, when taken in isolation and out of context, can seem trivial. There are many definitions of bullying, but most have three things in common:

- It is deliberately hurtful or threatening behaviour
- It is repeated often over a period of time
- It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves

Bullying can take many forms, but the main types are:

- Physical – for example, hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- Verbal – for example, name calling, insulting, belittling, unkind or discriminatory remarks
- Social – for example spreading nasty stories about someone, excluding someone from social groups, tormenting, staring, threatening gestures
- Emotional – for example, isolating others, tormenting, hiding possessions, threatening gestures, ridicule, intimidating, excluding, manipulation and coercion
- Cyber – this can take many forms and is outlined in greater detail in the Online Safety Policy. It may include posting on social media, sharing photos, sending unpleasant text messages, or social exclusion

- Sexual – for example, unwanted contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, exposure to inappropriate materials, sexual harassment or sexual violence
- A combination of the above – for example extortion (forcing someone to give up money or belongings) or intimidation (making someone frightened because of threats)

Any of these may also have contexts that discriminate in relation to race, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, SEN, or disability.

Our CYP

All CYP at Willow Dene have special educational needs and present with a range of complex learning difficulties. Our approach to anti-bullying therefore needs to take into consideration on the one hand, the impact of inappropriate behaviours on our physically and emotionally vulnerable CYP, while on the other, the influence of specific types of special needs on the behaviour of some CYP. While the school recognises this dilemma it is also dedicated to combating both the rare cases of 'true bullying' that may occur and the possible, while unintentional, incidents that may make CYP feel threatened, unsafe or afraid.

We distinguish between the inappropriate behaviours to others that arise through the impact of special educational needs and associated social or behavioural problems and those that occur through bullying. While not underestimating the impact of any inappropriate behaviour on the physical and emotional well-being of the recipient, the approach to the management of bullying will differ. Although this policy relates to the management of bullying within the school, inappropriate behaviours that impact on the physical and emotional welfare of others is unacceptable whatever the cause or context and will be addressed immediately.

STRATEGIES TO PREVENT BULLYING

- The complexity of needs of CYP at Willow Dene do not lend themselves to the majority of CYP having the capacity to cause intentional harm.
- Our curriculum is aimed to develop the whole CYP developing their understanding of themselves and others at an appropriate level. Our curriculum is highly personalised, enabling CYP to learn about themselves, relationships with other people and the world around them at an appropriate level. Essential Skills is a core area of the Willow Dene curriculum. This consists of the four components: Communication, Learning Skills, Social Skills and Self Help Skills. All of these areas are key to understanding of self and others.
- Our school values underpin all we do and guide the promotion of positive behaviour between staff and CYP and a culture of mutual respect

- Any bullying between adults is reported *to an appropriate person*. This may be the Head Teacher, a DSL or a governor
- Bullying involving member(s) of staff will be dealt in accordance with the Staff Code of Conduct and the Trust's Disciplinary Policy

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Bullying differs from discrimination in that the focus is rarely based on gender, race, or disability. No CYP or member of staff at Willow Dene School should be bullied or belittled, whatever their special educational or medical needs, ethnic origin, gender or religion.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Head Teacher is responsible for:

- overall monitoring of bullying and the anti-bullying policy within the school
- dealing with incidents of bullying between adults
- following up any situations not satisfactorily resolved in the view of the DSL, parent or any concerned member of staff
- ensuring accurate record keeping

All staff are responsible for:

- ensuring the safety of CYP who, because of the impact of their special needs struggle to communicate any issues that arise
- informing a DSL of any incidents of bullying or child-on-child abuse observed, disclosed or suspected

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This policy will be monitored and the effectiveness will be evaluated in the light of the numbers of bullying incidents recorded, staff response to bullying behaviour. The Governors with oversight of this policy are the Local Governing Body to whom numbers of incidents will be reported annually, to coincide with the policy review.

RELATED DOCUMENTATION

- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Safeguarding (including Child Protection) Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct