



## **POLICY DOCUMENT FRONTPAGE**

Anti-Bullying Policy

**CURRENT POLICY**

**APPROVED BY ALEC HUNTER LOCAL GOVERNING BODY**

**THIS POLICY IS REGULARLY REVIEWED  
FOLLOWING RECOMMENDED GUIDELINES**



## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

### Statement of intent

Alec Hunter 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 behaviour are dealt with, including the procedures by which we attempt to prevent occurrences of bullying behaviour.

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

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2019, outlines the legal obligations regarding the school's response to bullying. Schools must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst students. These measures are part of the school's Behaviour for Learning Policy, which is communicated to all students, school staff and parents/carers.

All staff, parents/carers and students work together to prevent and reduce any instances of bullying at the school. We recognise that incidents of bullying may still occur, despite our best efforts, because children are unpredictable by nature, but we are determined always to respond decisively and to demonstrate a 'zero tolerance' approach to bullying at Alec Hunter Academy.

### 1. Legal Framework

- 1.1. This policy has due regard to legislation, including, but not limited to the following:
  - Preventing and Tackling Bullying 2017
  - Behaviour in Schools 2022 Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2019
  - Equality Act 2010
  - Children Act 1989
  - 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
- 1.2 This policy will be implemented in conjunction with the school's [Behaviour for Learning Policy](#) and with regard to the school's [Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy](#)

### 2. What is bullying?

- 2.1 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.
- 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.

Bullying is not:

- Infrequent episodes of social rejection or dislike.
- Infrequent acts of nastiness and or spite.
- Random acts of aggression or intimidation.
- Mutual arguments, disagreements or fights.

These acts can cause distress however they do not fit the definition of bullying unless someone is deliberately and repeatedly doing them.

### 3. Types of Bullying

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

3.2 Bullying can be acted out through the following mediums:

- Verbally
- Physically
- Emotionally
- Online (Cyber)

3.3 An incident is deemed as prejudicial when it is perceived by the victim, or any other person, as an incident that is motivated by or demonstrates hostility because of the victim's disability, race, religion, sexual orientation, or transgender identity. Excuses such as 'it was a joke' or 'it was banter' will not be accepted.

Any incidents involving bullying behaviour that is judged to be discriminatory will be taken extremely seriously and recorded by the member of the Leadership Group who is responsible for the victim's year group. All incidents will be recorded centrally by their protected characteristic so that the school can monitor levels of bullying behaviours for students within different groups. Alec Hunter remains firm to the philosophy that the school is a place of learning and that students need to learn about the impact of bullying behaviour on each other

3.4 **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.

3.5 **Homophobic/ Biphobic bullying:** Bullying another person because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation

3.6 **Transphobic bullying:** Bullying based on another person's gender "variance" or for not conforming to predominant gender roles.

3.7 **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.

3.8 **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.

### 4. Statutory Implications

4.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the school understands that it has a responsibility to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the act, to

advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic (see list under section 3 Types of Bullying) and people who do not share it, and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

- 4.2 Under the Human Rights Act (HRA) 1998, the school understands that 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.
- 4.3 Headteachers must “satisfy themselves” that their school’s Anti-Bullying Policy complies with the HRA; the Headteacher understands that the school cannot do this without fully involving its teaching staff.
- 4.4 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 to electronically communicate with another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, or which conveys a message which is indecent or grossly offensive, a threat, or 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 police include: violence or assault, theft, repeated harassment or intimidation and hate crimes.

## **5. Prevention**

- 5.1 The school clearly communicates a whole-school commitment to addressing bullying behaviour and promoting kindness above all else.
- 5.2 All reported or witnessed incidents of bullying behaviours in the school are challenged by a member of staff.
- 5.3 Staff encourage student co-operation and the development of interpersonal skills through the use of group work and pair work.
- 5.4 All types of bullying behaviours are discussed as part of the curriculum, and diversity, difference and respect for others are promoted and celebrated through various lessons, assemblies and reflection time activities.
- 5.5 Planning seating arrangements in class carefully, using relevant information about the relationship between specific pupils, can help prevent instances of bullying behaviours.
- 5.6 Potential victims of bullying are drawn into working groups with children who do not abuse or take advantage of them.
- 5.7 Opportunities to extend friendship groups and interactive skills are provided through participation in special events, for example, therapeutic intervention programmes, trips and visits, drama productions, games, clubs, sporting activities and skills days.
- 5.8 All members of the school community are made aware of the school’s Anti-Bullying Policy.
- 5.9 All staff members receive training on Behaviour for Learning/Anti-Bullying as part of their induction when they join the school.

- 5.10 Low-level disruption and the use of offensive language can in itself have a significant impact and if left unchallenged or dismissed as banter or horseplay, can also lead to reluctance to report other behaviour. All staff will help to set clear expectations of the behaviour that is and isn't acceptable and help stop negative behaviours escalating.
- 5.11 A safe, supervised place may be arranged for students to go to at lunch if they are involved in conflict with their peers.

## **6. Signs of Bullying**

- 6.1 Some of the signs that a student may be a victim of bullying behaviour which staff are aware of include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Being frightened to travel to or from school
  - Asking to be driven to school
  - 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/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
- 6.2 Although the signs outlined above may not be due to bullying, they may be due to deeper social emotional or mental health concerns, so are still worth investigating.
- 6.3 Staff will engage with students who display a significant number of these signs, in order to determine the underlying issues, whether they are due to bullying or other issues.

## **7. Staff Principles**

- 7.1 Prevention is at the forefront of the school's Anti-Bullying Policy.
- 7.2 Staff treat reports of bullying behaviour very seriously.
- 7.3 Staff do not ignore signs of suspected bullying behaviour.
- 7.4 Unpleasantness from one student to another is always challenged and never ignored, even if, in itself, it does not constitute bullying.
- 7.5 Staff take action promptly; this applies to all staff, not solely teaching staff.
- 7.6 Staff always respect students' privacy, and information about specific instances of Bullying behaviours are not discussed with others, unless it is with the victim's consent.
- 7.7 Follow-up support is given to both the victim and perpetrator or young person exhibiting bullying behaviour following any incidents, to ensure that all bullying has stopped.

## **8. Roles and Responsibilities**

- 8.1 The governing body evaluates and reviews this policy to ensure that it is non-discriminatory.
- 8.2 It is the responsibility of all staff to be alert to the possible bullying of students and to deal with incidents as the highest priority.
- 8.3 The senior leader responsible for safeguarding reviews and amends this policy, taking account of new legislation and government guidance, and using staff experience of dealing with bullying incidents in the previous year to improve procedures.
- 8.4 The Headteacher keeps a Bullying Behaviour Log of all reported incidents including which type of bullying has occurred to allow for proper analysis of the data collected.
- 8.5 The Headteacher and other senior leaders responsible for behaviour analyse the data in the Bullying Log at termly intervals in order to identify any trends in the types of bullying occurring and implement the appropriate measures to tackle it. This is shared at our Governors' Standards and Education Committee on a regular basis.
- 8.6 Leadership Group arrange appropriate training for all staff members.
- 8.7 Each Student Support Leader and Head of Year corresponds and meets with parents/carers where necessary. They also provide a point of contact when more serious bullying incidents occur.
- 8.8 Tutors are alert to social dynamics in their tutor groups and are available for students who wish to report bullying.
- 8.9 Teachers ensure that they are alert to possible bullying situations, particularly exclusion from friendship groups, and that they inform the student's Student Support Leader of such observations.
- 8.10 All staff will avoid gender stereotyping when dealing with bullying.
- 8.11 Throughout the year, the composition of student groups, and the arrangement of seating within groups, shows sensitivity to those who have been the victims of bullying.
- 8.12 Parents/carers are advised to inform their child's Tutor, Student Support Leader or Head of Year if they are concerned that their child may be bullied or be involved in bullying.
- 8.13 Students are advised to inform a member of staff if they witness bullying behaviours, or are a victim of bullying.
- 8.14 Students are taught not to make counter-threats or to take retaliatory action if they are victims of bullying, but to report any concerns to staff instead. We promote the principle that 'two wrongs do not make a right'.
- 8.15 Students are taught to walk away from any dangerous situations and find a member of staff. They are also encouraged to avoid involving other students in incidents.
- 8.16 Students are advised to retain all evidence of cyberbullying, including times and dates, without responding, and to report it to CEOP or to the Police.

## **9. Procedures**

- 9.1 The school has a clear policy for dealing with incidents of bullying that is based on the philosophy that the school is a place of learning and that students need to learn about the impact of bullying on each other.

9.2 Our policy is based on a simple 4-point scale, as follows:

- a. If repetitive, targeted, negative behaviour towards another student is identified, a resolution agreement will be completed and filed on the student's record. Parents/carers will be made aware of possible sanctions put in place for the young person exhibiting bullying behaviour and support for the victim. Parents/carers will also be advised that if bullying behaviour continues, the young person will progress to the next point on our school's 4-point scale.
- b. If bullying behaviour continues (see 'bullying' definition in policy), the incident is fully investigated by the Student Support Team to establish the circumstances. The matter is discussed with the student(s) involved and they are warned that this cannot continue and will not be tolerated. Parents/carers are informed of the incident and of any sanctions which are imposed – these may be any that are considered appropriate from our Behaviour Ladder, depending on the severity of the incident. The Anti-Bullying Policy will be referred to and the next point on this 4-point scale will be explained in the event that the bullying should continue. The behaviour of the student who has bullied will be monitored and particularly his/her relationship with any other students involved. The student who has been bullied will be offered support, including a discussion of strategies to help them to stay safe.
- c. On the second continuation of bullying behaviour by the young person, the student's parents/carers will be contacted and requested to meet with school leaders. It is likely that students who reach this stage will be considered for fixed-term internal or external exclusion, possible Intervention at Andrew's Shed and they may be advised to attend counselling. A clear warning will be issued and a copy of the Anti-Bullying Policy will be given to the student and to parents/carers. The next point on this 4-point scale will be explained in the event that the bullying should continue.
- d. On the third occasion of continued bullying involving the same student, the student and parents/carers will be required to attend a disciplinary meeting with Governors. At this meeting, Governors will consider the most recent incident along with every aspect of the student's behaviour and performance record. The Governors have the authority to support permanent exclusion and persistent bullying is one of the possible reasons, cited by the Department for Education, for which a school may choose to impose the ultimate sanction of removal of the student from the school.

9.3 Due to the potential for sexist, transphobic and sexual 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.

9.4 The rapid development, of and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for "virtual" bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyberbullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people can forward content with just a click. The Education Act 2011 amended the power in the Education Act 1996 to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a member of staff who has been formally authorised by the Headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files, and delete these, where there is a good reason to do so. This power applies to all schools and there is no need to have parental consent to search through a young person's mobile phone. If an electronic device that is prohibited by the school rules has been seized and the member of staff has reasonable grounds to suspect that it contains evidence in relation to an offence, they must give the device to the Police as soon as it is reasonably practicable. Material on the device that is suspected to be evidence relevant to an offence, or that is a pornographic image of a child or an extreme pornographic image, should not be deleted prior to giving the device to the police. If a staff member finds material that they do not suspect contains evidence in relation to an offence, they can decide whether it is appropriate to delete or retain the material as evidence of a breach of school discipline.

## **10. Sanctions**

- 10.1 If the Student Support Leader and/or Head of Year is satisfied that bullying did take place, the student will be helped to understand the consequences of his/her actions and warned that there must be no further incidents.
- 10.2 The Student Support Leader and/or Head of Year informs the student of the type of sanction to be used in this instance and future sanctions if the bullying continues. Sanctions include any on our Behaviour for Learning Policy and will be judged by each individual incident of bullying behaviour.
- 10.3 Whenever possible, the Student Support Leader will attempt reconciliation and will obtain a genuine apology from the young person exhibiting bullying behaviour. 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 is used here; victims will never feel pressured into a face-to-face meeting with the young person exhibiting bullying behaviour.
- 10.4 The student who has exhibited bullying behaviour is encouraged to realise that some students do not appreciate the distress they are causing and that they must change their behaviour.
- 10.5 Parents/carers are informed of bullying incidents and what action is being taken.

## **11. Support**

- 11.1 The Student Support Leader, Head of Year and Form Tutor monitor whether the bullying behaviour has stopped after the initial complaint of bullying.
- 11.2 If necessary, group dynamics are reviewed by members of staff and may be altered by rearranging seating plans in classes.
- 11.3 The victim is encouraged to tell a trusted adult in school if bullying behaviour is repeated.
- 11.4 The victim is encouraged to broaden his/her friendship groups by joining lunchtime or after-school clubs or activities.

## **12. Follow Up Support**

- 12.1 Students who have experienced bullying behaviour are supported in the following ways:
  - Being listened to and reassured
  - Having immediate access to their Student Support Leader, Head of Year or a member of staff of their choice.
  - Being offered continued support
  - Being offered Andrew's Shed intervention, where appropriate.
  - A referral to EWMHS if necessary or other external agencies.
- 12.2 Students who have bullied others are supported in the following ways:
  - Receiving a consequence for their actions
  - Being able to discuss what happened
  - Reflecting on why they became involved
  - Understanding what they did wrong and why they need to change their behaviour
  - Appropriate assistance from parents/carers
  - Referral to intervention through Andrew's Shed or other outside agencies if appropriate.

### **13. Bullying outside of school**

- 13.1 Teachers have the power to discipline students for misbehaving in the immediate vicinity of the school premises, whilst off-site on trips and visits, on school transport or anywhere they are in school uniform and therefore representing Alec Hunter Academy.
- 13.2 Where bullying outside school is reported to school staff, in the circumstances defined in 13.1 above, it is investigated and acted on.
- 13.3 The Headteacher has a specific statutory power to discipline students for poor behaviour outside of the school premises and will do so in the circumstances defined in 13.1 above.
- 13.4 When responding to cyberbullying concerns, parents/carers do have a major role to play in ensuring that their children are behaving responsibly and respectfully online. The school may choose to intervene if the behaviour:
- could have repercussions for the orderly running of the school, or
  - poses a threat to another student or member of the public, or
  - could adversely affect the reputation of the school.

In these instances, support will be provided for the person who has been cyberbullied and the person who has carried out bullying behaviours will be educated regarding the implications of their actions. Educating young people about the responsibilities and impact social media can have on individuals is achieved through assemblies, skills days and within our curriculum such as Learning for Life lessons and ICT. Staff will encourage students to save any evidence (screenshots) to assist further investigation and take steps to remove offensive or upsetting material from circulation. This may include:

- Confiscating and searching pupils' electronic devices in line with 'Searching, Screening and Confiscation (DfE 2018).
  - Submitting reports to a service provider to request that they remove content if deletion of content cannot be achieved
  - Informing the Police if a criminal offence has been committed
- 13.4 The Leadership Group, Head of Year and Student Support Leaders are responsible for determining whether it is appropriate to notify the Police of the action taken by a student.
- 13.5 If the misbehaviour could be of a criminal nature, or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the Police are always informed.