

Sophia **HIGH SCHOOL**

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

2026 - 2027

Anti-Bullying Policy

Ownership & Consultation	
Document sponsors (role)	CEO / Director of Education/Director of EYFS
Document authors (name)	Melissa McBride David McCarthy Vanessa Temple - (From Sept 2022 Version).

Version control	
Implementation date	September 2020
Reviewed	September 2021
Reviewed and updated	September 2022
Reviewed and updated	September 2023
Reviewed and updated	August 2024
Reviewed and updated	August 2025
Reviewed and updated	August 2026
Review Date	August 2027

Anti-Bullying Policy

1 Introduction

1.1 We aim to establish a whole school positive culture in which all members of the community feel safe and confident, and treat each other with respect and courtesy, particularly with regard to individual differences. We are a global school that puts global citizenship as fundamental to our purpose, ethos and direction. To this end, bullying will be eliminated.

1.2 Our policy has been written in the context of our responsibilities under:

- The Equality Act 2010. The Act makes it unlawful in England and Wales for the responsible body of a school to discriminate against, harass or victimise a pupil, exclude them or subject them to any other detriment.

1.3 A bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern when there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. Where this is the case, staff will deal with the concern in line with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Online Safety Policy.

1.4 The support of external services may be accessed to tackle any underlying issues which have contributed to a child engaging in bullying.

2 What do we mean by bullying?

2.1 Bullying involves an imbalance of power which makes it hard for those being bullied to defend themselves. This may be seen or felt physically, online or psychologically, and includes social isolation or intimidation, as well as any threat of violence. It is defined as follows:

- Bullying may be characterised by behaviour that is intended to hurt, intimidate, undermine, humiliate or cause distress to another person and may involve a single serious incident or a pattern of behaviour.

2.2 Bullying may take various forms, and is often motivated by prejudice, including:

- Cyber: The use of electronic communications including email, mobile phones, text/multimedia messaging, photographs/video, online profiling, websites, social networks, and instant messaging; all with the intention to frighten, embarrass or harass. This can happen at any time of day with a potentially wider audience as content can be shared rapidly with others.
- Disability: because of, or focusing on, the issue of disability;
- Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures);
- Homophobic, Biphobic or Transphobic: because of, or focusing on, a person's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity.

- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence inflicted on another individual;
- Racist/Cultural/Religious: racial, cultural or religious taunts, comments or gestures;
- Sexual: sexually abusive taunts, comments or gestures; and images
- Verbal: for example, name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours.

We believe that bullying is a behaviour choice and that anyone can be encouraged to change their behaviour. It can be an individual or a group.

2.3 We respect difference and welcome diversity in our children, young people, staff and in society in general, and believe our school should be inclusive.

2.4 We believe that pupils and staff have the right to feel safe, secure and valued and that creating a safe environment and dealing with bullying is everyone's responsibility.

2.5 We support a range of positive strategies to deal with bullying and actively challenge the use of humiliation, fear, ridicule and other similar approaches in an effort to reduce bullying.

2.6 Bullying can result in long-term psychological damage and, in extreme cases, suicide. It is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example, on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation including transgender, children with SEND, disabilities and neurodiversity, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences. Any prejudice based language is unacceptable.

2.7 Bullying is not a criminal offence. However, there are criminal laws in the UK which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour. If we feel that an offence may have been committed our staff will seek assistance from the police.

2.8 Bullying which is deemed to be illegal must be reported to the police.

3 Definitions

3.1 Sophia High School recognises that bullying, harassment, victimisation, intimidation and abusive behaviour can take many forms and may occur in person or online.

3.2 For the purposes of this policy, the school will have regard to relevant legislation and Department for Education guidance, including the DfE definitions of bullying and harassment of school staff.

3.3 Bullying may be characterised by behaviour that is intended to hurt, intimidate, undermine, humiliate or cause distress to another person and may involve a single serious incident or a pattern of behaviour.

3.4 Harassment includes unwanted conduct related to a protected characteristic that has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment.

3.5 Victimisation occurs where a person is treated unfavourably because they have made, supported or participated in a complaint or report relating to discrimination, harassment, safeguarding concerns or other wrongdoing.

3.6 Intimidation includes behaviour intended to frighten, coerce, pressure or deter an individual from carrying out their duties, exercising their rights or participating in school processes.

3.7 Abusive behaviour may include verbal, written, physical, psychological, online or other conduct that causes harm, distress or fear.

3.8 These definitions should be read alongside relevant Department for Education guidance and applicable equality, safeguarding and employment legislation.

3.9 The School recognises that bullying and child-on-child abuse can occur both inside and outside school, including online, and staff should maintain the attitude that it could happen here.

4 Objectives

4.1 Our policy is implemented whenever the school is responsible for the conduct and welfare of children and young people. The Board of Directors, Leaders and all staff are responsible for its implementation.

4.2 Our objectives are to:

- Enable pupils to understand clearly what constitutes bullying and to understand that bullying, whatever its form, will not be tolerated by the school community;
- Make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted upon;
- Enable parents to feel confident that bullying incidents will be firmly dealt with by the school;
- Create a safe environment and promote an inclusive ethos in the school where pupils can discuss the cause of bullying without fear of further bullying or discrimination;
- Raise staff awareness of the presence of different types of bullying, and an awareness of groups of pupils who are bullied disproportionately;
- Establish guidelines for action where bullying is evident;
- Develop a range of effective strategies for pupils to learn about moral and social issues;
- Ensure pupils are able to explain how we expect them to behave; and
- Celebrate success as an important way of creating a positive school ethos around anti-bullying

5 Our Procedures

5.1 Effective staff training is an important aspect of our work to prevent and tackle bullying, including the different types of bullying. All staff have had relevant training and understand the importance of this policy. In particular, our Leadership team ensures that all staff understand the principles and purpose of the school's policy, the legal responsibilities, how to resolve problems and where to seek support. We use specialised skills to help our staff understand the needs of any pupils, including children with SEND, disabilities, neurodiversity and LGBTQIA+ throughout. Bullying may also be directed towards individuals because of neurodiversity, learning differences or additional learning needs, and such behaviour will not be tolerated.

5.2 We aim to ensure staff feel confident to consistently tackle all forms of bullying and that pupils are empowered to say "no" to bullying.

5.3 If a member of staff suspects that bullying is taking place online, either in lessons or outside the allocated online lesson time, or a disclosure is made to them about an incident of bullying, they should always consult a senior member of staff. Under the guidance of a senior staff member, an age appropriate investigation should take place. Separate meetings, at which all conversations should be recorded in writing, should be arranged with those involved to establish their version of events and assure them that the situation will be dealt with sensitively but firmly and fully.

5.4 Parents of both parties are always kept fully informed about how the alleged bullying is being handled.

5.5 Bullying behaviour will normally be addressed through the provision of counselling for all parties involved. A proven allegation of serious bullying will result in suspension or exclusion, with the possible involvement of the police. Following the incident, a senior staff member oversees the monitoring of the situation, liaising directly with the relevant teacher to check that further bullying is not occurring.

5.6 Parents are asked to keep the school and staff informed of any concerns, and encourage their child to report any incidents immediately to an appropriate staff member. The Leadership Team will ensure that the incident and any action taken are formally recorded in the behaviour incident log.

5.7 The school will ensure that the wishes, feelings and lived experiences of pupils involved are considered when determining appropriate support and intervention.

6 Preventative Strategies

6.1 As a successful school, we create an environment that prevents bullying from being a serious problem in the first place. Our digital learning environment has in-built safeguarding and security features such as lessons recording, chat transcripts etc which support our anti bullying procedures at the school.

6.2 We proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring in the first place. We talk with pupils through the curriculum about issues of difference and use dedicated project time and events such as special assemblies. We keep lines of communication open so pupils feel included.

6.3 We are aware that schools which excel at tackling bullying have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know this is the right way to behave. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, British values, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment. We reinforce these messages through the behaviour and attitudes of our staff, who set a good example.

We create and support a culture of kindness and acceptance through dedicated Holistic Horizons (PSHE) & Wellbeing lessons, which are structured into our curriculum to ensure that important values and behaviours, such as tolerance, acceptance of diversity, and global-mindedness are embedded into all we do and all we expect our pupils to embody.

The School recognises that online bullying can occur both during and outside of school hours and may have a significant impact on a student's wellbeing, safety and ability to engage with education.

7 Bullying and Harassment of Staff

7.1 Sophia High School is committed to maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive environment for all members of the school community. Bullying, harassment, intimidation, victimisation or abuse directed towards staff will not be tolerated.

The School recognises that bullying can affect anyone within the school community and adopts a whole-school approach to preventing and responding to inappropriate behaviour involving students, staff, parents, carers, governors, trustees, volunteers and visitors.

7.2 Types of Bullying and Harassment of Staff

Bullying and harassment of staff may occur in a variety of forms, including but not limited to:

7.3 Student to Staff

- Repeated verbal abuse, insults or derogatory comments.
- Intimidating, threatening or aggressive behaviour.
- Deliberate attempts to undermine a member of staff's authority or professional standing.
- Malicious allegations or repeated unfounded complaints.
- Targeted disruption intended to distress or humiliate a member of staff.

7.4 Parent or Carer to Staff

- Abusive, threatening or offensive communications.
- Harassment through meetings, telephone calls, emails or correspondence.
- Repeated unreasonable complaints or demands.
- Public criticism intended to intimidate, humiliate or undermine staff.
- Aggressive, intimidating or threatening behaviour on school premises or during school activities.

7.5 Staff to Staff

- Persistent unreasonable criticism or humiliation.
- Exclusion from professional activities or communications.
- Intimidation, victimisation or misuse of authority.
- Deliberate undermining of professional performance or reputation.
- Bullying behaviours carried out in person or through digital communication.

7.6 Online Abuse

Bullying and harassment may occur through digital technologies and online platforms. Examples include:

- Abusive emails, messages or online communications.
- Harassing comments on social media platforms.
- Sharing derogatory, offensive or defamatory content about staff.

- Unauthorised recording, sharing or manipulation of images, audio or video involving staff.
- Misuse of lesson recordings, screenshots or digital content.
- Creation or distribution of artificial intelligence (AI)-generated content intended to ridicule, intimidate, impersonate or harm a member of staff.
- This includes the creation, sharing or manipulation of images, audio or video using artificial intelligence, deepfakes or synthetic media where such activity causes harm, humiliation, intimidation or distress.
- Creation of fake or impersonation accounts purporting to represent a member of staff.

7.7 The School may take action in response to online conduct where it impacts the wellbeing, safety or professional reputation of staff or affects the orderly operation of the School.

7.8 Discriminatory Harassment

The School will not tolerate bullying, harassment or victimisation related to any protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010, including age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Behaviour that creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for a member of staff will be treated seriously and may result in formal action.

7.9 Reporting Concerns

Any member of the school community who experiences, witnesses or becomes aware of bullying or harassment directed towards a member of staff should report the matter as soon as possible.

Concerns may be reported to:

- A line manager;
- A member of the Senior Leadership Team;
- Human Resources;
- The Designated Safeguarding Lead where safeguarding concerns arise;
- The Headteacher, Principal or Director of Education;
- The Chair of Governors or Trustees where appropriate; or
- Through the School's Complaints, Grievance or Whistleblowing procedures, as applicable.

Where possible, evidence such as emails, messages, screenshots, recordings or witness accounts should be retained and provided to support any investigation.

7.10 Responding to Incidents

All reports of bullying or harassment of staff will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, fairly and proportionately.

Depending on the circumstances, the School may implement:

- Behavioural sanctions;
- Restrictions on communication or access to school premises;
- Formal complaints procedures;
- Staff disciplinary procedures;
- Safeguarding interventions;
- Referral to external agencies;
- Police involvement where behaviour may constitute a criminal offence.

7.11 Support for Staff

The School recognises the significant impact bullying and harassment can have on staff wellbeing, health and professional confidence.

Staff affected by bullying, harassment or abuse will be offered appropriate support, which may include:

- Access to line management support;
- Human Resources guidance;
- Occupational health or wellbeing support;
- Safeguarding support where required;
- Assistance in managing communications and interactions with those involved in the incident.

The School will take reasonable steps to protect staff from further harm and to maintain a safe and respectful working environment for all. The school will respond to reports of bullying, harassment, intimidation, victimisation and abusive behaviour in accordance with this policy, associated procedures, and relevant Department for Education guidance, including the DfE guidance and flowchart on handling incidents of bullying and harassment in schools. The flowchart should be used by leaders and designated staff to support the consistent assessment, recording, management and resolution of incidents. [DfE Guidance & Flowchart](#)

The school recognises that bullying, harassment and intimidation can have a significant impact on wellbeing. Appropriate support will be offered to affected staff and, where appropriate, individuals may be signposted to relevant internal and external support services, professional organisations or specialist advice providers.

8. Successful Intervention Strategies

8.1 We apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong. In accordance with our Behaviour and Acceptable Use Policy, we apply sanctions fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account any additional learning needs or disabilities that pupils may have and taking into account the needs of susceptible pupils.

8.2 We also consider carefully the motivating factors which may have affected the bullying behaviour and whether it indicates any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the child engaging in the bullying behaviour may need support themselves.

8.3 We involve parents to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and that they are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. We make sure that our parents feel confident that we will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way which protects the child.

8.4 We involve pupils so they understand our approach towards bullying and so they are clear in the part they have to play to prevent bullying, including when they find themselves as bystanders.

8.5 We regularly evaluate our approach and ensure that our policy and practice is up to date.

8.6 We make sure that the consequences of bullying reflect the seriousness of the incident, so that others see that bullying is unacceptable.

8.7 We teach pupils that using any prejudice-based language is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Global Citizenship and Personal Development is an essential part of our curriculum and is taught both in Early Years, PBL and discrete Holistic Horizons (PSHE) / Mindfulness and Wellbeing lessons.

8.8 We work with the wider community, such as the police and children's services and local authorities for international students, where bullying is particularly serious or persistent and where a criminal offence may have been committed.

8.9 We make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted upon.

8.10 We draw on the expertise of specialist organisations with a proven track record in dealing with bullying to ensure our practices are effective and keep children safe.

8.11 We ensure that notices on our website provide appropriate telephone numbers and email addresses for children to contact organisations such as ChildLine, Kidscape and CEOP.

8.12 We listen to our pupils' voices at all times and act accordingly. This includes a student leadership committee which was introduced during the 2021 - 2022 academic year. We conduct an annual student voice survey and enable all students to participate in our changemakers initiatives.

8.13 We aim to use restorative approaches in school which focus on reconciliation with those who have been harmed. This enables all those affected by any incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward, enabling everyone to prevent conflict and build relationships.

8.14 Supervision of Breakout Rooms and Collaborative Online Learning

Breakout rooms are an integral part of the school's delivery model, enabling paired and small-group collaborative work in line with the pedagogy of the Online Learning Policy. The school's approach to safeguarding within breakout rooms follows the principles of Keeping Children Safe in Education: supervision that is reasonable, proportionate and appropriate to the setting, rather than continuous surveillance of every pupil interaction — the same standard that applies to group work, corridors and shared spaces in a physical school.

The following controls apply whenever breakout rooms are in use:

- The class teacher retains host control of the whole session at all times, remains present in the lesson throughout, and moves between breakout rooms on an unannounced basis, as a teacher would circulate between groups in a physical classroom.
- The class teacher retains the ability to recall all students immediately to the main classroom where this is necessary for safeguarding, behaviour management or teaching purposes.
- Students always have the ability to exit the call and return to the main classroom or drop the call completely should any issue arise which makes them feel unsafe or uncomfortable and report the issue to the member of staff or trusted adult at home.

Where safeguarding, behavior or welfare concerns arise, staff may close breakout rooms immediately, return students to the main classroom and take any further action necessary in accordance with the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Policy.

Breakout groups are kept deliberately small, consistent with the school's small-group model.

- Every pupil retains an immediate exit at all times: any pupil may leave a breakout room and return to the main room, or leave the lesson entirely, at any moment. Pupils learn from home, with a parent or carer contactable as set out in the Online Learning Policy.
- All pupils are taught, and sign an age-appropriate Digital Safety Agreement committing to, the expectation that they report immediately to an adult anything that makes them uncomfortable, in a breakout room or anywhere else online. The school's behaviour and anti-bullying expectations apply in breakout rooms exactly as they do in the main classroom and in a physical school.

- Concerns raised about conduct in breakout rooms — by a pupil, parent or member of staff — are followed up promptly under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and Behaviour Policy, and grouping arrangements may be adjusted while any concern is looked into.
- Structured weekly parent contact provides a regular, reliable route through which concerns about peer interactions are surfaced and acted upon.

The school keeps its arrangements for breakout rooms and collaborative learning under continuous review as part of its safeguarding risk assessment, annual policy review cycle and in response to emerging safeguarding risks, technological developments and updates to statutory guidance.

9 Investigation and Intervention Procedures

9.1 The immediate priority is to stop the bullying, so instances will be dealt with without delay. The school takes the standpoint that most pupils involved in bullying do not intend to inflict significant harm. As a first recourse, those who bully will be counselled by their form teacher, an appeal will be made to 'better nature' and a commitment to correct the behaviour will be elicited. The bully should apologise to the victim, this may be in a Restorative Meeting.

9.2 It is important for the school to understand the motivation behind any bullying and whether it reveals any cause for concern about the safety of the perpetrator. This is because the bully may need support themselves.

9.3 In serious or persistent cases, parents should be informed and may be asked to join a virtual meeting to discuss the problem and, if necessary and appropriate, police will be consulted. All attempts will be made to help the bully or bullies change their behaviour. This may include referral to outside agencies or specialist programmes of support.

9.4 Our school uses restorative practice which includes a facilitated meeting being held to enable individuals and groups to work together to improve their mutual understanding of what has taken place and to jointly agree the best solution moving forwards. Sometimes a less formal approach is used with the same principles in place, depending on the nature of the incident.

Restorative practice provides an opportunity for everyone to reflect on how they interact with each other and consider how best to prevent harm and conflict, recognising everyone has a part to play and is responsible as such.

9.5 Incidents of bullying will be recorded by the class teachers. This will enable patterns to be identified, and keeping records of bullying incidents will also enable the school to:

- Manage individual cases effectively;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies;
- Celebrate the anti-bullying work of the school; and
- Respond effectively and swiftly to concerns from parents.

The most obvious strategy is the use of disciplinary sanctions and learning programmes to deal with those pupils who are found to be bullying. Such disciplinary measures have three main purposes, namely to:

- Impress on the perpetrator that what he/she has done is unacceptable;
- Deter him/her from repeating that behaviour; and
- Signal to other pupils that the behaviour is unacceptable and deter them from doing it.

9.6 Sanctions for bullying are intended to hold pupils who bully to account for their behaviour and to ensure that they face up to the harm that they have caused and learn from it. They also provide an opportunity for the pupil to put right the harm they have caused. Sanctions available are detailed in the school's Behaviour Policy and will be applied fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account the needs of susceptible pupils. Ultimately, bullies will not be tolerated at this school and permanent exclusion (expulsion) will be used if, at the Board level via the Director of Education discretion, it is considered appropriate and that the relevant procedures have been followed accordingly.

9.7 Searching, Screening and Confiscation guidance and the school's Digital Safety Policy to tackle cyber-bullying, including, where necessary, deletion of inappropriate images or files on cloud storage. We use this power under the specific authority of the Director of Education only and where there is good reason to do so, i.e. that it could be used to harm children, disrupt teaching or break the school rules. We do not search pupils in a blanket way.

Bullying may also include misogynistic behaviour, image-based abuse, harassment or discrimination linked to sex or gender, and behaviour influenced by harmful online content, harmful influencers or online communities that promote abusive, discriminatory or controlling attitudes.

9.8 All procedures and sanctions also apply to parents in Early Years lessons, where they are present and may interact with the children in that group. Parents who engage with others during online lessons are expected to follow the same standards of behaviour as their children and will be covered by the same sanctions if unacceptable behaviour occurs.

10 Monitoring and Evaluation

10.1 The Leadership Team is responsible for maintaining a behaviour log which includes instances of bullying. Low level behaviour concerns are also tracked by the school

10.2 The Leadership Team is responsible for the implementation of this policy and for reviewing from time to time to evaluate its implementation and impact.

10.3 The policy is updated annually with strategic review during the Summer, or as needed, as part of the Annual Cycle of Review

Related documentation
Behaviour Policy
Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Online Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
Digital Agreement
Exclusion Policy
Equality and Diversity Policy