



**Birchwood High School**

*your dreams, your future, our challenge*

# **Anti Bullying Policy**

## **2026**

Committee	Curriculum & Outcomes
SLT Link	Mr R Herbert
Approval Date	May 2026
Scheduled Review Date	May 2030



# Birchwood High School

*your dreams, your future, our challenge*

## Contents

Statement of Intent.....	3
What is Bullying?.....	3
Key Features of Bullying.....	4
Types of Bullying.....	4
Preventative Measures .....	4
Appendix 1: Anti-Bullying Policy – Advice for students.....	10
Advice on Avoiding Bullying Behaviour.....	10



# Birchwood High School

*your dreams, your future, our challenge*

## Statement of Intent

Birchwood High School is committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a secure and positive atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at Birchwood but, if bullying does occur, all students should be able to talk to someone, secure in the knowledge that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

As a school we believe that reducing bullying is a shared responsibility across the whole school community. We are committed to promoting a positive and inclusive ethos and creating a safe, healthy and stimulating environment for all students. Alongside clear and consistent responses to incidents of bullying, the school adopts a proactive, whole-school approach through its pastoral systems, implementing preventative strategies at school, class and individual level.

This policy should be read alongside the Behaviour for Learning Policy, which sets out the school's expectations, systems and sanctions for behaviour, including bullying.

The school takes a zero-tolerance approach to bullying and is committed to ensuring that all students feel safe, supported and able to succeed.

## What is Bullying?

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, which intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance; cyberbullying via text messages or social media), and can be motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, pupils' sexual orientation (LGBT), homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, culture, special educational needs and/or disability (SEND), appearance or health conditions or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities.

It is important that the school is aware of the Equality Act 2010 with regard to bullying incidents. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; staff must make careful judgements about each specific case.

It is vital that all staff challenge any incidences of bullying they encounter. It is also important that staff model good anti-bullying behaviour at all times. Students are made aware through the curriculum and pastoral activities that bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

A bullying incident should be addressed as a safeguarding concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm'. Where this is the case, staff should report their concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) who may make a referral to Children's Services.



Students themselves must be party to discussions on bullying. The most obvious vehicles for this are through PSHCE lessons, pastoral assemblies and the curriculum we offer which provides opportunities to contribute views in a mutually supportive environment.

## Key Features of Bullying

There are five recognised features of bullying:

- It is deliberate, hurtful behaviour
- It is repeated over a period of time
- It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves
- It is difficult for those who bully to learn new social behaviours
- Those who bully have and exercise power inappropriately over others

All forms of bullying can be damaging to the development of both the person being bullied and the person engaging in bullying behaviour.

## Types of Bullying

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

Physical bullying includes pushing, hitting, kicking, punching, taking belongings or an act of violence with intent to harm.

Verbal bullying includes name calling, insulting, threats/intimidation or making offensive remarks.

Indirect bullying includes spreading nasty stories about someone, exclusion from social groups or being made the subject of malicious rumours, or coercing someone into doing something they do not want to do.

Cyberbullying includes tormenting, threatening, harassing, humiliating or targeting individuals using text messaging, email, instant messaging or social media platforms. This includes misuse of images, video and digital technology.

Bullying is not a one-off falling out between friends.

## Preventative Measures

Bullying is most likely to occur outside lessons and particularly before school or at break and lunch time. The facilities available to students are also important, and relationships within peer groups often have a bearing on whether or not bullying is likely to occur. It is not enough that adults believe a culture of bullying is unacceptable – students need to feel similarly strongly.



In order to try to remove the conditions which can sometimes lead to bullying, the school seeks to develop a culture of openness so students can talk about bullying incidents and feel confident that concerns will be taken seriously. The curriculum plays an important role, with a strong emphasis on the role of form tutors in promoting positive relationships and developing a supportive ethos within each form group.

The school values the provision of extra-curricular activities before school, at lunchtime and after school, and takes all reasonable steps to ensure that students are appropriately supervised during unstructured times. Clear systems are in place to provide staff presence across the site, although it is recognised that it may not be possible to supervise all areas at all times. Student voice is promoted through school and year councils, enabling concerns to be raised and addressed.

Support is available through pastoral teams, mentors and, where appropriate, external agencies. The school also adopts positive behaviour management strategies, including restorative conversations, in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

## Incidents of Bullying (including those outside the school premises)

Bullying may occur at Birchwood High School, as it may in any organisation, and it is therefore important that all staff recognise this and act swiftly, effectively and appropriately when it does.

The school will act whilst recognising that our actions will not necessarily bring about an instant end to the concerns.

When a student makes a disclosure that they are being bullied, whether to a friend, a parent/carer, or directly to a member of staff, it is because the situation is significant to them and they are seeking support to make it stop. However, students may also feel anxious that intervention will not resolve the issue or may make matters worse. As a result, they may express reluctance for action to be taken. This should not be taken at face value; the act of disclosure itself indicates that the student requires support and that the concern must be taken seriously and acted upon appropriately.

Bullying may also occur outside of school, including online. Where behaviour outside school impacts on the safety or wellbeing of students, or brings the school into disrepute, the school will take action in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

## Responding to Incidents of Bullying

All staff have a responsibility to tackle bullying. The school endeavours to ensure that staff are equipped with the necessary skills and knowledge to identify and address all types of bullying effectively and safely.

When a concern is raised, it will be investigated by speaking to those involved, including the student who has raised the concern, the alleged perpetrator and any witnesses. Written records will be kept where appropriate. All accounts will be carefully considered and investigated in a fair, consistent and proportionate manner.



The school will offer a proactive, sympathetic and supportive response to students who are the victims of bullying. This will include immediate action to stop the incident, reassurance, and appropriate strategies to prevent further incidents. Parents/carers will be informed where appropriate and ongoing support will be provided.

The exact nature of the response will be determined by the individual needs of the student who has experienced bullying and may include:

- Immediate action to stop the incident and ensure the student's safety
- Reassurance and positive reinforcement that reporting was the correct action
- Ensuring the student understands they are not responsible for the behaviour
- Informing parents/carers at the earliest appropriate opportunity
- Strategies to prevent further incidents
- Ongoing pastoral support, including empathy and reassurance
- Increased supervision and monitoring where required
- Access to a safe space or identified member of staff
- Support from peers where appropriate (e.g. buddying or support networks)
- Consideration of timetable or group changes where appropriate
- Arrangements to review progress and ensure the situation has been resolved

In responding to bullying, the school will also work with the student displaying bullying behaviour to understand the reasons for their actions and support them in modifying their behaviour.

Sanctions will be applied in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy and may range from detention through to placement in BASE, suspension or permanent exclusion in the most serious or persistent cases.

Where bullying behaviour is repeated or persistent, the school may adopt a staged response to ensure that concerns are addressed and escalated appropriately. This may include:

- First incident: Principal's detention
- Second incident: Internal suspension (BASE)
- Third incident: Fixed-term suspension
- Fourth incident: Extended fixed-term suspension
- Fifth incident: Consideration for permanent exclusion

This staged approach is intended as a guide and will be applied where appropriate. Each case will be considered individually, and sanctions will always be proportionate to the severity of the behaviour. In cases of serious incidents, including those involving violence or significant harm, more serious sanctions may be applied at any stage.



In addition to sanctions, the school is committed to providing restorative and reflective support for all students involved. For the student who has experienced bullying, this may include pastoral support, access to a safe space, increased supervision, or support from a trusted adult or peer group.

For the student displaying bullying behaviour, support will focus on developing understanding, accountability and positive change. This may include restorative conversations, reflection tasks, mentoring, behaviour support plans, or targeted pastoral intervention.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, restorative approaches may be used to repair relationships and support learning. However, this will not be pursued where it may increase the vulnerability of the student who has experienced bullying.

## Cyberbullying

Social networking sites and digital technology are sometimes used for bullying. Where this behaviour impacts on students within school, it will be addressed in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy, regardless of whether it occurs on or off the school site.

The school recognises that incidents of cyberbullying may take place outside of school time and on external platforms. While the school will take appropriate action where such behaviour affects the wellbeing, safety or learning of students, its ability to investigate may be limited where evidence is unavailable.

Students and parents/carers are advised not to delete messages, images or other content, as these may be required as evidence.

In serious or persistent cases, incidents may be referred to external agencies, including the police.

## Bullying involving adults

Allegations of bullying involving adults are taken seriously and will be managed in line with the school's safeguarding and staff conduct procedures.

Where a student makes an allegation against a member of staff or another adult in school, the disclosure should be recorded by the member of staff receiving it and passed immediately to the Principal. The matter will then be dealt with in accordance with safeguarding procedures and, where appropriate, external guidance.

Where a student is involved in bullying behaviour towards an adult, the incident should be reported to an appropriate member of staff, such as a Head of Faculty, Form Tutor, Head of Year or member of the Senior Leadership Team, so that appropriate action can be taken.

Where concerns relate to adult-on-adult bullying, these should be reported to a line manager in line with staff procedures. Staff may also seek support from their professional association or union.



## Responding to the Student Displaying Bullying Behaviour

The primary objective in responding to a student who has engaged in bullying behaviour is to ensure that the student who has raised concerns feels safe and supported within the school environment. It is also important to develop a clear understanding in the student displaying bullying behaviour of the impact their actions have had on others.

Where appropriate and safe to do so, restorative approaches may be used to support reflection and repair relationships. However, this will not be pursued where it may increase the vulnerability of the student who has experienced bullying.

Sanctions and support will be applied in line with the Behaviour for Learning Policy.

## The Effects of Bullying

Young people who are being bullied are being denied the opportunity to reach their full potential. The effects of bullying can be significant and long term, and may include:

- Absenteeism
- A decline in academic performance
- Low self-esteem
- Health problems
- Social isolation and difficulty forming relationships
- Mental health difficulties, including depression
- Ongoing relationship difficulties

## Signs of Bullying

Possible signs that a student may be experiencing bullying include changes in behaviour, friendship groups or academic performance. These may include:

- Changes in friendship groups
- Lack of friends
- Reluctance to attend school
- Reports of feeling unwell at certain times or on certain days
- A change in the standard of work
- Withdrawal or a sudden loss of confidence
- Signs of low mood or distress



Although these signs are often associated with those experiencing bullying, changes in behaviour may also indicate that a student is displaying bullying behaviour. Students who engage in bullying may experience difficulties with relationships, friendships and self-esteem, and may require support to change their behaviour.

## Recording

Bullying incidents will be systematically recorded and used to identify patterns of behaviour. All incidents are recorded on the school's management information system (Arbor).

Sanctions for engaging in bullying range from detention through to suspension and permanent exclusion, depending on the severity and persistence of the behaviour.

Data is used to identify trends and inform preventative work. By recording incidents, the school demonstrates that bullying is taken seriously and ensures that appropriate action is taken.

## Reporting – Parents/Carers

Concerns and routine queries should be raised with the Form Tutor in the first instance. The Form Tutor has the most regular contact with students and plays a key role in monitoring their wellbeing and progress.

The school will make every effort to respond promptly to concerns and will work with parents/carers to resolve issues effectively.



## Appendix 1: Anti-Bullying Policy – Advice for students

Bullying can have a serious impact on a student's school life and education and is treated very seriously at Birchwood High School. It is a form of anti-social behaviour that has no place in our school community. Bullying can take many forms, including physical, verbal and psychological, and can affect not only those directly involved but also those who witness it.

It is important to remember that by reporting bullying, you are helping others as well as yourself.

The following advice has been suggested and approved by Birchwood students:

- Try to ignore the person who is attempting to bully you where possible
- Tell someone what has been happening, even if you have been told not to. You can speak to any adult in school, particularly your Form Tutor or Head of Year, or tell your parents/carers
- Do not retaliate physically or verbally. Walk calmly away from the situation
- Do not blame yourself
- If you see someone else being bullied, report it to an adult in school
- Do not ignore bullying. Consider how you would feel in the same situation
- Remember that bullying does not go away by itself
- Do not join in with bullying as an 'easy' option – support the person being targeted
- Try to remain confident and think positively about yourself

### Advice on Avoiding Bullying Behaviour

- Talk about problems rather than taking them out on others
- Do not make unkind or offensive remarks, even as a joke
- Try to avoid confrontations and find ways to calm down

We all have a responsibility to ensure that bullying has no place at Birchwood High School.