



Anti-Bullying & Cyber Bullying Policy

Approved by:
The Directors of Strive Alternative Provision

Signed on behalf of the Directors by:
Stacey Hickey, Head of Operations

Date Approved: October 2026
Review Date: October 2027

Policy Update Summary (2026)

- Updated in line with KCSIE 2026
- Updated in line with Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Refreshed cyberbullying and online-harm wording, including image/video manipulation and impersonation
- Strengthened child-on-child abuse, safeguarding escalation and recording expectations
- Updated roles, review dates and Strive terminology

Legal & Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE 2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2026)
- Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DfE, 2017; publication page updated 2026)
- Education Act 2002
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018
- Strive Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy, Behaviour Management Policy and Online Safety arrangements

1. Purpose

This policy ensures that Strive promotes the values of mutual respect and tolerance. We seek to establish a caring and secure setting in which all students can be themselves and feel valued and respected. Our overarching goals of this policy are to:

- Prevent bullying from reoccurring
- Ensure fast and effective resolution of bullying when it does occur.

2. Scope

All staff are responsible for reading and implementing this policy to ensure that bullying is prevented at Strive, insofar as reasonably practicable. All staff are responsible for promoting such positive staff/student relationships to ensure students feel able to disclose and discuss situations in which they have felt bullied. All staff are responsible for maintaining vigilance so that behaviours that may constitute bullying can be detected and challenged.

3. Policy statement, provision and safeguards - Objectives

- All staff; students and parents/carers should understand what bullying is
- All staff, students and parents should know what Strive's policy on bullying is and what they should do if bullying occurs
- All students should be aware of the serious consequences of bullying and know that this behaviour is not tolerated

- All students should understand how they can help to prevent bullying (including as bystanders) by reporting it to an appropriate adult
- Anyone who does bully is made fully aware that their behaviour is unacceptable. Staff seek to help them to understand how their behaviour affected another person, how they can change it and what amends need to be made
- Everyone involved, whether perpetrator, victim or bystander, maintains their right to unconditional positive regard. Definition of bullying 'Bullying is any behaviour, repeated over time, that: deliberately hurts someone, physically and/or emotionally'
- is unwanted by the recipient and unwarranted.

No list can include every action or activity that might be classed as bullying, but staff will work with students to ensure they understand the following descriptions/definitions:

- Bullying involves actions (including physical, spoken, written, drawn, gesture, specific body language, facial expression and can be actual or virtual, i.e. through personal contact or online)
- Cyberbullying
- Prejudice based and discriminatory bullying
- Physically, verbally or indirectly hurt or injure another individual
- Threaten or frighten
- Is demoralising or humiliating
- Psychologically hurt or injure.

Bullying is often motivated by prejudice against groups, e.g., on grounds of ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation or disability. It might be motivated by actual or perceived differences between young people. It often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim, whether physical, psychological, intellectual or social; this can make it difficult for those bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying may involve:

- the use of demeaning, ageist, racist, religious, cultural, sexual, sexist or homophobic names or language, or language related to special educational needs and disability
- it can be direct or indirect hurtful, upsetting or distressing comments about another individual's or group's racial, ethnic, cultural or linguistic background, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, age or gender identity
- hurtful, upsetting or distressing comments about one or more individuals with a special educational need or disability or learning difficulty picking on an individual or group

- pushing, punching, hitting, kicking or any physical violence
- teasing, mocking, taunting or making offensive comments, spreading rumors
- ostracising a student - deliberately ignoring or avoiding a fellow student and/or encouraging others to do the same
- repeatedly criticising or making personal comments to an individual or group
- threatening behaviour
- unacceptable body language
- taking or damaging property
- producing offensive graffiti
- placing a victim in a position where they cannot defend themselves
- online bullying

This list is illustrative but not exhaustive. Although bullying is not a specific criminal offence, there are laws which apply to harassment because of age, race, culture, disability, gender identity and sex, the misuse of technology, threatening behaviour and racist behaviour.

Specific Types of Bullying

Bullying related to race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, SEN

- This includes racist or faith-based bullying.
- Political and social issues can also be a factor in bullying and harassment.
- Bullying related to special educational needs and disabilities: Students with SEND can be more at risk of bullying than their peers. They may not have the social confidence and competence to protect themselves against bullying or the communication skills to report it.
- Bullying related to appearance or health conditions: Perceived physical appearance, such as size and weight, and other body image issues can be the object of bullying.
- Bullying related to status, wealth etc: Perceived extremes of affluence (poverty, richness) can lead to victimisation, especially if a student or their family is not able to afford items of clothing or other 'desirable' possessions.
- Bullying related to sexual orientation: This refers to any hostile or offensive action against those who are (or are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Homophobic bullying is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported, since disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying (for example, the student may not want to report bullying if it means 'coming out' to teachers and parents before they are ready to). This type of bullying may also affect students whose parents or other family members are (or are perceived to be) lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
- Sexist or sexual bullying: Sexist and sexual bullying affect both genders; students identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria (feeling

that they belong to another gender or do not conform with the gender role prescribed to them) can also be targeted. Sexual bullying may be characterised by name-calling, comments and overt 'looks' about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty. It may involve uninvited touching, innuendo, propositions, pornographic imagery, graffiti or sexting (sending sexually explicit images or messages, usually by mobile phone).

- Cyberbullying includes harmful or intimidating behaviour carried out through digital technology. This may include messages, posts, images, videos, group chats, gaming platforms or social media; impersonation or fake accounts; exclusion from online groups; sharing private information; and manipulated, AI-generated or altered images/video used to humiliate, threaten or target another person. Online harm can occur at any time, spread rapidly and reach a wide audience.

4. Cyber Bullying

Tackling cyberbullying

Mobile, Internet and wireless technologies have increased the pace of communication and brought benefits to users worldwide. But their popularity provides increasing opportunities for misuse through 'cyberbullying'. It's crucial that children and young people, who are particularly skilful at adapting to new technology, use their mobiles and the Internet safely and positively, and that they are aware of the consequences of misuse. Staff, parents and young people have to be constantly vigilant and work together to prevent this form of bullying and tackle it wherever it appears.

The advent of cyberbullying adds new dimensions to the problem of bullying. Unlike other forms of bullying, cyberbullying can follow children and young people into their private spaces and outside Provision hours; there is no safe haven for the person being bullied. Cyberbullies can communicate their messages to a wide audience with remarkable speed and can often remain unseen and unidentifiable.

What is cyber bullying?

Research commissioned by the Anti-Bullying Alliance from Goldsmiths College, University of London, identifies categories of cyber bullying:

1. Text message bullying involves sending unwelcome texts that are threatening or cause discomfort.
2. Picture/video-clip bullying via mobile phone cameras is used to make the person being bullied feel threatened or embarrassed, with images usually sent to other people. 'Happy slapping' involves filming and sharing physical attacks.

3. Phone call bullying via mobile phone uses silent calls or abusive messages. Sometimes the bullied person's phone is stolen and used to harass others, who then think the phone owner is responsible. As with all mobile phone bullying, the perpetrators often disguise their numbers, sometimes using someone else's phone to avoid being identified.
4. Email bullying uses email to send bullying or threatening messages, often using a pseudonym for anonymity or using someone else's name to pin the blame on them. Chat room bullying involves sending menacing or upsetting responses to children or young people when they are in a web-based chat room.
5. Bullying through instant messaging (IM) is an Internet-based form of bullying where children and young people are sent unpleasant messages as they conduct real-time conversations online.
6. Bullying via websites includes the use of defamatory blogs (web logs), personal websites and online personal polling sites. There has also been a significant increase in social networking sites for young people, which can provide new opportunities for cyber bullying.

Who is most vulnerable?

Because of the anonymity that new communications technologies offer, anyone with a mobile phone or Internet connection can be a target for cyber bullying. What's more, bullies can reach much larger numbers within a peer group than they can with conventional bullying. Vindictive comments posted on a website, for instance, can be seen by a large audience, as can video clips sent by mobile phone.

Most cyber bullying is done by students in the same class or year group. Although it leaves no visible scars, cyber bullying of all types can be extremely destructive.

What can you do about it?

While other forms of bullying remain prevalent, cyber bullying is already a significant issue for many young people. Staff, parents and young people need to work together to prevent this and to tackle it whenever it occurs.

Additional Measures Include:

Open Door policy where anyone can email a concern or report a case of bullying
A suggestion box is placed in the office space where anyone can place a written concern anonymously.

Strive will ensure that:

Online bullying is addressed within this policy and through Strive's safeguarding and curriculum arrangements. Staff will maintain sufficient knowledge of emerging online risks, teach students about safe and respectful use of technology, and respond to online incidents that affect a student's safety, wellbeing or participation at Strive, including where the behaviour occurs away from provision hours.

Make sure parents are kept informed of the Provision standards and policies so that they can be applied at home as well as at the Provision.

Preventing Bullying

Strive aims to foster a safe environment (both in-person and online), where individuality is celebrated and students can flourish without fear of harassment, irrespective of their race, religion, gender, sexual orientation and special educational needs or disabilities. Our ethos is one of mutual respect and tolerance. This is both embedded in Strive's culture (e.g., staff modelling respectful behaviour and relationships) and addressed directly (e.g. issues of difference and prejudice discussed in PSHE sessions).

Responding to Bullying

Bullying hurts and inevitably causes pain and distress. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Whilst it can take many forms, all bullying, both physical and emotional, must be viewed as very serious; it can have a significant and potentially long-lasting impact on an individual's mental health. Perpetrators of bullying behaviour need to understand and acknowledge the negative impact of their actions.

SLT will:

- ensure that all staff are aware of Strive's Anti-Bullying policies and procedures and their legal responsibilities
- ensure that students are aware of their responsibilities in preventing bullying, by reporting it to an appropriate adult
- investigate and take appropriate action on reported incidents of bullying, including cyberbullying
- ensure support is provided for both victim and perpetrator, as appropriate for their circumstances and needs
- keep records of all instances of bullying and review these records to ensure careful monitoring of behaviour, evaluate the effectiveness of Strive's approach to bullying and enable any patterns to be identified
- seek assistance from the police if he/she believes a criminal offence may have been committed.

All staff will:

- know all Strive's policies and procedures and deal with incidents in accordance with the policies
- be vigilant
- inform the Head of Provision, DSL or Director of any (suspected or known) bullying
- take action to reduce the risk of bullying at times and in places where it is most likely
- always challenge any instances of sarcasm, unpleasant behaviour or put-downs, whether in person or online, and take further action as appropriate.
- Create a culture of safeguarding in the centre where there is a child centred and coordinated approach to safeguarding.

5. Guidance for Students

If you are bullied or you see another student being bullied (including online), you must tell someone. Ignoring bullying allows it to get worse. Tell an adult that you trust and feel comfortable talking to. If you tell a member of Strive staff, he/she will:

- listen carefully
- record what has happened
- tell you that you have acted correctly in reporting the bullying
- not put you under any pressure
- not make you feel that your complaint is silly, that you have 'asked for it or that the person doing the bullying 'can't help it'
- help you to decide on actions you can take to prevent bullying
- follow up on the incident(s), maybe with other staff after consulting you
- check with you that the situation has improved and that the bullying has stopped.
- What happens to the person who has been carrying out the bullying?

Staff will ensure that the person who has carried out the bullying is made fully aware that their behaviour is unacceptable. In accordance with Strive's Behaviour Policy, staff will seek to enable the student to change their behaviour through the use of restorative justice and discussions about community needs, rights and responsibilities. Staff may involve parents where necessary. If the person does not stop the bullying behaviour, she/he may be required to leave Strive temporarily or permanently.

6. Guidance for Parents

Parents must inform staff if they suspect or know that there is a problem (in person or online) for their own child or for another child, whether as a perpetrator or victim. It is not always easy for a parent to know that their child is being bullied, but there are some indicators to look out for, such as:

- changes to the usual routine
- unwillingness to attend

- reluctance to travel on public transport
- becoming withdrawn, anxious or lacking in confidence
- becoming aggressive, disruptive and/or unreasonable
- starting to bully siblings and/or other children
- not eating
- claiming to feel ill on school mornings
- having nightmares, crying themselves to sleep, bedwetting
- personal possessions/clothes being damaged or going missing
- asking for unusual amounts of money or stealing money
- self-harming
- running away from home
- being afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- nervous when a text message is received
- unwilling to discuss behaviour.

These types of behaviours could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered and investigated. Incidents reported by parents or students are taken seriously and followed up immediately. Staff at Strive will listen sympathetically; the victim's perception of what happened will not be dismissed.

Victims will be reassured that they have acted correctly in reporting the incident, that the complaint is important and that something will be done. The person allegedly carrying out the behaviour will be spoken to, and the facts of the incident established.

Parents and students should refer to Strive's Complaints Policy if they feel that their concerns about bullying are not being addressed satisfactorily.

7. Safeguarding and Child Protection

Bullying may overlap with child-on-child abuse and other safeguarding concerns, including physical abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, harmful sexual behaviour, discriminatory abuse and online abuse. Staff must not dismiss harmful behaviour as "banter", "part of growing up" or an inevitable part of friendship groups. Where a bullying concern may also be a safeguarding concern, Strive's Safeguarding & Child Protection Policy takes precedence and the concern must be reported to the DSL promptly.

The DSL will consider the needs and safety of all children involved, record the concern appropriately and decide whether advice, early help, referral to children's social care, police involvement or another multi-agency response is required. Decisions will be child-centred, proportionate and made in line with KCSIE 2026, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 and local safeguarding procedures.

If a child is in immediate danger or at risk of significant harm, a referral to children's social care and/or the police will be made without delay. Relevant information will be shared lawfully and proportionately with agencies involved in safeguarding the child. Strive will consider appropriate support for the child who has experienced harm and for the child whose behaviour has caused harm, while ensuring that the safety and wellbeing of the wider group remain paramount.

8. Legislation and guidance that inform this document

- Preventing and Tackling Bullying – Advice for Headteachers, Staff and Governing Bodies (DfE, 2017; publication page updated 2026)
- Guidance on Prevention and Tackling of bullying (Gov.UK 2011)
- Preventing Bullying (Gov.UK 2013)
- Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty principles relevant to discriminatory bullying
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (DfE, 2026)
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (DfE, 2026)

9. Additional Sources of Guidance/Information Outside agencies that can offer support include:

Childline: 0800 1111
NSPCC: 0800 800 5000
Samaritans: 116123

END OF POLICY

MONITORING & REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, online risks, safeguarding learning or local requirements change. The Head of Operations is responsible for ensuring timely review and communicating material updates to staff.

Version Control

Version	Date	Changes Made	Approved By
2026.1	October 2026	Annual review; legislation/guidance, cyberbullying and safeguarding updates	Directors of Strive AP (via S. Hickey)