

BLEND YOUTH PROJECT

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

OCTOBER 2025



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Statement of Intent

Bullying can be a conscious or unconscious act that affects everyone involved. It may occur in any setting — including schools, alternative education provisions, homes, or youth-work environments. There is a need for a consistent and concerted effort to identify and challenge this behaviour whenever and wherever it arises.

Blend Youth Project will not tolerate bullying of any kind. Whether the bullying involves young people, students, staff, service users, parents, carers or partners, we will actively support victims and take appropriate action against perpetrators. All perpetrators within our Alternative Education and Youth services will face sanctions — up to and including exclusion — proportionate to the seriousness of their behaviour.

This policy is informed by national legislation and statutory guidance designed to safeguard children and young people, including the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* (s.89), *Equality Act 2010*, *Children Acts 1989 and 2004*, *Protection from Harassment Act 1997*, *Malicious Communications Act 1988*, *Communications Act 2003* (s.127), and the *Online Safety Act 2023*. It also aligns with *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)* and *Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)*.

Aims of Policy

- Promote a secure, safe, inclusive and friendly environment free from threat, harassment or any other form of bullying behaviour.
- Take positive action to prevent bullying from occurring.
- Show commitment to anti-bullying principles and make our stance clear during all induction processes.
- Inform children, young people and parents/carers of this policy and develop positive partnerships to maintain a bully-free environment.
- Ensure that staff understand their role in fostering the knowledge and attitudes required to achieve these aims.

Definitions

What is bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour that intentionally hurts, frightens or upsets another person — repeatedly or as a single serious incident — whether it is physical, verbal, emotional or online.

A bullying incident is defined as any situation that a reasonable person or the victim themselves perceives as motivated by an imbalance of power or intent to cause harm.

All reports of bullying must be recorded and investigated promptly and sensitively in line with our safeguarding procedures.

What does bullying look like, feel like, sound like?

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing, pinching, sexual assault, extortion, stealing or hiding belongings.
- **Verbal:** name-calling, mockery, insults, threats, sexual innuendo, or offensive remarks.
- **Indirect:** spreading rumours, excluding someone from social groups, malicious gossip, graffiti or defacing property, and displaying offensive (classist, ableist, homophobic, racist or sexist) material.

Who bullies?

Bullying behaviour can emerge in any group and may stem from low self-esteem, learned attitudes, or a perceived need for control. A strong focus on equality and inclusion reduces these risks.

Who is bullied?

Anyone can be bullied — young people, parents, carers, staff or volunteers. Bullying often targets people perceived as “different”, whether because of appearance, background, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, race, religion, belief, or any other protected characteristic under the *Equality Act 2010*.

Specific Types of Bullying

- **Classist Bullying**

Classist bullying occurs when someone is targeted because of their real or perceived social class or economic background. Typical behaviours include verbal abuse, physical threats, defacing property, mockery of accent or possessions, and exclusion.

- **Disablist Bullying**

Children and young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) can be at higher risk of bullying and may find it more difficult to report their experiences.

- **Homophobic, Biphobic and Transphobic Bullying**

Homophobic, biphobic or transphobic (HBT) bullying targets someone for being, or being perceived to be, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or questioning. HBT bullying can also affect families and allies.

- **Racist and Religious Bullying**

Racist or religious bullying targets someone because of race, ethnicity, nationality, culture or faith. It may involve derogatory language, stereotyping, or exclusion.

- **Sexist and Sexual Bullying**

Sexist bullying is based on gender stereotypes, while sexual bullying includes unwanted sexual comments, advances, or physical contact.

- **Cyberbullying / Online Bullying**

Online bullying (also called cyberbullying) involves the deliberate use of digital technology — such as social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, or email — to intimidate, harass or humiliate another person. It is recognised under the *Online Safety Act 2023* and related communications legislation.

Examples include:

- Sending threatening, abusive, or harassing messages.
- Sharing or posting humiliating photos, videos or comments.
- Impersonating someone online to cause harm or distress.
- Excluding others from online groups, chats, or games.

- Spreading false information, rumours or private material.
- Repeatedly contacting someone after being asked to stop.

Because online bullying can occur 24 hours a day and reach wide audiences, even a single post can have a lasting impact. Staff, parents and young people must treat online incidents with the same seriousness as face-to-face bullying.

Blend Youth Project will:

- Educate young people on respectful and responsible online behaviour.
- Promote awareness of privacy settings, digital footprints and reporting tools.
- Support victims of online bullying in line with safeguarding and data-protection procedures.
- Work in partnership with parents and carers to manage incidents effectively.
- Liaise with police, online platforms, or the *Report Harmful Content* service where content breaches the *Online Safety Act 2023* or other criminal law.

Staff must treat all reports of online bullying with urgency and compassion. Where illegal content is identified — such as hate speech, sexual images or credible threats — the incident will be referred to the Designated Safeguarding Lead and, where necessary, reported to law enforcement.

This approach aligns with statutory guidance including *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)* and *UKCIS: Education for a Connected World Framework*.

Prevention

Preventing bullying is more effective than responding after harm occurs. Blend Youth Project promotes a culture of respect, inclusion and empathy so that bullying behaviours are less likely to arise.

Key prevention strategies include:

- Clear expectations of behaviour communicated to all young people, parents, carers and staff.
- Regular discussions and workshops on respect, kindness, equality and digital citizenship.
- Visible adult presence in all activity areas and online spaces used by the project.
- Opportunities for young people to take part in peer-support, mentoring and restorative activities.
- Staff modelling positive behaviour at all times.

- Preventative work embedded through curriculum activities, youth-work sessions and one-to-one discussions.

Reporting and Responding to Bullying

Any concern about bullying — whether observed, reported by a young person, or suspected by a member of staff — must be recorded and reported promptly to the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or manager.

Steps to follow:

1. Listen carefully to the young person without judgment.
2. Record the concern factually using the organisation's safeguarding reporting system.
3. Inform the DSL/Manager immediately.
4. Investigate sensitively, ensuring the victim feels safe and supported.
5. Take appropriate action proportionate to the incident.
6. Inform parents/carers where relevant and obtain their cooperation.
7. Monitor and review to ensure bullying does not recur.

Every incident must be logged and outcomes recorded in line with data-protection and safeguarding procedures. Where a criminal offence may have occurred — such as harassment or online abuse — the police will be informed.

Support for Victims

Victims will be reassured that they have done the right thing by reporting. Support will be provided to rebuild confidence and wellbeing through positive inclusion, counselling or referral to external agencies if needed. The DSL will liaise with parents/carers and relevant professionals to agree a support plan.

Action with Perpetrators

Sanctions will be fair and proportionate, focusing on helping the young person understand the impact of their behaviour and take responsibility. The underlying causes of bullying — such as peer pressure, prejudice or unmet needs — will be explored and addressed.

Possible actions include:

- Restorative conversations or mediation (only if safe and appropriate).
- Behaviour agreements or reflective work.

- Parental involvement meetings.
- Temporary suspension or exclusion from activities.
- Referral to external agencies for additional support.

Staff Responsibilities

All staff and volunteers must:

- Model positive, respectful relationships.
- Challenge bullying behaviour immediately and consistently.
- Follow reporting procedures accurately.
- Support young people involved — both those targeted and those displaying bullying behaviour.
- Attend regular training on safeguarding, equality and online safety. Managers are responsible for monitoring incident records, identifying patterns and ensuring lessons learned are shared across the organisation.

Roles and Responsibilities

Staff and Volunteers

Create and maintain an inclusive culture where diversity is valued and bullying is unacceptable. Ensure that young people know how and to whom they can report concerns. Intervene promptly and appropriately when witnessing or suspecting bullying. Record all incidents accurately and share them with the DSL or manager. Provide appropriate supervision during all activities, including breaks, online work and off-site trips. Support restorative approaches where appropriate, helping young people rebuild positive relationships.

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

Oversee all bullying and safeguarding concerns. Ensure all reports are investigated and documented. Provide guidance and training for staff. Liaise with parents, carers, social care and external agencies as needed. Ensure compliance with safeguarding legislation and statutory guidance such as *Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)*.

Young People

Treat everyone with kindness, fairness and respect. Report any bullying to a trusted adult — whether it happens to you or someone else. Support peers who may be affected by bullying by including them and standing up against unkind behaviour. Avoid retaliating

or responding to bullying with further aggression. Use technology responsibly, following online-safety guidance and reporting harmful content.

Parents and Carers

Encourage and model positive behaviour at home. Talk to young people about respect, empathy and digital responsibility. Contact the project if they suspect or are informed that bullying has occurred. Work with staff to resolve incidents and support both the child who has been bullied and the one displaying bullying behaviour. Respect confidentiality while ensuring safety and wellbeing remain the priority.

Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed annually, or sooner if legislation or guidance changes, to ensure it remains current and effective.

Monitoring includes:

- Reviewing incident logs to identify patterns or trends.
- Seeking feedback from young people, staff and parents/carers.
- Evaluating the effectiveness of interventions.
- Updating training, practice and policy as required.

The review will be led by the DSL and Senior Management Team, with oversight from the governing body or trustees.

Legislative and Policy Framework

This policy is guided by the following key legislation and statutory guidance in England:

- Education and Inspections Act 2006 (Section 89)
- Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989 and Children Act 2004
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988 and Communications Act 2003 (Section 127)
- Online Safety Act 2023
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (2025)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)
- UK Council for Internet Safety (UKCIS)