



FIRST STEPS TOGETHER
SKILLS FOR LIFE

ANTI BULLYING POLICY

Revision History			
Date	Version	Change	Author
Oct 2024	1		M Bonilla
Feb 2026	2		D Ledger
Aug 2026	3	lated for KCSIE including safeguarding escalation, child-on-child abuse, online bullying, recording, information sharing and misogyny/VAWG.	T.Ahmed

As a school we celebrate differences and support each other so that everyone can reach their full potential regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The 2010 Equality Act makes it an offence to discriminate against a person due to the 9 protected characteristic(s). At First Steps Together no form of discrimination is tolerated, and our pupils show respect for those who share the protected characteristics.

It is against the law to discriminate against someone because of:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

The 9 Protected Characteristics are actively promoted in school through:

- Our school ethos statements, SIP, and SEF
- Our school core values
- Our school behaviour policy
- Conscious role modelling by all adults in the school community
- Active engagement and communication with parents and carers
- Assemblies
- British Values themes for a day, week/term
- Discussion within curriculum subjects, taking a cross-curricular approach
- Promoting articulation by building appropriate language and a coherent vocabulary
- Personal, Social, Health and Economic education (PSHE) sessions
- RSE lessons, LGBT discussions and Protected Characteristic talk's
- Sporting, Art and Cultural Events
- Pupil Voice
- Educational visits
- Real-life learning outside the classroom
- Guest speakers
- Developing links with local, national and international communities
- Extra-curricular activities charity work and work within the local community

At First Steps Together we believe that all pupils have the right to learn and develop in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied.

Aims of the Policy

Through the operation of this policy, we aim:

- To maintain and drive a positive and supportive culture among all pupils and staff throughout the school
- To prevent bullying behaviour, detect it when it occurs, and deal with it by counselling and/or disciplinary sanctions and, if necessary, by expulsion

Scope

This policy applies to all pupils and staff at the school irrespective of their age and whether a pupil is in the care of the school when or if bullying behaviour occurs. While this policy focuses mainly on the bullying of pupils by other pupils, it is recognised that other forms of bullying may occur.

Publication

This policy is provided to all parents and pupils on our website, and a copy is available on request at the school office.

This policy can be made available in large print or another accessible format if required. This policy will also apply to bullying behaviour outside of the school of which the school becomes aware.

Anti-Bullying Policy

At First Steps Together we have developed this policy with regard to Department for Education guidance on preventing and tackling bullying and the statutory safeguarding expectations in Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026, which comes into force on 1 September 2026. The policy is read alongside the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Relational Behaviour Support Policy, Online Safety/Acceptable Use Policy, Equality and SEND arrangements, RSE/PSHE provision and Complaints Policy.

At First Steps Together we have set out to create and follow a policy which has regard to the guidance issued by the Department for Education (DfE), Preventing and tackling bullying (2017) and will be reviewed against any new government guidance issued from time to time.

A Definition of Bullying

There are several definitions of bullying. The school defines bullying as repeated or persistent behaviour, including behaviour carried out online, that is intended to hurt, humiliate, intimidate, threaten, exclude or otherwise cause harm to another person. Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional, relational, sexual or online, and may involve an imbalance of power. We recognise that behaviour can sometimes be thoughtless rather than deliberate; such behaviour is still unacceptable and will be addressed appropriately. A single serious incident may also require safeguarding or disciplinary action even where it does not meet the school's definition of bullying.

However, bullying can also arise through the deliberate neglect or disregard for another's feelings or well-being.

Types of Bullying

Bullying and related harmful behaviours can include:

- **Emotional:** being actively unfriendly, excluding, tormenting
- **Physical:** pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any violence.
- **Racist:** racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- **Sexual:** unwanted physical contact or sexually orientated comments
- **Sexual, sexist or gender-based:** unwanted sexual comments or contact, sexualised comments, sexual harassment, sexist abuse, or behaviour targeting someone because of sex or gender.
- **Verbal:** name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, insulting, threats, coercion or demanding money.
- **Online/cyber:** misuse of websites, social media, gaming platforms, messaging services, email, mobile phones, cameras, video or other technology to upset, humiliate, threaten, exclude or harm another person. This includes harmful content shared or generated using artificial intelligence.
- **Property:** damage to or hiding one another's property
- **SEND:** name-calling, innuendo, negative stereotyping or excluding from activity based on disability or learning difficulties.
- **Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic:** language or behaviour targeting actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity, including slurs, exclusion or harassment.

- **Misogyny and gender-based abuse:** behaviour that expresses hostility, contempt or prejudice towards girls or women, or that reinforces harmful gender stereotypes or violence against women and girls.
- **Child-on-child abuse:** bullying can form part of a wider pattern of child-on-child abuse, including harassment, violence, sexual harassment, harmful sexual behaviour, coercion, initiation/hazing and abuse linked to protected characteristics. Such concerns will be considered under safeguarding procedures as appropriate.

Raising Awareness-The Curriculum

Students at First Steps Together are encouraged to cooperate with each other, form positive relationships and challenge behaviour that discriminates against, humiliates, intimidates or harms others. The curriculum promotes respectful relationships, equality, diversity, digital citizenship and safe online behaviour. Teaching and pastoral work will address harmful stereotypes, misogyny, sexism, prejudice, harassment and violence, including where these may be encountered online.

Several other subjects also offer openings to examine questions of oppressive behaviour and equality. For example, through literature students may explore the emotional impact of isolation or abuse and History can enable students to understand intimidation and persecution. In educating the students at First Steps Together about bullying, emphasis is put on the fact that serious psychological damage can result from bullying and that although bullying is not a specifically criminal activity, there are criminal laws which apply to harassment and threatening behaviour.

Online safety is treated as a running and interrelated theme across the curriculum and relevant policies. Pupils are taught how to recognise, report and respond to bullying, harmful content, manipulation and other online risks, including risks associated with artificial intelligence and the creation or sharing of harmful or intimate material.

A person who makes a physical or sexual assault on another, or who steals or causes damage to the property of another, commits a criminal offence and a civil wrong known as a "tort" for which there can be legal consequences outside the school. Bullying behaviour may also be regarded as threatening behaviour or harassment which can be either a criminal offence or a civil wrong. Misuse of electronic communications could also be a criminal offence, for example it is an offence to send an electronic communication (such as a text message, email, or social media post) to another person with the intent to cause distress or anxiety.

Raising Awareness of Staff

We ensure all staff are aware of this policy and receive appropriate safeguarding training so that they can identify and respond to bullying, child-on-child abuse and other harmful behaviour. Staff must act immediately when they have a concern about a child's welfare, following the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and reporting concerns to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or deputy without delay.

Staff are expected to promote an anti-bullying culture by:

- celebrating achievement
- anticipating problems and providing support
- disciplining fairly, consistently and reasonably, considering any special educational needs or disabilities of the pupil and the needs of vulnerable pupils
- making opportunities to listen to pupils
- acting as advocates of pupils.

Staff should remain alert to changes in behaviour, attendance, presentation, relationships or online activity that may indicate bullying, abuse or other safeguarding concerns. Staff should not assume that an incident is 'just bullying' where there may be wider safeguarding implications.

Procedures to follow (in preventing and dealing with bullying incidents)

At First Steps Together we seek to prevent bullying by promoting a school ethos in which bullying and all forms of harmful behaviour are regarded as unacceptable. Children are encouraged to speak up and report concerns. Staff should take all reports seriously, listen to children, establish what has happened as far as appropriate, and avoid making assumptions about the behaviour or the children involved.

In responding to concerns over bullying, our first response will be to gather relevant information in a calm and objective manner while considering the immediate safety and welfare of all children involved. Staff must consider whether the concern may indicate child-on-child abuse, harassment or violence, a safeguarding concern, discrimination, a criminal offence or another form of harm. Where safeguarding concerns arise, the DSL or deputy must be informed without delay and the school's safeguarding procedures followed.

All incidents and concerns are recorded on the Bullying Incident Report Sheet on the MIS System (IRIS), and the information is passed immediately to the senior leadership team representative who oversees the situation. Records should be clear, factual and sufficiently detailed to show the concern raised, actions taken, decisions made, the rationale for those decisions and outcomes. Relevant safeguarding records will be maintained in accordance

with the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. Information will be shared on a need-to-know basis where this is necessary to safeguard a child.

When responding to a perpetrator of bullying or harmful behaviour, the Headteacher will refer to and follow the Relational Behaviour Support Policy and consider the individual circumstances, including age, developmental stage, SEND, vulnerability, the nature and severity of the behaviour and any safeguarding concerns. Sanctions will be proportionate and may be accompanied by education, support, restorative work and/or other interventions. Severe or persistent bullying may result in exclusion in accordance with the school's Relational Behaviour Support Policy and statutory guidance.

Where bullying has been identified and intervened against, we will continue to monitor the situation for a suitable period, including checking in with the child who has experienced harm and, where appropriate, other children or staff. Monitoring will consider recurrence, retaliation, exclusion, online continuation and any wider safeguarding risks. Patterns and repeated incidents will be reviewed by the senior leadership representative and escalated to the DSL where appropriate.

As part of an investigation into alleged incidents of bullying behaviour, the school may search belongings and confiscate items or materials in accordance with the school's Relational Behaviour Support Policy and applicable statutory guidance. Restrictions on mobile phones and other devices will be managed in accordance with the school's Online Safety/Acceptable Use arrangements.

ICT - Acceptable Use, guidance and permissions

For information about the use of technology and devices in the classroom and beyond for all users, including staff and pupils please refer to the ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

Cyber Bullying

The school aims to educate, inform and assist pupils around cyberbullying and wider online harms, including texting, email, social media, gaming and instant messaging. Cyberbullying may take place on or off the school premises and may continue outside school hours. Where the school becomes aware of online bullying or harmful online behaviour that affects a pupil's welfare, learning or safety, the school will take appropriate action under this policy and the relevant safeguarding, behaviour and online safety procedures. Where content may constitute a criminal offence or serious safeguarding risk, advice will be sought from the appropriate safeguarding partners and/or police as necessary.

The School Environment

The school's intention is to minimise areas of the site that might facilitate bullying behaviour. Open areas where there is high public visibility are an effective deterrent. All areas of the school site at First Steps Together and the location of reported incidents are checked and monitored regularly. Less visible or visited areas are covered by CCTV, mainly for the purpose of deterrence.

Investigations and Safeguarding Children and Young People

A bullying incident will be addressed as a safeguarding concern where there is reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, harm, or where the behaviour forms part of child-on-child abuse, harassment or violence or another safeguarding issue. Staff must report concerns to the DSL or deputy without delay and follow the school's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy. The school will consider the child's individual circumstances, vulnerability and any wider contextual or extra-familial risks. The school will not investigate in a way that could prejudice a safeguarding or criminal investigation and will seek advice from children's social care and/or the police where appropriate.

All children involved in a safeguarding response will be treated as children first. The school will seek to understand what has happened, what support is needed and what action will reduce the risk of further harm. The DSL will ensure that records are kept and that relevant decisions, actions, rationale and outcomes are documented.

Where a concern involves sexual harassment, sexual violence or harmful sexual behaviour between children, the school will follow the safeguarding procedures and the requirements set out in KCSIE Part Five, including appropriate risk assessment, support for affected children, consideration of the alleged perpetrator's needs and proportionate information sharing.

Bullying Beyond the School

Bullying can occur outside the school premises, online or beyond school hours. Where the school becomes aware of bullying or harmful behaviour outside school that affects a pupil's welfare, safety, behaviour or education, the school will consider what action is reasonably required. Where the bullying is by pupils at the school, this policy and the relevant safeguarding and behaviour procedures will apply. The school may liaise with parents/carers, other schools, transport providers, the police, children's social care or other agencies as appropriate.

- Contact with the local police
- Contact the relevant transport provider about bullying on buses, trains.

- Contact with Heads of other schools
- Map safe routes to School and tell students about them.
- Talk to students about how to avoid or handle bullying outside the school premises.
- If the bullying is by pupils at the school, this policy will be applied alongside the school's Relational Behaviour Support and Child Protection and Safeguarding Policies.

The Role of Parents: It is clearly helpful where parents are able to support the values and measures represented within this policy and to discuss relationships, incidents and concerns in the same light. Parents who are concerned that their child may be being bullied, may be experiencing harmful behaviour, or may be involved in bullying should contact the Headteacher or a member of the safeguarding team immediately.

A parent who is dissatisfied with the way the school has dealt with a bullying incident can follow the Concerns and Complaints policy.

The Role of Staff

This policy focuses mainly on the bullying of pupils by pupils, although it is recognised that a staff member could be a victim and on occasion may be perceived to be guilty of bullying. Concerns about staff conduct that may amount to a safeguarding concern or allegation of harm must be reported and managed in accordance with the school's safeguarding procedures, including the appropriate procedure for allegations against staff.

Staff members who are concerned about being bullied or harassed should refer to their line manager immediately.

Pupils and parents who feel that a member of staff is bullying should report this in accordance with the procedures set out above. Where the concern may involve a safeguarding allegation against a staff member, it must be reported immediately to the Headteacher or other appropriate person in accordance with the school's safeguarding and allegations procedures. Complaints and disciplinary matters will be dealt with under the relevant procedures.

KCSIE 2026 Safeguarding Principles

- maintain a child-centred approach and consider what is best for the child;
- recognise that bullying may be a safeguarding issue and that 'it could happen here';
- act immediately on safeguarding concerns and report them to the DSL or deputy without delay;

- consider child-on-child abuse, including harassment and violence, alongside bullying and not treat serious harmful behaviour as 'just bullying';
- consider online harms, including online bullying and harmful content generated or shared using artificial intelligence;
- ensure concerns and decisions are recorded with actions, rationale and outcomes, and share information when necessary to protect a child;
- provide appropriate support to children who experience harm and consider support, education and safeguarding needs for children who have caused harm;
- work with parents/carers and relevant safeguarding partners, including children's social care and the police, where appropriate.