FARRINGTONS
SCHOOL

Antibullying Policy 2026-27

Author/Role	BOK/Head of Prep
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Links to other policies	Behaviour Policy; Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy; Online Safety Policy; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
Main changes since last review	Updates in line with Prep provision and the antibullying log additions.
Date of next review	September 27

1. Purpose, scope and status

This is a whole-school policy applying to pupils across the Prep School and Senior School. It should be read alongside the Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy, Behaviour Policy, Online Safety Policy, SEND Policy, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, Staff Code of Conduct and relevant pastoral procedures.

The School is committed to providing an environment in which pupils can learn, develop relationships and participate in school life safely, confidently and with dignity. Bullying is not tolerated. All concerns about harmful peer behaviour will be listened to, assessed and responded to, whether or not the behaviour ultimately meets the threshold for bullying.

This policy provides the shared whole-school principles. It also sets out a specific Prep School operational framework that reflects the Behaviour and Regulation approach introduced for 2026-27. Senior School pastoral and reporting arrangements remain substantially aligned with the September 2025 policy unless otherwise agreed through Senior School review.

2. Legal and guidance framework

The policy has regard to the following current requirements and guidance:

- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014, including the requirement for an effective anti-bullying strategy that prevents bullying so far as reasonably practicable.
- Department for Education, Independent School Standards guidance, revised April 2026.
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026, which comes into force on 1 September 2026.
- Department for Education, Preventing and tackling bullying: advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies.
- Equality Act 2010, including duties relating to discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- Children Act 1989 and wider safeguarding duties where harm or risk meets a safeguarding threshold.
- The School's Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy and procedures for child-on-child abuse.

KCSIE 2026 identifies bullying, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based bullying and discriminatory bullying, as a form that child-on-child abuse may take. Serious or discriminatory bullying may therefore require safeguarding action as well as a behaviour or pastoral response.

3. What we mean by bullying

For the purposes of this policy, bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally. In judging whether a pattern amounts to bullying, staff should also consider whether there is an imbalance of power that makes it harder for the affected pupil to defend themselves or change the situation.

The four central considerations are:

Consideration	Professional question
Harm	Has the behaviour caused physical, emotional, social or psychological harm?

Consideration	Professional question
Repetition	Is there a pattern over time, including a pattern created by a group even where different pupils participate on different occasions?
Power imbalance	Is there an imbalance arising from age, physical strength, number of pupils, confidence, social status, popularity, information, vulnerability, SEND, online reach or another factor?
Intent	Was harm intended, or did the behaviour continue when the harmful impact should reasonably have been clear?

These considerations support professional judgement rather than operating as a mechanical checklist. A single incident may be serious, harmful or safeguarding-relevant without meeting the definition of bullying. The School will still act.

3.1 Not every concern is bullying

Staff should distinguish between different forms of peer difficulty so that the response is accurate and proportionate:

- One-off unkindness: a hurtful incident without an established pattern.
- Peer conflict: a two-way disagreement or breakdown where power is broadly balanced.
- Social difficulty: a difficulty arising from communication, maturity, friendship skills, regulation or misunderstanding.
- Bullying: a repeated and intentionally hurtful pattern, commonly involving an imbalance of power.

The absence of a bullying label must never be interpreted as the absence of school action. Support, repair, recording, education, supervision and review may all be appropriate before a bullying threshold is met.

4. Forms of bullying and harmful peer behaviour

Bullying may be direct or indirect, face to face or online. It may include, but is not limited to:

- verbal bullying, including repeated name-calling, threats, humiliation, intimidation or malicious rumours;
- physical bullying, including repeated hitting, kicking, pushing, damaging belongings, extortion or deliberate physical intimidation;
- social or relational bullying, including deliberate and repeated exclusion, isolation, manipulation of friendships or encouraging others to withdraw support;
- online bullying, including harmful behaviour through messaging, group chats, gaming, social media, image or video sharing, impersonation, editing or redistribution of content;
- prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying linked to actual or perceived characteristics, identity, background, disability, SEND, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender-related issues, family circumstances or other difference;

- sexual or sexist bullying or harassment, which may also amount to child-on-child abuse and must be considered under safeguarding procedures;
- bullying linked to vulnerability, including SEND, health needs, caring responsibilities, being new to the School, social confidence or other circumstances that create a power imbalance.

Online harm can increase the reach, persistence and audience of bullying. Content can be forwarded or altered rapidly and may continue beyond the school day. Where AI-generated or digitally altered content creates humiliation, harassment, sexualised imagery or other harm, safeguarding and online safety procedures must be followed.

5. Bullying, child-on-child abuse and safeguarding

All staff must remain alert to the possibility that bullying or harmful peer behaviour is a safeguarding issue. Child-on-child abuse can occur inside or outside school and online. The fact that there are no reports does not mean that abuse is not taking place.

Concerns must be escalated to the Designated Safeguarding Lead or a Deputy DSL where there is a safeguarding concern, including where behaviour is serious, discriminatory, sexualised, coercive, threatening, involves significant harm, creates a serious power imbalance, involves harmful online content or otherwise suggests that a pupil may be at risk.

Safeguarding procedures take precedence over ordinary behaviour processes. Staff must not wait for a repeated pattern to emerge before raising a safeguarding concern.

Staff must not dismiss abusive or harmful behaviour as banter, part of growing up or a normal feature of peer relationships. Pupil voice should be taken seriously, while professional judgement should draw on context, patterns, risk and information from appropriate adults.

6. Possible signs and effects

There is no single presentation of bullying. Staff should remain professionally curious where they notice changes such as:

- anxiety about attending school, lessons, social times, transport or particular activities;
- changes in friendships, behaviour, eating, sleep, confidence, emotional regulation or interaction with others;
- withdrawal, reluctance to speak, avoidance of certain pupils or spaces, or unexplained distress linked to devices or online communication;
- loss of concentration, reduced engagement or deteriorating work;
- increased visits to pastoral, medical or wellbeing support;
- damage to belongings, unexplained injuries or requests for money;
- low mood, self-harm, suicidal thoughts or other significant mental health concerns.

Some pupils, including pupils with SEND or communication needs, may be disproportionately affected by bullying without showing obvious signs or may find it harder to report what is happening. Reporting routes and adult responses must therefore be accessible and responsive to individual need.

7. Preventing bullying

The School aims to prevent bullying through a culture in which respectful behaviour is taught, modelled, noticed and reinforced. Prevention is a whole-school responsibility and does not begin only when an incident occurs.

- PSHE, Relationships Education/RSE and wider curriculum teaching about healthy relationships, difference, respectful disagreement, online conduct and bystander responsibility;
- assemblies, Chapel, year-group or phase activities and participation in Anti-Bullying Week;
- explicit teaching and reinforcement of school values and behavioural expectations;
- pupil voice, leadership and reporting opportunities that allow pupils to raise concerns early;
- staff supervision and attention to locations, transitions or times where patterns of concern are more likely to emerge;
- staff training and shared professional language so that concerns are recognised, recorded and escalated consistently;
- appropriate use of filtering, monitoring and safeguarding systems to identify online harm;
- parent partnership and clear information about how concerns should be raised;
- regular review of incidents and patterns so that curriculum, supervision, pastoral support and whole-school culture can be adjusted where needed.

8. Reporting a concern

Pupils should be encouraged to tell a trusted adult whenever they are worried about themselves or another pupil. Reports can be made to any member of staff. Staff receiving a report must listen, avoid premature conclusions, record or pass on information appropriately, and ensure that the concern reaches the person best placed to respond.

8.1 Prep School

In the Prep School, the class teacher or another trusted member of staff will normally be the first point of contact. Depending on the nature of the concern, information should be shared with the appropriate Key Stage Lead, Deputy Head of Prep, Head of Prep, Head of Early Years where relevant, or safeguarding team. Parents will normally be contacted because of the age of the pupils, unless safeguarding advice indicates a different approach.

Pupils should also be reminded of the Prep School pupil voice and reporting routes available to them, including trusted adults and any established reporting systems such as Share Boxes or equivalent mechanisms in operation.

8.2 Senior School

Senior School pupils may report concerns to a Tutor, Houseparent, School Counsellor, member of the pastoral team, Head, Sixth Form Prefect where appropriate, or any other member of staff with whom they feel comfortable. The member of staff receiving the concern should inform the relevant Tutor and pastoral or Key Stage lead as soon as reasonably practicable and escalate safeguarding concerns to the DSL or a Deputy DSL.

Drafting note for SMT review: the Senior School route above is substantially retained from the September 2025 policy and should be confirmed against any separate Senior School anti-bullying review before final approval.

9. Responding to concerns

The School response should be investigative rather than reactive. The aim is to establish what has happened, protect pupils, understand patterns, apply a fair threshold and decide what needs to happen next.

Across the School, the following principles apply:

- take the concern seriously and reassure the reporting pupil that speaking up was appropriate;
- consider immediate safety and safeguarding needs first;
- gather accounts individually where appropriate and avoid public confrontation or forced agreement;
- consider context, chronology, power, repetition, intent, impact and vulnerability;
- contact parents where appropriate and communicate factual information without compromising confidentiality;
- record the concern and subsequent action on the School's designated recording system where required;
- apply proportionate consequences and support in accordance with the Behaviour Policy and safeguarding procedures;
- consider education, repair and wider cultural action as well as sanction;
- review the situation after intervention rather than assuming that the matter is resolved because an immediate action has been taken.

10. Operational framework

The Prep and Senior school use a five-stage framework for suspected bullying concerns:

Stage	What this means
1. Listen	Take the report seriously, establish immediate safety and identify the initial concern.
2. Gather	Collect pupil voice and relevant context, including chronology, locations, witnesses, online evidence where appropriately provided, and any known previous concerns.
3. Test	Use the bullying threshold and professional judgement to consider harm, repetition, power imbalance and intent. Consider safeguarding at every stage.
4. Act	Agree proportionate consequences, support and educational or cultural action. Serious, unsafe, discriminatory or safeguarding-relevant concerns may move directly to senior or safeguarding action.

Stage	What this means
5. Review	Check safety, recurrence, peer dynamics, wellbeing and whether apparently separate incidents form a wider pattern.

10.1 Relationship with Reflection and Repair

The School Behaviour and Regulation framework uses reminders, supported reset, reflection and repair for ordinary behaviour and regulation difficulties. Suspected bullying is not required to move through each stage of that pathway. Serious, harmful, repeated, discriminatory or unsafe behaviour can bypass the ordinary Reflection Pathway and move directly to pastoral, senior or safeguarding action.

Where restorative work is appropriate, it must be carefully judged. A pupil who has been harmed should not be required to participate in a face-to-face restorative meeting or accept an apology as a condition of resolution. Any restorative meeting must be safe, proportionate and in the pupil's best interests.

10.2 Investigation record

For concerns that may amount to bullying, a structured investigation and review record. The record should capture:

- Stimulus: what first caused concern and who raised it.
- Pupil voice: what the pupils involved say happened, recorded separately where appropriate.
- Context and chronology: when, where and how often concerns have arisen, including previous relevant records.
- Threshold judgement: consideration of harm, repetition, power imbalance and intent, together with safeguarding and vulnerability factors.
- Next steps: consequences, support, educational action, cultural or supervision changes and parent communication.
- Review: when and how safety, recurrence, relationships and wellbeing will be checked.

The purpose of the record is to make professional judgement visible and consistent, not to create an administrative barrier to acting quickly.

11. Recording, monitoring and review

Concerns and incidents should be recorded using the School's designated systems in accordance with pastoral, behaviour and safeguarding procedures. MyConcern, iSAMS or other approved systems should be used according to the nature of the concern and the School's current recording protocol.

Leaders should look beyond individual cases and review patterns. This may include repeated behaviour towards the same pupil or group, repeated incidents in particular locations or times, prejudice-related themes, online patterns, recurring peer-group dynamics, or concerns affecting vulnerable pupils.

The Prep School will incorporate anti-bullying review into its wider behaviour, pastoral and pupil voice monitoring. As a minimum, the Prep should use pupil voice and incident information during the year to identify themes and adapt curriculum, supervision, support or staff guidance where necessary.

The Senior school will also review this more widely using student council meetings and wider pupil voice.

12. Consequences, support and education

The response to bullying should address three connected areas: consequence, education and culture.

Consequence: A proportionate consequence communicates the seriousness of harmful behaviour and protects the school community.

Education: Pupils should be helped to understand impact, repair harm where appropriate, develop safer behaviour and address underlying needs.

Culture: Leaders should consider whether the incident exposes a wider issue requiring curriculum work, supervision changes, pupil voice, staff guidance or communication with families.

Pupils who have experienced bullying will be supported according to their needs. This may include trusted-adult check-ins, pastoral support, counselling, adjustments to routines or supervision, SEND support, parent partnership, safety planning or external support.

Pupils whose behaviour has caused harm are entitled to a fair hearing and appropriate support. The School will consider underlying needs without allowing those needs to excuse harmful behaviour. Sanctions may include those available under the Behaviour Policy and, for serious or persistent bullying, may extend to suspension or permanent exclusion in accordance with School policy.

13. Online and off-site bullying

Bullying and harmful peer behaviour may occur outside the School site or outside the school day and still have a direct impact on pupils' safety, wellbeing or school life. Where off-site or online behaviour is reported, the School will consider what action is reasonable and appropriate under its behaviour, safeguarding and online safety procedures.

Parents and pupils should preserve relevant evidence, such as screenshots, where it is safe and appropriate to do so, and provide this to the School rather than conducting parallel investigations through parent messaging groups or direct contact with other pupils. Staff should not investigate personal devices beyond their authority or role and should seek safeguarding or senior advice where evidence may involve illegal, sexualised or otherwise serious content.

14. Working with parents and carers

Parents and carers are encouraged to raise concerns early and provide factual information about what their child has reported. The School will listen carefully, gather information and keep parents appropriately informed while protecting the confidentiality and welfare of all pupils involved.

When a child reports that they may be experiencing bullying, parents are encouraged to:

- stay calm and reassure the child that telling an adult was the right thing to do;
- record the key facts: who, what, where, when and how often;
- preserve relevant online evidence where appropriate;
- contact the class teacher, Tutor or relevant pastoral contact early;
- avoid contacting other pupils directly or attempting to resolve the matter through parent messaging groups;

- keep the School updated if circumstances change or further incidents occur.

Where a child may have caused harm, parents are asked to work with the School to establish the facts, help the child understand impact, support proportionate consequences and reinforce respectful behaviour and repair.

15. Complaints and escalation

If a parent or carer remains dissatisfied with the way a bullying concern has been investigated or managed, they may use the School's Complaints Policy. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed under safeguarding procedures regardless of any complaint.

16. Responsibilities

Proprietor and governors: ensure that the School has and effectively implements an anti-bullying strategy consistent with the Independent School Standards.

Head and senior leaders: ensure that the policy is implemented, staff understand their responsibilities and patterns or serious concerns are reviewed.

Designated Safeguarding Lead: advises on safeguarding thresholds, child-on-child abuse and referrals where necessary.

Prep and Senior pastoral leaders: ensure concerns are investigated, recorded, supported and reviewed in line with phase-appropriate procedures.

All staff: model respectful behaviour, respond to concerns, record and escalate appropriately and do not dismiss harmful behaviour as banter or normal peer behaviour.

Pupils: are encouraged to report concerns, support others to seek help and contribute to a respectful school culture.

Parents and carers: are asked to report concerns promptly, share factual information and work in partnership with the School.

17. Review and linked documents

This policy should be reviewed at least annually and sooner where legislation, statutory guidance, School structure or lessons learned from incidents require amendment. Before final approval, Senior School leaders should confirm the Senior-specific reporting and operational sections and the safeguarding team should confirm alignment with the final 2026-27 Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.

Linked documents include:

- Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy
- Behaviour Policy and Prep Behaviour and Regulation Guidance
- Online Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Complaints Policy

- Staff Code of Conduct
- School recording and pastoral procedures

Appendix A: School bullying investigation and review record

This template is designed to support professional judgement. It should be used proportionately and does not replace safeguarding recording where a concern meets a safeguarding threshold.

Record section	Prompts
1. Initial concern	Date/time raised; pupil(s); person raising concern; immediate safety issue; summary of what has been reported.
2. Pupil voice	Separate factual accounts from pupils involved. Record the child's words where significant. Note what is agreed, disputed or unknown.
3. Context and chronology	Where and when has the behaviour occurred? Are there previous relevant incidents? Is there an online element? Are there SEND, vulnerability, group or power factors?
4. Bullying threshold	Harm: yes/no/unclear and evidence. Repetition: yes/no/unclear and evidence. Power imbalance: yes/no/unclear and evidence. Intent: yes/no/unclear and evidence. Overall professional judgement.
5. Safeguarding consideration	Does any aspect require DSL/DDSL advice or safeguarding action? Record advice/action.
6. Action	Consequences; support for affected pupil; support/education for pupil causing harm; parent communication; supervision/curriculum/cultural action.
7. Review	Review date; who will check in; what indicators will be checked; outcome; further action if required.

Appendix B: Key external references

- Department for Education, Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (effective 1 September 2026).
- Department for Education, Independent School Standards guidance, revised April 2026.
- Department for Education, Preventing and tackling bullying: advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies.
- Department for Education, Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff.
- Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014.

- Equality Act 2010.