



Vermont School's Anti-Bullying Policy 2024-2025

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1. Introduction

This policy is written to ensure that:

- All governors, staff, pupils, and parents understand what bullying is.
- All governors and staff know the policy and implement it consistently when a bullying incident is reported.
- All pupils and parents know the policy and understand what to do if bullying incidents arise.
- Pupils and parents are assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

2. What is bullying?

Bullying is a behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally harms another individual or group. There are four types of behaviour that cause harm:

1. Physical – pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.
2. Verbal – name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
3. Emotional – being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting, (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures).
4. Cyber – all areas of internet, such as email, internet chat room misuse. Mobile threats, text messaging and call. Misuse of technology, for example camera and video facilities.

The Anti- Bullying Alliance and its members have an agreed shared definition of bullying based on research from around the world over the last 30 years;

'The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical, verbal or psychological. It can happen face-to-face or online'.

[Anti-Bullying Alliance - What is bullying?](#)

3. In the context of our children and their needs

The pupils at Vermont School have a primary or secondary need in social, emotional and mental health. Some pupils have a diagnosis of ADHD, ASC, PTSD and some have experienced adverse childhood experiences. As a school we understand that bullying in this context can have additional subtleties and raise issues that are in themselves complicated to resolve. Not all pupils recognise bullying behaviour if they experience it, and they will not always have the social skills to communicate effectively. Equally not all pupils would recognise that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying.

We aim to support and teach pupils the skills to increase their social skills and understand what is meant by the definitions of bullying, helping to create an ethos of inclusivity and acceptance. This is achieved through the development of a bespoke curriculum approach taught through Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and indirectly through cross-curricular themes.

4. Reasons for this behaviour may include

1. Racist – Racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.
2. Sexual – unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.
3. Homophobic – focusing on the issue of sexuality.
4. Disability – can be physical or learning disabilities.
5. Religious/Faith – harmed because of their belief in a certain religion or faith.
6. Sexist – demean, intimidate or harm another person because of their gender.
7. Transphobic – hatred or fear of people who are transgendered. Transphobic being described as someone whose sense of their gender or identity is seen as being different to the typical gender norms.
8. Social Class – targeted by others because of their social group.
9. Other – any other reason other than the above.

Under the **Equalities Act 2010**, it is against the law to discriminate against anyone because of:

- Age.
- Being or becoming a transsexual person.
- Being married or in a civil partnership.
- Being pregnant or having a child.
- Disability.
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin including Gypsy, Roma, Travellers
- Religion, belief or lack of religion/belief
- Sex / gender
- Sexual orientation.

These are called '**protected characteristics**'.

Action Against Discrimination

We recognise that pupils with SEMH needs may be more vulnerable to discriminatory bullying and may also express distress in ways that could be misunderstood. Our staff are trained to respond sensitively and appropriately, with a clear understanding of the social and emotional contexts in which behaviours occur.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 and our safeguarding responsibilities, we will:

- Proactively challenge discriminatory language or behaviour in any form, including microaggressions, exclusion, and online abuse.
- Investigate all reports of discriminatory bullying thoroughly and sensitively, taking into account the emotional and mental health needs of those involved.
- Support both the targeted pupil and the perpetrator, recognising that pupils with SEMH needs may require structured intervention and restorative approaches.
- Record and monitor all incidents of discrimination, reporting patterns to the senior leadership team and governors.
- Involve families, external agencies, and mental health professionals where appropriate, to provide wraparound support and prevent recurrence.
- Educate pupils about diversity, inclusion, and respectful relationships, through the curriculum and PSHE sessions.

Our approach is restorative, supportive, and educational, aiming not only to stop bullying but also to build understanding and empathy.

The Law

Some forms of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. These include:

- Violence or assault
- Theft
- Repeated harassment or intimidation, for example name calling, threats and abusive phone calls, text messages or communication on social media platforms
- Hate crimes

Before reporting bullying to the police, parents/carers should report it to the school.

5. Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

Adults should be aware of these possible signs, and they should be investigated if a student:

- Raises concerns regarding travel to school.

- Changes their usual routine.
- Is unwilling to go to school and begins to abscond.
- Shows changes in their emotional presentation – low mood, interrupted sleep, withdrawn, anxious, lacking confidence, or becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable.
- Is bullying other children or siblings.
- Shows a concerning use of the internet or social media.
- Feels ill in the morning or shows changes in their eating habits.
- Begins to make less progress in their academic studies.
- Has missing or damaged possessions or asks for additional money.
- Has unexplained injuries.

These signs and behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

6. Bullying is not

It is important to understand that bullying is not the odd occasion of falling out with friends, name calling, arguments or when the occasional trick or joke is played on someone. Children sometimes fall out or say things because they are upset. When occasional problems of this kind arise, it is not classed as bullying. It is an important part of children's development to learn how to deal with friendship breakdowns, the odd name calling or childish prank. Pupils will be supported and encouraged to deal with these situations and develop social skills to repair relationships.

7. How bullying is dealt with when reported

- Providing support and a safe base for pupils who feel unsafe.
- Encouraging pupils to tell.
- Always addressing matters in a timely manner.
- Seeing the person who is being bullied to discuss the incident.
- Seeing involved individuals to discuss the incident.
- Maintaining a non-judgemental approach, during investigations.
- Offering mediation.
- The expectation is that further bullying will not be repeated.
- Relevant interventions are applied in line with our Behaviour policy.

8. The school's procedures to combat bullying are

The school takes several practical measures in order to discourage bullying and to promote an atmosphere of tolerance and respect. These include:

- Discussing the problems of bullying in the context of the personal development programme (PSHE).
- Holding staff meetings regularly in which the academic and social progress of individual children can be highlighted and discussed.
- Encouraging staff to be alert to changes in behaviour, friendship groups, punctuality and attendance.

- Using current affairs, historical events, drama and literature to raise awareness of bullying.
- Supporting the annual Anti Bullying Week to raise awareness.
- Staff are given 'pastoral care' induction sessions and updated on the latest trends in bullying through staff training days.
- Focussed work with individuals and groups of pupils where required to support understanding and development of social skills e.g. social skills groups, ELSA (Emotional Literacy Support Assistant), Saints Foundation.

In addition, the school has established pastoral procedures that encourage pupils to speak out when they either find themselves a victim of bullying or see others being bullied.

We recognise that sanctioning children who bully may not always be appropriate. Consideration is given to the context of the incident when deciding on action towards children who bully. In the first instance, children who bully will be given the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and move forward with their peers. Involvement of parents and the use of other support networks may be appropriate at this stage. When sanctions are necessary to deal with bullying, they are intended to hold pupils who bully to account for their behaviour and to ensure that they face up to the harm they have caused and to learn from it. The sanctions will provide an opportunity for the pupil to right the harm they have caused. In cases of severe and persistent bullying the sanctions may ultimately include suspension. The school will inform and work with parents as required, advising them on the strategies to adopt, whether their child is being bullied or the one doing the bullying.

9. What to do if you feel you are being bullied

Pupils are encouraged to talk to staff when they are unhappy or have concerns. Pupils in our school understand that they have a right to feel and be safe and a responsibility to support others to feel and be safe. Pupils are encouraged to report bullying to:

- A trusted adult.
- Their class teacher/TA.

Children are taught that it is important to talk to a trusted adult if bullying is taking place outside of school. Parents are also encouraged to report concerns and bullying to named individuals. This is normally the class teacher. When pupils report their concerns, our staff are trained to **LISTEN** and to **BELIEVE**. We involve children as far as possible in finding solutions.

On a regular basis we give pupils the opportunity to feedback on how safe and happy they feel at school, we do this through PSHE lessons, School Council meetings and external visitor reviews.

If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached, a clear account of the incident is recorded on CPOMS, this will be sent to a member of the school's Senior Leadership Team and flagged to the Designated Safeguarding Lead.

10. Supporting Pupils

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Reassuring the pupil and providing pastoral support.
- Offering an opportunity to discuss the experience with their teacher, the DSL, or a member of staff of their choice.
- Working towards restoring self-esteem and confidence.
- Providing ongoing support. This may include working and speaking with staff, and engaging with parents and carers.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this could include support through the Children's Resource Centre or Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

Pupils who have perpetrated bullying will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened, establishing the concern and the need to change.
- Informing parents/carers to help change the attitude and behaviour of the child.
- Providing appropriate education and support regarding their behaviour or actions.
- If online, requesting that content be removed and reporting accounts/content to service provider.
- Sanctioning, in line with school behaviour support policy. This may include:
 1. Reflection time/internal exclusions
 2. Removal of privileges (including online access when encountering cyberbullying concerns)
 3. In extreme or repeated cases, suspensions or permanent exclusions.
- Where necessary, working with the wider community and local/national organisations to provide further or specialist advice and guidance; this could include support through Children's Resource Centre or Children and Mental Health Service (CAMHS).

11. Procedures for Parents

If a parent has any concerns about their child, they should speak to the class teacher immediately. The Head teacher is always informed of any bullying concerns at Vermont School and monitors the situation carefully.

- If a parent feels unable to talk to the class teacher, they can make an appointment to speak directly with a member of the SLT.
- The school will work with both the child and the parents to ensure that any bullying is stopped and that support is given where needed.
- Parents should not confront the bully or their parents. This can complicate the situation and distress the pupil.
- The school will deal directly with all children involved and their parents directly. Parents will be kept informed of any actions the school is taking.
- If parents feel that their concern has not been dealt with appropriately, they should follow the Vermont School complaints policy. All members of the school community, including pupils, staff, parents and governors, are expected to treat

everyone with dignity respect at all times. This includes both face-to-face contact and online.

Appendix 1 – Useful Information

Name of Organisation	Telephone Number	Website
Anti-Bullying Alliance	0800 1111 (Childline Number)	https://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/
National bullying helpline	0845 2255787	https://www.nationalbullyinghelpline.co.uk/
Childline	0800 1111	www.childline.org.uk
Kidscape	0207 730 3300	www.kidscape.org.uk
NSPCC	0808 800 5000	www.nspcc.org.uk
Family Lives	0808 800 2222	www.familylives.org.uk