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# Friendship and Anti-Bullying Policy

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Type of Policy	School based policy



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## **Aims**

**This policy aims to:**

- Ensure everyone has the same clear and shared definition of bullying
- Provide a clear and consistent whole-school Anti-Bullying Approach
- Explain what we do to prevent and respond to bullying and why we do it
- Provide information and support to every member of our school community
- Make completely clear how seriously our school acts on reports of bullying

## **Links**

**Other School Policies:**

- This policy should be read in conjunction with the school's published policies for:
- Behaviour in School
- Child Protection & Safeguarding
- SEND
- Preventing Extremism and Radicalisation



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## 1. School Culture

At St John's Meads, we have **high expectations for behaviour** and set clear boundaries that all pupils and members of the school community understand. For further details, please see our **Behaviour in School Policy**.

Bullying can thrive in environments where name-calling, unwanted touch, rumour-spreading, or disrespect go unchallenged. **None of these behaviours are acceptable** at St John's Meads, and they will be challenged every time they occur.

## 2. What is Bullying?

The Anti-bullying Alliance defines bullying as:

*'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.'*

The four key elements of the definition are:

1. Repetitive
2. Hurtful
3. Intentional
4. Power Imbalance.

For an incident to be classed as bullying, **all four elements must be present**. If even one element is missing, the incident is **not** defined as bullying. However, this does **not** mean the behaviour is ignored. The school takes all concerns about unkindness, conflict or poor behaviour **very seriously**. Every incident is investigated and addressed quickly and appropriately.

# Is it Bullying?

When someone says or does something unintentionally hurtful and they do it once

**That's Rude**

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they do it once

**That's Mean**

When someone says or does something intentionally hurtful and they keep doing it even when you tell them to stop or show them you're upset.

**That's BULLYING**



**Be Kind**



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We recognise that disagreements or relational conflicts, if left unresolved, can develop into bullying. For this reason, they are dealt with carefully, reflected upon and monitored. For example, a single unkind comment or inappropriate remark is not bullying, but it still requires adult involvement. Staff will provide support, apply sanctions where needed, and help children reflect on how to make positive choices in the future.

The four key elements of bullying can be understood in the following way:

- **Repetitive** – the behaviour happens more than once or continues over time.
- **Hurtful** – the behaviour causes emotional or physical harm.
- **Intentional** – the person or group knows the behaviour is upsetting or unwanted and chooses to continue, even after being told, “Stop, I don’t like it.”
- **Power Imbalance** – the person showing the behaviour has more power in the situation. This imbalance exists when someone’s “no” is ignored, or when a child is at a disadvantage in some way.

Power imbalances can occur for many reasons, such as when a child is part of a smaller group, belongs to a minority gender, race or faith group, is younger or physically smaller, has communication difficulties, or has a special educational need or disability (SEND).

### 3. Relational Conflict and Bullying

Not every disagreement or relationship difficulty between children should be considered bullying. These situations are often described as **relational conflict**. Understanding how to recognise and respond to relational conflict is an important part of identifying and responding to bullying. It is important that adults do not label all arguments as bullying.

Relational conflict usually involves children who are **similar in power and status**, either individually or in groups. The behaviour often happens occasionally, and any harm caused may be **accidental**. In these situations, children are usually willing to **make things right**, reflect on what went wrong, and plan ways to repair the relationship.

While not all conflict becomes bullying, unresolved conflicts or negative feelings can develop into **patterns of behaviour intended to cause harm**, which may create a **power imbalance** and make a child or group more vulnerable. Early intervention and careful support can prevent relational conflicts from escalating into bullying.

### 4. Types of Bullying Behaviours

Bullying can take many forms. It may include one or more of the following:

- **Physical** – pushing, poking, kicking, hitting, biting, pinching, or other forms of physical harm.



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- **Verbal** – name-calling, teasing, sarcasm, spreading rumours, threats, or belittling others.
- **Emotional** – isolating or excluding others, tormenting, hiding belongings, intimidating gestures, ridicule, humiliation, manipulation, or coercion.
- **Sexual** – unwanted physical contact, inappropriate touching, abusive comments, homophobic abuse, or exposure to inappropriate images or videos.
- **Online/Cyber** – posting harmful content on social media, sharing images without permission, sending hurtful messages, or excluding others online.
- **Indirect** – using others to exploit, influence, or harm someone, sometimes without direct contact.

All types of bullying are taken seriously and will be addressed quickly and effectively by the school.

## 5. Spotting the Signs

Children experiencing bullying or other difficulties may not always show sadness or ask adults for help. Some may **act out** or even **start bullying others**. Adults should be aware of possible signs, including:

- Changes in school performance or engagement, including frequent or persistent absence
- Increased isolation or loss of interest in usual friendships
- Loss of interest in activities they previously enjoyed
- Changes in behaviour, such as becoming disruptive, aggressive, anxious, distressed, or withdrawn
- Noticeable changes in weight
- Signs of injury

## 6. “Stop! I Don’t Like It!”

At our school, we encourage children to **speak up clearly** when someone is doing something they do not like or that upsets them. This helps others understand that their behaviour is **not acceptable**.

Children are asked to use the words: **“STOP! I DON’T LIKE IT!”** to make their feelings clear.

If the behaviour continues **after the child or group knows it is unwelcome**, it is considered **intentional**. Intentional behaviour of this kind will be treated as bullying and addressed according to our anti-bullying procedures.



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## **7. How We Address Bullying**

### **1. Receive and Listen**

- Concerns about bullying can be raised by pupils and families in any form [in person, phone, email, etc.].
- Staff listen carefully, take concerns seriously, and ensure the pupil/families feels heard.
- Initial details are recorded on the school's safeguarding system [MyConcern] and the DSLs are notified immediately.

### **2. Respond Quickly and Investigate**

- A member of staff such as class teacher, safeguarding lead or senior leader meets with the children involved as soon as possible.
- Each child is given time to explain what happened, share their feelings, and discuss any factors influencing the incident.
- Staff ensure pupils with SEND are supported to participate fully.
- Information is compared to establish whether the concern is bullying or another type of conflict/poor behaviour.

### **3. Take Action and Support**

- Appropriate actions are agreed with the pupils involved, considering their needs and views [usually a two-week investigation/observation period]
- The school challenges any discriminatory language or behaviour.
- Support is offered to all affected pupils, and positive behaviour and respectful conduct are reinforced.
- Sanctions and restorative opportunities [reflection time with a senior leader] are used where necessary to promote better choices.

### **4. Communicate with Families**

- Parents/carers are kept informed throughout the process.
- Outcomes and next steps are explained clearly.
- Families are encouraged to continue raising concerns and contribute to ongoing improvement.

### **5. Promote Inclusion, Respect and Understanding**

- The school reinforces what bullying is [and isn't] so everyone understands expectations.



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- Differences are actively celebrated through curriculum activities, worship and school events.
- Staff model respectful behaviour at all times, and all visitors are expected to do the same.

## **6. Review and Prevent**

- Staff reflect on feedback from pupils and families to improve anti-bullying practice.
- The school continues to promote an inclusive environment where all pupils feel valued and participate fully in school life.

We strive for all members of our school community to be united in their understanding of the definition of bullying and clear about what actions the school and stakeholders will take in the event of reported bullying.

## **8. School and Community Response**

Once an investigation is complete and a restorative plan is decided:

- All parties, including parents/carers, are asked to **support the school's decisions**.
- Children reflect on their own and others' behaviour and help establish ways to **avoid similar situations** in the future.
- The aim is to **stop bullying** and ensure that pupils displaying bullying behaviour **change long-term**.
- Additional support is provided to children who have been bullied and to those who have displayed bullying behaviour if needed.

## **9. Preventing Bullying**

Our approach to anti-bullying begins **before any incident occurs**. We focus on **prevention**, creating a school culture where differences are respected, relationships are positive, and all pupils feel included and valued. By promoting kindness, respect, tolerance, and good behaviour, we aim to prevent bullying from happening in the first place. These values are central to our school and were chosen by the children as two of our five core values.

### **Prevention in the Classroom**

Classroom strategies form a key part of our preventative approach. These include opportunities for children to explore issues related to bullying and develop understanding, empathy, and positive social skills through:



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- Personal Development lessons
- Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) activities
- Class assemblies
- Whole-school Collective Worship
- Participation in special events, e.g., Anti-Bullying Week, Autism Awareness Week etc
- School and Classroom behaviour agreements
- Promoting acceptance, tolerance, and diversity across subjects and activities

### **Social and Emotional Strategies**

Alongside the curriculum, children will take part in activities that support the **social and emotional life of the classroom**, including:

- Circle time, co-operative group work, and quality circles
- Access to nurture and wellbeing activities
- Behaviour reflection sessions
- Participation in Student Leadership Groups [such as school Council, Friendship Group meetings]
- Targeted interventions when specific situations arise

Through these approaches, we aim to create a safe, inclusive, and supportive environment where all pupils can thrive and bullying is less likely to occur.

## **10. Whole School Approach**

We address bullying and support mental health using a **whole school approach** based on three key components:

- 1. Communication**
- 2. Prevention**
- 3. Response**

Our approach is designed to ensure that:

- Our stance on bullying and mental health is **communicated to all members** of the school community.
- Parents, pupils, and staff can **clearly understand** the school's expectations and procedures.
- Policies explicitly explain what bullying and mental health issues look like, including **warning signs to watch for**.



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- Mental and emotional health is taught through the **curriculum**, raising awareness, challenging stigma, and helping pupils to recognise and discuss issues. Children who experience mental health difficulties are supported and confident that appropriate strategies will be implemented.
- We **regularly listen to pupils** and take their views seriously when planning, reviewing, and improving our approaches to bullying and mental health.

By combining communication, prevention, and response, our school creates a **safe, supportive, and inclusive environment** where all pupils can thrive.

## 11. Celebrating Diversity and Differences

We recognise that bullying can be fuelled by prejudice. It is essential that everyone [in and outside of school] works together to create a culture where prejudice and hatred are **never accepted**.

**Prejudice** is an assumption or opinion about someone based on their membership in a particular group, such as ethnicity, gender, religion, or ability. Our school actively addresses behaviours that are homophobic, transphobic, racist, sexist, disablist, or prejudicial in any way. These behaviours can range from deliberate, targeted incidents to careless comments intended as jokes. **Every instance of prejudicial language or behaviour must be challenged** by all members of the school community to maintain a safe, inclusive environment for everyone.

We celebrate diversity every day and work hard to ensure that everyone who comes into our school community feels **welcome, safe, and included**.

## 12. How We Celebrate Differences

Through the following approaches, we aim to foster a culture of **inclusion, respect, and understanding** that reduces the risk of bullying and ensures all children feel valued:

- Celebrate the differences among all pupils and staff.
- Ensure all staff feel confident and comfortable discussing all kinds of difference.
- Give children opportunities to talk about things they find different or unique.
- Work with pupils to share what makes them different, if they choose to.
- Help all pupils understand what makes them who they are, while also highlighting shared interests and commonalities.
- Respect pupils' boundaries by not discussing a classmate's differences outside of what they are happy to share.
- Support children in learning how to communicate information about themselves.



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- Support pupils in interacting respectfully with classmates who communicate differently or have additional communication needs.

### 13. Online Bullying [cyberbullying]

Children's safety online is extremely important. All online behaviour—including messages, content, and social activity—should be **safe, polite, and monitored**.

Parents and carers are responsible for:

- Knowing when children have internet-enabled devices
- Monitoring the content they access and how they interact with others
- Ensuring accounts are private and only connect with people they know
- Being cautious when sharing images or information online

Primary school children often **lack the skills to navigate social media safely**. Adults must supervise and support their online activity, helping them understand the risks and pressures, such as the desire to “fit in” or “be popular.”

The best way to keep children safe online is to **talk with them regularly** about their internet use and maintain open communication so they feel confident to share any problems without fear of punishment.

Our approach to cyberbullying—whether it happens **inside or outside of school**—is the **same as for face-to-face bullying** and is treated just as seriously.

However, because cyberbullying occurs through internet-enabled devices, the school may have **limited access to information** about incidents, particularly if they happen at home. Families are responsible for ensuring that primary school-age children are **safely supervised online** and have the skills to navigate the internet responsibly.

If a child or parent believes that cyberbullying has occurred, the school may need further information to investigate the behaviour.

#### What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is bullying that happens via electronic means, such as:

- Smartphones, computers, laptops, or tablets
- Online gaming platforms
- Text messages, email, or messaging apps
- Social networking sites, video-hosting or photo-sharing platforms



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- Webcams, chat, or online learning environments

## Who is Involved?

Online bullying is often an **extension of face-to-face bullying**. Research shows that it rarely happens in isolation and usually occurs alongside traditional bullying.

## Bullying in an Online Context

Teachers and school leaders have a **duty of care** to provide a safe and healthy environment. In some cases, this may require the school to take action regarding pupils' behaviour **outside of school hours or off school premises** if it affects the safety and wellbeing of others in the school community.

## 14. Reporting, Recording and Data Analysis

All reports of bullying are taken **extremely seriously**. When a concern is raised:

- A full account is recorded on the school's **MyConcern safeguarding platform** as soon as possible.
- **Designated Safeguarding Leads (DSLs)** are notified immediately and will personally investigate the incident.
- All parties involved are asked to share their accounts. Children's statements are **compared and fact-checked**, and staff speak with any other witnesses.
- Investigations are usually completed within a few days if all parties are available.

Actions are decided on a **case-by-case basis** and specifically address issues identified in the investigation. **Parents, carers, and children** are informed of outcomes once all information has been reviewed. All actions are **fully recorded on MyConcern**.

DSLs regularly **review incidents** to identify patterns in behaviour, people involved, or locations within school. If patterns emerge, **interventions are put in place** to prevent further occurrences. DSLs meet weekly to discuss issues and provide daily briefings to staff. Urgent safeguarding information is shared promptly with relevant staff.

## 15. Bullying to and From School

Staff, parents, and the wider community are asked to remain **vigilant during travel to and from school**. Although incidents may occur off school premises, no child should feel unsafe. Reports of incidents outside school will be addressed, and, where appropriate, the school may involve the **police or other agencies** to safeguard pupils.