

ANTI-BULLYING & HARASSMENT POLICY

2026-2027



Serenity School

Document Status	
Author	COO
Date of Approval	01.09.2026
Date of next review	01.09.2027
Policy holder	Headteacher
Approval Body	Proprietary Board

Related policies: Safeguarding and Child Protection; Behaviour; Online Safety; Acceptable Use; Equality; Complaints; Exclusions; SEND; RSHE/PSHE; Staff Code of Conduct.

1. Purpose and commitment

Serenity School is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which every pupil is able to learn, participate and develop without fear of bullying, harassment, discrimination, sexual harassment, victimisation or abuse.

Bullying and harassment are not tolerated. All concerns will be taken seriously, responded to promptly and managed in a way that safeguards pupils, establishes the facts fairly, supports those affected and addresses the behaviour of pupils responsible for harm.

The School recognises that pupils may communicate distress, discomfort or harm in different ways. Staff must remain alert to changes in behaviour, presentation, attendance, communication and engagement, including where a pupil is non-speaking or has difficulty describing what has happened.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all pupils and to bullying or harassment that occurs:

- on the School premises;
- during lessons, breaktimes, lunchtimes and transitions;
- on school transport, educational visits, work experience, college placements and off-site activities;
- online, including through social media, messaging, gaming or other digital platforms;
- outside the School where the behaviour affects a pupil's safety, wellbeing, education or the orderly running of the School.

Concerns about bullying or harassment of staff are managed through the School's HR procedures, Staff Code of Conduct, Grievance Procedure and any other relevant employment policy. Where a pupil's behaviour towards a member of staff raises a safeguarding or behaviour concern, this policy and the relevant pupil policies may also apply.

3. Legal and statutory framework

This policy is informed by the legal and statutory framework applicable to independent schools, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (KCSIE);
- the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, as amended;
- the Equality Act 2010;
- the Human Rights Act 1998;
- Working Together to Safeguard Children;
- current Department for Education guidance on preventing and tackling bullying, behaviour, online safety and safeguarding.

Where an incident may constitute abuse, sexual violence, sexual harassment, exploitation, a criminal offence or another safeguarding concern, safeguarding procedures take precedence and the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) must be informed immediately.

4. Definitions

4.1 Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group that is usually repeated over time and intentionally hurts another person physically or emotionally. It commonly involves an imbalance of power that makes it difficult for the pupil experiencing the behaviour to defend themselves or make it stop.

A serious one-off incident may not meet the usual definition of bullying but will still be dealt with under the appropriate behaviour, safeguarding, equality or disciplinary procedures.

4.2 Harassment and prejudice-related behaviour

Harassment is unwanted behaviour that violates another person's dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. Harassment may relate to a protected characteristic or another aspect of a person's identity, appearance, circumstances or perceived difference.

4.3 Sexual harassment and sexual violence

Sexual harassment is unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual violence includes rape, assault by penetration and sexual assault. Sexual harassment and sexual violence are safeguarding matters and must never be dismissed as banter, joking, part of growing up or an inevitable part of school life.

4.4 Child-on-child abuse

Child-on-child abuse can take many forms, including sexual violence and sexual harassment, abuse in intimate personal relationships, physical abuse, initiation or hazing-type violence, bullying, online abuse, upskirting and consensual or non-consensual sharing of nude or semi-nude images. The School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy must be followed whenever child-on-child abuse is suspected or reported.

4.5 Cyberbullying

Cyberbullying is bullying carried out through digital technology. It may include abusive or threatening messages, group-chat harassment, social exclusion, impersonation, fake accounts, misuse of images or videos, altered or AI-generated content, sharing private information, repeated unwanted contact or conduct through gaming, social media, messaging or other online services.

5. Forms of bullying and harassment

Bullying and harassment may include, but are not limited to:

- physical behaviour such as hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting, damaging property or taking belongings;
- verbal behaviour such as name-calling, insults, threats, taunting, mocking or offensive comments;
- emotional or social behaviour such as exclusion, humiliation, intimidation, coercion, spreading rumours or manipulating friendships;
- racist, religious, cultural or faith-related bullying;
- sexist, sexual, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic bullying or harassment;
- bullying related to disability, special educational needs, communication differences or health conditions;
- bullying related to appearance, family circumstances, care status or any other perceived difference;
- online or technology-assisted bullying and harassment.

The School will challenge prejudice-related language and behaviour whether or not the behaviour is directed at a particular individual.

6. SEND, communication and developmental needs

The School recognises that the pupils it supports may have a wide range of special educational needs, disabilities, communication profiles and developmental levels. Staff must take these factors into account when preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to bullying.

- Pupils must be given an accessible means of reporting concerns. This may include speech, AAC, symbols, visuals, signing, written communication, communication devices, trusted adults or other individualised methods.
- Behaviour may be a form of communication. A change in behaviour, regulation, attendance, engagement, sleep, eating, self-injury, avoidance or emotional presentation may indicate that a pupil is experiencing harm.
- A pupil's developmental understanding, communication profile and ability to understand intention, impact and social rules must be considered when establishing what has happened.
- SEND must never be used to excuse harmful behaviour. The response may, however, require explicit teaching, environmental adjustments, therapeutic input, communication support and individual behaviour planning alongside appropriate consequences.
- Investigations must be adapted so that pupils are not disadvantaged by communication or processing difficulties. Staff should avoid leading questions and use familiar communication approaches wherever possible.

7. Prevention

The School will take active steps to prevent bullying and harassment by:

- promoting respectful relationships, dignity, inclusion and safe behaviour throughout the curriculum and wider school life;
- teaching pupils, at an appropriate developmental level, what bullying, harassment, consent, respectful behaviour and safe online conduct look like;
- challenging discriminatory, sexualised, abusive or derogatory language and behaviour;
- using PSHE/RSHE, assemblies, tutor or class time, pupil voice and themed activities to reinforce expectations;
- providing appropriate supervision and identifying locations, times or activities where incidents are more likely to occur;
- making reporting routes visible, accessible and understood by pupils;
- training staff to recognise signs of bullying, harassment, child-on-child abuse and online harm;
- using individual risk assessments, behaviour support plans, communication profiles and reasonable adjustments where required;
- reviewing data to identify patterns, hotspots, repeat concerns and groups who may be particularly vulnerable.

8. Signs that a pupil may be experiencing bullying

No single sign proves that bullying is taking place. Staff should, however, consider bullying or harassment where a pupil:

- becomes unusually anxious, withdrawn, distressed, aggressive or dysregulated;
- avoids particular pupils, staff, rooms, activities, transport or areas of the School;
- shows a change in attendance, punctuality, participation, concentration or attainment;
- has unexplained injuries or damaged or missing possessions;
- shows changes in eating, sleep, continence, communication or self-care;
- becomes reluctant to use a device or appears distressed after receiving messages or online contact;
- communicates fear, distress or refusal through behaviour, AAC, symbols, signing or another communication method;
- reports being excluded, threatened, humiliated, touched, filmed, photographed or targeted online.

Staff must respond to the pupil's presentation and record and escalate concerns in accordance with this policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

9. Reporting concerns

Pupils may report concerns to any trusted adult. Parents and carers should report concerns to the class teacher, tutor, Head of School or another senior leader. Staff who witness, receive or suspect bullying or harassment must act and must not assume that another person will report it.

Where there is any safeguarding element, the concern must be reported to the DSL or a Deputy DSL immediately and recorded on the School's safeguarding recording system in accordance with safeguarding procedures.

Behaviour incidents must also be recorded through the School's agreed behaviour or incident-recording arrangements so that patterns can be monitored. Records must be factual, proportionate and sufficiently detailed to show what was reported, what was established, actions taken, decisions made and follow-up arrangements.

10. Responding to a report

The School will respond promptly and proportionately. The response will normally include:

1. ensuring immediate safety and wellbeing;
2. listening to the pupil and acknowledging the concern;
3. informing the DSL immediately where safeguarding concerns are present;
4. recording the concern;
5. establishing the facts fairly, speaking separately to those involved and considering available evidence;
6. taking account of SEND, communication needs, developmental level, power imbalance, context, frequency, severity and impact;
7. considering whether other pupils may have been affected;
8. informing parents/carers where appropriate, unless doing so would place a pupil at risk or conflict with safeguarding advice;
9. agreeing support, consequences and any protective measures;
10. setting a clear review point and checking that the behaviour has stopped.

Restorative approaches may be used where appropriate and safe, but a pupil who has experienced bullying or harassment will never be required to take part in restorative work or meet with another pupil against their wishes.

11. Safeguarding, sexual harassment and sexual violence

All staff must maintain an attitude that abuse can happen here. Sexual violence, sexual harassment and other forms of child-on-child abuse must be taken seriously and must never be normalised.

The DSL or Deputy DSL will lead the safeguarding response and will consider:

- the wishes and needs of the pupil who has experienced harm;
- the nature of the alleged behaviour and whether a crime may have been committed;
- the ages, developmental stages, SEND and communication needs of the pupils involved;
- any power imbalance;
- whether the incident is isolated or forms part of a pattern;
- ongoing risks to the pupil, the alleged perpetrator and other pupils;
- whether an immediate risk and needs assessment is required;
- whether early help, children's social care, police or another specialist service should be involved.

The School will not wait for the outcome of a police or children's social care investigation before taking reasonable steps to safeguard pupils. Any School action will be coordinated so that it does not prejudice a statutory investigation.

12. Staged sanction and intervention system

The School uses the following staged system for bullying behaviour. The stages provide a consistent framework, but leaders may move directly to a higher stage where the seriousness, risk, repetition or safeguarding context of an incident requires it. Any safeguarding referral or statutory action may take place at any stage.

Stage	Action	Indicative response
Stage 1	Formal warning and parent/carer notification	A formal warning is issued. Parents/carers are informed. The pupil may be placed on the School's reporting/monitoring system and an anti-bullying plan or other targeted support may be put in place.
Stage 2	Formal meeting and behaviour contract	A formal meeting is held with the Head of School or appropriate senior leader. A behaviour contract/plan is agreed, with clear expectations, support, monitoring arrangements and review points. SLT monitors implementation.
Stage 3	Formal senior review and multi-agency involvement where appropriate	A formal meeting is held with the Headteacher and relevant senior leaders. External professionals, including the police or other agencies, may be involved where thresholds are met. A formal behaviour agreement or equivalent plan may be issued and reviewed over a defined period.
Stage 4	Placement review	A formal placement review is undertaken. This may include consultation with the local authority and other relevant professionals regarding the pupil's placement and EHCP where appropriate, alongside consideration of any further action available under the School's Behaviour and Exclusions policies.

Consequences at any stage will take account of the nature, frequency, severity and impact of the behaviour, together with the pupil's SEND, disability, developmental understanding, communication needs and any relevant safeguarding factors. Appropriate behaviour will be explicitly taught, reinforced and recognised.

13. Support for pupils

13.1 Pupils who have experienced bullying or harassment

- an immediate opportunity to communicate what has happened using their preferred communication method;
- reassurance that the concern is being taken seriously;
- a named adult or other agreed source of support;
- reasonable adjustments to increase safety, participation and access to learning;
- pastoral, therapeutic or specialist support where appropriate;
- support to rebuild confidence, relationships and engagement;
- regular follow-up to check that the behaviour has stopped and that the pupil feels safe.

13.2 Pupils responsible for bullying or harmful behaviour

- a clear explanation of the behaviour that must stop and its impact;

- appropriate consequences through the staged system;
- support to understand triggers, social situations, boundaries, consent and expected behaviour;
- targeted teaching, restorative work or therapeutic support where suitable;
- changes to behaviour support, risk management or environmental arrangements where required;
- monitoring to ensure that the behaviour is not repeated.

14. Online bullying and harmful digital behaviour

Online incidents will be treated as seriously as face-to-face incidents. The School may take action where online behaviour outside school affects a pupil's safety, wellbeing, education or the School community.

- Staff must not ask pupils to forward sexual images or videos to them or download such material unnecessarily.
- Where an incident involves nude or semi-nude images, staff must follow safeguarding procedures and current guidance on sharing nudes and semi-nudes.
- Where a device may contain evidence of a criminal offence, the DSL will determine next steps and seek police advice where appropriate.
- The School will preserve relevant evidence where lawful and appropriate and will avoid actions that could compromise a police investigation.
- Filtering and monitoring information may be considered alongside other evidence in accordance with the School's Online Safety and safeguarding arrangements.

15. Parents and carers

The School will work constructively with parents and carers. Parents and carers are expected to support the School's anti-bullying expectations and to encourage pupils to report concerns promptly.

When a concern is raised, the School will provide appropriate information about the process and outcome while respecting confidentiality and the rights of other pupils. The School cannot normally share personal information, sanctions or safeguarding details relating to another child.

Parents and carers who remain dissatisfied may use the School's Complaints Policy.

16. Recording, monitoring and analysis

The Headteacher and DSL will ensure that bullying and harassment information is reviewed regularly. Termly analysis should identify, where applicable:

- repeat pupils experiencing bullying;
- repeat pupils displaying bullying behaviour;
- prejudice-related and protected-characteristic trends;
- location and time hotspots;
- online patterns;
- links with attendance, wellbeing, behaviour and engagement;
- patterns affecting particular classes, cohorts or pupil groups;
- whether agreed actions have reduced recurrence.

Analysis must lead to action. Where patterns or weaknesses are identified, leaders will agree an owner, action, timescale and review point.

17. Roles and responsibilities

17.1 Governance and leadership hierarchy

Responsibility and oversight operate through the following leadership hierarchy:

Chair of Proprietary Board	Provides governance oversight and holds the CEO to account for the effectiveness of safeguarding, behaviour and anti-bullying arrangements.
CEO	Has executive accountability for ensuring that effective systems, resources and leadership are in place across the organisation.
Executive Headteacher (EHT)	Provides strategic oversight, challenge and support to Headteachers and escalates significant concerns to the CEO.
Headteacher (HT)	Is accountable for implementation of this policy within the School, including staff practice, monitoring, parental communication and outcomes.
Head of School (HOS)	Leads day-to-day implementation, ensures incidents are addressed promptly and consistently, and escalates concerns to the Headteacher as required.

Operational escalation will normally move from Head of School to Headteacher, Executive Headteacher, CEO and, where governance oversight is required, the Chair. Safeguarding concerns must always be escalated through the safeguarding structure without delay and are not dependent on this management hierarchy.

17.2 All staff

- model respectful behaviour and challenge bullying, harassment and discriminatory language;
- remain vigilant for signs of harm, including non-verbal or behavioural indicators;
- respond immediately to reports or observations;
- record concerns accurately and promptly;
- inform the DSL where safeguarding concerns are present;
- implement agreed support, monitoring and consequences consistently;
- maintain appropriate confidentiality.

17.3 Pupils

Pupils will be supported, at an appropriate developmental level, to treat others with respect, follow School expectations, report bullying or harassment and seek help for themselves or others.

18. Complaints, confidentiality and information sharing

Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis in accordance with safeguarding, data protection and confidentiality requirements. The welfare and safety of pupils is the primary consideration.

Where parents or carers are dissatisfied with the School's response, concerns may be raised through the School's Complaints Policy. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed through safeguarding procedures regardless of any complaint.

19. Review and publication

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a significant change in legislation, statutory guidance, School practice or identified need. Pupil, parent and staff feedback may be used to inform review and improvement. The policy will be published on the School website and made available to staff and parents/carers.

Appendix A - Reporting and response pathway

Step	Required action
1. Concern identified	Pupil, parent/carer, staff member or another person reports or identifies possible bullying or harassment.
2. Make safe and listen	Address immediate safety. Listen carefully and use the pupil's preferred communication method. Do not promise absolute confidentiality.
3. Safeguarding check	If abuse, sexual harassment/violence, exploitation, significant harm or another safeguarding concern may be present, inform the DSL immediately and follow safeguarding procedures.
4. Record	Record the concern promptly on the appropriate safeguarding and/or behaviour system.
5. Establish facts	Gather proportionate evidence, speak separately to those involved, consider SEND, communication needs, developmental level, power imbalance, pattern and impact.
6. Decide action	Agree protection, support, staged sanctions/intervention and any external referral. Inform parents/carers where appropriate.
7. Review	Set a review date. Confirm that the behaviour has stopped, support is effective and no further risk is present.
8. Escalate if required	HOS -> HT -> EHT -> CEO -> Chair, according to seriousness and governance need. Safeguarding escalation follows safeguarding procedures immediately.