Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Nursery and Primary School

Anti Bullying Policy

September 2026

1 Our commitment

Our Catholic ethos affirms the dignity and worth of every person. Every child has the right to feel safe, to belong and to learn. We challenge bullying, prejudice and abuse, listen to children and act promptly. No child is responsible for the bullying they experience.

Zero tolerance means that concerns are never dismissed or normalised. Responses will be fair, proportionate, educational and attentive to the safety and needs of every child. Support and disciplinary action may be provided together.

2 Legal framework and linked policies

This policy is informed by the Education Acts 1996, 2002 and 2011; Education and Inspections Act 2006; Children Acts 1989 and 2004; Equality Act 2010; Children and Families Act 2014; Human Rights Act 1998; and applicable data protection legislation. Relevant criminal legislation includes the Protection from Harassment Act 1997, Public Order Act 1986, Crime and Disorder Act 1998, Sexual Offences Act 2003, Online Safety Act 2023 and the remaining applicable provisions of the Malicious Communications Act 1988 and Communications Act 2003.

For a maintained school, section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 requires behaviour measures including preventing all forms of bullying. For an academy, the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 require an effective anti-bullying strategy. The school must confirm its status before adoption.

We have regard to Keeping children safe in education 2026 (KCSIE), Working Together to Safeguard Children, current statutory suspension and permanent exclusion guidance, the SEND Code of Practice and the EYFS statutory framework. We use DfE Preventing and tackling bullying, Behaviour in schools and Searching, screening and confiscation guidance; UKCIS Sharing nudes and semi-nudes advice updated March 2024; and the Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education guidance effective September 2026.

Read this policy with the school's Behaviour, Child Protection and Safeguarding, Online Safety, RSHE, SEND, Equality, Attendance, Data Protection, Staff Code of Conduct and Complaints policies. Safeguarding procedures take priority where harm is suspected. The headteacher and DSL will resolve inconsistencies before adoption and following later updates.

3 Understanding bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another person physically or emotionally. It commonly involves a real or perceived imbalance of power, making it difficult for the child affected to defend themselves. Power can arise through physical strength, popularity, group influence, communication differences, access to information or the ability to exclude others.

Staff will not wait for behaviour to become frequent or prolonged before acting. A single harmful incident, prejudice-related incident or allegation of abuse will be addressed under the appropriate behaviour or safeguarding procedure. A single online post may cause repeated harm when shared or repeatedly viewed. Uncertainty about intention, repetition or the bullying label must not delay protection or support.

Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional, relational or online. Examples include threats, hitting, damaging belongings, humiliating comments, spreading rumours, deliberate

exclusion, impersonation, coercion and sharing harmful content. It can involve racist, religious, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, sexist, sexual, disability-related or socioeconomic prejudice, or target appearance, family circumstances, care experience or caring responsibilities.

Ordinary disagreement or accidental harm is not automatically bullying, but still requires an appropriate response. Staff consider context, impact and power rather than dismissing a report as a friendship problem or banter.

4 Equality and accessible support

We meet our Equality Act duties, including having due regard to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations where the public sector equality duty applies. We protect children targeted because of actual or perceived characteristics or association with others.

Reporting, interviews, safety plans and consequences will be accessible. The SENCO will advise on communication aids, trusted adult support, sensory needs, processing time and reasonable adjustments for disability. We consider whether SEND contributed to behaviour and whether a proposed sanction is appropriate and lawful, while continuing to protect other children.

Staff must not assume that a child with SEND cannot report reliably, that harm is simply part of a disability, or that mental illness, experience of abuse or family circumstances mean a child is likely to bully. Concerns are assessed individually.

5 Responsibilities

The governing body or academy trust, as applicable, oversees implementation, approves the policy through its agreed delegation arrangements, checks equality and safeguarding compliance, receives anonymised trend reports and challenges whether action improves children's safety. Governors receive appropriate safeguarding training and updates.

The headteacher ensures consistent implementation, staff training, adequate resources and lawful behaviour decisions. The headteacher reviews CPOMS patterns at least termly, agrees improvement actions with the DSL and reports to governors without unnecessary personal information.

The DSL and deputies lead safeguarding decisions, coordinate referrals and risk assessments, advise staff and monitor safeguarding outcomes. The SENCO supports accessible processes and appropriate adjustments. Class teachers coordinate ordinary bullying investigations and follow-up as allocated by senior leaders.

All staff, including support, nursery, lunchtime, temporary and supply staff, act on concerns, record them and follow safeguarding procedures. Staff receive induction and appropriate updates on bullying, online harm and reporting. Children are encouraged to report concerns and support peers safely; adults retain responsibility for protection.

Parents and carers are asked to report concerns promptly, share relevant information, support agreed plans and avoid approaching other children or families to resolve allegations themselves.

6 Prevention and recognising concerns

We teach kindness, respectful relationships, boundaries, help-seeking, safe bystander action and online safety through age-appropriate lessons, assemblies and everyday practice. The

RSHE curriculum follows current statutory guidance and the school's published RSHE policy. Nursery provision uses developmentally appropriate teaching, modelling and observation.

We supervise identified risk areas, review playground and transition arrangements, provide access to a trusted adult and a supervised safe space when needed, and respond to pupil and parent feedback. Staff challenge discriminatory language and exclusion. Seating or grouping changes must support safety without stigmatising or isolating a child.

Possible signs include changes in attendance, confidence, friendships, sleep or engagement; unexplained injuries or damaged belongings; lost money; distress linked to devices; or reluctance to attend particular activities. One concerning sign may justify enquiry. These signs are not proof of bullying and should be explored sensitively.

7 Reporting and initial response

Children may tell any trusted adult, in person or through a parent or carer. Children who cannot easily explain a concern will receive communication support. Staff will take indirect disclosures, observations and reports from witnesses seriously.

Parents should contact the class teacher through the school office. They may contact the headteacher or DSL directly where a concern is urgent, serious or unresolved. The office will route reports promptly and must not require families to wait for a particular staff member. A concern about the headteacher follows the school's complaints or safeguarding allegations route, as appropriate.

The receiving adult will listen calmly, thank the child, avoid blame and promises of secrecy, establish immediate safety needs and record the child's words accurately. Any injury receives appropriate first aid or emergency treatment. Safeguarding concerns go to the DSL or deputy without delay.

Our operational target is to acknowledge a parent's report within one school day and identify a lead adult and initial safety measures promptly. The lead adult will agree an investigation timescale and update arrangements, normally within five school days. These are school service targets, not statutory deadlines; urgent protection is immediate and any delay will be explained.

8 Safeguarding and child on child abuse

Bullying may be child-on-child abuse, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, exploitation or serious physical or emotional harm. Abuse can occur at any age, online or offline, and inside or outside school. Lack of reports does not establish that abuse is absent.

Staff follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy immediately. If the DSL or deputy is unavailable, staff must not delay action: contact senior leadership and/or children's social care directly as necessary and inform the DSL as soon as practicable. Anyone can make a safeguarding referral. In immediate danger call 999. Where a child is suffering or likely to suffer harm, make an immediate referral to children's social care and, where appropriate, police in line with KCSIE and local arrangements.

Reports of sexual violence or harassment are managed under KCSIE Part Five. The DSL or deputy completes an immediate recorded risk and needs assessment for reported sexual violence, and considers one for sexual harassment case by case. Assessments address the child affected, alleged perpetrator, other children and relevant locations, and are regularly

reviewed. Police and social care advice will guide handling and prevent school enquiries compromising investigations.

Parents are normally informed, unless doing so would increase risk or conflict with safeguarding advice. No child will be pressured into mediation or reconciliation. Decisions about reporting to agencies must follow safeguarding requirements and must not depend on a preference to avoid criminalising a child.

9 Investigating and recording

The lead adult gathers accounts separately, uses open and non-leading questions, distinguishes allegation from established fact, considers witnesses and relevant records, and makes adjustments for age, communication and SEND. Staff do not conduct a criminal investigation or delay agency referrals to complete school enquiries.

Arrangements will reduce intimidation or interference between children. Children must not threaten witnesses or spread harmful accounts, but may speak to parents, trusted adults and appropriate professionals for support. Staff will not impose a blanket secrecy instruction.

All reported bullying concerns, including those not substantiated, are recorded on CPOMS promptly. Records identify dates, accounts, type of concern, prejudice factors where relevant, immediate protection, evidence considered, decisions and reasons, referrals, parent communication, support, consequences and review outcomes. Do not attach suspected illegal sexual imagery.

Records are factual, secure and shared only where necessary for a legitimate purpose. Pupil consent is not a prerequisite to necessary safeguarding information sharing. Retention and transfer follow the school's data protection and safeguarding retention arrangements. Families receive information about their own child and the response, while other children's personal information is protected.

10 Online bullying and harmful imagery

Online bullying includes harmful messages, gaming or group-chat abuse, impersonation, exclusion, threats and distribution of humiliating or manipulated content, including AI-generated material. It is addressed with the same seriousness as comparable offline harm.

Children should seek adult help, avoid retaliation and use blocking or reporting tools where safe. Ordinary non-sexual evidence may be preserved, such as dates, usernames, URLs and messages. The school will support appropriate reporting and removal of harmful material.

This evidence advice does not apply to suspected sexual imagery of children. Staff and pupils must not copy, screenshot, print, forward, download or save such images. Staff must not intentionally view them except where the DSL determines that exceptional circumstances justify viewing under current UKCIS guidance. Refer immediately to the DSL; do not ask a child to send or show the image. Record the report without reproducing the image.

The DSL follows current UKCIS and KCSIE procedures, including assessment of coercion, exploitation, adult involvement and AI-generated imagery. Decisions on agency involvement, viewing, removal or deletion are recorded. Staff must not independently delete potential evidence or ask children to delete material before the DSL has considered safeguarding and police requirements.

11 Searches and confiscation

This policy creates no general right to search a child or browse their device. Searches and confiscation must follow the law, the school's published search arrangements and current DfE guidance. Only appropriately authorised staff exercise statutory search powers, with the required grounds and safeguards, including recording and parent notification where required.

Data on a lawfully confiscated device may be examined only where the legal conditions and good-reason test are met. Any examination must be necessary and proportionate. Lack of a requirement for parental consent does not remove these conditions. Suspected child sexual imagery is handled under section 10.

Where material may be evidence of an offence, staff preserve it, seek DSL and police advice and follow requirements for handing devices to police. Deletion is not automatic and must not destroy potential criminal evidence. The reason for examination, retention, transfer or permitted deletion is documented.

12 Decisions and consequences

The headteacher or delegated lead decides the school response on the evidence available, using the balance of probabilities for behaviour decisions. Protection and support can be provided while facts remain uncertain. Children and parents receive an appropriate explanation of the outcome and next steps.

Consequences follow the Behaviour Policy and take account of seriousness, impact, repetition, age, SEND, disability adjustments and safeguarding context. They are proportionate and accompanied by work to change harmful behaviour. A restorative approach is used only where safe, appropriate and freely agreed; consent is not presumed and an apology is not a substitute for protective action.

Suspension or permanent exclusion is never automatic. Only the headteacher, or acting headteacher, takes these decisions in accordance with current statutory guidance and legal tests. No child is informally excluded, pressured to leave or sent home as an unrecorded disciplinary measure.

13 Support and continued education

For the child affected, an individual safety and support plan may identify a trusted adult, supervision, safe transitions, timetable or grouping arrangements, pastoral support and specialist referral. We ask what would help and check whether changes actually improve safety. The child is not expected to become more resilient as a condition of protection.

Children who have harmed others receive appropriate boundaries, opportunities to understand impact and assessed support. Counselling is offered only where suitable, with appropriately qualified practitioners and appropriate consent arrangements; it is not a mandatory punishment. Staff do not undertake therapy beyond their qualifications.

The school seeks to maintain the affected child's safe access to education. A move to another school is not the default solution. Any proposed transfer is individually considered, voluntary and in the child's best interests with parental involvement and required procedures. Alternative provision is considered only through the proper assessment, commissioning and safeguarding arrangements, with education duties and any EHC plan obligations maintained.

14 Review and follow up

The lead adult agrees early checks with the child and parents according to risk, normally within two school days of the initial action and again within ten school days. Continuing risk requires more frequent checks and immediate escalation. Monthly reviews may support longer-term monitoring but do not replace early checks.

Reviews consider whether harmful behaviour has stopped, the child feels safe, attendance and access to learning have recovered, and support remains appropriate. Further reports trigger renewed assessment and action. The case is not closed simply because a consequence has been issued. Review dates, the child's views, decisions and reasons are recorded.

15 Conduct outside school

Reports of bullying outside school, including online and on transport, will be investigated and acted on appropriately rather than merely logged. The school considers safeguarding, support, family contact, agency involvement and lawful proportionate consequences.

The school may regulate behaviour outside school to such an extent as is reasonable, including conduct affecting pupils' safety or orderly school life. Sanctions are imposed and implemented only on school premises or while the child is under the lawful control or charge of staff. The Behaviour Policy sets out the applicable scope.

Bullying is not itself a single criminal offence. Particular behaviour, including assault, harassment, hate-related offending, threats or unlawful communications, may constitute an offence depending on its legal elements. Racist bullying is not automatically a distinct criminal offence in every case. Staff seek police assistance where an offence may have occurred and act immediately in emergencies.

16 Concerns about the response

If a family believes the response is ineffective, they should contact the headteacher promptly; ongoing safety concerns will be acted on while any complaint is considered. The school's published Complaints Policy explains formal escalation, including the route where the headteacher is the subject of the complaint. The school office will provide an accessible copy on request.

Concerns about staff conduct or safeguarding practice follow the appropriate allegations, low-level concerns or whistleblowing procedure and must not be handled solely as pupil bullying. No child or family will be treated adversely for raising a concern in good faith.

17 Oversight and publication

The headteacher and DSL review anonymised patterns at least termly, including location, type, prejudice, repeat concerns, outcomes and the experience of vulnerable groups. Governors examine effectiveness, training and whether pupils know how to obtain help, using pupil and parent feedback alongside incident data.

This policy is published with the Behaviour Policy and explained to staff, children and families in accessible ways. The headteacher and DSL review it annually and sooner following serious incidents, changes in law or guidance, or evidence that procedures are ineffective. The planned review is September 2027.