Anti-Bullying Policy

Florence Bilingual School

Europe & USA

2026

Registered in England & Wales - Cognita Schools Limited No. 02313425
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COGNITA

THRIVE IN A RAPIDLY EVOLVING WORLD

1. Introduction

1.1. We aim to establish a whole school positive culture in which all members of the community feel safe and confident, and treat each other with respect and courtesy, particularly with regard to individual differences. The School prides itself on its respect and mutual tolerance. Parents/carers/guardians (termed 'parents' throughout this policy) have an important role in supporting the School in maintaining high standards of behaviour. It is essential that there are consistent expectations of behaviour both at school, online and at home, and that the School and parents co-operate closely together.

1.2. We believe that pupils should have the right to feel safe, secure, and valued and that creating a safe environment and dealing with bullying (which, when used in this policy infers the inclusion of harassment and intimidation throughout) is everyone's responsibility.

1.3. We support a range of positive strategies to deal with bullying and actively challenge the use of humiliation, criticism, fear, ridicule, and other similar approaches in an effort to reduce bullying.

1.4. We treat all our pupils and their parents fairly, and with consideration, and we expect them to respect the staff, the School and each other, in return. All forms of bullying are unacceptable at the School (including, but limited to, cyberbullying, prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying). All instances of bullying will be recorded and, where appropriate, will result in disciplinary action in accordance with the School's Behaviour Policy.

1.5. This policy should be read and understood in the context of our Behaviour Policy, RSE Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, Suspension, Expulsion and Required Removal in Other Circumstances Policy and our approach to personal, social, healthcare and economic education.

1.6. Our policy has been written in the context of our responsibilities under:

- Our policy has been written in the context of our responsibilities under:
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition), as a source of safeguarding best practice across Cognita schools, and statutory guidance in the UK.
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), in particular Articles 2, 3, 12, 19, 28 and 29.

1.7. As a Cognita school, we have signed up to the principles embodied within the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA), linked to the National Children's Bureau, NSPCC, and The Diana Award, including access to specialist training of staff to support our best efforts to promote healthy relationships and positive behaviours in our school, and eradicate bullying.

1.8. This policy is available to parents of pupils and prospective pupils on our website and on request. It is also communicated to all staff and pupils.

1.9. This policy applies to all pupils and applies to behaviours undertaken both inside, and outside of the school, including online

All bullying incidents will be considered in the context of the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and School staff should ensure any response to bullying is aligned with the provisions of this policy. If the staff member is in doubt, they should discuss the matter with the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)/Child Protection and Wellbeing Coordinator (CPC) who may reach out to the Regional Safeguarding Lead (RSL) as required.

2. What do we mean by Bullying

2.1. Bullying falls under the wider form of abuse, known as Child-on-Child Abuse (for more information on Child-on-Child Abuse see our Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy).

2.2. Bullying is the
'repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical (including sexual), verbal or psychological (emotional). It can happen face-to-face or online'
(Anti-Bullying Alliance).

Navigating identity, relationships, and sexuality is a central and often complex part of child development, and, as such, friendship issues will not be viewed as 'Bullying' unless they have involved behaviour as outlined below.

2.3. Forms
Bullying may take many forms, including, but not limited to:

- physical (including any threat of or use of violence of any kind, and/or involving the use or threat of using weapons, and hazing and/or initiation rituals)

- sexual (including the sharing of self-generated intimate imagery/videos, including those that are AI generated)

- verbal (including misogyny/misandry, cyberbullying via text messages, email, social media, gaming, or other instant messages, and can include the use of imagery and videos)

- emotional (including by excluding/ostracising peers, being sarcastic, demeaning, name-calling, tormenting or spreading malicious rumours). It can involve manipulating a third party to tease or torment someone, or actions that fall short of direct participation, where someone encourages others to bully, or joins in with laughing at a victim. Bullying is often hidden and subtle.

2.4. Factors which may indicate that behaviour is bullying include:

a) where it is repeated over time and/or where the perpetrator (s) intended to cause serious harm
b) where there is an element of coercion or pre-planning
c) where there is an imbalance of power, for example, as a result of age, size, social status or wealth.

This list is not exhaustive, and staff should always use their professional judgment and discuss any concerns with the DSL, who in turn should seek guidance from the RSL where needed.

2.5. Vulnerabilities

Bullying can happen to any child, but is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups and may involve actions or comments regarding a person's race, ethnicity, nationality, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities (SEND) or certain health conditions or because of other vulnerabilities a pupil may have, including but not limited to their familial circumstances, such as they are adopted, in care or that they have caring responsibilities. The latter groups of pupils may be at increased risk of bullying, and the school will be mindful of this. Bullying may be motivated by actual differences between pupils, or perceived differences. For example, bullying can still be homophobic if directed towards a pupil that is perceived by their peers to be gay, whether or not this is the case. Bullying related to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 will be treated extremely seriously.

2.6. Location

Bullying can happen anywhere and at any time and can involve anyone - pupils, other young people who are not pupils, staff, and parents. School visits are a part of everyday school life and, as such, this policy applies to conduct of our pupils outside School (including online). Bullying incidents occurring off the premises, such as on public transport, school buses or in the local community and/or online will fall under this policy and be treated accordingly. The Headteacher/Principal, will, where appropriate and under the Behaviour Policy, discipline pupils for misbehaviour online, outside School premises and outside School hours.

2.7. Criminal Offences

Whilst bullying itself may not constitute a specific criminal offence, certain bullying behaviours may amount to criminal conduct under the laws of the country in which the School operates. Such behaviour may include, but not be limited to: assault, harassment, hate crime, stalking, exploitation/extortion of any form, threats (including the use of a weapon) coercive or controlling behaviour, recording without consent, malicious communications and/or the sharing of self-generated intimate imagery/videos, including those that are AI generated (with or without consent).

If the School believes that a criminal offence may have been committed, staff will seek advice from, or refer matters to, the appropriate authorities e.g. the Police in accordance with local legal requirements and the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

2.8. Local Children's Services: Where an incident of bullying causes or is likely to cause significant harm to a pupil, the School will follow the procedures set out in the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

2.9. Other bodies: All schools will follow their state-level agreements and local anti-bullying protocols according to the area in which the School operates. This includes, but is not limited to, making notifications where needed.

3. Signs of Bullying

3.1. Changes in behaviour that may indicate that a pupil is being bullied include:

- Unwillingness to return to school;
- Avoidance of certain areas of school or community, including hiding
- Displays of excessive anxiety, becoming withdrawn or unusually quiet;
- Failure to produce work, or producing unusually poor work, or work that appears to have been copied, interfered with, or spoilt by others;
- Books, bags, money, and other belongings suddenly go "missing", or are damaged;
- Change to established habits (e.g. giving up music lessons, change to accent or vocabulary);
- Diminished levels of self-confidence;
- Frequent visits to the school nurse/medical room with symptoms which may relate to stress or anxiety, such as stomach pains or headaches;
- Unexplained cuts and bruises or other injuries;
- Persistent, prolonged, and/or unexplained absence,
- Late arrival to school /class and/or reluctance to leave school/class;
- Choosing the company of adults rather than peers;
- Displaying repressed body language and poor eye contact;

- Difficulty in sleeping or experiencing nightmares;
- Self-harming, including disorder eating
- Suicidal ideation, and/or suicide attempts
- New (or increased) drug and/or alcohol use
- Running away from home or school.

Although there may be other causes of some of the above symptoms, a repetition or combination of these possible signs of bullying must be investigated by school safeguarding leads, working in partnership with the pupil's parents, and reported and recorded, as appropriate, in accordance with this policy and the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

4. Objectives

4.1. Our objectives are to:

- Enable pupils to understand clearly what constitutes bullying and to understand that bullying, whatever its form, will not be tolerated by the school community;
- Make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to, and incidents acted upon;
- Ensure that no reports of bullying result in an escalation or retaliation against any pupil involved;
- Enable parents to feel confident that bullying incidents will be firmly dealt with by the School;
- Create a safe environment and promote an inclusive ethos in the school where pupils can discuss the cause of bullying without fear of further bullying or discrimination;
- Raise staff awareness of the presence of different types of bullying, and an awareness of groups of pupils who are bullied disproportionately, including due to their vulnerabilities;
- Establish guidelines for action where bullying is evident;
- Develop a range of effective strategies for pupils to learn about moral and social issues;
- Ensure pupils are able to explain how we expect them to behave; and
- Celebrate success as an important way of creating a positive school ethos around anti-bullying

5. The Schools Response to Bullying

5.1. At the School, we always treat bullying very seriously. It conflicts sharply with the School's social and moral principles, and potentially with its policy on equal opportunities for pupils and will not be tolerated.

5.2. When incidents of bullying occur, they are dealt with quickly and staff will reassure any victim(s) that they are being taken seriously and that they will be supported and kept safe.

5.3. The School understands that bullying can be so serious that it may cause physical, emotional, and psychological damage, such as eating disorders, self-harm and even suicide. Stopping violence and ensuring the immediate physical safety of pupils is the School's first priority, however, the School acknowledges that emotional bullying sometimes has the potential to be more damaging than physical bullying in the longer term, and therefore staff will use their discretion when dealing with an incident of bullying within the parameters of this policy and the Behaviour Policy.

5.4. As stated above, School recognises that pupils with SEND, being neuro-divergent, or certain health/medical conditions can face additional safeguarding challenges and may be more prone to group isolation or bullying (including online and, prejudice-based bullying) than other children. The school also recognises that certain pupils may face additional barriers to reporting an incident because of their vulnerability, disability, sex, ethnicity and/or sexual orientation. This may be due to their communication challenges or difficulty articulating what has occurred. They may also be more reluctant to report bullying due to previous experiences at other educational establishments, and concerns about repercussions.

5.5. Pupils who are victims of bullying will be supported and reassured that they will be kept safe. Pupils who have engaged in bullying behaviour will be subject to appropriate disciplinary sanction and will also be supported in learning different ways of behaving and offered support for their own circumstances; they too may be a victim or have safeguarding needs (see below 7.2). Risk assessments will be put in place according to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

6. Preventative Strategies

6.1. The School's response to bullying does not start at the point in which a pupil has been bullied. We take the following preventative measures in order to create an environment that prevents bullying from becoming a problem at the School:

6.2. As a successful school, we create an environment that prevents bullying from being a serious problem in the first place.

6.3. We proactively gather intelligence about issues between pupils which might provoke conflict and develop strategies to prevent bullying occurring. We talk with pupils through the curriculum about issues of difference and use dedicated project time and events such as special assemblies. We keep lines of communication open, so pupils feel included.

6.4. We are aware that schools which excel at tackling bullying have created an ethos of good behaviour where pupils treat one another and the school staff with respect because they know this is the right way to behave. Values of respect for staff and other pupils, an understanding of the value of education, global values, and a clear understanding of how our actions affect others permeate the whole school environment. We reinforce these messages through the behaviour and attitudes of our staff, who must set a good example.

6.5. Effective staff training is an important aspect of our work to prevent and tackle bullying, including the different types of bullying. All staff have had relevant training and understand the importance of this policy. In particular, our Senior Leadership Team ensures that all staff understand the principles and purpose of the School's policy, the legal responsibilities, how to resolve problems and where to seek support.

We all understand that bullying can occur in any school and that we have a responsibility to be vigilant for incidents, especially at times and in places where it is more likely to occur.

6.6. We aim to ensure staff feel confident to consistently tackle all forms of bullying and that pupils are empowered to say "no" to bullying.

7. Successful Intervention Strategies

7.1. We apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong. In accordance with our Behaviour Policy, we apply sanctions fairly, consistently and reasonably, taking into account of any special educational needs or disabilities that pupils may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable pupils.

7.2. We also carefully consider the motivating factors which may have affected the bullying behaviour and whether it indicates any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case, the pupil engaging in the bullying behaviour may need support themselves.

7.3. We involve parents to ensure that they are clear that the school does not tolerate bullying and that they are aware of the procedures to follow if they believe that their child is being bullied. We make sure that our parents feel confident that we will take any complaint about bullying seriously and resolve the issue in a way which protects the child.

7.4. We involve pupils so they understand our approach towards bullying and so they are clear in the part they have to play to prevent bullying, including being an upstander, not a bystander.

7.5. We regularly evaluate our approach and ensure that our policy and practice is up to date.

7.6. We make sure that the consequences of bullying reflect the seriousness of the incident, so that others see that bullying is unacceptable.

7.7. We teach pupils that using any prejudice-based language is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.

7.8. We work with the wider community, such as the Police and Children's Services, where bullying is particularly serious or persistent and/or where a criminal offence may have been committed. We adhere to all local anti-bullying protocols.

7.9. We encourage pupils via a variety of avenues to report bullying so that they feel assured that they will be listened to, and incidents acted upon. All pupils can approach any member of staff if they are worried about bullying, but know who the safeguarding team are, who are there to action any concerns that are raised.

7.10. We draw on the expertise of specialist organisations with a proven track record in dealing with bullying to ensure our practices are effective and keep children safe.

We ensure that notices are placed around school which provide appropriate telephone numbers and email addresses for children to contact organisations such as Telefono Azzurro.

7.11. We listen to our pupils' voice at all times and act accordingly. This may involve site safety mapping if they raise concerns about any areas of the school site in which they feel unsafe.

7.12. We aim to use restorative approaches in school which focus on reconciliation with those who have been harmed. This enables all those affected by any incident to play a part in repairing the harm and finding a positive way forward, enabling everyone to prevent conflict and build relationships.

7.13. We promote and monitor pupil attendance, addressing any persistent, prolonged or unexplained absence to ensure that bullying is not a factor.

7.14. We monitor repeated medical need to identify whether bullying is a factor.

8. Our Procedures

Please see the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy for procedures related to managing incidents if Child-on Child Abuse. These will be followed should an incident of Bullying be reported.

However, in summary:

8.1. If a member of staff observes that bullying is taking place in school, they must always intervene to stop the incident. The first step is to ensure that the pupil has no medical needs.

8.2. Should the above observation happen, or a disclosure is made by a pupil has been made, or a parental report received, the staff member should always inform the DSL/CPC - they must be made aware of all reports around bullying as this is a Safeguarding matter An initial risk assessment must be completed. This may involve the immediate keeping of the victim and alleged perpetrator apart. The former must be kept to their normal routine, as they are the victim.

8.3. The immediate priority is to stop the bullying, so instances will be dealt with without delay. All reports will be acknowledged promptly and investigated within an appropriate timescale, proportionate to the seriousness of the allegation. Under the guidance of the DSL/CPC and/or Headteacher/Principal, an age-appropriate investigation will take place. Separate meetings would usually be arranged with those involved (including the pupils and any witnesses) to establish their version of events and assure them that the situation will be dealt with sensitively but firmly and fully.

Appropriate records of the meeting (s) will be taken by the staff member either during or after the conversation, as per school internal recording procedures

8.4. Parents of any pupils involved will be kept informed about how the alleged bullying is being handled, as appropriate.

8.5. The Behaviour Policy will be followed in terms of sanctions for the perpetrator of the bullying; however, they will also receive support in parallel. The school takes the standpoint that most pupils involved in bullying do not intend to inflict significant harm.

8.6. A proven allegation of serious bullying may be considered under our Suspension, Expulsion or Required Removal in Other Circumstances Policy.

8.7. Following the investigation a senior staff member oversees the monitoring of the ongoing situation, alongside the DSL/CPC liaising directly with the relevant staff to and pupils involved to check that not further bullying is occurring.

8.8. Parents are asked to keep the School and staff informed of any concerns and encourage their child to report any incidents immediately to an appropriate staff member. The Headteacher will ensure that the incident and any action taken are formally recorded in the behaviour incident log and/or the safeguarding recording systems.

8.9. It is important for the school to understand the motivation behind any bullying and whether it reveals any cause for concern about the safety of the perpetrator. This is because the bully may need support themselves.

8.10. In serious or persistent cases, parents should be informed and may be asked to come into a meeting to discuss the problem and, if necessary and appropriate, Police will be consulted if it is thought that a criminal offence has occurred (see above). All attempts will be made to help the bully or bullies change their behaviour. This may include referral to outside agencies, including Children's services, local anti-bullying protocols, and/or referrals to specialist programmes of support.

8.11. Our school uses restorative practice, where appropriate, which includes a facilitated meeting being held to enable individuals and groups to work together to improve their mutual understanding of what has taken place and to jointly agree the best solution moving forwards. Sometimes a less formal approach is used with the same principles in place, depending on the nature of the incident. Restorative practice provides an opportunity for everyone to reflect on how they interact with each other and consider how best to prevent harm and conflict, recognising everyone has a part to play and is responsible as such.

8.12. Incidents of bullying will be recorded by all staff using the school recording systems and actions always taken. This will enable patterns to be identified, and keeping records of bullying incidents will also enable the school to:

- Manage individual cases effectively and keep pupils safe;
- Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of strategies;
- Celebrate the anti-bullying work of the school; and
- Respond effectively and swiftly to concerns from parents.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

9.1. Each Headteacher/Principal is responsible for maintaining a behaviour log which includes instances of bullying (these records may be recorded on the schools Electronic Case Management System). The School's leadership team is responsible for the implementation and procedural monitoring of this Policy.

9.2. The Headteacher/Principal alongside the DSL/CPC and a designated member of SLT will review all incidents of reported bullying to help identify patterns of behaviour, so that the School can take appropriate steps to address bullying behaviours within the School. Records of bullying incidents will also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the School's anti-bullying procedures, and to highlight any necessary amendments.

9.3. Headteachers/Principals report on behaviour and bullying at governance meetings. This forms the monitoring and evaluation function of the proprietor.

9.4. Where there are concerns regarding the school's approach to dealing with bullying, these will be explored by the Director of Education.

10. Appendix A - Local legal references

10.1. United Kingdom

10.2. Equality Act 2010

10.3. Education and Inspections Act 2006

10.4. Keeping Children Safe in Education (current edition)

10.5. Preventing and Tackling Bullying (DfE)

10.6. Spain

10.7. Ley Orgánica 8/2021 de Protección Integral a la Infancia y la Adolescencia frente a la Violencia

10.8. Massachusetts, USA

10.9. Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 71, Section 37O

10.10. Title VI Civil Rights Act 1964

10.11. Title IX Education Amendments 1972

10.12. Section 504 Rehabilitation Act 1973

10.13. Americans with Disabilities Act

10.14. Greece

10.15. Law 5029/2023 "We Live Together in Harmony – Breaking the Silence", together with relevant ministerial decisions, guidance and procedures relating to the prevention and management of intra-school violence and bullying.

10.16. Austria

10.17. Schulunterrichtsgesetz (School Education Act)

10.18. Relevant federal child and youth welfare legislation

10.19. Switzerland

10.20. Swiss Federal Constitution (Articles 8 and 11)

10.21. Relevant cantonal education legislation

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