HEDNESFORD HILLS FEDERATION

Anti – Bullying Policy

School	Hednesford Hills Federation
Policy owner	Headteacher / Designated Safeguarding Lead
Approved by	Governing Body 7.10.26
Review cycle	At least annually and sooner where guidance, legislation or school practice changes
Applicable guidance	Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 and associated statutory safeguarding guidance

This policy applies across West Hill Primary School, Hednesford Nursery School and West Hill Pre-School and applies to pupils, children, staff, volunteers, students, governors, visitors, contractors and parents/carers where relevant.

1. Policy statement and ethos

Everyone within the Hednesford Hills Federation has the right to feel welcome, happy and safe. We provide a safe, caring and inclusive environment in which children can learn with confidence, develop positive relationships and maximise their potential. West Hill school values - Respect, Learn, Achieve - and our behaviour expectations support an ethos in which differences are discussed openly, diversity is celebrated and bullying is not tolerated.

We recognise that bullying can affect a child's education, attendance, relationships, mental health, wellbeing and sense of safety. Children should feel confident that concerns will be listened to, taken seriously and acted upon. No child should be made to feel that they are creating a problem by reporting bullying, abuse or harmful behaviour.

The Hednesford Hills Federation recognises that bullying may also be a safeguarding issue. Child-on-child abuse can happen inside or outside school and online, and the school maintains an attitude of 'it could happen here'. Harmful behaviour will not be dismissed as banter, part of growing up, having a laugh or an inevitable part of children's relationships.

Where behaviour raises a safeguarding concern, staff will act immediately and follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The immediate safety and wellbeing of children will always be the priority.

2. Aims

- provide a safe and secure environment in which children feel safe and are able to learn;
- prevent bullying through a positive culture, curriculum, supervision and early intervention;
- ensure children understand what bullying is, including online and prejudice-related bullying;
- ensure children know how and where to seek help and are confident that adults will listen, believe and act;
- respond promptly, consistently, proportionately and fairly to concerns;
- recognise when bullying or associated behaviour may constitute child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern;
- support the child who has experienced bullying, the child who has displayed harmful or bullying behaviour, and other children affected;
- work constructively with parents/carers and, where appropriate, external agencies;

- record and analyse incidents so that patterns, risks and the effectiveness of interventions can be identified.

3. Legal and safeguarding framework

This policy should be read alongside current statutory and departmental guidance, including Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, the Equality Act 2010, current DfE behaviour guidance, statutory safeguarding guidance and current online safety, filtering and monitoring expectations.

It should also be read alongside the school's:

- Safeguarding Policy;
- Child-on-Child Abuse procedures/policy;
- Behaviour Policy;
- Online Safety and Acceptable Use Policies;
- SEND and Inclusion arrangements;
- PSHE, Computing, British Values and SMSC curriculum provision;
- Complaints Policy;
- Staff Code of Conduct.

4. Definition of bullying

The federation uses the Anti-Bullying Alliance definition: 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 be physical, verbal or psychological and can happen face-to-face or online.

Bullying will commonly involve deliberate harm or humiliation, an imbalance of power and repeated or persistent behaviour. However, a serious single incident may still require an anti-bullying and/or safeguarding response, particularly where there is prejudice, sexual harassment, threats, online harm or a risk of further harm.

Not every disagreement, friendship difficulty or one-off incident is bullying. These behaviours will still be addressed appropriately under the Behaviour Policy and safeguarding procedures where relevant.

5. What bullying may look like

Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing, poking, biting, pinching, damaging or taking property.

Verbal: name-calling, threats, teasing, belittling, sarcasm, abusive comments or spreading rumours.

Emotional/relational: isolation, exclusion, intimidation, humiliation, manipulation, coercion or threatening gestures.

Sexual: sexualised comments, unwanted touching, sexual harassment, sharing sexual content, coercive or harmful sexual behaviour.

Online/cyber: abusive messages, posts or group chats; impersonation; exclusion; threats; image/video sharing; harassment through social media, messaging, gaming, livestreaming or other online platforms.

Indirect: encouraging others to exclude, intimidate or harm another person, including exploitation of individuals.

There is no hierarchy of bullying. All forms are taken seriously. Behaviour may occur in the presence of others physically or online, and witnesses or bystanders may also require support.

6. Prejudice-related and discriminatory bullying

Bullying may be related to actual or perceived protected characteristics or other aspects of a child's identity or circumstances. The school will challenge racist, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, sexist, disablist and other discriminatory language and behaviour, including where it is presented as humour or banter.

This includes bullying related to:

- disability or special educational needs;
- race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller heritage;
- religion, belief or lack of religion/belief;
- sex;
- sexual orientation;
- gender reassignment;
- appearance or health needs;
- being a young carer, looked-after child or previously looked-after child;
- family or home circumstances, or association with another person.

Prejudice-related incidents will be recorded and monitored in accordance with school and local procedures, including one-off incidents where appropriate.

7. Child-on-child abuse and safeguarding

Bullying can overlap with, or constitute, child-on-child abuse. This may include physical abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, coercive or controlling behaviour, prejudice-related abuse and online abuse.

Any member of staff who believes that an incident may constitute abuse, indicates that a child is at risk of harm, or otherwise raises a safeguarding concern must report it immediately to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or a Deputy Designated Safeguarding Lead (DDSL), in accordance with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Staff must not wait for bullying to become repeated before taking safeguarding action. Where necessary, the DSL/DDSL will consider early help, children's social care, police involvement and/or advice from other relevant agencies.

8. Online bullying

Online bullying can be intrusive, persistent and difficult for a child to escape. It may begin in school and continue online, begin online and affect behaviour or relationships in school, or take place wholly outside school but have an impact on a child's safety, wellbeing or education.

Examples include:

- abusive, threatening or discriminatory messages or posts;
- inappropriate use of group chats or messaging services;
- impersonating another person or accessing accounts without permission;
- sharing, altering or posting images or videos to embarrass, threaten or humiliate;
- deliberate exclusion from online groups;
- harassment through social media, gaming or livestreaming;
- stalking, manipulation, coercion or repeated unwanted contact.

The federation will support children and families where online behaviour outside school affects a child's welfare or school life. Online incidents will be considered alongside the Online Safety Policy and the school's

filtering and monitoring arrangements. Where there is a safeguarding concern, safeguarding procedures take precedence.

Children will be taught to:

- tell a trusted adult and not try to manage serious bullying alone;
- avoid responding to abusive messages;
- preserve relevant evidence where safe to do so;
- avoid sharing, liking or commenting on bullying content;
- block and report content/accounts using appropriate platform tools;
- seek immediate adult help where threats, sexual content, coercion or serious harm are involved.

9. Vulnerability, SEND and reasonable adjustments

The federation recognises that some children may be more vulnerable to bullying, may experience bullying differently, or may find it harder to recognise, communicate or report what has happened. This may include children with SEND, communication needs, sensory needs, trauma histories, EAL, care experience or other vulnerabilities.

Staff will make reasonable adjustments to reporting, investigation and support. This may include using visuals, communication aids, trusted adults, additional processing time, adapted language, sensory support, alternative methods of giving an account and liaison with the SENDCo or other relevant professionals.

10. Preventing bullying

The federation will promote an anti-bullying culture through:

- PSHE and relationships education;
- Computing and online safety education;
- assemblies and age-appropriate discussion;
- teaching about respectful relationships, consent, protected characteristics and inclusion;
- staff modelling respectful behaviour;
- appropriate supervision and awareness of higher-risk locations and times;
- anti-bullying and safer internet activities;
- encouraging children to be active, safe bystanders and to seek adult help;
- staff training so that all adults, including non-class-based staff, can identify and respond appropriately to bullying and safeguarding concerns.

11. Reporting concerns

Children may report concerns to any trusted adult. Parents/carers should normally raise concerns with the class teacher in the first instance, unless the matter is urgent or safeguarding-related, in which case they should contact the school office, Headteacher or safeguarding team promptly.

Staff receiving a disclosure or concern will listen carefully, remain calm, avoid promising confidentiality, take the child seriously and explain what will happen next. They will not require a child to repeatedly recount distressing events where this can be avoided.

12. Responding to an incident

When bullying is reported or suspected, staff will:

1. prioritise immediate safety and wellbeing and take any necessary protective action;

2. listen to the child who has reported or experienced the behaviour and reassure them that reporting was the right thing to do;
3. record the concern factually and notify the appropriate member of staff;
4. consider immediately whether the behaviour may constitute child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern and, if so, refer to the DSL/DDSL;
5. investigate proportionately, fairly and without predetermined assumptions, gathering relevant accounts and evidence;
6. consider the needs, age, SEND, communication profile and vulnerability of all children involved;
7. inform parents/carers where appropriate, unless doing so would place a child at increased risk or conflict with safeguarding advice;
8. agree proportionate actions, support, consequences and/or restorative work where appropriate;
9. monitor the situation and review whether the actions taken have stopped the behaviour and improved safety.

The federation will use neutral language while facts are being established, such as 'child who has experienced/reported bullying' and 'child alleged to have displayed bullying behaviour'. Once findings are established, records will clearly state the outcome.

13. Support and consequences

Responses will be proportionate to the nature, severity and persistence of the behaviour and will be consistent with the Behaviour Policy and safeguarding duties. Consequences may include restorative work where safe and appropriate, loss of privileges, increased supervision, removal from particular activities or spaces, individual behaviour support and, for serious or persistent behaviour, suspension or permanent exclusion in accordance with statutory guidance.

Support will be considered for the child who has experienced bullying, the child who has displayed harmful or bullying behaviour, and witnesses or other affected children. Harmful behaviour may indicate unmet needs or safeguarding concerns; this will be considered without minimising responsibility for the behaviour or its impact.

Possible support may include a trusted adult, check-ins, mentoring, nurture/pastoral support, targeted teaching, SEND support, safety planning, adjustments to supervision, work with parents/carers and referral to external services where appropriate.

14. Recording and information management

All confirmed or suspected bullying incidents will be recorded on MyConcern or in the class behaviour book in accordance with school recording procedures.

Records should include, as appropriate:

- a factual description of the concern or incident;
- the children involved and relevant contextual information;
- the child's voice and any reasonable adjustments used to obtain it;
- actions taken to establish immediate safety;
- decisions made and the rationale for those decisions;
- whether the DSL/DDSL was informed and any safeguarding action taken;
- communication with parents/carers and other agencies where appropriate;
- support, consequences and interventions provided;
- follow-up, monitoring and outcomes.

Records will be stored securely, accessed only by appropriate staff and retained in accordance with the school's safeguarding, data protection and records-management arrangements.

15. Roles and responsibilities

Pupils

- treat others with respect and follow school behaviour expectations;
- tell a trusted adult about bullying, harmful behaviour or concerns for another child;
- avoid participating in, encouraging, sharing or liking bullying content;
- engage with support and agreed actions.

Parents and carers

- support the federation's anti-bullying expectations and model respectful behaviour;
- raise concerns promptly and provide relevant information;
- support appropriate monitoring of children's online activity and reinforce online safety;
- work with the school on agreed support or behaviour plans;
- use the federation's Complaints Policy if concerns remain unresolved after the school's procedures have been followed.

All staff

- remain alert to signs of bullying and changes in behaviour or wellbeing;
- listen, believe and act when a child raises a concern;
- challenge discriminatory, sexualised, abusive or harmful language and behaviour;
- record incidents promptly and accurately on MyConcern or within the class behaviour book;
- refer safeguarding concerns immediately to the DSL/DDSL;
- implement agreed support, supervision and behaviour strategies;
- maintain confidentiality on a need-to-know basis.

Headteacher and DSL

- ensure this policy is implemented consistently and understood by staff;
- ensure staff receive appropriate safeguarding and anti-bullying training;
- ensure safeguarding concerns are assessed and referred appropriately;
- ensure incidents and trends are reviewed and actions evaluated;
- ensure children and staff receive appropriate support following serious incidents;
- report relevant themes and assurance information to governors while maintaining confidentiality.

Governing Body

- ensure appropriate safeguarding and anti-bullying policies and procedures are in place;
- provide appropriate challenge and oversight of implementation;
- receive anonymised information about patterns, trends and the effectiveness of preventative and responsive action;
- consider trends relating to protected characteristics, SEND, online incidents, locations/times and repeat concerns;
- ensure policy review reflects current statutory guidance.

16. Working with parents/carers

Parents/carers of children involved will normally be informed at an early and appropriate stage. Information shared will respect the privacy and safeguarding needs of other children. The school may be unable to disclose specific consequences or confidential information relating to another child.

Where ongoing support is needed, parents/carers may be involved in behaviour support, safety planning, pastoral strategies or review meetings. Where informing a parent/carer could increase risk to a child, the DSL will determine the appropriate course of action in line with safeguarding procedures.

17. Pupil voice and follow-up

Children will be supported to express their experience and views in a way that is appropriate to their age, understanding and communication needs. Younger children and children with communication needs may be supported through visuals, simple language, drawing, communication aids, trusted adults or other suitable approaches.

Follow-up will check that the behaviour has stopped, the child feels safer and agreed support is effective. Staff will remain alert to retaliation, recurrence, changes in friendship groups or movement of bullying into online spaces.

18. Monitoring, analysis and review

The Headteacher/DSL and relevant senior leaders will monitor day-to-day practice and review recorded incidents for patterns. Analysis will consider, where appropriate, repeat incidents, children or groups affected, locations, times, online platforms, protected characteristics, SEND, vulnerability and the effectiveness of interventions.

Anonymised themes and trends will be reported to governors at appropriate intervals. Where monitoring identifies a concern, the school will take action through supervision, curriculum, staff training, individual support, environmental changes or other appropriate measures.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner following significant changes to statutory guidance, legislation, local safeguarding procedures or school practice, or where monitoring indicates that amendments are required.

19. Complaints

If a parent/carer remains dissatisfied with the school's response after concerns have been raised through the appropriate school channels, they may use the school's Complaints Policy. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed through safeguarding procedures regardless of any complaint.

20. Key message for children

Tell someone. You will be listened to. We will take you seriously and act to help keep you safe.