

PLYMOUTH COLLEGE

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Including Early Years Foundation Stage



Last reviewed:	November 2025
Next review date:	November 2026
Responsibility:	Senior Deputy Head

The Anti-Bullying Policy is founded on the educational aims and ethos of Plymouth College.

This policy is available on the School website, the staff School Policies folder in Google Drive and on request from the School.

It should be read in conjunction with the following policies:

- Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy
- E-Safety Policy
- Respect and Responsibility Policy
- SEND Policy

This document also complies with:

- DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2025) [Keeping children safe in education 2025 - GOV.UK](#)
- DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for School Leaders, Staff and Governing Bodies (July 2017) [Preventing and tackling bullying - GOV.UK](#)
- National Minimum Standards for Boarding School (2022), Standard 16: Preventing Bullying [National Minimum Standards for boarding schools - GOV.UK](#)
- Equality Act, 2010 [The Equality Act 2010 and schools](#)
- SEND Code of Practice 2015: 0 to 25 years [Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years](#)
- [Childline](#)
- [Cyberbullying: Advice for headteachers and school staff - GOV.UK](#)

Policy Statement

The Independent School Standards Regulations require the Headteacher of an independent school to ensure that an effective anti-bullying strategy is drawn up and implemented. The Equality Act 2010 covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

The Duty has three aims:

1. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.
2. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
3. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

Bullying is a primary concern for parents regarding their children's safety and well-being and is also a significant concern for children and young people themselves. Plymouth College takes all forms of bullying seriously and strives to ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring, and safe environment without fear of being bullied.

All members of the community, including teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, and parents, should understand what bullying is and be familiar with the school policy on bullying. The aim of this policy is to help members of the school community deal with bullying when it occurs and, more importantly, to prevent it. Bullying is anti-social behaviour that affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incidents of bullying that come to their attention, and these reports will always be taken seriously.

We encourage an environment where independence is celebrated, allowing individuals to flourish without fear. Every pupil has the right to feel safe and happy at school and to be protected when they feel vulnerable. We will respond quickly, appropriately, and sympathetically to any disclosure of bullying. It is acknowledged that bullies may have complex reasons for their behaviour and may well need help. It is crucial to recognise that allowing bullying to continue can be detrimental to both the bully and the victim. All pupils deserve the opportunity to learn what acceptable behaviour is.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. This often involves an imbalance of power.

Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyberbullying via text messages or the internet) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between pupils or perceived differences.

Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is the school's first priority, but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and the school must make their own judgments about each specific case.

Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators having control over the relationship, making it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest in several ways; it

may be physical, psychological (knowing what upsets someone), derive from an intellectual imbalance, or arise from having access to the support of a group or the capacity to socially isolate. It can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through the threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online. Emotional bullying can be subtle and must be taken seriously, as it has the potential to lead to longer-term psychological damage.

Types of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as any deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, which intentionally hurts another pupil or group physically or emotionally. It is often difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves and is often motivated by prejudice. The types, methods, motivations and context to bullying can include:

Physical:	Hitting, kicking, taking, moving, or hiding belongings, including money.
Verbal:	Name-calling, threatening, teasing, insulting, writing unkind notes.
Indirect Emotional:	Being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, spreading rumours, or giving spiteful looks.
Racial/Cultural:	Identified by the motivation of the bully, the language used, and/or the fact that the victims are singled out due to the colour of their skin, the way they talk, their ethnic background, or by their religious or cultural practices.
Sexual/Gender:	Can range from sexualised name-calling and spreading rumours about someone's sexual behaviour to criminal offences such as assault or rape.
Homophobic/LGBTQ+:	Occurs when bullying is motivated by prejudice against lesbian, gay, transgender, bisexual, queer (or questioning) individuals. As with other types of bullying, schools have a legal duty to ensure homophobic bullying is addressed.
Disability:	Children with special needs or disabilities are more likely to become victims of bullying. Schools need to be especially vigilant in this area.

Cyberbullying

The rapid development of technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyberbullying is a distinct form of bullying that can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially larger audience and more avenues for sharing content.

The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyberbullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones. Pupils will also be made aware that there is zero tolerance toward cyberbullying involving members of the school. Even if an incident occurs outside school hours or off-site, the school reserves the right to address it seriously if it impacts the school community in any way. Such actions may result in suspension and, if repeated, ultimately lead to permanent exclusion. Police will also be notified if the attack is deemed serious enough. Further information on cyberbullying is found in the E-safety policy.

Safeguarding Children and Young People

Under the Children Act 1989, a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm.' In such cases, school staff must report their concerns to local authority children's social care. Even where safeguarding is not considered an issue, schools may need to draw on various external services to support the pupil experiencing bullying or to tackle underlying issues that have contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

Some types of harassing or threatening behaviour - or communications - could be a criminal offence; therefore, if school staff feel that an offence may have been committed, they should seek assistance from the police. For example, it is an offence for a person to send an electronic communication to another with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or to send a communication that conveys a message that is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or information believed to be false by the sender.

Educating Pupils on Anti-Bullying

Pupils are educated through Pupil Personal Development (PPD) Time, including tutor time, PSHEE, and assemblies. We usually celebrate Anti-Bullying Week in November (e.g. Odd Socks Day).

The wider curriculum raises awareness, with discussions on differences between people and the importance of avoiding prejudice. PSHEE and assemblies also cover cyberbullying regularly. Pupils and staff can train as Anti-Bullying Ambassadors through the Diana Awards.

Pupils experiencing bullying may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences, or clinging to adults. There may also be changes in work patterns, lack of concentration, or truancy. Pupils are encouraged to look out for these signs and seek help for their peers.

Action

Members of staff and all community members must be alert to signs of bullying; legal responsibilities are known, and community members should act promptly and firmly against it in accordance with the policy. At Plymouth College, we prioritise preventing bullying and, should it occur, protecting the victim. If you feel that you are being picked on, you must talk to someone: you will be given all necessary help to protect you. There are many people you can approach: a prefect, a teacher, the school nurse, parents, or a friend. Never suffer in silence.

We aim to create an atmosphere where pupils who are being bullied or know about someone who is a victim feel that they will be listened to and believed, and that action will be swift yet sensitive to their concerns. Not telling protects the bully and sends the message that they can continue, potentially bullying others as well. We deal with any incidents sensitively and holistically and consider any mitigating factors - with all actions being in the best interests of all involved, liaising with relevant colleagues, notably pastoral staff and the safeguarding team (as appropriate).

While the school deplores all types of bullying, it is essential that any allegation of bullying is substantiated and that the bully, as well as the victim, is listened to: there may have been provocation. Background reasons for the bullying behaviour may need careful addressing and support, potentially relating to deeper issues in that child's life and circumstances. This resonates with the school's focus not merely on sanctions for poor behaviour but a close scrutiny of the reasons that might lie behind it.

Criminal laws apply to harassment, assault, and threatening behaviour. If staff believe that a criminal offence may have occurred, they should seek assistance from the police. Serious incidents will be dealt with according to the school's behaviour policy and may lead to exclusion or the involvement of external agencies.

Prep School Communication and Pupil Support

In the Prep School, staff will ensure that communication with parents is prompt, clear and supportive whenever a concern regarding potential bullying arises. Parents will be informed at an early stage so that school and home can work collaboratively to monitor behaviour and support the pupils involved. Where possible, pupils will be engaged in one-to-one discussions with a trusted member of staff, usually the Head of Prep, to help them articulate their experiences, understand the impact of their behaviour, and explore appropriate strategies for resolution. These conversations will be age-appropriate, sensitive, and focused on promoting empathy, personal responsibility, and positive relationships. Follow-up meetings will be arranged as necessary to review progress and ensure that all pupils feel safe, listened to, and well supported.

Reporting Procedures

If You Are Being Bullied

- If you feel safe to do so, confront the bully.
- Share your feelings with someone you trust, e.g., a teacher or pastoral leader.
- Report it to a trusted member of staff or adult.

If You Witness Bullying

- Offer support to the victim and encourage them to speak to someone.
- Report the incident to a trusted adult.

For Staff

Reassure the Victim:	Always ensure the victim feels safe and supported. Let them know that they did the right thing by speaking up.
Investigate Promptly:	Investigate all reports of bullying thoroughly and discreetly. Gather accounts from all parties involved, including witnesses.
Document the Incident:	Record all relevant details, including the time, date, and nature of the incident. Ensure the documentation is kept confidential and stored securely.
Take Action:	Based on the findings of your investigation, take appropriate action in line with the school's behaviour policy. This may include discussing the incident with the bully and their parents, implementing support measures for both parties, and monitoring the situation closely.
Inform Leadership:	Keep the relevant pastoral leader or senior leader informed of the situation and any actions taken.

Support for Victims and Bullies

Victims

Plymouth College is committed to supporting victims of bullying. Support may include:

Counselling Services:	Access to the school counsellor or mental health resources.
Peer Support:	Connecting with mentors.
Monitoring:	Regular check-ins by a designated staff member to ensure the victim feels safe.

Bullies

It is essential to address the behaviour of the bully while also supporting them. Strategies may include:

Counselling:	Referrals to counselling or support services to address underlying issues.
Behaviour Management Plans:	Developing plans with specific targets to change behaviour.
Education:	Involving the bully in restorative practices to understand the impact of their actions and develop empathy.

Role of the School Council

The School Council plays an important role in shaping the anti-bullying policy and reviewing its effectiveness. Regular discussions will take place with pastoral leaders to ensure early warning signs of bullying are spotted, that the school reacts to emerging trends, and that unreasonable behaviour is addressed. The School Council will organise and analyse surveys and feedback to gather pupil input on bullying experiences and the effectiveness of current measures.

Monitoring and Review

The school will regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of this policy and its implementation. Surveys will be conducted periodically to assess the school climate regarding bullying and to gather feedback from pupils, staff, and parents. The policy will be reviewed at least every year, or sooner if necessary, to ensure it remains effective and relevant. Updates will be communicated to all members of the school community.

Conclusion

Plymouth College is dedicated to fostering a supportive environment where all pupils can thrive without fear of bullying. We believe that through a collaborative effort involving pupils, staff, parents, and the wider community, we can create a safe, inclusive, and nurturing educational environment. All members of the school community are encouraged to work together to uphold the principles of respect, kindness, and understanding.

Galaxy Global Education Group Schools Management Board, providing local insight, support, and challenge to the school's leadership in regards to educational standards and school improvement, safeguarding and welfare, community and stakeholder engagement, compliance and reporting. The Chair of the LAB is appointed by the Chair of the Schools Management Board and the LAB is composed of 3-4 local members appointed by the Chair of the Schools Management Board (with whom formal governance authority rests) and approved by the Board of Directors of the Galaxy Global Education Group.