Connected Futures Partnership

Authoring our story.

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Anti-Bullying Policy

SEPTEMBER 2026

Contribution | Challenge | Inclusivity | Aspiration

Table of Contents

1. Purpose and scope 2
2. Legal and statutory framework 2
3. Aims and principles 2
4. Definitions 3
   4.1 Bullying 3
   4.2 Conflict, unkind behaviour and one-off harm 3
   4.3 Child-on-child abuse 3
5. Vulnerability, SEND and inclusion 3
6. Preventing bullying 4
7. Reporting concerns 4
8. Responding to bullying and harmful behaviour 5
   8.1 Immediate response 5
   8.2 Safeguarding takes precedence 5
   8.3 Support for the child who has experienced harm 5
   8.4 Support and intervention for the child displaying harmful behaviour 5
9. Prejudice-related and discriminatory incidents 6
10. Online bullying 6
11. Working with parents and carers 6
12. Bullying, harassment or abuse involving adults 7
13. Recording, monitoring and governance 7
14. Anti-Bullying Week and pupil voice 7
15. Sources of support 7
16. Review statement 8

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Applies to	All CFP settings
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1. Purpose and scope

Connected Futures Partnership (CFP) is committed to providing safe, respectful and inclusive environments in which every child is valued, belongs and is able to learn. Bullying, prejudice, discrimination, harassment and intimidation are not accepted.

This policy sets out our federation-wide approach to preventing, identifying, reporting and responding to bullying involving pupils. It applies to all CFP schools and settings. Local procedures may identify named roles or operational arrangements, but the principles and expectations in this policy apply consistently across the Partnership.

The policy should be read alongside each setting's Behaviour and Communication Policy, Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Child-on-Child Abuse Policy, Online Safety Policy, Mobile Phone and Personal Devices Policy, Anti-Racism Policy, SEND Policy, PSHE/RSE Policy, Parent/Carer/Visitor Code of Conduct, Complaints Policy and Staff Code of Conduct.

2. Legal and statutory framework

This policy has regard to current legislation and national guidance, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (DfE)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DfE, 2017; publication page updated July 2026)
- Behaviour in Schools: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff
- Mobile Phones in Schools: statutory guidance (DfE, 2026)
- Searching, Screening and Confiscation: Advice for Schools
- Preventing and Tackling the Bullying and Harassment of School Staff (DfE, 2026)
- Equality Act 2010
- Education and Inspections Act 2006
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, where applicable.

Nothing in this policy replaces the school's safeguarding duties. Where behaviour may constitute abuse, exploitation, harassment, violence or another safeguarding concern, safeguarding procedures take precedence.

3. Aims and principles

Across CFP we aim to create a culture in which children feel safe to speak, adults notice concerns early, and harmful behaviour is addressed consistently. We will:

- prevent bullying through a whole-school, relational and inclusive approach;
- teach children the difference between friendship difficulties, conflict, unkind behaviour and bullying;
- act on harmful behaviour whether it is repeated or a serious one-off incident;
- respond promptly to prejudice-based, discriminatory, sexualised and online harm;
- support the child who has experienced harm and provide appropriate intervention for the child displaying harmful behaviour;
- make reasonable adjustments so that pupils with SEND and communication needs can report concerns and participate safely in any response;

- work constructively with parents and carers; and
- record, monitor and review incidents so that patterns are identified and addressed.

4. Definitions

4.1 Bullying

For the purposes of pupil anti-bullying work, bullying is generally understood as behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying often involves an imbalance of power, which may be physical, psychological, social or arise through access to technology or information.

Bullying can include:

- verbal bullying, including name-calling, threats, taunting or humiliating remarks;
- physical bullying, including hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting, taking or damaging property;
- relational or emotional bullying, including deliberate exclusion, intimidation, coercion, rumour-spreading or humiliation;
- prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying related to a protected characteristic, perceived characteristic, identity or difference;
- sexual or sexist bullying, including unwanted sexualised comments, conduct or image-sharing; and
- online or cyberbullying through messaging, social media, group chats, gaming, image or video sharing, or other digital technologies.

4.2 Conflict, unkind behaviour and one-off harm

Not every disagreement or unkind act is bullying. Children can fall out, experience conflict or behave poorly without the behaviour meeting the usual definition of bullying. However, this distinction must never be used to minimise harm.

A serious one-off incident may constitute discrimination, harassment, sexual harassment, violence, child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern. It will be acted upon even if it is not categorised as bullying. The phrase “it only happened once” is never a reason not to respond.

4.3 Child-on-child abuse

Bullying, including online, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying, can be a form of child-on-child abuse. Staff must remain professionally curious and must not dismiss harmful behaviour as banter, part of growing up, having a laugh or children being children. Where a safeguarding concern is identified, staff must report it to the DSL or deputy without delay and follow the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

5. Vulnerability, SEND and inclusion

Some pupils may be more vulnerable to bullying or may find it harder to recognise, describe or report what has happened. This can include pupils with SEND, communication differences, disabilities, social care involvement, caring responsibilities or other vulnerabilities.

CFP settings will:

- consider a child’s communication profile, developmental level and individual needs;
- make reasonable adjustments to reporting, investigation and support arrangements;

- use accessible communication approaches, visuals, trusted adults or other individualised support where appropriate;
- consider whether apparently challenging behaviour may communicate distress, fear or unmet need;
- avoid assumptions that a pupil's SEND or communication differences make their account less reliable; and
- consider additional supervision, environmental adaptations or targeted support where risk is identified.

6. Preventing bullying

Prevention is part of everyday school culture, not an annual event. Settings will use age-appropriate approaches including:

- explicit teaching through PSHE/RSE, assemblies, curriculum opportunities and class discussion;
- teaching about respectful relationships, consent, boundaries, protected characteristics, difference and belonging;
- teaching children how to distinguish bullying from conflict and how to seek help;
- pupil voice, School Council and accessible child-friendly information;
- staff modelling of respectful language and immediate challenge of discriminatory or derogatory language;
- safe and well-supervised social times, with additional support where patterns or vulnerabilities are identified;
- online safety education, including group chats, gaming, image-sharing, privacy, reporting and blocking;
- Anti-Bullying Week and other opportunities to reinforce key messages; and
- partnership with parents, carers and relevant specialist organisations.

7. Reporting concerns

Children must have more than one safe route for reporting. Depending on the setting and the child's needs, they may speak to a trusted adult, class teacher, teaching assistant, pastoral or inclusion staff, a member of SLT or the DSL. Settings may also use worry boxes, pupil check-ins or other accessible reporting systems.

Children are encouraged to report concerns they witness as well as concerns affecting them personally, including harmful behaviour that occurs outside school or online where it affects pupils' safety, wellbeing or school life.

Parents and carers should raise concerns with the class teacher in the first instance, or directly with the Head of School, DSL or another member of SLT where the concern is serious, sensitive or safeguarding-related.

Staff who receive a disclosure or concern must listen carefully, avoid promising confidentiality, reassure the child that the concern will be taken seriously, record the information accurately and take the appropriate next action.

8. Responding to bullying and harmful behaviour

8.1 Immediate response

The response will be proportionate to the nature, seriousness and context of the incident. Staff will:

- ensure immediate safety and provide appropriate reassurance;
- record the concern on the school's safeguarding/behaviour recording system in line with local procedures;
- identify and record any prejudice-related, discriminatory, sexualised or online element;
- consider whether the matter meets a safeguarding threshold and refer to the DSL/deputy without delay where required;
- gather information fairly and sensitively, taking account of age, SEND, communication and vulnerability;
- inform parents/carers as appropriate, unless doing so would create or increase a safeguarding risk;
- agree support, education, consequences and/or intervention; and
- follow up to establish whether the behaviour has stopped and whether further action is required.

8.2 Safeguarding takes precedence

Restorative approaches can be valuable, but they are not automatic. They must not be used where they could place a child at further risk, create pressure to forgive or reconcile, minimise abuse, or be inappropriate because of the nature of the incident or power imbalance. Where safeguarding is engaged, the DSL will determine the appropriate response and whether external agencies should be involved.

8.3 Support for the child who has experienced harm

- a trusted adult and regular check-ins;
- emotional, pastoral or therapeutic support where appropriate;
- reasonable adjustments or safety planning;
- support with attendance, transitions, social times or online safety where relevant;
- clear information, appropriate to the child's age and understanding, about what will happen next; and
- ongoing monitoring rather than assuming that the matter is resolved after the initial response.

8.4 Support and intervention for the child displaying harmful behaviour

The purpose of intervention is to stop the behaviour, protect others and help the child understand and change it. Responses may include:

- clear boundaries and proportionate consequences in line with the Behaviour and Communication Policy;
- structured reflection and teaching about impact, empathy, relationships and respectful behaviour;
- parent/carer involvement;
- pastoral, SEND, emotional regulation or social communication support;
- risk assessment or safety planning where required;
- restorative work only where safe, appropriate and genuinely voluntary; and
- referral to safeguarding, early help or external services where indicated.

9. Prejudice-related and discriminatory incidents

CFP will respond to discriminatory language and conduct promptly. An incident does not need to be repeated before action is taken. Concerns may relate to race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, or another aspect of identity or perceived difference.

Staff will challenge the behaviour, support the person affected, record the incident accurately, consider safeguarding and Equality Act implications, inform relevant leaders and parents/carers as appropriate, and use education and intervention to reduce the likelihood of recurrence. Patterns will be monitored at setting and federation level.

Where relevant, staff should also follow the Anti-Racism Policy, Child-on-Child Abuse Policy, PSHE/RSE Policy and safeguarding procedures.

10. Online bullying

Online bullying can occur at any time and may quickly reach a wide audience. It can include harmful messages, exclusion from group chats, impersonation, threats, sharing private information, non-consensual image sharing, manipulated or AI-generated content, or abuse through social media, gaming and other platforms.

Where online bullying affects pupils or the school community, the school may act even when the original behaviour occurred away from the school site. Responses may include preserving evidence, supporting the child affected, educating pupils about blocking/reporting and privacy, involving parents/carers, applying behaviour procedures where lawful and appropriate, and referring to the DSL, police, platform/provider or other agencies where necessary.

Any search of a pupil or device, or confiscation of an item, must be carried out in accordance with current law, DfE guidance and CFP policy. Personal mobile phones and comparable smart technology are managed in accordance with the CFP Mobile Phone and Personal Devices Policy and current statutory guidance.

11. Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers are important partners in preventing and responding to bullying. We ask families to encourage children to report concerns, reinforce respectful behaviour, support age-appropriate and safe technology use, and share relevant information with the school.

Parents/carers should not approach, question or confront another child or family about an allegation. Concerns should be raised through the school so that they can be handled safely and fairly.

The school will communicate appropriately about concerns involving a parent’s own child. Confidentiality and data-protection duties mean that the school cannot normally share detailed information about another child, including specific sanctions or personal circumstances.

If a parent/carer believes the school has not followed its procedures or responded appropriately, they may use the school’s Complaints Policy.

12. Bullying, harassment or abuse involving adults

Bullying, harassment, intimidation and abuse directed towards staff are unacceptable. Concerns involving adults will be managed through the procedure appropriate to the circumstances rather than through pupil anti-bullying procedures. This may include the Staff Code of Conduct, grievance or dignity-at-work procedures, complaints procedures, Parent/Carer/Visitor Code of Conduct, safeguarding procedures, low-level concerns/allegations procedures, whistleblowing arrangements or disciplinary processes.

Where a pupil's behaviour towards a member of staff is harmful, threatening or abusive, the school will respond through safeguarding and behaviour procedures as appropriate, while considering the pupil's age, needs and circumstances. Staff affected will be supported and risks will be assessed and managed.

13. Recording, monitoring and governance

Accurate recording enables leaders to identify patterns, vulnerable pupils, repeat behaviour, locations, times and emerging themes. Each setting will maintain appropriate records of bullying, prejudice-related incidents and associated safeguarding concerns.

Leaders will review information regularly and take action where patterns emerge. Analysis should consider, where appropriate, protected characteristics, SEND, online harm, repeat incidents and the effectiveness of interventions.

The Governing Body will receive appropriate assurance about the effectiveness of the Partnership's arrangements. Information will be anonymised and handled in accordance with data-protection requirements.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, safeguarding learning or organisational change requires it.

14. Anti-Bullying Week and pupil voice

CFP settings will participate in Anti-Bullying Week and use it as one element of a year-round approach. Pupil voice will be used to test whether children know what bullying is, understand how to report it, trust adults to respond and feel safe in school. Findings will inform improvement work.

15. Sources of support

Schools may signpost children, families and staff to appropriate sources of support, including:

- Anti-Bullying Alliance
- Childline
- NSPCC
- Kidscape
- YoungMinds
- Childnet
- UK Safer Internet Centre
- Report Harmful Content
- CEOP
- PSHE Association
- Diversity Role Models

- The Proud Trust
- Tell MAMA
- Stop Hate UK
- Show Racism the Red Card
- Mencap and other SEND-specific organisations, where appropriate.

The school will select support that is appropriate to the child, family and nature of the concern and will use current contact details from the relevant organisation's official website.

16. Review statement

Connected Futures Partnership is committed to ensuring that every pupil feels safe, valued, respected and able to belong. Preventing bullying is a shared responsibility. We will listen, act, support and learn, and we will not allow labels or definitions to become a reason for overlooking harm.