

# Anti-Bullying Policy

## Orange Tree School and OTS Ridgeway

Independent School Standards: paragraphs 10 and 34.

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## INTRODUCTION

At Orange Tree School, we aim to provide a safe, calm and caring learning environment for all students, staff and visitors to our schools. Using our Orange Tree Values, we encourage everybody to be respectful of each other, treat everyone with respect and to report incidents of bullying that they either witness or experience themselves.

At Orange Tree School:

- We believe all forms of bullying as completely unacceptable in any circumstance
- Bullying will be responded to in line with our behaviour policy (as well as the specific guidance below)
- Bullying is taught and explored both by following our PSHE Education curriculum and when or if incidents occur.
- Where applicable, managing electronic bullying (e.g. cyber-bullying) must also be considered if amounting to bullying.
- We will take measures to prevent and respond to bullying and implement them consistently and fairly, while also taking into account individual needs, levels of understanding and developmental differences.
- We recognise that some students, including those with autism and other special educational needs, may experience rigid or confused thinking, misinterpret social situations, or unintentionally display behaviours that could be perceived or received as bullying.
- Responses are therefore individualised and proportionate, focusing on education, support and understanding, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach, while ensuring the safety and wellbeing of all students.

This policy should also be read in conjunction with our 'relationship and behaviour' policy.

IT IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY TO WORK TOGETHER TO PREVENT OCCURRENCES OF BULLYING AND TO REPORT AND DEAL WITH INCIDENTS QUICKLY AND EFFECTIVELY.

AT ORANGE TREE SCHOOL WE PROMOTE BEING KIND, ACCEPTANCE AND TOLERANCE.

## WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying can be defined as "behaviour by an individual or a group, repeated over time that intentionally hurts another individual either physically or emotionally". (DfE "Preventing and Tackling Bullying", July 2017)

Bullying may include:

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing, physical intimidation
- **Verbal:** name-calling, insults, threats
- **Indirect:** exclusion, spreading rumours
- **Online (cyberbullying):** messages, images, or posts intended to harm

Bullying is recognised by Orange Tree School as being a form of child-on-child abuse. It can be emotionally abusive and can cause severe and adverse effects on children's and young people's emotional development.

#### Bullying vs Conflict

Not all incidents of unkind behaviour are bullying.

- **Bullying** → repeated, intentional harm
- **Conflict / misunderstanding** → one-off or unintentional

In an SEN setting or SEN students may:

- Misinterpret social situations
- Struggle with communication
- Act without intent to harm

It is essential that staff distinguish between these to ensure appropriate responses.

#### SEN Considerations

At Orange Tree School, we recognise that:

- Students may have differences in social understanding
- Behaviour may arise from unmet needs or communication difficulties
- Intent and impact may not always align

When responding to incidents, staff will consider:

- Level of understanding
- Communication needs
- Emotional regulation
- Intent vs perceived impact

Responses will be:

- Individualised
- Developmentally appropriate
- Focused on learning and repair
- Balanced with ensuring safety for all students

## WHAT DO WE DO TO PREVENT & REDUCE BULLYING?

We actively prevent bullying through:

- Strong staff-student relationships
- High levels of supervision
- PSHE and social skills curriculum
- Assemblies and Anti-Bullying Week
- Teaching respectful behaviour and differences
- Clear Code of Conduct and school values
- Staff modelling positive interactions
- Early intervention when issues arise

Bullying incidents are relatively rare due to this proactive approach.

Staff are extremely vigilant, and the high level of staff and pastoral support means we are able to identify any 'bullying' behaviours or misunderstandings quickly.

Staff are proactive to support students to socialise and interact appropriately so that all students feel safe and supported and always have a member of staff they can talk to.

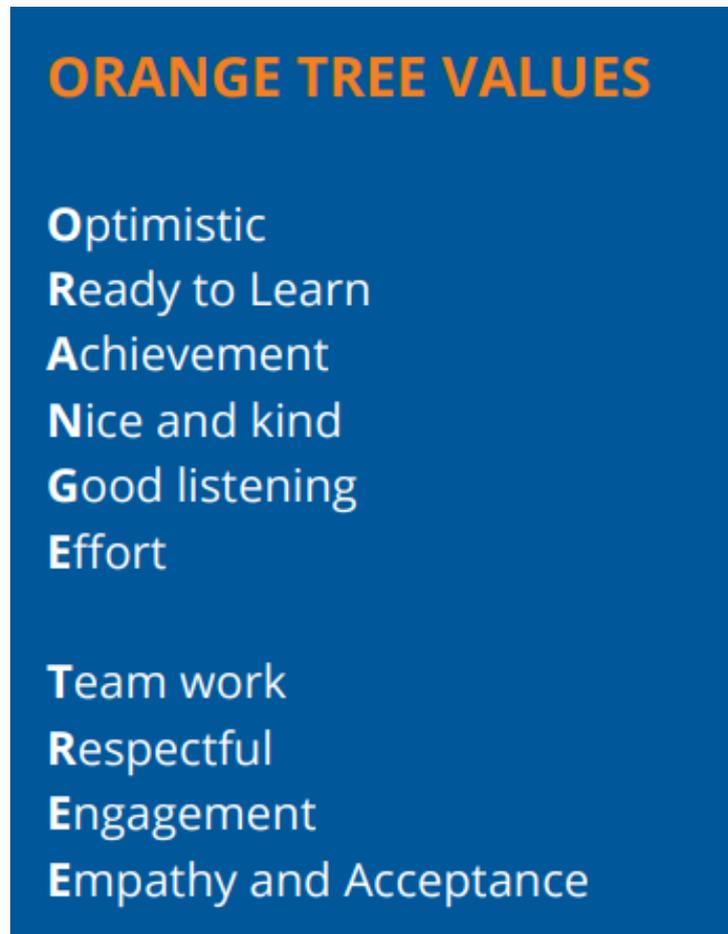
'Bullying' incidents are not usual at Orange Tree school due to the Orange Tree Values instilled throughout the school and the high level of support and staff available. Staff promote kindness and tolerance throughout the day. Staff also support students who may not realise their behaviour or interaction could be classed or identified as 'bullying' or repetitive unkind behaviours and support mediation and reflection activities as soon as appropriate. Staff also look at why these behaviours might be happening and look at what additional support a student might need to understand their emotions and emotional responses.

Using our extensive individualised knowledge of students, and strong relationships with home, we aim to recognise any changes that might be a result of 'bullying' behaviours.

As a whole school approach, we ensure that appreciation and respect for all cultures and backgrounds are promoted and celebrated. The school takes reasonable steps to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation. We ensure that all students have the means to communicate, where verbal communication is challenging. The school also have a robust monitoring and filtering system that is effective in protecting students from inappropriate information's or websites, email access is restricted, and cyber based bullying is filtered.

The Orange Tree Code of Conduct and Values are actively promoted throughout the schools to develop a positive learning environment with the aim of supporting understanding and tolerance of others, embracing differences and reducing the opportunities for bullying to occur.:

- Code of Conduct which is highly visible in the school and referred to in lessons and assemblies as part of our approach to promoting positive behaviour
- Our Orange Tree Values promote being a good citizen, creating a supportive, calm school, respect and British values and which is taught through social skills lessons, our PSHE curriculum, our assemblies and any other opportunities we can.



We also actively teach what bullying is, why is it wrong and support student to identify it and report it through:

- The national 'anti-bullying week' each year
- Have regular speakers and charities at school
- Relevant assemblies
- Social Skills lessons
- A robust student induction process including going through the Code of Conduct and Orange Tree Values and a key member of staff.
- Using the schools' behaviour policy and point system to reward kind behaviour and rewarding positive choices.

- Regular staff training to recognise and deal with bullying, including on specific areas such as homophobia, transphobia, biphobia, religious diversity, Islamophobia, disability discrimination and racism
- Staff model and support how to interact and resolve conflict and support student to recognise how their behaviour can impact someone else.

## Parents/Carers

Parents and carers have an important part to play in preventing and responding to bullying. We ask parents to look out for uncommon behaviour in their child – for example, feeling ill, being overly quiet or isolating themselves etc. We also ask parents and carers to monitor device use and internet access to ensure it remains appropriate. Whilst we can support in school by teaching students how to use devices and phones appropriately, we cannot monitor use at home and cannot always deal with issues at school that happen at home.

We ask that parents/carers take an active role in their child's education, ask how their day has gone and who they have spent time with. If a parent or carer feels their child may be a victim of bullying, they must inform the school. This information will be taken seriously, and appropriate action will follow.

If as a parent or carer you feel another child has bullied your child, we ask that you do not approach that child or their family or post on any form of social media or WhatsApp platforms. Instead, please inform us immediately.

- It is important to establish the facts and to see if the concern is bullying.
- It is important that parents/carers do not advise their child to react back or to repeat the bully's behaviour. This will only make the situation worse.
- It is important to never tell a child it is their fault they are being bullied.
- It is hugely helpful for families to support children in asking for help.

## Reporting Concerns

Allegations and incidents of bullying at Orange Tree School will be taken seriously by all staff and investigated and dealt with impartially and promptly. All of those involved will have the opportunity to be heard. Staff will support all students involved whilst the allegations and incidents are investigated and resolved.

Concerns can be reported by:

- Students speaking to a trusted adult
- Parents/carers contacting the school
- Staff observations
- Student voice systems

All reports are taken seriously and handled sensitively. Students will never be blamed for reporting bullying.

The following robust, but flexible, procedures are followed:  
Step-by-Step Process

### **1. Report received**

### **2. Initial triage by staff member and then sent to senior staff to determine if incident is:**

- Bullying
- Conflict
- Safeguarding concern

### **3. Investigation**

All allegations of bullying are investigated promptly, fairly and consistently.

The school will:

- Speak to all students involved
- Gather available evidence
- Review context and history

### **4. Outcome classification**

- Confirmed bullying
- Conflict / misunderstanding
- Unsubstantiated

### **5. Response**

- Restorative work
- Supported Mediation
- Social skills/PSHE sessions
- Therapeutic support which could be mentoring, ELSE
- Sanctions in line with the Relationship and Behaviour Policy and in line with individual needs
- Supporting students responsible for bullying to understand the impact of their actions and make amends

### **6. Recording**

- Logged on MIS
- Outcome reported to parent/carers.

### **7. Follow-up**

- Monitor and review

In serious or ongoing cases, parents/carers will be invited into school to agree next steps. In rare cases, further sanctions may include exclusion or involvement of external agencies or the police.

In the unlikely event the bullying continues, or in more serious cases of bullying, families will be invited into the school for a meeting to discuss the problem with the AHT and agree a way forwards. In very rare cases, mediation/restorative justice meetings with both families and students present may be used to resolve the issues. If issues continue or not resolves, further sanctions will be considered including further exclusion and/or involving the police or other external agencies.

All incidents of bullying are logged by category on the schools' MIS system including student files and analysed in leadership team meetings.

Actions from this analysis (e.g. staff training, timetable changes, specific support plans, etc) are then implemented as appropriate to reduce, eradicate or prevent further cases of bullying.

We focus on supporting students to develop their social interaction skills, understanding themselves and own needs, accepting themselves, improving their self-esteem to focus on the feelings underneath the behaviours, to ultimately stop recurring bullying and support developing relationships and positive social interactions

### **Evidence and Decision-Making**

- Decisions are based on the **balance of available evidence**
- The school will not make findings based on **unverified reports alone**
- Where evidence is limited, this will be recorded and support provided

### **Incidents Outside of School (Including Online)**

The school recognises that incidents may occur outside of school, including online.

Where concerns are raised, the school will:

- Consider impact on students in school
- Provide support and guidance

However:

- The school cannot investigate or enforce consequences for incidents outside of school without clear evidence
- The school does not have authority over home environments or personal devices

Parents/carers are responsible for:

- Monitoring online activity

- Managing behaviour outside school

The school recognises that incidents outside of school, including online, may affect pupils in school and will take appropriate steps to ensure their safety and wellbeing during the school day. However, the school's capacity to investigate or enforce consequences is limited where incidents occur beyond the school environment, particularly in the absence of clear evidence.

Parents may be advised to:

- Report to online platforms
- Contact police where appropriate

## Responses and Support

Responses may include:

- Restorative conversations
- Mediation
- Targeted social skills work
- Therapeutic intervention
- Behaviour sanctions

Both the student experiencing harm and the student displaying behaviours will be supported.

## Safeguarding

Bullying is recognised as a form of **child-on-child abuse**.

Where concerns reach safeguarding thresholds, they will be:

- Logged on safeguarding systems
- Managed by the DSL
- Referred to external agencies where necessary

## THE PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS (FROM THE EQUALITY ACT 2010)

This policy complies with the Equality Act 2010. The school takes reasonable steps to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation related to protected characteristics, including:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex

- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy, maternity, marriage or civil partnership

Discriminatory bullying is treated with the utmost seriousness.

## ALLEGATIONS FROM STUDENTS AGAINST OTHER STUDENTS

Allegations from students against students are covered by this policy and also in our behaviour policy. However, some allegations raised may be of a more serious nature and raise safeguarding concerns. Allegations made against another student may include:

- physical abuse (e.g. violence, particularly pre-planned; forcing the use of drugs or alcohol)
- emotional abuse (e.g. bullying, blackmail, extortion, threats, intimidation)
- sexual abuse (e.g. indecent exposure, touching, sexual violence and sexual harassment, sexting, forcing the watching of pornography or upskirting, which is a criminal offence and typically involves someone taking a picture under a person's clothing without them knowing, with the intention of viewing their genitals or buttocks to obtain sexual gratification, or cause the victim humiliation, distress or alarm and/or sexual exploitation (e.g. photographing or videoing indecent acts).

Sexting is sending or posting sexually suggestive images, including nude or semi-nude photographs, via mobiles or over the internet. If any devices need to be seized and passed onto the police, then the device(s) will be confiscated, and passed to the police. The device will be turned off and placed in the safe until the police are able to come and retrieve it. Please see our mobile phone policy.

In this case, the allegation must be logged using our online safeguarding reporting system and will be dealt with as a safeguarding concern by the DSL. Further guidance on this area can be found in our safeguarding policy.

## Roles and Responsibilities

### Headteacher

- Overall responsibility for implementation of this policy
- Ensures compliance with statutory guidance

### Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Manages safeguarding-related bullying concerns
- Liaises with external agencies where appropriate

### Staff

- Promote positive behaviour
- Challenge and report bullying
- Support students effectively

### Students

- Treat others with respect
- Report bullying or concerns
- Support peers

### Parents and Carers

- Monitor changes in behaviour
- Support children to report concerns
- Work in partnership with the school
- Monitor behaviour outside school
- Understand that the school has a process to follow and not all concerns raised will necessarily be categorised as bullying incidents where the evidence does not support this.

### Monitoring and Review

All bullying incidents are logged, monitored and analysed by senior leaders. Trends and patterns are reviewed to inform:

- All incidents recorded and analysed
- Trends reviewed by leadership
- Adjustments made to practice if possible such as timetable changes or supervision
- Staff training
- Targeted student support

This policy is reviewed **annually**, or sooner if required.

### Related Policies:

- Relationship and Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- PSHE Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- Mobile Phone Policy

### Statutory Framework:

- Independent School Standards (ISS) – Paragraphs 10 and 34
- Keeping Children Safe in Education (current version)
- Equality Act 2010
- *DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying Guidance*