Anti-Bullying Policy

Date Policy due to be reviewed: September 2028

Committee Responsible for Policy: Full Trust Board

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Section 1 - Policy Introduction

It is a government requirement that all schools have an anti-bullying policy. It is our school's duty to promote good behaviour.

The policy has regard to relevant legislation and governmental guidance, '*Safe to learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools' and Childnet's 'Cyberbullying: Understand, Prevent and Respond: Guidance for Schools'*. It is compliant with the Equality Act (2010), 'Promoting Positive Behaviour and Relationships' (2016), the updated DFE guidance – 'Preventing and Tackling Bullying' (July 2017), 'Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges' guidance (September 2021), and 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2026).

Definition
At Hillcrest School we define bullying as 'repeated negative behaviour that is intended to make others feel upset, uncomfortable or unsafe'. (Diana Trust) It can happen on a regular basis or over a sustained period. Bullying is when an unpleasant situation becomes out of control. Bullying can be 'direct', including physical violence, mental abuse, such as name-calling, threatening, ignoring or insulting another person's family, religion, race, sexuality, sexual identify, mental health or anything which intentionally makes a person feel unhappy or intimidated. It can also be 'indirect', for example being ignored, not spoken to or isolated from friendship groups. It is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can happen both off-line and on-line. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, it is important to note that some types of harassing or threatening behaviour/communications, could be a criminal offence.

Bullying can occur through various types of anti-social behaviour. It can take many forms:

Physical: a child can be physically punched, kicked, hit, spat at, pinched or threatened with physical violence, including the threat to harm with a weapon.
Verbal: can take the form of name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.
Emotional: excluded from discussions/activities, tormenting, humiliating.
Racial, Religious or Cultural: a student may experience prejudiced-based and discriminatory abusive taunts, comments, graffiti or gestures.
Disability or SEN: a student may experience insults, taunts or inappropriate comments about their physical and/or mental health.
Cyberbullying: this is the deliberate use of ICT, particularly mobile phones or the internet, to upset or insult someone else by aggression, intimidation, rumour spreading or the misuse of images via any electronic device, including the use of AI generated resources.
Sexual or sexist: a student may experience misogyny or misandry, harmful sexual behaviours including harassment, violence and abusive comments about their sex, body shape, appearance or preferences regarding sexual stereotyping.
Damage to property or theft: a student may have their property regularly damaged, vandalised or stole. Physical threats may be used to bully in order that the student hands over property.
Homophobic: bullying that is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender people, including non-binary, gender questioning and non-gender conformity.

In accordance with the Children Act (1989), we recognise that a bullying incident should be treated as a child protection concern when there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering or likely to suffer significant harm' as a result of being either a victim or perpetrator of bullying.

Section 2 - Entitlement
It is a basic right of all young people to receive their education free from fear, humiliation and abuse. Every person who is a part of Hillcrest School has a responsibility to take action to care for each other to create and maintain a secure and safe environment at school.

At Hillcrest School we aim to:

- Promote and protect the welfare and well-being of every student;
- Have a 'zero tolerance' approach to all forms of bullying and child-on-child abuse;
- Create a 'Telling School' environment and encourage students to report all concerns;
- Create an atmosphere in which every student has a sense of involvement and belonging;
- Create an environment in which students know they will be listened to by all members of the school community, their reported concerns will be taken seriously and they will be supported and kept safe;
- Encourage staff to build trusting relationships with students and display professional curiosity when they suspect a student may not be ready or able to disclose any form of bullying they may be experiencing;
- React to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way;
- Prevent the continuation of harmful behaviour, i.e. - physical, sexual, verbal and online, including AI-generated content;
- Safeguard any learner who has experienced any form of bullying based on their race, religion, culture, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, gender non-conformity, gender questioning, special educational need or disability or due to the family background of a child, including young carers and looked after/adopted children;
- Prevent our students from being drawn into any form of anti-social behaviour, prejudiced-based, discriminatory bullying or extremist conduct, both physically and online, as a result of pressure placed on them by other members of our community;
- Empower students to use AI-generated technology appropriately and highlight the harmful risks posed to others if used inappropriately.
- Ensure reporting systems are well promoted, easily understood and accessible for children to confidently report bullying and all forms of child-on-child abuse, particularly those with a special education or additional needs;
- Provide a variety of sources of support for learners who have experienced bullying, particularly if it has an impact on their physical and mental health;
- Apply disciplinary procedures to learners who adopt anti-social behaviour to ensure they learn from the experience;
- Offer help, support and counselling as is appropriate to bully(ies) to enable them to address their anti-social behaviour;
- Apply monitoring and follow-up procedures to ensure reported examples of bullying are not repeated in the future;
- Ensure that teaching materials, assembly themes and workshops delivered by external visitors do not give a negative view of any group because of their ethnic origin, sex, sexuality, sexual identity, gender non-conformity, disability, etc; and
- Promote the key 'British Values' of mutual tolerance and respect for people from different religious, ethnic and cultural backgrounds through our Character Education curriculum.

This policy aims to ensure a consistent school response to bullying incidents that may occur in school, online and in the wider community.

In every aspect of school life, we strive to ensure the equal representation and celebration of people across faiths, ethnicities, sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions, class backgrounds, family types, nationalities and ages. This will ensure every member of the school community is included and informed about the true diversity around them.

As a school we are alert to factors that increase vulnerability or potential vulnerability such as mental ill health, domestic abuse, children with additional needs, and children from groups at greater risk of exploitation and/or of feeling unable to report abuse (for example, LGBTQ+ children).

Section 3 - Roles and Responsibilities

The Governing Body

The Governing Body is committed to our whole school approach to safeguarding and supports the Headteacher in all attempts to eliminate bullying from our school. The Governing Body will not condone any bullying at all in our school, and any incidents of bullying that do occur will be taken very seriously and dealt with appropriately. The Governing Body monitors incidents of serious bullying that may occur and reviews the effectiveness of this policy regularly. The Governors require the Headteacher to keep accurate records of all incidents of bullying, and to report to the Governors on request about the effectiveness of school anti-bullying strategies.

A parent who is dissatisfied with the way the school has dealt with a bullying incident can ask the Chair of Governors to investigate the matter. The Governing Body will respond within ten days to any request from a parent to investigate incidents of bullying. In all cases, the Governing Body will notify the Headteacher, asks them to investigate the case and report to a representative of the Governing Body.

The role of the Headteacher

It is the responsibility of the Headteacher to implement the school anti-bullying strategy, and to ensure that all members of staff (teaching, non-teaching, contractors, volunteers, supply teachers) are aware of the school policy and know how to identify and deal with incidents of bullying. The Headteacher reports to the Governing Body about the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy on request.

The Headteacher ensures that all children know that bullying and child-on-child abuse is wrong, and that it is unacceptable behaviour in this school. The Headteacher draws the attention of children to this fact at suitable moments. For example, if an incident occurs, the Headteacher may decide to use an assembly as the forum in which to discuss with all children why this behaviour is wrong.

The Headteacher ensures all pupils are aware that they should:

- Report incidents of bullying to an adult if they are the victim
- Report incidents of bullying if they are a witness
- Treat others as they would wish to be treated
- Accept the consequences of their behaviour

The Headteacher ensures that staff receive sufficient training to be equipped to identify and deal with all incidents of bullying, with specific focus on different forms of online and AI-influenced bullying.

The Role of the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral)

The Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) will:

- Review and update the Anti-Bullying policy annually, including the views of all stakeholders
- Plan and deliver staff training on safeguarding themes linked to bullying, online and AI-influenced risks, child-on-child abuse and sexual harassment/violence.
- Maintain records of reported incidents of bullying/peer-on-peer abuse, actions taken by the school and outcomes of actions taken.
- Analyse patterns of behaviour, including the type of incident, location, time and students involved, to inform future practice and safeguards.
- Complete annual review and risk assessment of online safety provision in school.
- Implement policy and procedure to ensure Hillcrest School is a mobile phone-free environment for all students.

The Role of the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

The DSL will:

- If necessary, consult or involve other agencies, such as the police, if a criminal offence has been committed, or other local services including Early Help or Birmingham Children's Trust, if a child is felt to be at risk of significant harm.
- Refer students to relevant external agencies to access specialist support for the victim and/or perpetrator of a bullying incident, i.e. - Kooth, FTB, Young Minds, Anti-Bullying Alliance.
- Work with the IT Manager to ensure appropriate filtering and monitoring systems are in place to identify examples of inappropriate online behaviour, including the use of generative AI to facilitate bullying.
- Work with SENDCO and Safeguarding and Well-Being Coordinator to plan pastoral intervention(s) to provide appropriate support to victims and/or perpetrators of a bullying incident.

The Role of the Teacher and Support Staff

All the staff in our school take all forms of bullying seriously and seek to prevent it from taking place. All staff are aware of their responsibility to provide students with a varied range of confidential means to alert them of instances of bullying. If teachers become aware of an issue which involves bullying, they will refer it to the Head of Year and/or Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral). All bullying concerns are to be logged on CPOMS. This is regularly monitored by the Deputy Headteacher.

Teachers and support staff do all they can to support the child who is being bullied. All staff will monitor the situation and if a child continues to be bullied over a period of time, the Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) will be informed. When any bullying has taken place between members of a class, the class teacher / form tutor will deal with the issue in the first instance. The teacher may also offer counselling and support for the victim. All members of staff are offered training, which equips them to identify bullying and to follow school policy and procedures regarding behaviour management.

Teachers use a range of methods to help prevent bullying and to establish a climate of trust and respect for all. They use drama, role-play, stories etc., within the formal and Character Education curriculum, to help students understand the feelings of bullied children, and to practise the restraint required to avoid lapsing into bullying behaviour. Life Skills lessons, Religious Education, visits, assemblies and circle time all provide opportunities to praise, reward and celebrate the success of all children, and help create a positive atmosphere. Staff avoid the use of teaching materials or equipment which may give a negative view of any group based on their ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, physical ability, race, religion or culture.

Hillcrest School Staff Development

As part of our commitment to ensuring every child should be able to learn in a school environment free from bullying of any kind and in which they feel safe and supported we will ensure the following actions are taken in respect of staff development:

- This policy will be regularly reviewed and updated in light of changes in national legislation.
- We will respond to specific incidents that may occur and update our policy or guidance if necessary.
- Staff will be fully informed of any relevant changes to policy or guidance.
- Staff training is in place for all staff, including ECT's, trainee teachers and volunteers, to ensure all staff are fully informed of current practice and are equipped to always implement our policy.
- Our Deputy Headteacher (Pastoral) will attend regular training sessions with regard to Behaviour and Attendance as organised by the LA and Oaks Network.
- Staff will complete regular CPD training on a range of vulnerabilities that may lead to increased chance of bullying and child-on-child abuse, i.e. – extremist radicalisation, gang culture, child sexual exploitation, honour violence, mental health, sexual orientation, gender questioning, gender non-conformity, looked after or adopted status, special education needs and disabilities.

- Staff will complete annual CPD training on online risks and behaviours, including the potential uses of generative AI tools for anti-social and bullying purposes. Staff will also learn about the benefits and risks associated with the use of generative AI companions/chatbots to support victims of bullying.

Staff training will raise and maintain awareness of bullying issues and equip staff with ways of responding to all forms of bullying appropriately. It will outline our 'zero tolerance' approach and emphasize that even if there are no reported cases, staff must remain vigilant as it can happen in school and online, particularly in terms of child-on-child abuse.

The Role of the Parents/Carers

Parents/carers should:

- Look for unusual behaviour in your child. For example, a child may suddenly not wish to come to school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to his/her normal standard
- Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how his/her day has gone, how lunch time was spent etc. If you feel that your child may have been the victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school IMMEDIATELY. We cannot help unless we are informed. Your concern will be taken seriously, and appropriate action will follow.
- It is important to advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse.
- Tell your own child that there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is not his or her fault that he/she are being bullied.
- Ensure that your child is fully aware of the policy concerning bullying and that he/she need not be afraid to ask for help.
- Remind your child that he/she must tell an adult at school if they feel they are being bullied and that they will know what to do about it.
- Parents also have a responsibility to support the school's anti-bullying policy, actively encouraging their child to be a positive member of the school.
- Regularly monitor online behaviour to ensure their child is not being abused online or is involved in the online bullying of other children.
- Monitor the use of any online and/or generative AI chatbots if your child experiences any form of bullying as the chatbots may provide inaccurate and inappropriate advice on how to manage situations and deal with their emotions including self-harm and suicide.

Signs and Symptoms of a child experiencing bullying

A child may display signs or behaviour that might indicate that he or she is being bullied. Parents should watch out for signs that your child is being bullied or is bullying others. Parents and families are often the first to detect symptoms of bullying. Common symptoms include headaches, stomach aches, anxiety and irritability. It can be helpful to ask questions about progress and friends at school; how break times and lunchtimes are spent; and whether your child is facing problems or difficulties at school. Don't dismiss negative signs. Contact the school immediately if you are worried.

Parents/carers should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school/public bus
- begs to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- begins to truant
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away

- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- lost or destroyed clothing, books, electronics or jewellery
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has money continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- comes home very hungry (snack has been stolen)
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received
- changes to eating habits, i.e. - stops eating or binge eating

Parents/carers should also be aware of signs that might suggest a child is engaging in bullying behaviours:

- Getting involved in physical fights or verbal conflicts
- Having friends who bully others
- Becoming increasingly aggressive towards peer and/or adults
- Unexplained extra money or new belongings
- Unwillingness to accept responsibility for their actions
- Become worried about their status and reputation
- Excessive online activity, particularly the use of generative AI tools.

The Role of Students

Students have a responsibility to prevent bullying.

If you are bullied, or you see someone being bullied (including online)

- Remember that it is not your fault. Nobody deserves to be bullied.
- Try to stay in a friendly group.
- Try to be confident even if you do not feel it, but remember walking away is not cowardly.
- If you are worried you can go to the Pastoral Hub, Zone or OLC at lunchtime to be with other students.
- Keep a diary recording what happened, when, where, and with whom.
- Speak to the victim and ask them if they require any help and support
- You should not encourage the bully.

Who you should tell:

- Your Form Tutor
- Your Head of Year
- The school Safeguarding Team
- The Safeguarding and Well-Being Co-ordinator (you can refer to break and lunchtime drop-in sessions)
- Any member of staff you feel happy to talk to, or feel you can trust
- Your parent, carer or anyone at home
- Your friend, if this helps
- In an emergency tell the nearest adult.

Important!

- It does not help to keep the problem to yourself. You need support, and students who bully need help so that they can change their behaviour.
- The problems are unlikely to go away if you ignore them, and they could get worse.
- Take a friend with you if you are worried about telling someone - your friend may help you.
- Staff will listen to you in confidence as far as they can, but you must be aware that they may have to pass on certain information to get you the help you need. They will always tell you what they are going to do.
- Do not rely solely on any form of online generative AI chatbots for advice and support as they do not always give the most appropriate advice and relationships can become unhealthy.

Section 4 - Action to be taken when bullying is suspected

In addition to bullying on the school site, under the Education and Inspections Act (2006), schools have the power to intervene and discipline students for their behaviour outside the school premises. This may include behaviour on public transport, outside local shops, in the city centre and online. This also includes school supervised activities such trips, residential visits, school-based events in the community and work experience.

If an instance of bullying is identified, under any of the circumstances outlined above, the following action will be taken:

- The victim will be interviewed on their own and asked to write an account of events.
- The alleged perpetrator, together with all others who are involved, will be interviewed individually and asked to write an account of events.
- Parents of the alleged victim and perpetrator will be contacted by the Deputy Headteacher or Head of Year.
- If appropriate, parents will be invited into school to meet with the Deputy Headteacher or Head of Year.
- The incident will be recorded on CPOMS and outcomes/actions taken by either the Deputy Headteacher or Head of Year.

Help, support and counselling will be given as appropriate to both the victim/s and the perpetrator/s. We support the victim/s in the following ways:

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, or another member of staff if they choose.
- Considering their wishes and feelings when determining what action to take and services to provide.
- Providing necessary support to ensure they are able to continue to attend school (i.e. – time out card, modified timetable, change of tutor or teaching groups, safe space at break and lunchtimes, Pastoral support self-referral system and lunchtime drop-in)
- Informing the victim's parents and explaining the actions taken by the school
- Signposting the family to local and national organisations that could offer support.
- Referring the child to Birmingham Children's Trust if there is reasonable cause to suspect the child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm as a result of the bullying.

We will support the perpetrator (s) by discussing what happened to understand why they became involved. Other actions include:

- Informing the perpetrator's parents and working with them to eradicate this behaviour
- Working with the perpetrator to understand the motivations behind the behaviour and assess whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator.
- Continuing to work with the perpetrator to change prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- Signposting the family to local and national organisations that could offer support.
- Involving the Community Police Team to work with the perpetrator and their family
- Suggesting counselling accessed through the child's GP.

We will take appropriate disciplinary steps in line with the school's behaviour policy. Action must be appropriate to the age of the child but may include:

- An official warning to stop offending.
- Informing the perpetrator's parents.
- Co-ordinating a 'Restorative Justice' mediation meeting between the victim and perpetrator using the 'Girls on Board' model.
- Meeting with parents/carers to agree a Behaviour Contract.
- Formal review of Behaviour Contract over an agreed period.
- Formal internal or fixed term suspensions from school for the incident or if the bullying continues to persist (the school reserves the right to issue a permanent exclusion from school depending on the nature, frequency and/or outcomes of a serious bullying incident in school, in the community or online)
- Arranging a passport or off-site direction placement to another school.
- Informing the police of on-going bullying concerns as necessary, particularly in the community, or if the law has been broken by the behaviour of the alleged perpetrator(s)
- Referring to Early Help or Birmingham Children's Trust if the incident is dealt with as a safeguarding concern and the victim is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm. The same principle may also apply to the alleged perpetrator(s).

We will follow the 'Girls on Board' restorative justice model of intervention, where appropriate, to ensure perpetrators fully understand the impact of their behaviour on their victims and help the victim to have an insight into their own behaviour as well as that of the perpetrator. The first time a bullying incident occurs, we will endeavour to use the 'no blame approach'. This focuses on encouraging students to empathise with one another and understanding each other's feelings. As outlined above, sanctions may be applied for the initial behaviour but there is a great emphasis on trying to restore or build relationships between those involved to agree a mutual way forward in the interest of all parties.

Section 5 - Mobile Phones

Schools are legally required to be mobile phone-free environments. Please refer to 'Promoting Positive Relationships and Supporting Behaviour Regulation' policy for details on consequences issued to students if a mobile phone is seen in school by staff. The Headteacher reserves the right to confiscate and formally ban a student from bringing their mobile phone onto the school site if the device was used in a bullying incident in school or in the wider community.

Section 6 - Child-on-Child Abuse

As outlined in 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2026), child-on-child abuse is abuse by one or more students against another student. It can manifest itself in many ways and can include:

- bullying (including cyber-bullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying)
- abuse in intimate relationships between peers and threatening to and/or sharing intimate images, including deepfakes, without consent, including AI-generated content
- physical abuse (hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm)
- misogyny, misandry, sexual violence and harassment
- consensual and non-consensual sharing of nudes and semi-nude images and/or videos.
- causing someone to engage in sexual activity without consent, such as forcing someone to strip, touch themselves sexually, or to engage in sexual activity with a third party
- upskirting (which is a criminal offence), which typically involves taking a picture under a person's clothing without their permission, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress, or alarm

- initiation/hazing type violence and rituals.
- Cyberflashing (unsolicited online images intended to alarm or cause distress)
- Epilepsy trolling (flashing online images designed to trigger seizures)
- Verbal and/or online behaviour encouraging others to self-harm, even if the harm does not occur.

Hillcrest School believes that all child-on-child abuse is unacceptable and has a zero-tolerance approach. Abusive comments and interactions, including online, should never be passed off or dismissed as 'banter' or 'part of growing up'. Nor will harmful sexual behaviour be dismissed as the same or 'just having a laugh'. All reports child-on-child abuse will be treated as a safeguarding matter and in line with our Child Protection and Behaviour policies.

Section 7 - What is Cyber-bullying?
At Hillcrest School, cyberbullying will be treated as seriously as any other form of bullying and will be dealt with accordingly, in line with our Behaviour policy.

Cyber-bullying has been defined as -
"The use of technology, such as mobile phones, email, chat rooms or social media sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and Twitter, to harass, threaten, embarrass, intimidate or target another person or group of people"

- Cyber-bullying can be an extension of face-to-face bullying.
- Our concern is that cyber-bullying invades home and personal space.
- Cyber-bullying is a form of bullying and can affect learners and staff.
- Cyber-bullying is not a specific criminal offence but laws concerning harassment and threatening behaviour may be applied.

Cyber-bullying and e-crime (a form of cyber-bullying) has many forms:

- Threats
- Intimidation and blackmail
- Harassment (repeatedly sending malicious messages on-line)
- Spreading malicious and abusive rumours
- Cyberstalking or trolling (repeatedly sending unwanted texts / messages)
- Mobbing an individual (a group who target one individual)
- Manipulation
- Sexting
- Happy Slapping (video recording of anti-social behaviour)
- Outing (publication of private information/images without consent or sharing personal secrets about someone on-line)
- Setting up website pages or accounts to invite others to post derogatory comments about another student or group of students
- Vilification/defamation, including the use of generative AI to spread misinformation and disinformation
- Setting up false information or identities online
- Tricking someone into revealing information about themselves and then sharing it with others
- Identify fraud and identity theft
- Impersonating someone else when sending or posting mean or false information on-line
- Hacking into social networking sites and removing and circulating material which may be embarrassing or personal
- 'Chatting' on-line, i.e. - through Social Networks / Gaming sites
- Flaming (on-line fights usually through emails, instant messaging or chat rooms where angry and ruse comments are exchanged)
- Exclusion by intentionally leaving someone out of a group chat
- Victim of cybercrime

It is essential to understand that some incidents of cyber-bullying may be unintentional, and the consequences may also be unintentional. It is important to stress those by-standers or observers of cyber-bullying may become perpetrators by allowing these actions to take place.

Hillcrest School's response to cyber-bullying

Cyber-bullying is a form of bullying. Students at Hillcrest School will understand and discuss cyberbullying through:

- The sharing of the definition of cyber-bullying
- This discussion of cyber-bullying and its forms
- The learning of our responsibilities in the use of ICT, including generative AI, and the sanctions for its misuse
- Agreed rules will be followed when using ICT in school (see Acceptable Use policy)

We will adopt our full range of anti-bullying strategies to combat this from of bullying. Additional strategies available to us to combat this form of bullying include:

- Monitoring the use of ICT during school hours, periods of remote learning and out of school hours on school loaned devices
- Confiscating any mobile phones, and other forms of smart technology, that are used or visible in school at any time of the school day from the moment a student arrives in the morning to the moment they leave the school site at the end of the day
- Encourage the person being bullied to keep any evidence (screenshots) of the bullying activity to assist any investigation
- Work with the individuals and online service providers to prevent the incident from spreading and assist in removing offensive or upsetting material from circulation. This may include: Supporting reports to a service provider to remove content if those involved are unable to be identified or if those involved refuse to or are unable to delete content; confiscating and searching pupils' electronic devices, such as mobile phones, in accordance with the law and the search and confiscation section of the school's Behaviour Policy; requesting the deletion of locally-held content and content posted online if they contravene school behavioural policies; advising those targeted not to retaliate or reply; providing advice on blocking or removing people from contact lists; helping those involved to think carefully about what private information they may have in the public domain;
- Examining the data or files, where there is good reason to do so and without parental consent, on a mobile phone or other type of device in school;
- Restricting access to ICT provision during and out of school hours (including remote learning);
- Encouraging parents to monitor use of ICT outside of school hours;
- Providing learners with access to a range of means of reporting incidents causing concern; and
- Working closely with the Police to report concerns at the earliest opportunity.

If parents/carers are concerned, please contact the school. We would ask all parents/carers to:

- Be vigilant of how their child uses such technologies.
- Use the relevant safety 'tools' that are available to help monitor and manage the internet
- Keep any evidence of offending emails, text messages or online conversations

As outlined in the DFE 'Behaviour in Schools' guidance (February 2024), 'many online behaviour incidents amongst your people occur outside the school day and off the school premises. Parents are responsible for this behaviour'. Therefore, we encourage parents to monitor their child's online activity and behaviour to ensure they are not involved in any online activities that could lead to the bullying of others either online or in school.

In addition to incidents in school, we reserve the right to contact the police, if we feel a criminal offence has been committed (i.e. - violence or death threats, assault, cyberflashing, epilepsy trolling, threatening communication, encouragement to self-harm or racially motivated criminal offences), and/or permanently exclude or suspend a student from school for incidents of cyber-bullying or inappropriate on-line behaviour out of school. Such forms of behaviour bring the school community into disrepute. In such circumstances, we will talk the victim's parents through the range of options open to them, including referring their concerns directly to the police and setting monitoring/filtering systems on their child's devices at home.

Cyberbullying Advice for Parents

Many young people say that they would not report cyberbullying because most adults do not know that they have a cyber-life - and if they report, then the technology will be taken away from them. They are also likely to take the position that their online activities are their business. But parents have a moral, as well as a legal, responsibility to ensure that their children engage in safe and responsible behaviour - including online behaviour.

So, what can parents do?

- Get involved and be aware
- Learn everything you can about information and communication technologies, including generative AI, and how your child is using them. Talk to them about the places they go online and the activities that they are involved in.
- Encourage your child to come to you if anybody says or does something that makes them feel uncomfortable or threatened. Stay calm and keep the lines of communication and trust open.
- Take action if your child is being bullied online
- Watch out for signs that your child is being bullied online - a reluctance to use the computer or go to school may be an indication.
- If the bullying is coming from a pupil at the same school, meet with school representatives and ask for help in resolving the situation.
- Report any incident of online harassment and physical threats to your local police and your Internet Service Provider (ISP).
- If your child is bullied through a mobile phone, report the problem to your phone service provider. If it is a persistent problem, you can change the phone number.
- Encourage your child to develop their own moral code so they will choose to behave ethically with the technologies
- Talk to them about responsible use. Teach them to never post or say anything that they would not want the whole world - including you - to see or read.
- Work with them to create a contract or agreement with clear rules about ethical behaviour.

Section 8 - Homophobic, Transphobic and Biphobic Bullying

What is Homophobic bullying?

Homophobic bullying is bullying which is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary, transsexual, gender questioning or transgender people.

Homophobic bullying can be experienced by a variety of people:

- Young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary, transsexual, gender questioning, socially transitioning or transgender.
- Young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay, non-binary, bisexual, transsexual, gender questioning or transgender.
- Young people who are different in some way.
- Young people who have gay friends or family.
- Teachers who may or may not be lesbian, gay, non-binary, bisexual, transsexual or transgender.

Homophobic bullying can be carried out by a variety of people:

- People who think lesbian, gay, bisexual, non-binary, transsexual, gender questioning or transgender people should be bullied because they do something 'wrong'.
- People who may be gay themselves and feel angry about this.
- People who think gay people have fewer rights than heterosexual people.
- People who think gay parenting is wrong.

Homophobic bullying can look like other forms of bullying:

- Physical Bullying (including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault and threatening behaviour)
- Verbal Bullying (including spreading rumours about another person's sexuality or gender identity, suggesting that someone is inferior because of their sexual orientation/gender identity)
- Cyberbullying (using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. It can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging, and through the use of AI generated content)

Hillcrest School's response to Homophobic Bullying:

Keeping Children Safe in Education (September 2026) states that it is the duty of all schools to safeguarding and promote the welfare of all students. LGBTQ+ pupils are entitled to an education free from bullying, abuse and harassment.

At Hillcrest, we will ensure homophobic bullying and language is challenged and dealt with appropriately. We aim to create an environment in which LGBTQ+ staff, volunteers, parents, carers, children and young people are safe and free to be themselves and experience acceptance from the school community.

In addition to following our Anti-Bullying Procedures we will also ensure that the following guidance is followed:

- Homophobic bullying is not acceptable under any circumstance
- We will ensure that learners are aware that homophobic language will not be tolerated in school or the community
- All incidents of homophobic language will be recorded and dealt with appropriately.
- If a learner uses homophobic language, we will ensure that they are aware of the effects such language has on people.
- If a learner makes persistent remarks they will be subjected to our Behaviour Policy and our Anti-Bullying Policy. The parents of such a learner will be contacted immediately. In the event of the problem continuing, the parents will be invited into school to discuss further sanctions, and the police may be called into school to speak with the student/parents. We will also offer support to learners and parents in order for them to fully understand the consequences of such language or behaviour and will provide support if necessary.

The school endeavours to ensure that prevention is the first step in our strategy to remove homophobic bullying. The use of Life Skills lessons, assemblies, guest speakers and our support staff play a crucial role in this aspect of our strategy. As part of the wider curriculum, we teach students about LGBTQ+ rights movements and LGBTQ+ people's involvement in culture, music, science, politics and philosophy in the UK and globally. In addition, the curriculum is designed to explore healthy same sex relationships, the value of marriage and civil partnerships, challenge gender stereotypes and conformity, to ensure diverse families, sexual orientations and gender identities are represented in teaching across all subjects.

We will listen to the views of LGBTQ+ people in our school community and use this feedback to inform policy, procedure and teaching content and strategies. In addition, we will utilise local community organisations to bring new perspectives, resources and approaches into the school community.

Staff will undertake annual LGBTQ+ training to ensure they are fully equipped to identify, respond to and support victims of homophobic abuse, as well as using inclusive and appropriate terminology in lessons and the wider curriculum.

The school reserves the right to suspend a student from school for incidents of homophobic bullying. This may be either an internal or external suspension based on the nature and severity of the incident. The school may also issue a permanent exclusion from school based on the nature and severity of the incident.

Section 9 - Bullying around Race, Religion and Culture (Racist Bullying)

What is Racist Bullying?

The term refers to a range of hurtful behaviour, both physical and psychological, that makes a person feel unwelcome, marginalised, excluded, powerless or worthless because of their colour, ethnicity, culture, faith, community, national origin or national status.

Under the current political climate, we endeavour to empower our students to be resilient against the pressure being placed on young people from different forms of extremist ideologies, i.e. - English Defence League (EDL) and Islamic State (ISIS/ISIL). As a result of the increasing use of social media, young people are being drawn into joining extremist groups and undertaking actions that are designed to deliberately offend or hurt other religious and racial groups. In addition, we recognise the growing impact of right-wing extremism in the UK and seek to ensure all members of our school community are valued and respected irrespective of their nationality, ethnicity or country of birth.

Racist bullying can be experienced by a variety of people:

- Young people from all ethnic groups.
- Young people who are thought to be from a particular ethnic group.
- Young people who have different religious or cultural beliefs.
- Young people whose friends or family are from different ethnic groups.
- Young people whose friends or family hold different religious or cultural beliefs.
- Teachers who are from different ethnic groups.
- Teachers who hold, or are believed to hold, different religious or cultural beliefs.

Racist bullying can be carried out by any member of the school community.

Racist bullying can take the form of other types of bullying:

- Physical Bullying (including wearing provocative badges or insignia, refusing to co-operate in work or in play)
- Verbal Bullying (including name-calling, racist jokes and offensive mimicry)
- Cyberbullying (including inciting others to behave in a racist way and the inappropriate use of AI generated content)
- Distributing extremist literature in the community
- Racist graffiti or other written insults, even against food, music, dress or customs.

Hillcrest School's response to Racist Bullying

In addition to following our Anti-Bullying Procedures we will also ensure that the following guidance is followed:

- As outlined in our commitment to British Values, any form of racist bullying is not acceptable.
- We will ensure that learners are aware that racist bullying will not be tolerated in school
- All incidents of racist bullying will be recorded and dealt with appropriately.

- If a learner uses language that may be considered racist we will ensure that they are aware of the effects such language has on people.
- If a learner makes persistent remarks, they will be subjected to our Behaviour Policy and our Anti-Bullying Policy. The parents of such a learner will be contacted immediately.
- In the event of the problem continuing, the parents will be invited into school to discuss further sanctions.
- We will also offer support to learners and parents in order for them to fully understand the consequences of such language or behaviour and will provide support if necessary.
- The school endeavours to ensure that prevention is the first step in our strategy to remove racist bullying. The use of Life Skills lessons, Character Education curriculum, Assemblies, Guest Speakers and our Support Staff play a crucial role in this aspect of our strategy.
- The use of self-reflection is an integral part of our policy and every attempt to ensure that members of the school community who use racist language or behaviour are given the opportunity to reflect on the consequences of their actions will be used.
- All students undertake annual Life Skills sessions to focus on promoting and embedding the 'British Values' as part of the wider PREVENT and Community Cohesion agenda.

The school may deem it necessary to contact the Police or make a referral to Birmingham Children's Trust depending on the severity of the situation and level/nature of the incident.

Any form of racist behaviour towards other student(s) will result in a suspension. This may be either an internal or external suspension based on the nature and severity of the incident. The school may also issue a permanent exclusion based on the nature and severity of the incident.

Section 9 - Bullying linked mental health issues

Research suggests that a young person's mental health (actual and perceived), learning difficulties, disability or long-term health conditions may put them a risk of being bullied. Young people experiencing difficulties around mental health can be particularly at risk because of the stigma associated with having a mental health problem, specifically young people who display high levels of shyness or withdrawn behaviours, tend to be anxious or fearful, are insecure or have low self-esteem. Research shows those who self-harm are more likely to be bullied.

We recognise that bullying affects young people's mental health, emotional well-being and identity. Research shows that some young people develop mental health issues because of being bullied.

Hillcrest School's response to any form of bullying linked to a mental health issue:

- The school curriculum promotes inclusivity and creates a climate of understanding and acceptance in relation to mental health issues.
- The topic of mental health is covered sensitively in Life Skills lessons and whole school assemblies to highlight the impact bullying can have on a person's emotional well-being and mental health.
- Curriculum coverage de-stigmatises mental health issues and encourages students to use appropriate and non-derogatory language about mental health and emotional well-being.
- Life Skills lessons, Character Education resources and assemblies focus on raising awareness that mental health is not restricted to older generations and shares positive examples of how young people have coped with a range of issues.
- Staff undertake training to raise awareness of the indictors of mental health issues in young people and the range of support they can provide in such cases. This allows staff to confidently challenge the language and behaviour of students when it stigmatises mental health or when verbal abuse is used against others.
- Our Safeguarding and Well-Being Co-ordinator and Pastoral Support Worker are trained to support students experiencing a wide range of mental health issues and offers regular drop-in sessions to support students.

The school reserves the right to suspend a student from school for bullying incidents linked to physical or mental health issues. This may be either an internal or external suspension based on the nature and severity of the incident. The school may also issue a permanent exclusion based on the nature and severity of the incident.

Section 10 - Sexual Bullying (including harassment, sexual violence and online abuse)

Bullying includes an imbalance of power – and some children may be more vulnerable to coercion and control – a key characteristic of sexual bullying. There are a lot of wider pressures that have influenced the increase in sexual bullying (e.g. the way sex is portrayed in films and increased access to pornography). This can influence how young people see and understand sex and make them feel pressured to act in a certain way. Misogyny, misandry and sexual bullying is on a spectrum and can progress to sexual assault. Sexual violence and harassment can be between children of any gender and/or sexual orientation and can occur through a group of children assaulting or sexually harassing a single child or group of children.

Children may be particularly susceptible to this form of bullying as often victims are uncomfortable or confused about what is happening and may feel that they are willingly involved but not understand that the behaviour is harmful. This can be exasperated for children who may find it hard to understand and communicate their feelings.

In 'Keeping Children Safe in Education' (September 2026), sexual harassment is defined as 'unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that can occur online and offline and both inside and outside of school'. This includes:

- Sexual comments, i.e. - telling sexual stories, making lewd comments, making sexual remarks about clothes and appearance, taunts, innuendoes, propositions, sexual jokes, calling someone sexualised names
- Inappropriate physical contact that makes the recipient feel uncomfortable or scared (this can include hugging and kissing, upskirting, deliberately brushing against someone, interfering with someone's clothes)
- Distributing sexual material (including pornography) and sending photos or videos of a sexual nature
- Displaying pictures, photographs or drawings of a sexual nature
- Online harassment, i.e. - the use of AI-generated content and consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and videos, sharing unwanted explicit content, coercion, threats, sexual exploitation, and grooming
- Making phone calls and sending texts or messages of a sexual nature
- 'Games' with a sexual element that may make a child or young person feel uncomfortable or scared (e.g. taking clothes off, kissing or touching games)
- Pressure to spend time alone or apart from others with another person, or people, that makes the person feel uncomfortable or scared (e.g. behind school buildings, in the toilets or changing rooms, in the field)
- Pressure to be in a relationship with another person, or to engage in a sexual act with another person - both inside and outside of school
- Misogyny, misandry and sexism in all its forms; pressure to conform to gender 'norms' (e.g. pressure on children to have multiple partners, or pressure on boys and girls to be heterosexual).

Hillcrest School's Response to Sexual Bullying:

All forms of sexual harassment, online sexual abuse and sexual violence (including sexualised language) is unacceptable. We are committed to creating an environment where sexism is not tolerated; where personal space of students and staff is respected; where sexist language and comments are challenged, and where students and staff feel empowered to say no to any unwanted behaviour directed towards them. We take a strong approach against all forms of sexism and gender inequality.

We recognise that all children need support to understand about puberty and sexual development; to recognise harmful sexual behaviour; to learn about consent, and to communicate concerns about sexual bullying.

Key principles for prevention of sexual bullying and harassment at Hillcrest School include:

- We openly talk about these issues with students and, as part of the wider curriculum, explain sexual development, and harmful sexual behaviour in an age and development appropriate way to our students.
- Our curriculum reinforces the message that 'no means no' and that regardless of their age, developmental needs, or disability, all students need to be empowered to say no to any physical touch or approach that makes them feel scared or uncomfortable. As a result, all students are supported to report concerns about harmful sexual behaviour freely.

As part of our curriculum and whole school ethos, we teach students about and model examples of respectful relationships. This includes challenging all forms of misogyny/misandry/sexism and sexual name-calling or comments, respecting personal space, loving and valuing your own body, not judging someone else for their experience or preference, and showing kindness and understanding to others who may be different to you or may have had different experiences in life. Our wider curriculum specifically addresses sexual harassment, online abuse and the use of generative AI content, sexual violence and issues of consent.

Our Safeguarding Team train all members of staff on different forms of bullying. As a result, we have a consistent approach and staff feel empowered to challenge sexual bullying in all its forms - including misogyny, misandry, sexism and sexual comments.

Any concerns about sexual bullying should be reported immediately to the safeguarding team. Once a concern is reported the DSL will follow guidance outlined in the 'Relationship and Sex Education' and 'Child Protection' policies.

The safeguarding team will consider the following questions when investigating an alleged report of sexual bullying, harassment, violence and/or online abuse before deciding on any actions that may need to be taken (i.e. - referral to the police, Early Help or Children's Social Care, or imposing any sanctions outlined in our behaviour policy):

- Is the behaviour in the context of a particular type of relationship (e.g. a 'romantic' relationship where there may be pressure to please)?
- Is there a power imbalance between those involved (e.g. age difference, physical strength and capability, emotional development)?
- Are those involved equipped to describe their wants and desires and to give consent?
- Is the behaviour age appropriate and appropriate to the level of development of the person involved – or could the person have been coerced into a type of behaviour?
- Is the behaviour potentially harmful or risky? (e.g. the distribution of sexual photos or video content).
- Is the behaviour appropriate to the school environment whether or not you consider it to be consensual?

The school reserves the right to permanently exclude or suspend a student from school for incidents of sexual bullying. This may be either an internal/external suspension or permanent exclusion based on the nature and severity of the incident. However, we are also aware that a child abusing another child may be a sign they have been bullied or abused themselves in some way and we will endeavour to offer appropriate support to ensure they do not continue with this form of behaviour.

Section 12 - Support

In all cases, alleged or proven incidents of bullying of any form, the school will endeavour to provide appropriate support to both the victim(s) and perpetrator(s). This may involve making a multi-agency 'Early Help' referral, liaising with our Community Police Officer or signposting students and their families to support agencies online or in the community, including PAUSE, NSPCC, Young Minds, Birmingham LGBTQ.

Students will be able to access support from Mrs McGettrick (Safeguarding and Well-Being Coordinator), Mrs Stansbie (SEND HLTA for SEMH) or their respective Head of Year. Students will be advised against relying solely

on the use of generative AI chatbots for support due to the inaccurate and inappropriate advice and support they may offer. This information will be shared with parents/carers.

Section 13 - Resources

Further guidance may be accessed at:

http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/pupilsupport/behaviour/bullying
http://www.cyberbullying.org/
Kidscape www.kidscape.org.uk
Bullying Online www.bullying.co.uk
Children's Legal Centre www.childrenslegalcentre.com
Bullying Helpline – 08451 205 204
Parentline Plus www.parentlineplus.org.uk

Advice can be obtained from the Child Exploitation and Online Protection Unit (CEOP)

Cyberbullying

- Childnet: www.childnet.com
- Internet Watch Foundation: www.iwf.org.uk
- Think U Know: www.thinkuknow.co.uk
- UK Safer Internet Centre: www.saferinternet.org.uk
- The UK Council for Child Internet Safety (UKCCIS): https://www.gov.uk/government/groups/uk-council-for-child-internet-safety-ukccis
- ·DfE 'Cyberbullying: advice for Headteachers and school staff': www.gov.uk/government/publications/preventing-and-tackling-bullying

SEND

- Changing Faces: www.changingfaces.org.uk
- Mencap: www.mencap.org.uk
- DfE: SEND code of practice: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/send-code-of-practice-0-to-25

Race, religion and nationality

- Anne Frank Trust: www.annefrank.org.uk
- Kick it Out: www.kickitout.org
- Report it: www.report-it.org.uk
- Stop Hate: www.stophateuk.org
- Tell Mama: www.tellmamauk.org
- Educate against Hate: www.educateagainsthate.com

LGBT Q+

- Barnardo's LGBT Hub: www.barnardos.org.uk/what_we_do/our_work/lgbtq.htm
- EACH: www.eachaction.org.uk
- Proud Trust: www.theproudtrust.org
- Schools Out: www.schools-out.org.uk
- Stonewall: www.stonewall.org.uk

Sexual harassment and sexual bullying

- Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAW) www.endviolenceagainstwomen.org.uk
- Disrespect No Body: https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/disrespect-nobody-campaign

Section 134 - Monitoring and Review

The effectiveness of this policy is monitored on a day-to-day basis by the Headteacher, who reports to Governors on request. This policy is reviewed every two years or earlier if deemed necessary.