



Inspired by yesterday, Learning today, Leading tomorrow

Anti-Bullying Policy

Approved by/on:

Frequency of review: Yearly

Date of previous review: February 2023

1. Introduction

At St John's Primary School, we are committed to providing a safe, nurturing and inclusive environment where every child feels valued, respected and able to learn. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Our school values — **perseverance, ambition, curiosity and kindness** — guide our approach to relationships, behaviour and wellbeing.

This policy outlines how we define bullying, how we prevent it, and how we respond when it occurs. It is rooted in the principles of emotional wellbeing, positive relationships and child development, and has been written with reference to our Behaviour And Relationships Policy, and incorporates training from **Thrive** (Preventing Bullying Through Action and awareness).

2. Our School Values

Our values shape the culture of St John's and underpin our anti-bullying work:

- **Perseverance** — We support children to keep trying, even when relationships feel difficult.
- **Ambition** — We aim for every child to thrive socially, emotionally and academically.
- **Curiosity** — We encourage children to understand feelings, behaviours and perspectives; both their own and others'.
- **Kindness** — We expect all members of our community to treat others with empathy and respect.

3. Definition of Bullying

St John's Primary School adopts the **Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA)** definition of bullying:

Bullying is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face-to-face or online.

Bullying can be:

- **Physical** — hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging property;
- **Verbal** — name-calling, insults, threats;
- **Social/relational** — excluding, spreading rumours, manipulating friendships;
- **Online (cyberbullying)** — sending unkind messages, sharing images, excluding others digitally;
- **Prejudice-based** — including bullying related to race, religion, gender, disability, sexuality or family circumstances.

4. The Difference Between Conflict and Bullying

Not all disagreements or fallouts are bullying. Children may experience **conflict**, which is a natural part of learning to socialise.

Conflict

- A disagreement or argument between children

- No significant power imbalance
- Both parties may be upset
- Usually occasional
- Often resolved with support, discussion and reflection

Bullying

- Repeated behaviour
- Intentional harm
- Power imbalance (physical, social, emotional or digital)
- One-sided
- Requires adult intervention and structured support

Understanding this distinction helps staff respond appropriately and ensures children learn healthy relationship skills.

5. Discharge and Defence Behaviours

Some behaviours that appear aggressive or withdrawn may be **discharge** or **defence** behaviours — signs that a child is overwhelmed, dysregulated or struggling emotionally.

- **Discharge behaviours** may include shouting, lashing out, running away or acting impulsively.
- **Defence behaviours** may include shutting down, avoiding others, masking emotions or becoming overly compliant.

These behaviours are **not excuses for harm**, but they help us understand the child's emotional state and respond with appropriate support.

6. Thrive Approach and Developmental Stages

Our anti-bullying work is informed by the **Thrive stages of development**, which help us understand children's needs and guide our responses:

Power & Identity (Early Development)

Children need to feel safe, seen and valued. We support them to understand their feelings, develop self-worth and build trusting relationships.

In this period, children are developing their own identities and begin to explore power with responsibility/

Skills & Structure (Middle Childhood)

Children learn social skills, boundaries and emotional regulation. We teach problem-solving, empathy, communication and conflict resolution.

In this period, children begin to understand the need for rules and build to develop their own sense of morals and values.

Interdependence (Later Development)

Children learn to collaborate, negotiate and take responsibility for their actions. We encourage leadership, teamwork and positive peer relationships. Children begin to explore their identity and connect more closely with their peers.

By recognising where a child is developmentally, we can respond to bullying and conflict in ways that are supportive, effective and developmentally appropriate.

7. Prevention Strategies

We aim to prevent bullying through:

Whole-School Culture

- Promoting kindness, respect and inclusion
- Celebrating diversity and difference
- Modelling positive relationships at all times

Curriculum

- PSHE lessons exploring relationships, empathy and emotional regulation
- Activities supporting wellbeing and resilience
- Online safety education
- Assemblies on kindness, respect and anti-bullying themes

Environment

- Clear supervision in playgrounds and in school
- Safe spaces and trusting relationships for children to talk and seek help
- Visual reminders of school values and expectations

Pupil Voice

- School council involvement in anti-bullying initiatives
- Worry boxes
- Peer support and buddy systems

Systems and Processes

- Behaviours are recorded using CPOMs and reviewed, so that patterns can be observed and identified.
- School Council deliver Anti-Bullying Assemblies and activities for whole school participation.
- Staff training ensures all members of staff are alert for bullying behaviours and treat these with necessary gravitas.
- Children are aware that they may speak with any adult. Vulnerable children are provided with named adults and additional 1:1 emotional support where needed.
- Bullying is addressed within our curriculum, including online bullying.
- Outside visitors (Cyber Security, police, NSPCC) reiterate messages heard inside school.
- Staff are involved in the creation and dissemination of the anti-bullying policy.
- Staff safeguarding training incorporates bullying, both in person and online.
- SLT are available at the start and end of every school day and also via email, so that parents and children can easily report any concerns.

8. Responding to Bullying

When bullying is reported or suspected, staff will:

1. **Listen carefully** to all children involved
2. **Record concerns** factually and promptly
3. **Assess whether the behaviour meets the definition of bullying**
4. **Provide immediate support** to the child experiencing harm
5. **Address the behaviour** of the child displaying bullying behaviour, using restorative and relational approaches
6. **Inform parents/carers** of all children involved
7. **Implement a support plan**, which may include:
 - Restorative conversations
 - Emotional regulation support
 - Behaviour plans
 - Increased monitoring
8. **Follow up regularly** to ensure the bullying has stopped and relationships are improving

Bullying incidents are monitored to identify patterns and ensure accountability.

9. Support for Pupils

At St John's, we respond to both the child who has experienced bullying and the child who has displayed bullying behaviour because **every child's wellbeing, safety and development matter**. Children who are bullied need protection, reassurance and support to rebuild confidence and feel safe. Children who bully others also require help to understand the impact of their actions, develop empathy and learn healthier ways to manage their feelings and relationships.

Bullying behaviour often signals underlying emotional needs, including discharge or defence behaviours, which must be addressed to prevent further harm. By supporting both children—through relational practice and restorative approaches—we aim, not only to stop the bullying but, to teach positive, lasting relationship skills. This approach ensures that all children are guided towards making better choices and thriving within our community.

For children experiencing bullying:

- Safe adult to talk to
- Emotional support and reassurance
- Strategies to rebuild confidence
- Regular check-ins
- Restorative conversations, if they are willing to do so

For children displaying bullying behaviour

- Clear boundaries and expectations
- Restoration and consequence

- Support to understand the impact of their actions
- Emotional regulation strategies

For bystanders

- Education on how to report concerns
- Encouragement to act safely and responsibly
- Recognition of positive, courageous behaviour

10. Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually and updated in consultation with:

- Staff
- Pupils
- Parents and carers
- Governors

It should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour and Relationships Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Acceptable Use Agreements (AUA) for pupils, staff and parents
- PSHE / RSE Policy
- Inclusion and SEND Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Equality Policy

We evaluate the effectiveness of our anti-bullying work through:

- Behaviour and safeguarding records
- Pupil voice surveys
- Parent feedback
- Staff observations
- Thrive self-audit

11. Conclusion

At St John's Primary School, we believe every child has the right to feel safe, respected and able to learn. Through our values of **perseverance, ambition, curiosity and kindness**, and our commitment to relational, restorative and developmentally informed practice, we work together to create a community where bullying has no place and every child can thrive.