

Amble Links Primary School
Anti-Bullying Policy



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This policy should be read in conjunction with school policies for Behaviour, Equalities, Digital Safety, Tackling Radicalisation and Extremism (PREVENT) & Child on Child Abuse.

Introduction

Everyone at Amble Links Primary School has the right to feel welcome, safe and happy. Only if this is the case will all members of the school community be able to achieve to their maximum potential. Bullying of any sort prevents this happening and prevents equality of opportunity

Our school seeks to provide a safe, secure and positive environment for everyone.

This policy outlines how we make this possible at Amble Links Primary School and focuses on protecting children from bullying. The policy operates in accordance with statutory guidance including Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE), DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying, and the Equality Act 2010.

What is bullying?

Bullying is deliberate, repeated, and hurtful behaviour—in person or online—where an individual or group repeatedly targets someone to cause physical or emotional distress, making it hard for the person being targeted to defend themselves.

Bullying must always be taken seriously. All bullying is unacceptable. Bullying does not only occur between children. The above definition can also be seen to characterise some relationships between adults or between adults and children.

In more serious instances where adults abuse their power over a child or a child abuses their power over another child, bullying may be viewed as child abuse and should be treated as such. In these cases, we would also refer to our Safeguarding policies.

Bullying can stem from thoughtlessness, such as in name calling or stem from institutionalised attitudes, for example in relation to gender or race. That does not make it any less unacceptable.

Bullying behaviour typically manifests across four primary categories, which may occur individually or in combination:

- **Physical Bullying:** Direct, aggressive physical actions or actions directed at personal property, including hitting, kicking, pushing, tripping, stealing, or damaging belongings.
- **Verbal Bullying:** Spoken or written language intended to cause distress, including name-calling, taunting, insults, threats, and offensive or discriminatory remarks.
- **Emotional / Relational Bullying:** Indirect behaviours designed to damage social standing or psychological well-being, such as spreading rumours, deliberate social exclusion, manipulation, and public humiliation.
- **Cyber / Digital Bullying:** Harassment or intimidation conducted via electronic devices or online platforms, including threatening messages, exclusion from digital groups, non-consensual sharing of media, and image-based abuse.

Bullying across any of these categories may also be classified as **Prejudice-Based Bullying** if motivated by protected characteristics, such as race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity. See appendix A.

Bullying is always significant to the person being bullied.

Reporting Bullying

Pupils are actively encouraged to report bullying, whether they are the victim or a bystander. This is reinforced through regular assemblies, through PHSE lessons and Digital Safety Lessons.

- **Pupils:** Taught to report incidents immediately to any member of school staff or electronically via the 'Report a Concern' tool on the School360 platform.
- **Parents & Carers:** Encouraged to report concerns directly to the pupil's class teacher or senior leadership team in person, by telephone or by email
- **Staff:** Required to record all reported or observed incidents centrally on CPOMs using specific category tags to ensure accurate tracking and monitoring.

Identifying Bullying

We know that victims of bullying often feel embarrassed, afraid, or reluctant to report bullying directly. All school staff are expected to be observant in identifying when bullying may be taking place.

Recognising bullying requires looking for patterns of behaviour rather than single isolated incidents, as well as being alert to changes in a child's physical, emotional, or social well-being.

Key Criteria for Identifying Bullying

To determine if a situation is bullying versus a regular disagreement or conflict, staff and parents look for three core indicators:

- **INTENTIONAL:** The behaviour is deliberately hurtful or aggressive.
- **REPEATED:** It occurs repeatedly over time (often remembered using the **S.T.O.P.** acronym: *Several Times On Purpose*).
- **POWER IMBALANCE:** The targeted individual feels powerless or unable to stop the behaviour or defend themselves.

Common Signs and Indicators that bullying may be taking place

Physical & Material Indicators

- Unexplained injuries, cuts, or bruises
- Damaged, torn, or missing clothing, schoolbooks, or personal belongings.
- Arriving home unusually hungry (because lunch or lunch money was taken or avoided).

Behavioural & School-Related Indicators

- Unwillingness or anxiety about going to school, changing routes to school, or frequent school refusal.
- Frequent complaints of physical symptoms (e.g., stomach aches, headaches, or feeling ill) on school mornings.
- Sudden drop in academic performance, lack of concentration, or loss of interest in schoolwork.
- Making excuses to stay inside during break times or hanging around staff members on duty.

Social & Digital Indicators

- Sudden shifts in friendship groups, being repeatedly excluded from games, or sitting/playing alone at break times.
- Becoming distressed, upset, or unusually secretive after using electronic devices or checking messaging platforms (online/cyberbullying).
- Stopping the use of devices or social platforms they previously enjoyed.

Subtle Behaviours to watch For

School staff should also monitor low-level precursor behaviours that can often signal underlying relational bullying or prejudice:

- **Body language:** Intentional eye-rolling, staring, snickering, turning backs on individuals when they join a group.
- **Verbal cues:** Whispering when someone approaches, persistent "teasing" disguised as banter, or deliberate misgendering/use of offensive slurs.
- **Exclusion:** Systematically leaving a specific child out of group work, line-ups, or playground games.

Other signs that a child may be a victim of bullying could include: unwillingness to attend certain activities, unwillingness to venture into certain areas of the school building or grounds, loss of appetite, reduced school attendance, stammering, stealing and bedwetting.

At Amble Links Primary School, we are also aware that vulnerable pupils (such as those with SEND, Children with a Social Worker, Cared for Children) *may* be more likely to be involved in incidences of bullying and are vigilant of this.

Bullying is not a natural part of growing up and should never be accepted as such.

Preventative Actions to Tackle Bullying

Amble Links Primary School proactively embeds an anti-bullying ethos across all areas of school life to prevent bullying behaviours before they occur. Preventative actions fall under four key areas:

Curriculum & Values Integration

- **PSHE Framework:** Regular, structured Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education delivered through the Jigsaw curriculum.
- **Dedicated Assembly Themes:** Weekly anti-bullying focus themes during assemblies to reinforce tolerance, empathy, and positive relationships.
- **'It's OK' Ethos:** Promotion of the school-wide 'It's OK' culture through classroom discussions, displays, and dedicated 'It's OK' days to celebrate differences and diversity.

Environment & Supervision

- **Active Playground Supervision:** High-visibility staff presence and proactive monitoring during unstructured times (break and lunchtimes) where peer conflicts are most likely to occur.
- **Vulnerable Pupil Tracking:** Maintaining up-to-date awareness and oversight of vulnerable groups (e.g., pupils with SEND, Cared For Children, or those with a social worker) to offer tailored support.

Pupil Empowerment & Peer Support

- **Reporting Pathways:** Teaching children explicit strategies and tools to report concerns, including face-to-face reporting and online tools (e.g., 'Report a Concern' via School360).
- **Peer Leadership:** Utilizing peer support networks, such as School Council buddies and peer monitors, to encourage positive play and role-model inclusive behaviour.

Staff Training & Policy Awareness

- **Discriminatory Language Training:** Equipping staff through regular training to recognise, challenge, and address prejudice-based language (e.g., homophobic, racist, sexist, or transphobic remarks) immediately.
- **Policy Integration:** Aligning anti-bullying practices with E-Safety, Equalities, Behaviour, and Child-on-Child Abuse policies to maintain a consistent whole-school safeguarding approach

Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Amble Links Primary School follows a structured, consistent process to investigate allegations of bullying that is prompt, fair and transparent, ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all involved.

1. Initial Investigation & Fact-Finding

- **Prompt Response:** Investigations begin immediately upon receiving a report from a pupil, parent, or staff member.
- **Neutral Discussion:** A designated staff member (e.g., class teacher or senior leader) speaks with the involved parties separately. The adult maintains a neutral, non-accusatory approach, allowing each child to share their account.
- **Evidence Gathering:** Where relevant, staff gather accounts from witnesses, review online/digital media (in cyberbullying cases), and compile a clear timeline of events.
- **Central Recording:** All findings and statements are logged centrally on CPOMs under specific category tags to track patterns and ensure accountability.

2. Action and Interventions

Once an incident of bullying is verified, tailored interventions are put in place for both the targeted pupil and the pupil exhibiting bullying behaviours:

Support for the Targeted Pupil

- Immediate reassurance and protection from further harm.
- Creation of a personalized support/safety plan (e.g., check-ins with the ELSA, peer buddies, or designated safe spaces).
- Regular follow-up reviews to ensure the bullying has ceased and the pupil feels secure.

Intervention for the Pupil Exhibiting Bullying Behaviour:

- Application of clear, proportionate sanctions in line with the school's Behaviour Policy.
- Structured reflection and re-education to help the pupil understand the impact of their actions, address underlying causes, and change their behaviour.
- Close monitoring to ensure there is no repetition or retaliation.

Parental Communication & Safeguarding Escalation

- Informing Parents: Parents/carers of all pupils directly involved are notified of the investigation, the actions taken, and the ongoing support plan. This will also be logged on the CPOMS system.
- Safeguarding Escalation: If an investigation reveals serious risk of harm, persistent child-on-child abuse, or criminal behaviour, the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) escalates the matter under the Child Protection Policy and may involve external agencies (e.g., Children's Social Care or Local Authority teams).

Monitoring, Governance & Complaints

Monitoring: Bullying incidents are reviewed termly by the Headteacher and Deputy Headteacher and will be reported in the Headteacher's termly report to governors.

Complaints: Parent concerns regarding anti-bullying provision should be raised first with the class teacher. Unresolved issues can be escalated to the Headteacher in line with the School Complaints Policy.

Policy Review: This policy is reviewed every two years by senior leadership and the Governing Body.

A COPY OF THIS POLICY IS AVAILABLE IN LARGE PRINT ON REQUEST

Appendix A

Under the Equality Act 2010 and statutory guidance, Amble Links Primary School strictly prohibits any form of discrimination, harassment, or bullying motivated by prejudice against protected characteristics.

1. Racist Bullying

In accordance with the Macpherson Report, racist bullying is defined as *"any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person."* It targets an individual or group based on ethnicity, nationality, skin colour, culture, or heritage. Incidents include:

- **Verbal Abuse:** Name-calling, racist jokes, slurs, or offensive mockery/mimicry.
- **Written & Digital:** Racist graffiti, online insults, discriminatory memes, or sharing racist content via messaging platforms or social media
- **Cultural / Indirect:** Targeted insults against food, dress, customs, or religious practices, and deliberate exclusion based on ethnic background.

2. Sexual and Sexist Bullying

Sexual or sexist bullying involves targeted behaviour, comments, or physical contact driven by gender stereotypes or sexual intent. Incidents include:

- **Verbal & Relational:** Sexist name-calling, derogatory comments about appearance, attractiveness, or emerging puberty, and spreading sexual rumours.
- **Digital & Image-Based:** Non-consensual sharing of private media, coercive messaging, or exposure to inappropriate online content.
- **Physical:** Inappropriate or uninvited touching, harassment, or intimidation. *(Extreme instances constitute criminal offenses and are managed immediately under Safeguarding and Child Protection procedures)*

3. Homophobic and Biphobic Bullying

Homophobic and Biphobic bullying is directed at individuals due to their actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. Pupils do not need to identify as LGBTQ+ to experience this type of targeting. Incidents include:

- **Homophobic/Biphobic Language:** Casual or targeted use of discriminatory slurs (e.g., using "gay" as an insult or derogatory phrase).
- **Prejudice & Intimidation:** Taunting pupils for not conforming to traditional gender roles or expectations.
- **Exclusion:** Purposefully excluding or isolating pupils based on perceived orientation or identity.

4. Religious / Belief-Based Bullying

Targeting individuals or groups due to their religious beliefs, faith, or lack of belief. Incidents include:

- **Derogatory Remarks:** Mocking or insulting religious beliefs, practices, prayer, or sacred items.
- **Targeting Appearance:** Ridiculing traditional or religious dress, headwear, symbols, or dietary practices.
- **Intolerance:** Intentionally preventing or mocking participation in cultural or religious observances.

5. Disability and SEND-Related Bullying

Targeting pupils with Special Educational Needs, Disabilities (SEND), or long-term health conditions. Incidents include:

- **Mockery & Mimicry:** Insulting or imitating physical movements, speech patterns, learning differences, or medical conditions.
- **Relational Exclusion:** Taking advantage of communication barriers to manipulate, isolate, or exclude a pupil.
- **Damage to Equipment:** Interfering with or damaging mobility equipment, sensory tools, or learning aids

6. Gender Reassignment and Gender Identity

Transphobic bullying occurs when targeted behaviour, language, or intimidation is directed at an individual due to their actual or perceived gender identity or gender expression. Incidents include:

- **Verbal Abuse:** Persistent mocking, name-calling, or using offensive terms related to gender identity or non-conformity.
- **Misgendering & Deadnaming:** Purposefully and repeatedly using incorrect pronouns or a former name to cause distress.
- **Breaches of Privacy:** Revealing sensitive personal information or "outing" a pupil's gender identity without their consent.
- **Harassment:** Challenging an individual's right to express their identity or demanding justification for their appearance, clothing, or choices.