

St Michael's CE Primary School Sydenham



Anti-Bullying Policy

Agreed by the Governing Body on:	September 2026
Signed (Chair):	Beryl Fielder
Review Date:	September 2027

Updated September 2026 to reflect KCSIE 2026 and current statutory guidance.

1. Purpose and aims

At St Michael's CE Primary School, every pupil has the right to learn and flourish in a safe, respectful and inclusive environment. Bullying is unacceptable and will be addressed promptly, consistently and proportionately.

This policy explains how we prevent, identify, record and respond to bullying. It should be read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, Relationships and Health Education policy, SEND/Inclusion policy, Equality policy, Staff Code of Conduct, Complaints Procedure and Whistleblowing Policy.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. In line with Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, staff maintain a child-centred approach, act on concerns without delay and recognise that bullying can be a form of child-on-child abuse.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has regard to current legislation and statutory/non-statutory guidance, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (DfE), in force from 1 September 2026.
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including the duty to promote good behaviour, respect for others and prevent all forms of bullying.
- Education Act 2002, including the duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of pupils.
- Equality Act 2010, including the Public Sector Equality Duty and protection from discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004; Human Rights Act 1998.
- Public Order Act 1986 and Protection from Harassment Act 1997, where relevant.
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (DfE).
- Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance, revised guidance in force from 1 September 2026.
- Teaching Online Safety in Schools (DfE).
- Suspension and Permanent Exclusion statutory guidance, updated July 2026.
- Preventing and Tackling the Bullying and Harassment of School Staff (DfE, July 2026), where concerns relate to adults.

The school will also follow Lewisham safeguarding partnership procedures and local referral pathways.

3. What is bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that hurts, intimidates, humiliates or excludes another person and is commonly repeated over time and/or involves an imbalance of power. The imbalance may be physical, social, emotional, technological or linked to status, popularity, age, ability or access to information.

Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional, relational, prejudicial or online. It can happen face-to-face, through technology, on the journey to or from school, or outside school where the behaviour has an impact on pupils' safety, wellbeing or school life.

Not every disagreement, friendship difficulty or one-off incident is bullying. However, a one-off incident can still be serious, discriminatory, harmful or a safeguarding concern and will be responded to appropriately. The school will not wait for behaviour to become repeated before acting where a child may be at risk.

4. Forms of bullying and harmful behaviour

- Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing, taking or damaging belongings, threatening physical harm or encouraging others to harm someone.
- Verbal: name-calling, insults, threats, mocking, repeated teasing or humiliating comments.
- Emotional/relational: deliberate exclusion, coercion, intimidation, spreading rumours, manipulating friendships or encouraging others to isolate a pupil.
- Online/cyberbullying: abusive or threatening messages, posts, images, group-chat behaviour, impersonation, exclusion, sharing content without consent, or using digital tools to humiliate or target another person.
- Prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying: behaviour related to race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sex, disability, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, or other perceived difference or association.
- SEND/disability-related bullying: targeting a pupil because of a disability, additional need, communication difference, learning need or perceived vulnerability.
- Sexist, sexual or gender-related bullying: sexualised comments, unwanted conduct, sexual harassment, misogynistic or sexist language, unwanted touching, rumours of a sexual nature, or behaviour related to gender.
- Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying: language or behaviour directed at a person because of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, or because of association with others.
- Faith/religion-related bullying: hostility, ridicule, stereotypes, threats or exclusion based on religion, belief or perceived faith.
- Appearance, health, family or circumstance-related bullying: targeting body image, health conditions, caring status, poverty, family circumstances, looked-after status or other personal circumstances.

5. Child-on-child abuse and safeguarding

KCSIE 2026 identifies bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying, as a form of child-on-child abuse. Child-on-child abuse can also include physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, abuse within intimate personal relationships, sharing self-generated intimate images, including AI-generated or manipulated intimate images/deepfakes, upskirting, and initiation or hazing-type violence or rituals.

All staff must recognise that child-on-child abuse can happen inside or outside school and online. Staff must not dismiss harmful behaviour as 'banter', 'part of growing up', 'just having a laugh' or similar. The absence of a report does not mean abuse is not happening.

Where an incident may constitute abuse, exploitation, sexual violence, sexual harassment, significant harm or another safeguarding concern, staff must follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and report it to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy without delay. If a child is in immediate danger, emergency services must be contacted.

The school will consider the needs and safety of all children involved, including the child who has been harmed, the child alleged to have caused harm, and witnesses/bystanders. Support and safeguarding action will not depend solely on whether a disciplinary sanction is applied.

6. Equality, inclusion and vulnerability

The school will challenge racism, discrimination, harassment and prejudice. Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 reinforces the importance of inclusive, anti-discriminatory and anti-racist safeguarding practice.

Some pupils may be more vulnerable to bullying or may find it harder to recognise, report or describe what has happened. This can include pupils with SEND, communication needs, disabilities, children in care or

previously in care, young carers, pupils experiencing social or economic disadvantage, and pupils who are perceived to be different from their peers.

Reasonable adjustments will be made so that pupils can report concerns and participate in investigations in ways that meet their communication, sensory, emotional and learning needs. The school will consider unmet need, trauma, disability and other contextual factors without excusing harmful behaviour.

7. Preventing bullying

Prevention is part of the school's whole-school safeguarding, behaviour, curriculum and pastoral approach. We will:

- promote the school's Christian ethos and values, respectful relationships, dignity, kindness and inclusion;
- teach pupils through Relationships and Health Education, PSHE, online safety, computing, collective worship and the wider curriculum how to recognise bullying, prejudice, unsafe behaviour and healthy relationships;
- teach pupils how to report concerns, seek help, be an active bystander and use technology safely and respectfully;
- make clear that discriminatory language, sexual harassment and harmful online behaviour are not tolerated;
- use pupil voice, surveys, safeguarding information and behaviour data to identify patterns, locations, groups or times where risks are higher;
- provide appropriate staff training and updates on bullying, child-on-child abuse, online harms, equality and safeguarding;
- use supervision, playground systems, peer support initiatives and targeted pastoral work to reduce opportunities for bullying;
- work with parents/carers and external agencies where additional support or specialist advice is required.

8. Reporting concerns

Pupils are encouraged to tell any trusted adult. Parents/carers should report concerns to the class teacher in the first instance, unless the concern is serious or safeguarding-related, in which case it should be raised promptly with a member of the senior leadership team or DSL.

Any member of staff who witnesses bullying, receives a disclosure or has a concern must act. Safeguarding concerns must be passed to the DSL/deputy immediately and recorded in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures.

Concerns about the conduct of an adult working with children must be managed under the school's safeguarding allegations/low-level concerns procedures, not investigated solely through this anti-bullying policy. Where appropriate, advice will be sought from the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO).

9. Responding to alleged bullying

The school will respond promptly, fairly and in a child-centred way. The response will be proportionate to the seriousness, frequency, impact and context of the behaviour.

1. Ensure immediate safety and provide reassurance and support.
2. Listen carefully to the child and avoid asking leading or unnecessarily repeated questions.
3. Record the concern accurately, including the child's own words where appropriate.
4. Inform the DSL/deputy immediately where there is any safeguarding element.
5. Gather information from relevant pupils, staff and witnesses separately and sensitively.

6. Consider whether the behaviour is bullying, a prejudice-related incident, child-on-child abuse, a safeguarding concern, a criminal matter, or a combination of these.
7. Consider SEND, disability, communication needs, vulnerability, power imbalance, previous incidents, online evidence and contextual factors.
8. Agree protective and supportive measures for the child who has been harmed.
9. Decide appropriate support, education and consequences for the child who has caused harm, in line with the Behaviour Policy.
10. Communicate appropriately with parents/carers, unless doing so would place a child at greater risk or conflict with safeguarding advice.
11. Review the situation and continue monitoring until leaders are satisfied that the behaviour has stopped and safety has been restored.

Restorative approaches may be used where appropriate and safe, but they will not be imposed where there is a significant power imbalance, safeguarding concern, sexual violence/harassment, coercion, or where the child who has been harmed does not feel safe to participate.

10. Online bullying and digital evidence

Online bullying can occur at any time and can rapidly reach a wide audience. The school may respond to online behaviour outside school where it threatens another pupil, causes harm, disrupts school life or affects the orderly running of the school.

- Do not encourage a child to retaliate or respond to abusive content.
- Preserve relevant evidence where safe and lawful to do so, for example screenshots, URLs, usernames, dates and times.
- Do not ask pupils or staff to view, copy, forward or print nude or semi-nude images. Follow safeguarding procedures and current UKCIS guidance.
- Report harmful content through the relevant platform/provider where appropriate.
- Where there are threats, sexual content, coercion, stalking, hate crime, serious harassment or suspected criminal behaviour, the DSL will consider police and/or children's social care involvement.
- Where AI-generated or manipulated content, including deepfakes, is used to sexualise, humiliate, impersonate or threaten a child, this will be treated seriously and managed through safeguarding procedures.

11. Recording, monitoring and information sharing

The school will maintain clear records of reported bullying and safeguarding concerns. Records should include a summary of the concern, actions taken, decisions made, the rationale for decisions and outcomes. Safeguarding information will be shared when necessary and proportionate to protect a child; data protection law is not a barrier to appropriate safeguarding information sharing.

Leaders will monitor patterns and trends, including repeated incidents, prejudice-related incidents, online behaviour, locations, times, pupil groups and any disproportionate impact on pupils with protected characteristics or additional vulnerabilities. Relevant information will inform safeguarding, behaviour, equality and curriculum planning.

The governing body will receive appropriate anonymised information to support oversight of safeguarding, behaviour, equality and the effectiveness of this policy.

12. Support for pupils

Support will be tailored to need and may include a trusted adult, check-ins, pastoral support, safety planning, adjustments to routines, peer support, curriculum work, SEND support, counselling or referral to external services.

Children who display bullying or harmful behaviour may also need support. The school will seek to understand the reasons for behaviour, teach safer and more respectful alternatives, and address unmet needs while maintaining clear boundaries and accountability.

13. Consequences and disciplinary action

Consequences will be applied in line with the school's Behaviour Policy and will be proportionate, lawful and appropriate to the individual circumstances. They may include restorative or reparative work, loss of privileges, removal from particular activities or social times, behaviour plans, increased supervision, internal measures, suspension or, in the most serious circumstances, permanent exclusion.

The current statutory terminology is 'suspension' and 'permanent exclusion'. Any suspension or permanent exclusion will be managed in accordance with current DfE statutory guidance. The school will consider SEND, disability and equality duties and will not use exclusion because a pupil has additional needs that the school cannot meet.

14. Bullying or harassment involving adults

Bullying or harassment of staff is unacceptable. Concerns involving staff, parents/carers or other adults will be managed under the appropriate employment, complaints, conduct, safeguarding, whistleblowing or harassment procedures. The DfE's July 2026 guidance on preventing and tackling bullying and harassment of school staff will be considered where relevant.

Parents/carers must not confront pupils or other families in a way that intimidates, threatens or harasses. Concerns should be raised with the school so they can be managed safely and appropriately.

15. Roles and responsibilities

Role	Key responsibilities
Governing Body	Provides strategic oversight; ensures statutory duties are met; reviews the effectiveness of safeguarding, behaviour and equality arrangements.
Headteacher	Ensures the policy is implemented, staff are trained, behaviour systems are effective and serious incidents are addressed.
DSL / Deputy DSL	Leads safeguarding responses; advises on referrals, risk, information sharing and support; ensures safeguarding records are maintained.
All staff	Model respectful behaviour; remain vigilant; intervene safely; record and report concerns promptly; follow safeguarding procedures.
Pupils	Treat others with respect; report bullying or unsafe behaviour; seek help; avoid joining in or sharing harmful content.
Parents/carers	Work constructively with the school; report concerns promptly; support safe and respectful behaviour, including online.

16. Complaints

If a parent/carer is dissatisfied with the way a bullying concern has been handled, they should use the school's Complaints Procedure. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed through safeguarding procedures and will not be delayed by a complaint.

17. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner if there are changes to legislation, statutory guidance, local safeguarding procedures, or learning from incidents. The policy should be reviewed alongside the Behaviour Policy and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Appendix 1 – Key indicators that a pupil may be experiencing bullying

Indicators are not proof of bullying, but changes should be explored sensitively. They may include:

- reluctance or refusal to attend school, increased lateness or unexplained absence;
- changes in mood, confidence, behaviour, sleep, eating or concentration;
- unexplained injuries or damaged/lost belongings;
- withdrawal from friends, activities, online spaces or particular areas of school;
- fear of checking a phone/device or distress after going online;
- decline in attainment or engagement;
- repeated requests for money or missing possessions;
- comments suggesting isolation, humiliation, threats or hopelessness.

Appendix 2 – Staff quick response

- STOP: intervene safely and prevent further harm.
- LISTEN: take the child seriously; do not promise confidentiality.
- RECORD: write a clear factual account, including the child's words where appropriate.
- REPORT: tell the DSL/deputy immediately if there is any safeguarding concern.
- SUPPORT: consider immediate safety and emotional needs.
- FOLLOW UP: ensure actions, decisions, rationale and outcomes are recorded and reviewed.

Appendix 3 – Reference documents (September 2026)

- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026.
- HM Government, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026.
- Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies.
- Department for Education, Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education (RSE) and Health Education statutory guidance (revised 2026).
- Department for Education, Teaching Online Safety in Schools.
- Department for Education, Suspension and Permanent Exclusion statutory guidance (updated July 2026).
- Department for Education, Preventing and Tackling the Bullying and Harassment of School Staff (July 2026).