

# Catcote Academy

(Part of Hartlepool Aspire Trust)

## Preventing and Tackling Bullying Policy



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**Date:** February 2022

**Approver:** Finance & Audit Committee

**Date:** February 2022

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## **Statement of intent**

Catcote Academy believes that all students are entitled to learn in a safe and supportive environment; this means being free from all forms of bullying behaviour. This policy outlines how instances of bullying are dealt with, including the procedures to prevent occurrences of bullying.

These strategies, such as learning about tolerance and difference as part of the academy's curriculum, aim to promote an inclusive, tolerant and supportive ethos at the academy.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006 outlines several legal obligations regarding the academy's response to bullying. Under section 89, schools/academies must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst students. These measures are part of the academy's *Ready to Learn Policy*, which is communicated to all students, academy staff and parents.

All staff, parents and students work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at the academy. There is a zero-tolerance policy for bullying at the academy.

# 1 Legal framework

This policy has due regard to all relevant legislation and statutory guidance 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 Act 1998
- Education Act 2011
- DfE (2017) 'Preventing and tackling bullying'
- DfE (2021) 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges'
- DfE (2018) 'Mental health and wellbeing provision in schools'
- DfE (2021) 'Keeping children safe in education 2021'
- DfE (2020) 'Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings working with children and young people'

This policy operates in conjunction with the following academy policies:

- Ready to Learn Policy
- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Relationship and Sex Education Policy
- Exclusion Policy

## 2 Definitions

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. Bullying is generally characterised by:

- **Repetition:** Incidents are not one-offs; they are frequent and happen over an extended period of time.
- **Intent:** The perpetrator 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 students are more likely to be the targets of bullying due to the attitudes and behaviours some young people have towards those who are different from themselves. Vulnerable students may include, but are not limited to:

- Students who are adopted.
- Students suffering from a health problem.
- Students with caring responsibilities.
- Students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Students with certain characteristics are also more likely to be targets of bullying, including, but not limited to:

- Students who are LGBTQ+, or perceived to be LGBTQ+.
- Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) students.
- Students with SEND.

### 3 Types of bullying

Many kinds of behaviour can be considered bullying, and bullying can be related to almost anything. Teasing another student because of their appearance, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, home life, culture, or SEND are some of the types of bullying that can occur.

Bullying is acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbal
- Physical
- Emotional
- Online (cyberbullying)

**Racist bullying:** Bullying another person based on their ethnic background or skin colour. Racist bullying is a criminal offence under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 and Public Order Act 1986.

**Homophobic and biphobic bullying:** Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation.

**Transphobic bullying:** Bullying based on another person's gender identity or gender presentation, 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 or dynamic that subordinates, humiliates or intimidates another person. This is commonly underpinned by sexist attitudes or gender stereotypes.

**Ableist bullying:** Bullying behaviour that focusses on another person's disability or support needs; this can include mocking the individual's disability or their needs, using derogatory words or slurs in relation to an individual's disability, or deliberately excluding an individual because of their disability.

**Prejudicial bullying:** Bullying based on prejudices directed towards specific characteristics or experiences, e.g. religion or mental health issues.

**Relational bullying:** Bullying that primarily constitutes of excluding, isolating and ostracising someone – usually through verbal and emotional bullying.

**Socioeconomic bullying:** Bullying based on prejudices against the perceived social status of the victim, including, but not limited to, their economic status, their parents'

occupations, their health or nutrition level, or the perceived “quality” of their clothing or belongings.

## **4 Roles and responsibilities**

The Trustees are responsible for:

- Evaluating and reviewing this policy to ensure that it does not discriminate against any students on the basis of their protected characteristics or backgrounds.
- The overall implementation and monitoring of this policy.
- Ensuring that the academy adopts a tolerant and open-minded policy towards difference.
- Ensuring the academy is inclusive.
- Analysing any bullying data to establish patterns and reviewing this policy in light of these.
- Appointing a safeguarding link trustee who will work with the DSL to ensure the policies and practices relating to safeguarding, including the prevention of cyberbullying, are being implemented effectively.

The CEO/Deputy CEO is responsible for:

- Reviewing and amending this policy, accounting for new legislation and government guidance, and using staff experience of dealing with bullying incidents in previous years to improve procedures.
- Keeping a bullying log of all reported incidents, including which type of bullying has occurred, to allow for proper analysis of the data collected.
- Analysing the data in the bullying log at termly intervals to identify trends, so that appropriate measures to tackle them can be implemented.
- Arranging appropriate training for staff members.

Pastoral teachers are responsible for:

- Corresponding and meeting with parents where necessary.
- Providing a point of contact for students and parents when more serious bullying incidents occur.
- Being alert to social dynamics in their class.
- Being available for students who wish to report bullying.
- Providing follow-up support after bullying incidents.
- Being alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups.
- Refraining from stereotyping when dealing with bullying.
- Understanding the composition of student groups, showing sensitivity to those who have been the victims of bullying.
- Reporting any instances of bullying once they have been approached by a student for support.

The Family Liaison Officer is responsible for:

- Offering emotional support to victims of bullying.
- Alerting the relevant staff regarding any incidents of bullying.

Parents are responsible for:

- Informing their child's pastoral teacher if they have any concerns that their child is the victim of bullying or involving in bullying in anyway.
- Being watchful of their child's behaviour, attitude and characteristics and informing the relevant staff members of any changes.

Students are responsible for:

- Informing a member of staff if they witness bullying or are a victim of bullying.
- Not making counter-threats if they are victims of bullying.
- Walking away from dangerous situations and avoiding involving other students in incidents.
- Keeping evidence of cyberbullying and informing a member of staff should they fall victim to cyberbullying.

## **5 Statutory implications**

The academy understands that, under the Equality Act 2010, it has a 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 academy understands that, under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, it could have charges brought against it if it allows the rights of students to be breached by failing to take bullying seriously. The Head teacher/CEO will ensure that this policy complies with the HRA; the Head teacher/CEO understands that they cannot do this without fully involving their teaching staff.

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.

## **6 Prevention**

All members of the academy will be made aware of this policy and their responsibilities in relation to it. All staff members will receive training on identifying and dealing with the different

All types of bullying will be discussed as part of the RSE and health education curriculum, in line with the Secondary School Relationships and Sex Education Policy. Staff will encourage student cooperation and the development of interpersonal skills using group and pair work. Diversity, difference and respect for others will be promoted and celebrated through various lessons. Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills will be provided through participation in special events, e.g. drama productions, sporting activities and cultural groups.

There are several Thrive Practitioners and trusted adults across the academy that provide a safe place which is available for students to go to during free time if they feel threatened or wish to be alone.

Within the academy students spend the majority of their time with their Pastoral staff which enables any problems to be actioned quickly.

The academy will be alert to, and address, any mental health and wellbeing issues amongst students, as these can be a cause, or a result, of bullying behaviour.

The academy will ensure potential perpetrators are given support as required, so their educational, emotional and social development is not negatively influenced by outside factors, e.g. mental health issues.

## **7 Signs of bullying**

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

- Being frightened to travel to or from the academy
- Unwillingness to attend the academy
- Repeated or persistent absence from the academy
- Becoming anxious, withdrawn or lacking confidence
- Saying that they feel ill repeatedly
- Decreased involvement in school work
- Leaving the academy with torn clothes or damaged possessions
- Missing possessions
- Cuts or bruises
- Lack of appetite
- Unwillingness to use the internet or mobile devices
- 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. Students who display a significant number of these signs will be approached by a member of staff to determine the underlying issues causing this behaviour.

Staff will be aware of the potential factors that may indicate a student is likely to exhibit bullying behaviours, including, but not limited to, the following:

- They have experienced mental health problems, which have led to them becoming more easily aggravated
- They have been the victim of abuse

If staff become aware of any factors that could lead to bullying behaviours, they will notify the student's pastoral teacher, who will investigate the matter and monitor the situation.

## **8 Staff principles**

The academy will ensure that prevention is a prominent aspect of its anti-bullying vision.

Staff will treat reports of bullying seriously and will not ignore signs of suspected bullying. Staff will act immediately when they become aware of a bullying incident. Unpleasantness from one student towards another will always be challenged and will never be ignored.

Staff will always respect students' privacy, and information about specific instances of bullying is not discussed with others, unless the student has given consent, or there is a safeguarding concern. If a member of staff believes a student is in danger, e.g. of being hurt, they will inform the DSL or DDSL immediately.

Follow-up support will be given to both the victim and perpetrator in the months following an incident to ensure all bullying has stopped.

## **9 Peer-on-peer abuse**

The academy has a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of peer-on-peer abuse, including sexual harassment and sexual violence.

To prevent peer-on-peer abuse and address the wider societal factors that can influence behaviour, the academy will educate students about abuse, its forms, and the importance of discussing any concerns and respecting others through the curriculum, assemblies and PSHE lessons, in line with the [Prevention](#) section of this policy.

All staff will be aware that students of any age and gender are capable of abusing their peers. Staff will take all instances of peer-on-peer abuse equally seriously regardless of the characteristics of the perpetrators or victims, will never tolerate abuse as "banter" or "part of growing up", and will never justify sexual harassment, e.g. as "boys being boys", as this can foster a culture of unacceptable behaviours. Staff will also be aware that peer-on-peer abuse can be manifested in many ways, including sexting, sexual harassment and assault, and hazing- or initiation-type violence.

Students will be made aware of how to raise concerns or make a report and how any reports will be handled – this includes the process for reporting concerns about friends or peers. If a student has been harmed, is in immediate danger or is at risk of harm, a referral may be made to children's social care services (CSCS), where the DSL deems this appropriate in the circumstances.

The academy's Peer-on-peer Abuse Policy outlines the academy's stance on addressing peer-on-peer abuse, including sexual abuse, and the procedures in place will be adhered to if any instances are uncovered or disclosed. More information on the academy's approach to preventing and managing instances of peer-on-peer abuse can be found within this policy and the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

## 10 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying can take many forms and can go even further than face-to-face bullying by invading personal space and home life, and can target more than one person. It can also take place across age groups and target students, staff and others, and may take place inside the academy, within the wider community, at home or when travelling. It can sometimes draw bystanders into being accessories.

Cyberbullying can include the following:

- Threatening, intimidating or upsetting text messages
- Threatening or embarrassing pictures and video clips
- Disclosure of private sexual photographs or videos with the intent to cause distress
- Silent or abusive phone calls
- Using the victim's phone to harass others, to make them think the victim is responsible
- Threatening or bullying emails, possibly sent using a pseudonym or someone else's name
- Menacing or upsetting responses to someone in a chatroom
- Unpleasant messages sent via instant messaging
- Unpleasant or defamatory information posted to blogs, personal websites and social networking sites, e.g. Facebook

**NB.** The above list is not exhaustive, and cyberbullying may take other forms.

The academy has a zero-tolerance approach to cyberbullying. The academy views cyberbullying with the same severity as any other form of bullying and will follow the sanctions set out in [section 12](#) this policy if they become aware of any incidents.

All members of staff will receive training on an annual basis on the signs of cyberbullying, in order to identify students who may be experiencing issues and intervene effectively.

Many of the signs of cyberbullying will be similar to those found in the '[Signs of bullying](#)' section of this policy.

Staff will also be alert to the following signs which may indicate that a student is cyberbullying others:

- Avoiding using the computer or turning off the screen when someone is near
- Acting in a secretive manner when using the computer or mobile phone
- Spending excessive amounts of time on the computer or mobile phone
- Becoming upset or angry when the computer or mobile phone is taken away

Parents will also be invited to attend annual informative sessions in order to educate them on the signs and symptoms of cyberbullying, and will be advised to report to the students' pastoral teacher if their child displays any of the signs outlined in this section.

Staff will be aware that a cyberbullying incident might include features different to other forms of bullying, prompting a particular response. Significant differences may include the following:

- **Possible extensive scale and scope** – students may be bullied on multiple platforms and using multiple different methods that are made possible by virtue of the bullying taking place online
- **The anytime and anywhere nature of cyberbullying** – students may not have an escape from the torment when they are at home due to the bullying continuing through technology at all times
- **The person being bullied might not know who the perpetrator is** – it is easy for individuals to remain anonymous online and on social media, and students may be bullied by someone who is concealing their own identity
- **The perpetrator might not realise that their actions are bullying** – sometimes, the culture of social media, and the inability to see the impact that words are having on someone, may lead to students crossing boundaries without realising
- **The victim of the bullying may have evidence of what has happened** – students may have taken screenshots of bullying, or there may be a digital footprint that can identify the perpetrator

The academy will support students who have been victims of cyberbullying by holding formal and informal discussions with the student about their feelings and whether the bullying has stopped, in accordance with [section 13](#) and [section 14](#) of this policy.

In accordance with the Education Act 2011, the academy has the right to examine and delete files from students' personal devices, e.g. mobiles phones, where there is good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools/academies and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone.

## 11 Procedures

Minor incidents will be reported to the victim's pastoral teacher, who will investigate the incident, set appropriate sanctions for the perpetrator, and inform their line manager of the incident and outcome.

When investigating a bullying incident, the following procedures will be adopted:

- The victim, alleged perpetrator and witnesses are all interviewed separately
- Members of staff ensure that there is no possibility of contact between the students being interviewed, including electronic communication
- If a student is injured, members of staff take the student immediately to the Health Care Assistant for a medical opinion on the extent of their injuries
- A room is used that allows for privacy during interviews
- A witness is used for serious incidents
- If appropriate, the alleged perpetrator, the victim and witnesses are asked to write down details of the incident; this may need prompting with questions from the member of staff to obtain the full picture

- The academy's E-safety Lead / a member of SLT will gather evidence of a cyberbullying incident; this may involve text messages, emails, photos, etc. provided by the victim
- Premature assumptions are not made, as it is important not to be judgmental at this stage
- Members of staff listen carefully to all accounts, being non-confrontational and not assigning blame until the investigation is complete
- All students involved are informed that they must not discuss the interview with other students

Due to the potential for some specific forms of bullying to be characterised by inappropriate sexual behaviour, staff members involved in dealing with the incident are required to consider whether there is a need for safeguarding processes to be implemented.

## **12 Sanctions**

If the CEO is satisfied that bullying did take place, the perpetrator will be helped to understand the implications of their actions and warned that there must be no further incidents. The CEO will inform the perpetrator of the type of sanction to be used in this instance.

If possible, the CEO will attempt reconciliation and will obtain an apology from the perpetrator. This will either be in writing to the victim, and/or witnesses if appropriate, or face-to-face, but only with the victim's full consent. Discretion will be used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the perpetrator.

Parents are informed of bullying incidents and what action is being taken.

All staff involved in managing instances of bullying will be aware that taking disciplinary action and providing support are not mutually exclusive actions, and should be conducted simultaneously to encourage more positive behaviour in future.

The academy will avoid unnecessarily criminalising students for bullying or abusive behaviour where possible, as young people with criminal records face stigma and discrimination in future aspects of their lives. The academy's focus when handling perpetrators will be supporting them to develop more positive behaviours and to refrain from abusive and bullying behaviours in the future.

The pastoral staff will informally monitor the student involved over the next half-term. The academy will remain cognisant of the fact that continued access to academy can be important for rehabilitation of harmful behaviour, and will not exclude students unless as a last resort – where there have been serious or consistent incidents of bullying, the academy will act in line with the Exclusion Policy.

## **13 Support**

In the event of bullying, victims will be offered the following support:

- Emotional support and reassurance from the pastoral staff, Thrive practitioners and the Family Liaison Officer
- Reassurance that it was right to report the incident and that appropriate action will be taken
- Liaison with their parents to ensure a continuous dialogue of support

- Advice not to retaliate or reply, but to keep the evidence and show or give it to their parent or a member of staff
- Advice on aspects of online safety, in the event of cyberbullying, to prevent re-occurrence, including, where appropriate, discussion with their parents to evaluate their online habits and age-appropriate advice on how the perpetrator might be blocked online
- Discussion with their parent on whether police action is required (except in serious cases of child exploitation or abuse where the police may be contacted without discussion with parents)

The CEO will carefully consider in each instance of bullying that is handled whether it is appropriate to split up the victim(s) and perpetrator(s), e.g. preventing them sharing classes or spaces where possible, and will split up other harmful group dynamics to prevent further occurrences where necessary. Victims will be encouraged to broaden their friendship groups.

Pastoral staff/Thrive practitioners will work with the victim to build resilience, e.g. by offering emotional therapy.

The academy will acknowledge that bullying may be an indication of underlying mental health issues. Perpetrators will be required to attend a mandatory counselling session to assist with any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing issues. The academy will work with the perpetrator regarding any underlying mental health or emotional wellbeing problems.

## **14 Follow-up support**

The progress of both the perpetrator and the victim will be monitored by their pastoral staff. One-on-one sessions to discuss how the victim and perpetrator are progressing may be appropriate. If appropriate, follow-up correspondence will be arranged with parents one month after the incident. Students who have been bullied will be offered continuous support.

Students who have bullied others will be supported in the following ways:

- Receiving a consequence for their actions
- Being able to discuss what happened
- Being helped to reflect on why they became involved
- Being helped to understand what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour
- Appropriate assistance from parents

Students who have been bullied will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and the SENCo will, if necessary, refer the victim of bullying to CAMHS.

## **15 Bullying outside of the academy**

Staff will remain aware that bullying can happen both in and outside of the academy, and will ensure that they understand how to respond to reports of bullying that occurred outside of the academy in line with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy (Inclusive of Peer on Peer abuse).

The CEO has a specific statutory power to discipline students for poor behaviour outside of the academy's premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections

Act 2006 gives the CEO the power to regulate students' conduct when they are not on the academy premises, and therefore, not under the lawful charge of an academy staff member.

Teachers have the power to discipline students for misbehaving outside of the academy's premises. This can relate to any bullying incidents occurring anywhere off the academy's premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in the town center.

Where bullying outside the academy is reported to academy staff, it will be investigated and acted upon. In all cases of misbehaviour or bullying, members of staff can only discipline the student on the academy's premises, or elsewhere when the student is under the lawful control of the member of staff, e.g. on a school trip.

The CEO is responsible for determining whether it is appropriate to notify the police of the action taken against a student. If the misbehaviour could be of a criminal nature, or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police will be informed.

## **16 Record keeping**

The DSL will ensure that robust records are kept with regard to all reported or otherwise uncovered incidents of bullying.

The CEO and DSL will ensure that all decisions and actions recorded are reviewed on a regular basis for the purposes of:

- Identifying patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour on the part of certain students that may need to be handled, e.g. with pastoral support.
- Reflecting on whether cases could have been handled better and using these reflections to inform future practice.
- Considering whether there are wider cultural issues at play within the academy, e.g. whether the academy culture facilitates discriminatory bullying by not adequately addressing instances, and planning to mitigate this.
- Considering whether prevention strategies could be strengthened based on any patterns in the cases that arise.

## **17 Monitoring and review**

This policy is reviewed every two years by the CEO and the DSL. Any changes to this policy will be communicated to all relevant stakeholders.

The scheduled review date for this policy is **January 2024.**

