

Updating / Writing Your Anti-Bullying Policy

A whole school approach to writing or refreshing your anti-bullying policy: a resource for schools

All schools have a legal duty to prevent bullying. If you're a maintained school you need to explain how you go about this in your behaviour policy at the very least – if you're an academy you are also required to have a clear strategy. Whatever type of school you are – **a carefully considered anti-bullying policy that is put into action on a daily basis is vital for the protection of pupils and staff.**

We would recommend that this is a stand alone anti-bullying policy that you publish on the school website and regularly promote to pupils, staff and other members of the school community.

Having an anti-bullying policy does not suggest that you have a bullying issue – bullying can happen anywhere, and a good policy ensures pupils and staff are clear on expectations and on how you tackle bullying as a community.

Your anti-bullying policy must be a living document. Bullying cultures can spring up, and conflict can come and go depending on relationships and influences. We would recommend you commit to reviewing your anti-bullying policy with pupils, staff and parents on an annual basis – Anti-Bullying Week can be a good time of year to schedule this in.

We don't provide a template anti-bullying policy as each school should consult with pupils, parents and staff about what we will work for your school. Instead here are some guiding principles on how to go about developing your policy.

Guiding principles

1. Involve all members of the school community in writing or refreshing the policy. If it's not owned and understood by everyone it won't have an impact. This includes pupils of all ages and disabled pupils and those with special educational needs.
2. Do the ground work – talk to pupils, parents, staff and the wider community about what the issues are. Give opportunities to input in confidence so that people can be honest about what is good about current school practice – and what needs to change.
3. Agree as a school community on what you mean by bullying. Never assume that everyone knows what you're talking about.
4. List the different of behaviour that bullying might include and what you will be looking out for as a school community.

5. Make sure you are explicit about your school approach to cyberbullying – whether inside or outside of school. Do you need to set clear expectations for pupils, staff and parents?
6. Talk about how bullying can be fuelled by prejudice and how you will work to create a culture where prejudice and hatred is not accepted. Be clear on what you mean by prejudice. Reference behaviour that is homophobic, transphobic, racist, targeted at faith, sexist and disablist. Explain how this type of behaviour might manifest itself.
7. Set clear boundaries and make sure these are understood by all pupils. Bullying thrives in cultures where name-calling, unwanted touch, rumour mongering and disrespect go unchallenged. Think carefully about physical contact between members of your community and what is and isn't acceptable.
8. Agree routes for reporting bullying. Discuss whether there should be designated members of staff to manage bullying complaints. Be clear on timescales for responding to incidents, who you will involve, and what the different outcomes might be. How will you record incidents to establish patterns and provide evidence of action?
9. Agree as a school community on ways you can all be involved in challenging bullying behaviour. Consider the role of peer mentors and leaders.
10. Find out where the bullying hot spots are in your school and make changes to the environment or to your strategies that target these areas.
11. Consider the experience of pupils in break and lunch times. Do you have a safe place that pupils can access? Free play is not for everyone so consider alternatives.
12. Include your response to bullying on the way to and from school. Are there members of the wider community you can work with to prevent bullying in the streets or on transport?
13. Make sure you link your anti-bullying policy to your safeguarding policy. When might you need to escalate a bullying incident to the police or children's services?
14. Support pupils with managing relationship conflict. Promote assertive behaviour strategies, discuss how they can respond to verbal, physical and online attacks. What are their options – how can they manage their response at an individual level and when might they need to seek support from others. What are the expectations on pupils, staff and parents if they witness bullying behaviour? How can you support one another?
15. Agree as a school community on how you can best respond to bullying incidents. Ultimately you all agree that you want the bullying to stop so how can you make sure that happens. Think about the different factors that might fuel bullying behaviour. How can you make sure that the pupil/s displaying bullying behaviour stop – and change in the long term. What additional support might those that have experienced bullying, and those that have bullied need? Remember bullying can have a significant impact on mental health so the goal must always be to nip it in the bud and to make sure the right support is in place.
16. Consider how you can celebrate diversity in a meaningful way. What do you need to do to be sure that anyone could walk into your school community and feel welcome?
17. Accept that you will make mistakes, but learn from them. Every bullying incident is an opportunity to learn and to improve your shared approach to tackling bullying.
18. Agree a time each year to review your policy and consider setting up a team of pupils and staff dedicated to tackling bullying all year round.

19. Get creative over how to share your anti-bullying policy. A paper policy is a good start but how about visual displays or pupil made films to emphasise different areas of the policy.

We would love to hear from you if you have put these principles into action and developed or refreshed your anti-bullying policy. It is always helpful to be able to share these experiences with other schools and to promote good practice across the country. Please contact aba@ncb.org.uk