



St Bernard's Catholic High School

Anti-Bullying Policy

2026/2027

Policy Name	Anti-bullying Policy
Policy Approved By	Matt Cush - Chair of Governors
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Named Persons in this policy	D Vince: Headteacher

St Bernard's Catholic High School, Barrow
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1. Policy Statement

At St Bernard's Catholic High School, Barrow, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly, and safe environment for all our pupils and staff, rooted in our Catholic values. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. We expect anyone who knows bullying is happening to report it and for swift action to be taken.

2. Aims and Objectives

- Prevent all forms of bullying, including cyberbullying, racist, sexist, homophobic, and peer-on-peer abuse.
- Ensure all pupils feel safe, supported, and valued.
- Comply with statutory guidance, including KCSIE 2026.
- Promote Christian values of respect, tolerance, and forgiveness.

3. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is:

- Deliberate, repeated behaviour intended to hurt another individual physically, emotionally, or psychologically.
- It can take the form of:
 - **Physical** (hitting, kicking, pushing)
 - **Verbal** (name-calling, threats, derogatory comments)
 - **Indirect** (spreading rumours, excluding someone, manipulating friendships)
 - **Cyber** (abusive messages, social media harassment, making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes, AI-generated or AI-altered harmful content)
 - **Prejudicial**, including:
 - Racist bullying
 - Sexist bullying (including misogyny and misandry)
 - Homophobic, biphobic, or transphobic bullying
 - Disability-related bullying
 - Bullying related to religion or belief
 - Bullying related to appearance or health conditions

4. Important definitions:

- **Making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes:** This includes consensual and non-consensual sharing of nude and semi-nude images and/or videos. It explicitly includes images that have been digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence (e.g., deepfakes). All such incidents mandate a safeguarding response.

- **Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB):** Sexual behaviour displayed by children that is developmentally inappropriate, may be harmful towards themselves or others, or may be abusive. HSB exists on a continuum from inappropriate sexual behaviour through to sexual violence.
- **Sexual violence:** Rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault (intentional sexual touching).
- **Sexual harassment:** Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature – such as sexual comments, sexual jokes or taunting, physical behaviour like interfering with clothes, or online harassment.
- **Misogyny:** Prejudice, contempt, or hatred directed against women or girls.
- **Misandry:** Prejudice, contempt, or hatred directed against men or boys.

5. Understanding Harmful Sexual Behaviour (HSB)

At St Bernards Catholic High School, we recognise that harmful sexual behaviour exists on a continuum and requires a nuanced, safeguarding-led response.

The HSB Continuum:

HSB ranges from:

1. **Inappropriate sexual behaviour** – developmentally inappropriate sexual behaviour that may indicate a lack of understanding
2. **Problematic sexual behaviour** – behaviour that is outside normal developmental parameters and may cause concern
3. **Harmful sexual behaviour** – behaviour that is harmful to the child themselves or others
4. **Sexual violence** – rape, assault by penetration, or sexual assault

Our approach to HSB:

- We understand that sometimes pupils demonstrate HSB because they are communicating their own experience of abuse
- We will respond to all incidents on the continuum with appropriate support and intervention
- We will use age-appropriate resources, including NSPCC guidance on typical stages of sexual development, to inform our responses
- We will ensure staff understand consent and can explain it appropriately to pupils
- We will gently but firmly condemn the behaviour, not the pupil, to create a safe space for disclosure

Consent:

We teach pupils that:

- Consent is about having the freedom and capacity to choose
- Consent can be withdrawn at any time
- A person cannot consent if they are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, asleep, unconscious, or lack the mental capacity to consent
- Consent to one activity does not mean consent to another
- The age of consent is 16 years old

Support and intervention:

- All incidents of HSB will be reported to the DSL
- We will conduct a risk assessment for each incident
- We will provide appropriate support to both the victim and the child displaying HSB
- We will work in partnership with external agencies where appropriate
- We will offer a safe space for pupils to discuss their behaviour and understand why it was inappropriate

5. Cyberbullying and Online Safety

Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place online or through digital devices. It can include:

- Abusive or threatening messages via text, social media, gaming platforms, or email
- Sharing embarrassing or manipulated images or videos
- Spreading rumours online
- Excluding someone from online groups or activities
- Creating fake profiles to impersonate or humiliate someone
- Making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes, including images that have been digitally altered or wholly generated by artificial intelligence (AI)

6. Making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes:

This includes any incident where a child:

- Creates, shares, or is in possession of nude or semi-nude images of themselves or other children
- Receives such images from another child
- Is subject to images that have been digitally altered using AI (e.g., deepfakes where a child's face is superimposed onto inappropriate content)
- Is subject to wholly AI-generated images that depict them in a nude or semi-nude manner

All incidents involving the making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes mandate a safeguarding response, regardless of whether the sharing was consensual or non-consensual.

Our response:

- All incidents must be reported immediately to the DSL
- We will never view, download, or share the images ourselves

- We will follow UKCIS guidance "Sharing nudes and semi-nudes: advice for education settings"
- We will assess whether the incident requires referral to children's social care and/or the police
- We will support all pupils involved, including education about the serious consequences and risks
- We will work with parents/carers to address the incident

7. Mobile phones and devices:

In line with KCSIE 2026 and DfE guidance, our school operates as a mobile phone-free environment during the school day. Our mobile phone policy (available on our website) sets out:

- When and where pupils may use mobile phones
- Consequences for misuse
- How we educate pupils about responsible device use

8. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and online safety:

We recognise the emerging risks associated with AI, including:

- Generation of fake or manipulated images (deepfakes)
- AI-generated harmful content
- Use of AI to create or spread false information about pupils

We will:

- Educate pupils about AI-related risks through our PSHE curriculum
- Include AI safety in our online safety training for staff
- Respond to AI-related incidents with the same seriousness as other forms of cyberbullying
- Work with external agencies where appropriate to address complex AI-related safeguarding concerns

9. Legal and Statutory Framework

This policy is informed by:

- **Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2026** statutory guidance
- DfE "Preventing and Tackling Bullying" (2017)
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025

KCSIE 2026 Key Updates (incorporated):

- Enhanced terminology for image sharing, including AI-generated and AI-altered content
- Strengthened guidance on harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) as a continuum through to sexual violence

- Explicit requirement to address both misandry and misogyny
- Greater emphasis on pupil wellbeing and support
- Updated safeguarding reporting requirements

10. Roles and Responsibilities

- Headteacher: Ensure implementation and monitoring of the policy.
- SLT:
 - Has overall responsibility for behaviour and anti-bullying across the school.
 - Oversees all bullying investigations and ensures consistent application of the policy.
- Pastoral Team (Heads of Year):
 - Are the first point of contact for pupils and staff regarding concerns about bullying.
 - Support pupils throughout the investigation and follow-up processes.
 - Work closely with the Deputy Head to monitor patterns and provide interventions.
- Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL):
 - Oversees recording and reporting of incidents, staff training, and support for victims/perpetrators.
- All Staff:
 - Recognise signs of bullying, report and record incidents, support pupils.
- Pupils:
 - Report bullying, support peers, uphold school values.
- Parents/Carers:
 - Work in partnership with the school to address bullying.

11. Reporting and Recording Procedures

How to report bullying:

Any member of the school community can report bullying:

- Verbally to any member of staff
- In writing (including anonymous reports via email)
- Via CPOMS and/or Arbor
- Directly to a Head of Year, or any SLT member

Recording requirements:

KCSIE 2026 recognises bullying as a form of child-on-child abuse. This is a safeguarding issue, and all safeguarding concerns about a child must be recorded in writing.

All staff must:

- Record all bullying incidents, no matter how 'low-level' they may appear
- Use CPOMS to record incidents, ensuring all relevant details are captured
- Report incidents to the relevant Head of Year and Deputy Headteacher

- Escalate immediately to the DSL if the incident constitutes a child protection concern (see below)

When to escalate to the DSL:

You must escalate to the DSL (or deputy DSL if unavailable) without delay if:

- You think the incident constitutes a child protection concern – this is where there's "reasonable cause to suspect a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm"
- The incident involves making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes
- The incident involves harmful sexual behaviour (HSB), sexual violence, or sexual harassment
- The incident could be a criminal offence or poses a serious threat to a member of the public
- You have any concerns about a child's safety or wellbeing

Do not delay taking action if the DSL is unavailable – speak to a deputy DSL or a member of SLT immediately.

External reporting:

The DSL will determine whether incidents require reporting to:

- Children's social care
- The police
- The Local Authority (if additional LA reporting requirements apply, e.g., for racist incidents)

Monitoring and analysis:

- All recorded incidents are monitored by the Deputy headteacher and DSL
- We analyse patterns and trends in bullying data, including types of bullying, locations, times, and groups affected
- This analysis informs our prevention strategies and staff training
- Data is reported termly to governors and the Trust board

Responding to Bullying

1. Immediate action: Stop the bullying, support the victim, and address the perpetrator.
2. Investigation: Led by the relevant Head of Year and overseen by the Deputy head. Collect statements from all parties and witnesses.
3. Intervention: Use restorative approaches where possible, apply appropriate sanctions, and provide support.
4. Safeguarding: Refer to DSL if there are safeguarding concerns, including peer-on-peer abuse, sexual harassment, or online abuse as per KCSIE 2026.
5. Parental involvement: Inform parents/carers of all pupils involved.
6. Monitoring: Heads of Year and Deputy Head follow up with all parties to ensure resolution and wellbeing.

12. Prevention Strategies

We are committed to creating a culture where bullying is not tolerated and all pupils feel safe to report concerns.

Curriculum and education:

- **PSHE lessons** covering:
 - Anti-bullying, including all forms of prejudice-based bullying (racist, sexist including misogyny and misandry, homophobic, biphobic, transphobic, disability-related)
 - Harmful sexual behaviours
 - Consent and healthy relationships
 - Online safety, including the risks of making or sharing nudes or semi-nudes, and AI-generated content
 - Bystander intervention and how to report concerns
 - Respect for diversity and protected characteristics
- **Morning meetings** with regular anti-bullying messages and reminders of our Christian values
- **Assemblies** addressing specific themes for example: Anti-Bullying Week and Internet Safety Day

Staff training:

All staff receive regular training on:

- Recognising all forms of bullying, including online and prejudice-based bullying
- Understanding harmful sexual behaviour (HSB) and the continuum to sexual violence
- Responding to incidents involving making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes
- Addressing misogyny and misandry
- Understanding the impact of AI-generated content on pupil safety
- Safeguarding procedures and when to escalate to the DSL
- KCSIE 2026 requirements

Training is updated annually and includes specific briefings when new guidance is published.

Pupil voice and peer support:

- Peer mentoring schemes
- Student council representatives who feedback on pupil experiences and concerns
- Regular pupil surveys to monitor the effectiveness of our anti-bullying work

Environment and culture:

- Clear displays of our Christian values: respect, tolerance, compassion, and forgiveness
- Visible anti-bullying messages throughout the school
- A mobile phone-free environment during the school day (see our Mobile Phone Policy)
- Celebration of diversity through displays, events, and curriculum content

- Strong pastoral support through our Heads of Year and pastoral team

Parental engagement:

- Clear communication about our anti-bullying approach via our website, newsletters, and parent meetings
- Information for parents about recognising signs of bullying
- Guidance on supporting children with online safety at home
- Partnership working when incidents occur

13. Monitoring and evaluation:

- Regular review of bullying incident data to identify patterns and trends
- Evaluation of the effectiveness of interventions
- Annual review of this policy in consultation with pupils, staff, parents, and governors
- Use of pupil, staff, and parent surveys to inform improvements

14. Supporting Pupils

Support for victims:

Victims of bullying will receive:

- Immediate reassurance that they have done the right thing by reporting
- A safe space to talk about their experiences
- Regular check-ins from their Head of Year and pastoral staff
- Access to counselling or external support services if needed
- Practical strategies to stay safe and build resilience
- Ongoing monitoring to ensure the bullying has stopped
- Support to rebuild confidence and self-esteem

We will take the victim's wishes into account when deciding on next steps, including:

- Whether the alleged perpetrator should move class or seating position
- How to keep them at a reasonable distance on school premises
- Whether they wish to be involved in restorative approaches

However, the final decision will be made by the school, balancing the victim's wishes with the need to safeguard all pupils.

Support for perpetrators:

We recognise that pupils who display bullying behaviour may themselves be experiencing difficulties or communicating their own experiences of harm.

Perpetrators will receive:

- A clear message that their behaviour is unacceptable and must stop
- An opportunity to explain their behaviour in a safe, non-judgemental space
- Support to understand the impact of their actions on others
- Appropriate sanctions (see our Behaviour Policy)
- Behaviour interventions and support to modify their behaviour, which may include:
 - Restorative approaches
 - Counselling or mentoring
 - Targeted work on empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills
 - Referral to external agencies if appropriate
- Ongoing monitoring by pastoral staff to ensure behaviour has changed

We will gently but firmly condemn the behaviour, not the pupil, to create an environment where they feel safe to discuss their actions and any underlying issues.

Support for bystanders:

We recognise that witnessing bullying can be distressing for pupils. Bystanders will:

- Be praised for reporting incidents
- Receive reassurance that they have done the right thing
- Be supported if they are feeling upset or anxious about what they witnessed
- Be empowered through our curriculum to safely intervene or report future incidents

Support for pupils involved in making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes:

All pupils involved in incidents of making or sharing of nudes or semi-nudes will receive:

- An immediate safeguarding response led by the DSL
- Support to understand the seriousness and potential consequences of their actions
- Education about online safety, consent, and the law
- Ongoing monitoring and support
- Referral to external agencies if appropriate

We will never view, download, or share the images, and will follow national guidance in our response.

15. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Review

- Policy reviewed annually in consultation with pupils, staff, and governors.
- Data on bullying incidents analysed for trends and reported to the Trust board.
- Feedback from pupil, staff, and parent surveys used to update policy and practice.

16. Links to Other Policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** (with reference to KCSIE 2026)

- **Behaviour Policy**
- **Mobile Phone Policy**
- **Equality and Diversity Policy**
- **Relationships, Sex and Health Education (RSHE) Policy**
- **Data Protection Policy** (referencing Data Protection Act 2018, UK GDPR, and Data (Use and Access) Act 2025)
- **SEND Policy**
- **Acceptable Use Policy (for staff and pupils)**

All policies are available on our school website and are reviewed regularly to ensure compliance with current statutory guidance.