Local Procedure/Protocol

School/Home Name:	**Sandwell Learning Centre**
Local Procedure/Protocol Title:	**Anti-Bullying Local Procedure**
Linked to Group Policy Title & Code:	**OPSP04 Anti-Bullying Policy**
Date Reviewed:	SEPTEMBER 2026
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EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY STATEMENT

Witherslack Group is committed to the fair treatment of all in line with the Equality Act 2010. An equality impact assessment has been completed on this policy to ensure that it can be implemented consistently regardless of any protected characteristics and all will be treated with dignity and respect.

ENVIRONMENT, SOCIAL, GOVERNANCE (ESG) STATEMENT

Witherslack Group is committed to responsible business practices in the areas of: Environmental Stewardship, Social Responsibility, Governance, and Ethics & Compliance. An ESG impact assessment has been completed on this procedure/protocol to ensure it can be implemented successfully without adverse implications on our Group goals.

To ensure that this procedure/protocol is relevant and up to date, comments and suggestions for additions or amendments are sought from users of this document. To contribute towards the process of review, please email the named policy lead.

CONTENTS

1 POSITION AND VALUES
2 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS
3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
4 STRATEGIES TO REDUCE BULLYING
5 REPORTING, SANCTIONS AND MONITORING
6 USEFUL WEBSITES
7 REFERENCES
8 ASSOCIATED FORMS
9 APPENDICES

1. POSITION AND VALUES

1.1 The aim of the policy is to prevent bullying of any sort and to ensure that everyone can operate in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. All members of the school community, including, teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/carers should have an understanding of what bullying is, and be familiar with the school policy on bullying: therefore the aim of the policy is to help members of the school community to deal with bullying when it occurs and, even more importantly, to prevent it. The Policy operates as a core component of our learning centres wider safeguarding framework, directly supporting the Child Protection Policy and the School Behaviour Policy.

1.2 Bullying is an anti-social behaviour which affects everyone; it is unacceptable and it will not be tolerated. Everyone in the community has a responsibility to report any incident of bullying that comes to their attention and these reports will always be taken seriously.

1.3 To protect the rights of all pupils to have a safe and secure learning environment our school will continuously work towards preventing acts of bullying, harassment, and other forms of aggression and violence as these behaviours are unacceptable and interfere with both our school's ability to educate children, and a child's ability to learn. If such a case arises, the staff at our school will follow the anti-bullying guidelines laid out in this policy. This will enable staff to:

- Identify children displaying unacceptable behaviour and know how to support them in order that they develop the necessary skills to contribute to the school community positively;
- Keep all other children safe, happy and confident.

1.4 Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation including, but not limited to, the following:

Education and Inspections Act 2006
Equality Act 2010
Protection from Harassment Act 1997
Malicious Communications Act 1988
Public Order Act 1986
Communications Act 2003
Human Rights Act 1998
Crime and Disorder Act1998
Education Act 2011

2 CLARIFICATION OF TERMS

2.1 Definition of bullying

For the purpose of this policy, 'bullying' is defined as persistent behaviour by an individual or group with the intention of verbally, physically, or emotionally harming another person or group. All children have upsets and squabbles; these are not classed as bullying and are dealt with through the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Policy.

2.2 Bullying is generally characterised by:

Repetition: Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over a period of time.

Intent: The perpetrator(s) means to cause verbal, physical or emotional harm; it is not accidental.

Targeting: Bullying is generally targeted at a specific individual or group.

Power imbalance: Whether real or perceived, bullying is generally based on unequal power relations.

Vulnerable pupils are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people may have towards those who are different from themselves.

2.3 Definition of cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is the use of technology such as mobile phones, email, chat rooms or social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter to harass, threaten, embarrass, intimidate or target a child. Unlike physical bullying, cyber-bullying can often be difficult to track as the cyber-bully (the person responsible for the acts of cyber-bullying) can remain anonymous when threatening others online, encouraging them to behave more aggressively than they might face-to-face.

2.4 Types of bullying

- **Physical**: Deliberately physically hurting particular children on a regular basis;
- **Verbal:** Deliberately hurting feelings through name-calling etc;
- **Ostracising:** Making someone feels left out and different by deliberately setting out to exclude them
- **Racist bullying:** Bullying another person based on their ethnic background, religion or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.
- **Homophobic Bullying:** Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation. People may be a target of this type of bullying because of their appearance, behaviour, physical traits or because they have friends or family who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning or possibly just because they are seen as being different. Homophobic bullying is the most frequent form of bullying after name calling[1].
- **Transphobic bullying:** Bullying based on another person's gender variance or for not conforming to dominant gender roles.
- **Sexist bullying:** Bullying based on sexist attitudes expressed in a way to demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their sex or gender. Sexist bullying may sometimes be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviours.
- **Sexual bullying:** Bullying behaviour that has a physical, psychological, verbal or non-verbal sexual dimension/dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.
- **Prejudicial bullying:** Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics, e.g. SEND, mental health issues or any other protected characteristic as defined by the Equality Act 2010.
- **Relational bullying:** Bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

[1] According to Stonewall's School report, 96% of gay pupils hear homophobic remarks such as 'puff' or 'lezza' used in school. 99% hear phrases such as 'that's so gay' or 'you're so gay' in school. 54% of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people don't feel there is an adult at school who they can talk to about being gay.

- **Cyberbullying**: our school has a separate policy related to online safety addressing the use of mobile technology, social media, appropriate online activity, security, access and monitoring procedures in place. The ICT code of conduct is displayed prominently in all ICT classrooms and is explained and discussed with pupils in assemblies, PSHE classes and IT classes.

2.5 Types of cyber-bullying

- **Flaming:** Online fights usually through emails, instant messaging or chat rooms where angry and rude comments are exchanged.
- **Denigration:** Putting mean online messages through email, instant messaging, chat rooms, or websites set up to make fun of someone.
- **Exclusion:** Intentionally leaving someone out of a group such as instant messaging, friend sites, or other online group activities.
- **Outing:** Sharing secrets about someone online including private information, pictures, and videos.
- **Trickery:** Tricking someone into revealing personal information then sharing it with others.
- **Impersonation:** Pretending to be someone else when sending or posting mean or false messages online.
- **Harassment:** Repeatedly sending malicious messages to someone online.
- **Cyber-stalking:** Continuously harassing and denigration including threats of physical harm.

2.6 Actions NOT considered to be bullying

- Not liking someone;
- Being suspended;
- Accidentally bumping into someone;
- Making other children play things a certain way;
- A single act of telling a joke about someone;
- Arguments;
- Expression of unpleasant thoughts or feelings regarding others;
- Isolated acts of harassment, aggressive behaviour, intimidation, or meanness.

2.7 Reasons for bullying

Some reasons why children might bully someone include:

- They think it's fun, or that it makes them popular or 'cool';
- They feel more powerful or important, or they want to get their own way all the time;
- They feel insecure or lack confidence or are trying to fit in with a group;
- They are fearful of other children's differences;
- They are jealous of another child;
- They are unhappy;
- They are copying what they have seen others do before, or what has been done to them.

2.8 The effects of bullying

All forms of bullying cause psychological, emotional and physical stress. Each child's response to being bullied is unique, however some signs that may point to a bullying problem are:

- depression and anxiety;
- increased feelings of sadness, helplessness, decreased self-esteem and loneliness;
- loss of interest in activities they used to enjoy;
- unexplainable injuries;
- lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics, or jewellery;
- frequent headaches or stomach-aches, feeling sick or faking illness;
- changes in eating habits, like suddenly skipping meals or binge eating. Children may come home from school hungry because they did not eat lunch;
- difficulty sleeping or frequent nightmares;

- declining grades, loss of interest in schoolwork, or not wanting to go to school;
- sudden loss of friends or avoidance of social situations;
- self-destructive behaviours such as running away from home or school, harming themselves, or talking about suicide.

3 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 The Education Act 2002 and Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 and Education and Skills Act 2008, make reference to a school's legal responsibility to prevent and tackle bullying. By law, all schools must have a behaviour policy in place and displayed on their website and must also follow anti-discrimination law. This means staff must act to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation within the school. Additionally our school have developed this anti-bullying policy, a copy of which is available from the school office and on the school website for parents/carers, staff and pupils to access when and as they wish.

3.2 Schools have the legal power to make sure pupils behave and do not bully outside of school premises, for example on public transport or in nearby public communal areas. If seen as appropriate the Head teacher or staff can choose to report bullying to the police or local council. During school hours, including while pupils are taking part in school visits, after school clubs and cyber bullying the school has direct responsibility to ensure children feel safe and secure.

3.3 The role of School Board

The Witherslack Group supports the Head teacher with the evaluation, review and implementation of this policy and ensures the school adopts a tolerant and open–minded policy towards difference and promote an inclusive culture. The Witherslack Group also supports the Head teacher in all attempts to eliminate bullying from the school. The Witherslack Group will not condone any bullying at all, and any incidents of bullying that do occur will be taken very seriously, and dealt with appropriately.

The school monitors incidents of bullying that do occur, and reviews the effectiveness of this policy regularly. The school board require the Head teacher to keep accurate records of all incidents of bullying and to report to the school board on request about the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying strategies.

A parent/carer who is dissatisfied with the way the school has dealt with a bullying incident can use escalation procedures outlined in the complaints policy and make a complaint to the Regional Director. The complaint will be dealt with in accordance with the complaints policy which can be accessed from the school's website.

3.4 The role of the Head teacher

It is the responsibility of the Head teacher to ensure that bullying at the school is prevented in so far as reasonably practicable by the implementation of an annual anti-bullying strategy. This strategy is regularly reviewed and updated by the schools anti-bullying co-ordinator under the guidance and support from the senior leadership team. The Head Teacher will ensure that all stakeholders are aware of the school policy, and that they know how to identify and deal with incidents of bullying. The Head teacher will ensure that the school keeps accurate records of all incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for detailed analysis of all the data collected. The Head teacher will ensure there is analysis of the data in the bullying records at termly intervals (minimum) to identify any trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.

It is the Head teacher who must ensure that all children know that bullying is wrong, and that it is unacceptable behaviour in school. The Head teacher will draw the attention of children to this fact at suitable moments. For example, the Head teacher may decide to use an assembly as the forum in which to discuss with the children why bullying is wrong.

The Head teacher will ensure that all members of staff receive sufficient training to be equipped to identify and deal with all incidents of bullying.

The Head teacher will set the school climate of mutual support and praise for success, so making bullying less likely. When children feel they are important and belong to a friendly and welcoming school, bullying is far less likely to be part of their behaviour.

3.5 The role of the staff

Members of staff must be alert to social dynamics and be alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups, and that they report any concerns to the Pastoral Manager.

Members of staff will do all that they can to eradicate bullying; they will ensure that they follow the school's anti-bullying policy.

All members of staff will receive training that equips them to identify bullying and to follow school policy and procedures with regard to positive behaviour support.

Staff will use a range of methods to help prevent bullying and to establish a climate of trust and respect for all. They will use drama, role-play, stories etc. within the curriculum, to help pupils understand the feelings of bullied children, and to practice the restraint required to avoid lapsing into bullying behaviour. 'Ring fenced' time will also be used to praise, reward and celebrate the successes of all children, and thus to help create a positive atmosphere.

Members of staff will keep a vigilant watch on suspected 'bullies'; any incidents will be handled carefully. It is important that the child responsible for initiating the bullying is dealt with appropriately. The person dealing with the incident will need to collect all the relevant information and then provide the Head teacher with a copy in order that he/she can decide on an action. All cases are individual and various strategies will be employed by the Head teacher to address the issue.

Teachers and support staff will do all they can to support a child who is being bullied.

3.6 Bullying in the workplace

Incidents, where it has been deemed that a member of staff has been bullying a child will be taken very seriously. The Head teacher, with the support of the Witherslack Group, will deal with this and formal action will be taken where necessary. Such action will also be taken if it is deemed that a member of staff is bullying other members of staff.

In the event of the Head teacher being involved in such incidents, reports will be given immediately to the Regional Director who will also take formal action where necessary.

3.7 The role of parents/carers

Parents/carers should be watchful of their child's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff of any changes.

Parents/carers, who are concerned that their child might be being bullied or who suspect that their child may be the perpetrator of bullying, should contact the school Pastoral Manager. If they are not satisfied with the action taken they should contact the Head teacher.

If they remain dissatisfied, they should follow the escalation procedure detailed in the schools complaints policy. Parents/carers have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy by actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school and this expectation of support is outlined in the home/school agreement.

3.8 The role of pupils

Pupils are encouraged to tell somebody they trust if they are being bullied, and if the bullying continues they must keep on letting people know; the children are taught a number of strategies to help them with this.

Pupils are encouraged to not make 'counter threats' if they are the victims of bullying.

Pupils are encouraged to walk away from dangerous situations and avoid involving other pupils in incidents.

Pupils are encouraged to keep any evidence of cyber bullying and informing a member of staff should they fall victim to cyber bullying.

Pupils are also encouraged to participate fully in activities that raise their awareness about bullying in order that they clearly understand what to do if they, or another child, are being bullied.

3.9 Statutory implications

The school understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, it has responsibility to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act;
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The school understands that, under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, it could have charges brought against it if it allows the rights of children and young people at the school to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously.

Although bullying itself is not a criminal offence, some types of harassment, threatening behaviour and/or communications may be considered criminal offences:

- Under the Malicious Communications Act 1988, it is an offence for a person to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or in a way which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or contains information which is false and known or believed to be false by the sender.
- The Protection from Harassment Act 1997 makes it an offence to knowingly pursue any course of conduct amounting to harassment.
- Section 127 of the Communications Act 2003 makes it an offence to send, by means of a public electronic communications network, a message, or other matter, that is grossly offensive or of an indecent, obscene or menacing character. It is unlawful to disseminate defamatory information through any media, including internet sites.

Other forms of bullying which are illegal and should be reported to the police include: violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment or intimidation and hate crimes.

4 STRATEGIES TO REDUCE BULLYING

4.1 our school has adopted a range of strategies to prevent and reduce bullying, to raise awareness of bullying and support victims and those displaying bullying behaviour, including:

- the consistent promotion of the school's code of behaviour which requires all pupils to respect the rights of others;
- the reinforcement of the clear message that violence has no place at our school
- consultation with the 'Pupil Voice' on appropriate action;

- taking part in initiatives such as Anti-Bullying Week;
- training for all members of staff on anti-bullying policy and strategy;
- the supervision by school staff of all communal and play areas at lunch times and breaks;
- buddies for pupils;
- providing information to all parents on the symptoms of bullying and the steps to take if the suspect their child is being bullied;
- a clear policy of mobile phones not permitted to be in use during school hours;
- the celebration of all pupil's backgrounds and cultures through assemblies;
- the training of a cross section of pupils as anti-bullying ambassadors;
- during assemblies and PSHE learning sessions discussing and exploring bullying issues with the children;
- raising awareness of cyber bullying and teaching children to safely use technology (including mobile phones, email, internet);
- staff will encourage pupil cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work;
- all websites accessed in school are screened. This software screens the language used in all documents, emails and websites. Rude or offensive emails, websites, documents are sent to the Head teacher and appropriate action will be taken and recorded;
- effective recording systems;
- working with multi-agency teams including police and children's services as appropriate;
- contacting the parents/carers of both the child being bullied and the bully;
- challenge-ing sexual content within verbal abuse especially challenging the word 'gay' and other homophobic language;
- the school will be alert to, and address any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst pupils, as these can be a cause of bullying behaviour;
- all reported or investigated instances of bullying will be investigated by a member of staff.
- all types of bullying will be discussed as part of the curriculum;
- the school will ensure that potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional and social development isn't negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g. mental health issues;
- diversity, difference and respect for others is promoted and celebrated through various lessons.
- seating plans will be organised and altered in a way that prevents instances of bullying;
- opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills are provided through participation in special events, for example, drama productions, sporting activities and cultural groups.

4.2 **Signs of bullying**

Staff will be alert to the following signs that may indicate a pupil is a victim of bullying:

- Unwillingness to attend school;
- Truancy;
- Becoming anxious or lacking confidence;
- Saying that they feel ill in the morning;
- Decreased involvement in school work;
- Returning home with torn clothes or damaged possessions;
- Missing possessions;
- Asking for extra money or stealing;
- Cuts or bruises;
- Lack of appetite;
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices;
- Becoming agitated when receiving calls or text messages;
- Lack of eye contact;
- Becoming short tempered;

- Change in behaviour and attitude at home.

Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social, emotional or mental health issues, so are still worth investigating.

Pupils who display a significant number of these signs are approached by a member of staff, to determine the underlying issues, whether they are due to bullying or other issues.

4.3 In addition, staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a person is likely to have bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to the pupil becoming aggravated;
- They have been the victim of domestic abuse;
- Their academic performance has started to fall, which has meant they are stressed;
- If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify the Pastoral Manager, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

5 REPORTING, SANCTIONS AND MONITORING

5.1 How to report bullying

1. Any member of staff can be approached to report incidents of bullying, and they in turn will report to the Pastoral Manager.
2. The Pastoral Manager has overall day-to-day responsibility for dealing with reported incidents and will forward details to the relevant member of staff to investigate.

5.2 Procedures

The following steps must be taken when dealing with incidents of bullying:

1. If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached, or who suspects/observed the bullying;
2. The Pastoral Manager must be informed immediately;
3. A clear account of the incident will be recorded in writing either by the victim or the member of staff recording the victim's verbal statement;
4. The Pastoral Manager will interview all concerned and will record the incident via the Witherslack Group Incident Reporting database;
5. Parents of all parties will be kept informed by the Pastoral Manager or Keyworker/Learning Mentor;
6. Subject teachers will be kept informed and asked to monitor the situation;
7. An anti-bullying debrief forum will be used to seek clarity and solution to the situation. This will be uploaded against the incident report on the database;
8. In the first instance the school will seek a restorative and educative approach to bullying. It may also be appropriate to employ a range of appropriate consequences used as part of this approach. Typical consequences could include: restrictions of break and lunchtime activities, less unsupervised time, reparation, and in the event of persistent bullying even fixed term suspension. Where appropriate the Head teacher may inform the police;
9. There will be regular audit and analysis of incident reports and interventions to continually improve practice.

This school has set procedures to follow in implementing consequences where a bullying incident has occurred, as described above consequences are applied in appropriate proportion to the event. In the event of all other avenues being exhausted, or in particularly serious cases that lead to suspension, the school will examine the evidence that a wide range of strategies had been tried and failed to affect a positive change in the bullying behaviour.

5.3 Monitoring, evaluation and review

1. The Witherslack Group, the Head teacher and relevant staff will review this policy annually and assess its

implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school;
2. The school council will review the effectiveness of the policy biannually (minimum) and their views given to the Head teacher;
3. An annual anti-bullying questionnaire will be given to pupils every year. The resulting data will be considered in the annual policy review and reported to school board;
4. A record of all such incidents will be kept both centrally and on pupil files;
5. The numbers of incidents will be reported to the school board monthly or provided to them at any time on request;
6. Bullying data will be analysed to reflect and re-design further strategies to improve procedures.
7. The setting will compile and review an annual Anti-bullying strategy.

6 USEFUL WEBSITES

6.1
www.bullying.co.uk
www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk
www.childline.org.uk
www.kidscape.org.uk
www.each.education
www.youngminds.org.uk
www.youngstonewall.org.uk
www.nspcc.org.uk
www.stoptextbully.co.uk
www.beyondbullying.com
www.childnet-int.org
www.thinkyouknow.co.uk
www.cyberbullying.org.uk
www.eachaction.org.uk
www.stonewall.org.uk
www.thedianaaward.org.uk
www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/

7. REFERENCES

DfE 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies
DfE 'Keeping Children Safe in Education
DfE 'Mental Health and wellbeing provision in schools
DfE 'National Minimum Standards for residential special schools

8. ASSOCIATED FORMS

OPSF12 Anti-Bullying Debrief with Guidance and Process
OPSF13 Anti-Bullying Strategy Template

9. APPENDICES

None