Haverfordwest High VC School

Challenging Bullying and Harassment Policy

Responsible	Written/Revised	Approved by/date
J.Dodd	January 2026	Standards and Curriculum Committee 12/05/2026
J.Dodd	September 2026	Standards and Curriculum Committee October 2026

Haverfordwest High VC School believes that all forms of bullying are unacceptable and should not be tolerated. All members of the school community share a collective responsibility for tackling bullying should it occur and in working together to promote positive behaviour. The school acknowledges it has a legal duty to prevent and tackle all forms of bullying behaviour.

The Power of Language

Our school is aware that using terms such as 'bully' and 'victim' entrenches the notion that the powerful have power over the weak and can sometimes encourage pupils to become bullies so as not to be perceived as weak. In line with Welsh Government guidance this school will use the terms 'perpetrator' and 'target'

In setting policy objectives for this school, we will take due regard to the Equality Act 2010 general duty to:

Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited under the Act;

Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; this means removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by persons who share a relevant protected characteristics that are connected to that characteristic Take steps to meet the needs of persons who share a relevant protected characteristic that are different from the needs of persons who do not share it.

Aims of the policy: This key SAFEGUARDING policy is essential to support our whole school ethos which is to ensure that children feel safe, secure, confident and happy. It is designed to prevent bullying behaviour wherever possible, and to respond consistently, in line with agreed procedures, should it occur and to provide support to those involved as appropriate. Our children's safety, health and well-being is of paramount importance and everybody's business.

Prevention includes sending out a clear message that negative behaviour is anti-social, unacceptable and will not be tolerated here.

This school policy is based on the Welsh Government guidance '*Challenging Bullying and Harassment'* (2026) and replaces the previous guidance issued in 2019 ' *Challenging Bullying – Rights, Respect, Equality'* (2019). This is statutory guidance for local authorities and governing bodies, as well as advisory guidance for children and young people, parents and carers.

What is Bullying behaviour?

There is no legal definition of bullying in Wales or indeed in the UK. Therefore, the definition used in this guidance builds upon widely used principles established in the United Kingdom since 1993. For the purposes of this guidance, bullying is defined as:

"Behaviour by an individual or group which intentionally hurts others either physically or emotionally, which may include individual instances that are usually repeated over time.

Bullying is deliberately hurtful and designed to cause distress. It is usually repeated over a period of time and is difficult for the target being bullied to defend themselves against. It involves direct or indirect acts and usually involves repeated acts of negative behaviour or aggression. Bullying involves an imbalance and abuse of power and may have a racist or discriminatory motivation and can focus on race, culture, class, religion, learning difficulties, gender, sexuality, long term health conditions and disability. It may be based on small differences between children which are not always clear to us and may shift and develop as relationships change. Bullying behaviour may be shown by individuals or groups. It may not always be clear who is manipulating the behaviour we see. Some children can be 'provocative victims' e.g. by behaving in a tiresome way which eventually triggers a response which may then be seen to be bullying.

Bullying differs from an argument, a fight or friendship fallout in that it:

- Is deliberate or intentional
- Is generally repeated over time
- there is an imbalance or perceived imbalance of power between the child or
- young person bullying and the individual experiencing it
- bullying causes feelings of distress, fear, loneliness, humiliation and
- powerlessness

Bullying behaviour can take many forms including:

- **Physical** – kicking, tripping someone up or shoving them, injuring someone, damaging their belongings or gestures of intimidation
- **Verbal** – taunts and name-calling, insults, threats, humiliation or intimidation
- **Emotional** – behaviour intended to isolate, hurt or humiliate someone
- **Indirect** – sly or underhand actions carried out behind the target's back or rumour-spreading
- **Online** – using any form of technological means, mobile phones, social networks, gaming, chat rooms, forums or apps to bully via text, messaging, images or video
- **Relational aggression** – bullying that tries to harm the target's relationships or social status: drawing their friends away, exploiting a person's special educational needs (SEN) or long-term illness, targeting their family's social status, isolating or humiliating someone or deliberately getting someone into trouble
- **Sexual** – unwanted touching, threats, suggestions, comments and jokes or innuendo. This can also include sextortion, so called 'revenge porn' and any misuse of intimate, explicit images of the child or young person targeted When any of these incidents only involve those aged 10 to 17, situations will be considered on a case-by-case context, with some dealt with as a safeguarding and (or) criminal matter. This issue is addressed further in the Welsh Government's peer-on-peer sexual harassment action plan.
- **Prejudice-related** – bullying of a learner or a group of learners because of prejudice. This could be linked to stereotypes or presumptions about identity. Prejudice-related bullying includes the protected characteristics. Prejudice can and does also extend beyond the protected characteristics and can lead to bullying for a variety of other reasons such as social and financial status or cultural background. See the prejudice-related bullying section for more
- **Insults and banter** Children and young people will often protest that an incident was a joke or banter. If friends of equal power are in the habit of bantering with one another it is not deemed to be bullying behaviour. If one learner uses banter to humiliate or threaten another who is powerless to stop it and made fearful by the act, the border between banter and bullying behaviour is likely to be crossed.There are several distinctive elements associated with bullying behaviour. These include the following.
- **Intention to harm** Bullying behaviour is deliberate with the intention to cause harm. Children and young people who bully others often know exactly how to humiliate or hurt someone. They pick on key aspects of their appearance, personality or identity that produces the effect wanted. They seek out the area in which they have power over the individual.

Harmful outcome

Someone or a group is hurt physically or emotionally. This can include making them: feel isolated, humiliated or fearful and question their sense of self-worth.

Direct or indirect acts

Bullying behaviour can involve: direct aggression, such as hitting indirect acts such as spreading rumours, revealing private information about someone or sharing intimate or 'deep fake' images with people for whom the information or images were not intended.

These acts are a way of controlling the other learner. When incidents involve those aged 10 to 17, situations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Some will be dealt with as Safeguarding and (or) a criminal matter.

Repetition

Bullying behaviour usually involves repeated acts of negative behaviour or acts of aggression which are controlling and emotionally abusive. An isolated aggressive act, such as a fight, is not usually considered bullying behaviour. Yet any incident can be the start of a pattern of bullying behaviour which develops subsequently. That is why incident records are so valuable.

Unequal power

Bullying behaviour involves the abuse of power by one person or a group who are perceived as more powerful, often due to their age, physical strength, popularity or psychological resilience and privilege.

Possible Signs of Bullying

Those being bullied may show changes in behaviour such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness or clinging to adults. Their schoolwork may deteriorate. They may lack concentration or truant from school.

Reasons and motivations for bullying

Some behaviour, though unacceptable, is not considered bullying behaviour. It is recognised that a one-off incident can leave a learner traumatised and nervous of reprisals or future recurrence. Intervention should be immediate whether it is bullying behaviour or any other one-off negative behaviour. One-off incidents that do not form part of a repetitive pattern of bullying behaviour should be handled as inappropriate behaviour and addressed under the school's behaviour policy in a trauma-informed way.

What is not considered bullying?

Friendship fallouts

Friendship fallouts are not generally regarded as bullying behaviour. A friendship feud may however deteriorate into bullying behaviour enabled by the fact that former friends have an intimate knowledge of the fears and insecurities of one another. Children and young people who are targeted by former friends feel the betrayal deeply and are frequently isolated from their former friendship group.

Arguments or disagreements

An argument or disagreement between 2 children or young people is not generally regarded as bullying behaviour.

Fights

Fights are not regarded as bullying behaviour. They should be addressed according to the school's behaviour policy unless it is part of a pattern of behaviour that indicates intentional targeting of another individual. Physical assaults should be stopped and addressed immediately, and in some cases police involvement may be appropriate.

Hate incidents

Unless hate incidents are repeated it would not usually be regarded as bullying behaviour, but it may still be criminal behaviour. This would need to be dealt with in accordance with the school's behaviour policy and other relevant policies school would need to involve the police if it appears that a crime may have been committed.

What motivates bullying behaviour?

Children and young people who engage in bullying behaviour can have a range of motivations. They may have prejudices against certain groups in wider society. These prejudicial opinions may be informed by a wide range of factors including the following influencers: online and social media, community and (or) family values or previous personal experience. Children and young people who display bullying behaviour may be motivated by a desire for power and popularity to belong to a strong in-group with a robust sense of identity and self-esteem to avoid being bullied themselves.

Our Whole School Approach to preventing bullying includes:

Adopting preventative approaches to bullying.

Developing a positive ethos which includes knowing bullying is unacceptable.

Expecting positive behaviour which helps and supports learning and Development.

A high level of Trauma Informed (or TiS) training and approaches with the whole school community.

Promoting co-operation and expecting socially responsible behaviour.

Encouraging those bystanders who witness bullying to act positively by alerting staff and exerting collective peer pressure to deter perpetrators.

Valuing and celebrating everyone's differences, skills and talents.

Supporting the development of emotional literacy, self-esteem and resilience through assemblies, PSE, the Healthy Schools programme, skills development, teaching pupils personal coping strategies, School Council involvement, and Peer Mentoring.

Active involvement of our designated Police SCPO in the delivery of the all Wales School Liaison Core Programme.

Raise awareness about bullying behaviour by having external agencies support the school such as the Police Liaison Team (School Beat Programme); Anti- bullying week activities every November / assemblies / PSE sessions / curriculum content.

Use opportunities across the new curriculum for Wales 2022 to embed positive behaviour and respect**.** Opportunities will not be limited to the Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning Experience but extended across all curriculum areas and beyond.

Showing respect for others and challenging and educating about inappropriate language that is; racist, homophobic, sexist, religiously biased, disability driven, or would be deemed offensive or derogatory by any protected groups named in the Equality Act.

Making the information in this policy available to everyone in our school community. Train all staff including lunchtime staff and learning coaches, teaching assistants and support staff to identify bullying and follow school policy and procedures on bullying. Training needs will be reviewed annually for all members of staff.

Actively create "safe spaces" for vulnerable children and young people. Involving all members of the school community in designing /implementing the policy. Promote the importance of healthy relationships and raise the awareness of children about the issues of violence and abuse in an age appropriate and safe way by hosting sessions from Stori (previously Hafan Cymru- Spectrum Project).

All staff modelling appropriate positive behaviours by example.

Contact relevant outside agencies where appropriate.

Bystanders

Bystanders who laugh or join in the bullying behaviour are at risk of becoming bullies themselves. Our school will endeavour to ensure children and young people who are bystanders to bullying behaviour understand that they have the power to challenge the bullying behaviour, either by intervening, if they feel safe to do so or by reporting it immediately to a member of staff or trusted adult.

Encouraging Reporting of Incidents if Bullying occurs:

Pupils and parents/carers can be assured that their concerns will be responded to with sensitivity. All reports will be taken seriously and investigated.

Confidentiality for anyone who shares information will be respected.

Opportunities for children to communicate concerns include a problem boxaccess to any member of staff, representation on the School Council and buddies/mentors who will pass on concerns. If bullying occurs we will implement the following procedures, as appropriate, in line with the Welsh Government guidance series ' Challenging Bullying and Harassment'.

We will take all incidents seriously and record their occurrence on a Bullying Log. Investigate the incident / establish facts by independently talking to all involved. Use appropriate Restorative intervention techniques to manage difficulties between perpetrators & targets; encourage reconciliation where this is possible/feasible.

Where bullying behaviour has been established, implement agreed sanctions consistently and fairly as necessary to prevent further incidents. Involve parents as early as possible where appropriate.

Apply guidelines from the all Wales Police "School Beat" partnership working document to determine whether official police involvement is needed; as indicated in these guidelines, deal with incidents internally wherever possible.

Keep accurate, factual records of all reported incidents and the school's response. Always follow-up incidents after they have been dealt with and review outcomes to ensure bullying behaviour has ceased.

The school will always offer a Restorative Approach and look to repair harm. It may also, depending on the type of incident, use sanctions, these may include; Withdrawing privileges/free time. Preventing access to parts of school. Short or long term exclusion, detention or lunchtime exclusion. Involving parents when necessary. Involving appropriate outside agencies. Including details on the perpetrator's school record.

Saving evidence

Learners who are bullied should be encouraged, where possible, to keep evidence of the activity. Evidence may be threats or images sent on or offline by messaging,conversations, notes or images, damaged clothing or other belongings, online conversations or notes. Bystanders may also be able to provide witness statements or additional evidence. Dates and times when things happened should be noted. Screenshots can be saved as online evidence.

Interventions will consider the impact on individual learners and should not include removing a targeted learner from school. While this may safeguard the learner from further immediate harm, it could damage their self-esteem and emotional well-being and empower the child or young person displaying the bullying behaviour. It also sends a message that the bullying behaviour is acceptable, disrupts the child or young person's education and may make it more difficult for them to reintegrate.

If deemed appropriate, the school may provide separate on-site provision (for either learner) to provide respite for the child or young person affected by the bullying behaviour. As a school we will make every effort to ensure that a bullied learner is able to attend school and that they feel safe doing so.

Bullying Outside of School

Under section 89 of the 2006 Act headteachers can determine measures to regulate the conduct of learners when they are off-site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff. This is of particular significance to online bullying behaviour which often takes place out of school but can impact very strongly on the school life of those learners involved. School staff may request a learner reveal a message or show them other content on their phone for the purposes of establishing if bullying behaviour has occurred. Where the text or image is visible on the phone, staff can act on this. Where the school's behaviour policy expressly allows it, a member of staff may search through the phone themselves where the learner is reasonably suspected of involvement. Staff are advised never to search through a learner's phone without another appropriate staff member present. This is best done with the designated safeguarding lead or the ICT manager. They should prepare a written

note stating: the date, time, who was present, purpose of the search and any evidence why it was necessary

Section 94 of the 2006 Act also provides a defence for school staff in confiscating items, such as mobile phones, from learners if they are being used to contravene the school behaviour and (or) anti-bullying policy and are being confiscated as a disciplinary penalty.

Travel to and From School

The Statutory Travel Behaviour Code (the Travel Code) made by the Welsh Ministers under section 12 of the Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008 sets out specific requirements regarding the behavioural conduct of learners when travelling. The Travel Code requires all learners to 'never bully other learners' and 'respect others (including the bus driver)'.

It is important to bear in mind that many behaviours, which in the school context are called bullying, may be defined in law as threatening behaviour, criminal damage,theft, assault, sexual harassment, disablist, homophobic or racial harassment, hate crime. It is the right of pupils and parents to report such incidents to the Police.

How our school will know a strategy is effective

We will conduct a self-evaluation exercise seeking feedback from both staff and learners to measure the extent of bullying present and ongoing review at key times during the school year. This data may be used to evidence progress as part of self-evaluation and the school development plan.

As a school we know that if children and young people lack confidence that they will achieve a good outcome when they report what is happening to them, they tend to stay silent. The Children's Commissioner for Wales found that 'trust' was a recurring theme raised by children.

The right to complain

Having reported an issue regarding bullying behaviour to the school, if a learner or their parent does not feel that the school has taken it seriously or has not addressed their concern to a satisfactory standard, they can make a formal complaint.

Under Section 29 of the Education Act 2002, school governors are required to have and publicise a complaints procedure ensuring anyone with an interest in the school can raise a complaint, confident it will be considered properly and without delay.

Reviewing the Policy

The final details of this policy have been drawn up in consultation with pupils, parents, staff and members of the school community.

It will be discussed, reviewed and revised every three years or when new Welsh Government Guidance is released.

Reference Documents and Useful Links:

Welsh Government Guidance: Challenging bullying and Harassment

Challenging bullying and harassment [HTML] | GOV.WALES

The Equality Act 2010 http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2011/1064/contents/made

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence. Act Wales. 2015. http://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2015/3/contents

Wales Safeguarding Procedures, Safeguarding Wales

Guidance for Education Settings on Peer Sexual Abuse, Exploitation and Sexual Abuse

guidance-for-education-settings-on-peer-sexual-abuse-exploitation-and-harmful-

	Name	Signature	Date
Chair of Governors	Mrs C Williams		13/10/2026