



**Transforming
Futures**
TRUST



ACE TIVERTON
SCHOOL

Anti-Bullying Policy

Policy Information

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| Policy Owner | Stacy Fagg |
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| Approving Committee | Safeguarding & Wellbeing |
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| Next Review Date | March 2025 |

Adoption of the Policy

This Policy has been adopted and reviewed by the Trustees of Transforming Futures Trust

Signed
(Chair of Trust)

Date: 14.3.23

| Version No | Date | Summary of Changes |
|------------|----------|--------------------|
| 1.0 | Mar 2023 | Original document |
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Context:

ACE Tiverton School is a special school which provides education for young people aged 11-16 years with a **Primary Need/Diagnosis** of Identified Social, Communication and Interaction needs including a primary diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Condition and/or related social, emotional and mental health needs.

Cognition & Learning:

- Our students are at least of broadly average cognitive ability and can access, with scaffolding and support, an age-appropriate curriculum in most subject areas.
- Our students, with the right strategies and scaffolding, can learn independently with the aspiration to achieve level two qualifications in some or all subjects by the end of Year 11.

Social Communication & Interaction:

- Our students can successfully interact independently in a range of learning and social situations with suitable adult support and structure as needed.
- Our students, with access to appropriate information and strategies, aspire to be an independent member of society.

Physical & Sensory:

- Our students are mostly independent regarding their intimate and personal care.
- Our students have sensory need(s) that can only be met with specialist adaptation or resourcing.

Social, Emotional and Mental Health:

- Our students can regulate themselves in some structured situations with significant effort or adult support.
- Our students can be enabled to manage their emotions to maintain socially appropriate behaviour and communication in a range of situations and setting.

This is not an exhaustive or fully comprehensive list but communicates the focus of our school setting:

- We educate pre-teen and teenage students with social communication needs linked to ASC alongside the challenge presented by puberty and teenage development.
- We follow the national curriculum and KS4 qualification syllabi for all subjects offered in our curriculum.
- We teach students who are on a pathway to independent or supported post 16 learning, employment, or training.
- We offer a blended academic and therapeutic curriculum personalised to the needs of each student, within the context of the year and school cohort.
- We educate students in groups with a minimum adult/student ratio of 1:5.
- We make all possible adjustments to our physical environment and learning resources to meet the needs of students to access and achieve within the framework of the national curriculum and KS4 qualification requirements.

Overview:

This policy sets out the procedures for dealing with bullying of all types, within our school community and has been written with reference to Safe to Learn – Bullying of Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities – Embedding Anti-Bullying work in School (2008) and Preventing and tackling bullying - Advice for Headteachers, staff and governing bodies (2017). Alongside guidance and advice from the Anti-Bullying Alliance. This policy should be read with our Positive Relationship policy.

The young people at ACE Tiverton have a wide range of needs. As a school community we understand that bullying in this context can have additional subtleties and raise issues that are in themselves complicated to resolve. Not all students at ACE Tiverton will recognise bullying behaviour if they experience it or/and may be unable to express or communicate their aversion to and also to respond appropriately to instances of bullying behaviours. Equally not

all students would recognise that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying. We recognise that the negative consequences of experiencing bullying can last well into adulthood. It is vital that a timely and well-planned response to bullying is implemented as this can have a positive effect on lessening the impact of those who experience it.

Bullying is an anti-social behaviour that has no place in our school. Every member of our school family, adult or student, has the right to attend school and feel safe and to return home at the end of the day with body, property and self-respect intact. As a school we take bullying and its impact seriously. Students and families should be assured that known incidents of bullying will be responded to. Bullying cannot be defined as a particular action, as particular actions can be perceived in different ways by the victim. The ethos of our school fosters high expectations of excellent communication and interaction, and we will consistently challenge any words, actions or intentions that are perceived as bullying.

We are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Students are given every opportunity to express their feelings in the most appropriate form of communication. ACE Tiverton uses a trauma informed approach, providing a safe environment that fosters trust and belonging alongside a culture that supports mental health. Our aim is to maximise the protective factors of school by creating an environment of safety that has strong, positive and supportive relationships at its centre. Please read our Positive Relationship Policy for more information.

Policy Aims:

- All those involved in the governance, teaching and non-teaching staff as well as our families should know what the school policy is on bullying and what they should do if bullying arises.
- To provide a happy and secure school environment for all students and staff.
- To ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied.
- To promote consistency of approach and create an environment in which all types of bullying are considered unacceptable.
- To respond to bullying incidents in a reasonable, proportionate and consistent way.

Definition:

Bullying is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. Bullying is unacceptable words, intentions or actions used by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. In other words, bullying at ACE Tiverton is “unacceptable behaviour which occurs ‘lots of times, on purpose’.” Bullying can be short term or continuous over long periods of time. Bullying includes adult to adult, adult to child, child to adult and child to child. Bullying can relate to:

- Race.
- Gender.
- Religion.
- Culture.
- SEN or disability
- Appearance or health condition.
- Home circumstances, including young carers and poverty.
- Sexual orientation, sexism or sexual bullying, homophobia.
- Gender identity.

ACE Tiverton is committed to minimising all kinds of bullying and all staff are vigilant to changes in our students' presentation; common signs of a bullied individual are (but not limited to):

- Isolated - does not play or interact.

- Fearfulness, withdrawal and depression.
- Sudden outbursts, mood changes.
- Deterioration in schoolwork.
- Ingratiating behaviour with more powerful peers.

Process:

The starting point regarding any report is always that we have a zero-tolerance approach to any form of bullying, harassment or violence. It is never acceptable and has no place in our school family. We do not pass off any sexual violence or harassment as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “girls being girls/boys being boys” as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for our students.

In a bullying incident, there is usually a perpetrator and a victim. However, these roles may become enmeshed, changeable and difficult to separate. At ACE Tiverton, students are encouraged to trust adults and confide in them through the establishment of positive relationships. Staff are always on duty during unstructured times, and we have a high level of adult support in classes. We operate a zero tolerance to bullying and the following principles will be followed when we encounter cases of bullying:

- Always respond to bullying.
- Ensure that the victim is safe from harm.
- Isolate the perpetrator and deal with them in line with the behaviour management policy.
- Support both the victim and the perpetrator.
- Discuss bullying openly with all those involved.
- Involve parents wherever bullying is an issue.
- Monitor incidents.

We will:

- Establish a climate of trust which encourages the reporting of any perceived bullying.
- Embed clear procedures should incidents of bullying occur.
- Maintain a high level of awareness of the potential impact of all types of bullying behaviour.
- Enhance students’ self-esteem and confidence, strengthening the skills students use to deal with perceived incidents of bullying.
- Work with students identified as behaving in a way that is perceived as bullying to improve their understanding of the effects of their behaviour.
- Strategies used to educate and raise awareness of our expectations:
- Inform and educate students in the types of behaviour, language, interactions and responses that can be perceived as bullying.
- Create learning opportunities where students can develop empathy, awareness of different perspectives and understanding of others’ points of view.
- Use of assemblies, Preparation for Adulthood, Citizenship, Relationship, Social and Health Education (RHSE) and Mentoring/Student Skills Programme to make clear to all that bullying is not an acceptable learning behaviour.
- Encourage staff and students to be alert, as they move around the College, to the possibilities of bullying; to be prepared to intervene (or find help to intervene).
- Promote respect of all students, staff and visitors to the College.
- Embed and monitor reporting routes for students and staff.
- Take seriously and act upon all reports or allegations of bullying.
- Enable students to seek ‘counselling’ and providing opportunities for individuals to talk to and be listened to by a member of staff of their choice.

- Use the school brochures, bulletins and other newsletters to ensure that all staff, students and parents are aware that bullying is not acceptable behaviour and that action will be taken should it occur.

Our school ethos and philosophy means that all staff actively encourage students to have respect for themselves, each other and our environment. Good and kind communication is regularly acknowledged and rewarded. Staff will regularly discuss bullying which will help ensure students know that we are serious about dealing with bullying. It also enables leads to open conversations and increased confidence for students to feel comfortable to discuss bullying and report any incidents or concerns about other students' behaviour.

“Prevention is better than...” Any report of a bullying incident must be shared immediately with the Learning Family Leader, Student Support Team or a Senior Leader.

ACE Tiverton will not tolerate behaviour towards any member of our community that is abusive, hurtful, violent or aggressive. All members of our school family have the right to learn and work in a safe environment and we will take every step possible to ensure that behaviours contrary to this statement are addressed.

Child on Child (Peer on Peer) Abuse: Actions and Expectations

Children can abuse other children; this is generally referred to as child-on-child abuse and can take many forms. It can include (but is not limited to) bullying (including cyberbullying); sexual violence and sexual harassment; physical abuse such as hitting, kicking, shaking, biting, hair pulling, or otherwise causing physical harm; sexting and initiating/hazing type violence and rituals.

We recognise that, in contextualising our approach to child-on-child abuse, bullying and other forms of child-on-child conflict, all our students all have diagnosed and identified speech, language, communication and interaction needs. This does not excuse any actions within the definition of child-on-child abuse but our purpose as a school is to educate our students to operate successfully in the wider world. We hold a very clear view that Child-on-child abuse, where the intention is to cause harm can and does happen amongst our student population and that their profile of need is not a reason to avoid acting clearly and effectively.

We take all reports of any form of abuse, harassment, and conflict very seriously and consider the complete safeguarding picture relating to individual and groups of students in determining the best next step. In line with our Family Relationship Policy, we work with families as well as appropriate external agencies to ensure our approach to these issues are just, appropriate, personalised, and suitable for the age and stage of our students. We know that any form of conflict driven behaviour is harmful to both the perpetrator (who is a child) and the victim. Our approach focuses on harm reduction coupled with equipping students with healthy and appropriate strategies to identify their emotions, communicate them safely and effectively. This is alongside developing students' self advocacy and sense of self-worth to ensure they are empowered to speak up, report any worries or concerns and that their views will be heard and taken seriously.

We teach across all year groups, throughout our Preparation for Adulthood curriculum, a full range of topics connected to child-on-child abuse and harmful sexual behaviour. This ensures that students understand and can identify any signs of peer to-peer abuse or harmful sexual behaviour that they may experience, as well as anything they may hear or observe within their families or friendships groups. We follow the full RHSE curriculum and further details can be found within our RSHEC Policy, including curriculum content.

In line with our Positive Relationships Policy and as taught through Preparation for Adulthood, Citizenship and throughout the wider curriculum, we seek first to understand the experience of both the victim and the perpetrator and the events they have experienced. As per our Family Relationship Policy, we engage with student's families whether victim, perpetrator or witness to ensure the right support, guidance and information is available at all times.

In most cases, we will do the following:

1. The Learning Family Leader will contact the family of their student (perpetrator or victim).

2. Appropriate information will be shared with the family and discussion of the risks and support strategies to be followed and a decision made about the next steps.
3. Support Plans and risk assessments are updated to include the response and ongoing actions.
4. These may include family support in the form of monitoring social media usage, message content, supervised travel to and from school, restorative justice meetings as well as consequences such as community service, proportional loss of privileges, suspension and involvement of outside agencies such as the Police, Children's Social Care or specialist services.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions are recorded via our school systems.

If a direct disclosure is received or reported observations relating to Child-on-child abuse or Harmful Sexual Behaviour: What Actions Should Be Taken?

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| 1 | Staff must follow the reporting procedure for safeguarding concerns. Having listened carefully, assured, and validated the student – report immediately to a member of the safeguarding team and complete a detailed written report on CPOMS of the content, the facts as reported by the student, time, place and those present when the disclosure was made or worries observed. We are aware that any notes, records, or other document including messages and emails we make will be part of any follow up actions or processes led by an external agency as we will provide all necessary information to ensure that effective and efficient actions can be taken. |
| 2 | A formal report will be taken, with at least two staff present (one from the safeguarding team and the other a student's preferred adult). |
| 3 | If the report includes an online element, staff will act in accordance with the advice for schools on searching, screening and confiscation as well as the UKCIS Sharing Nudes and Semi-Nudes Advice . In some cases, it may be appropriate to confiscate any devices to preserve evidence and hand them to the Police for inspection. |
| 4 | Staff will not promise confidentiality and will talk through who the report will be shared with, it will only be those necessary to progress it. We know the importance of ensuring all students – victims particularly – understand what the next steps will be and who the report will be passed to; It is important that the person to whom the student discloses recognises that they have been placed in a position of trust. They will be supportive and respectful of the student at all stages through the disclosure and any subsequent process that unfolds. |
| 5 | Following receipt of any report or worry related to Peer-to-Peer abuse or harmful sexual behaviour, the DSL (or deputy where appropriate) will undertake a risk assessment and consider the most appropriate initial response. This will include, but not be limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the victim, especially their protection and support. • whether there may have been other victims, • the alleged perpetrator(s); and • all the other students, (and, if appropriate, adults, students and staff) in our school community, especially any actions that are appropriate to protect them from the alleged perpetrator(s), or from future harms |

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| 6 | <p>Additional considerations relating to harmful sexual behaviour and/or sexual harassment may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the wishes of the victim in terms of how they want to proceed which is especially important in the context of sexual violence and harassment. • Victims should be given as much control as is reasonably possible over decisions regarding how any investigation will be progressed and any support that they will be offered. This will however need to be balanced with our duty and responsibilities to protect other students. • the nature of the alleged incident(s), including whether a crime may have been committed and/or whether <p>HSB has been displayed;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the ages of the students involved; • the developmental stages of the students involved; • any power imbalance between the students. For example, is the alleged perpetrator(s) significantly older, more mature or more confident? Does the victim have a disability or learning difficulty?; • if the alleged incident is a one-off or a sustained pattern of abuse (sexual abuse can be accompanied by other forms of abuse and a sustained pattern may not just be of a sexual nature); • that sexual violence and sexual harassment can take place within intimate personal relationships between peers; • are there ongoing risks to the victim, other students, adult, or school staff; and • other related issues and wider context, including any links to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation. |
| 7 | <p>Each report and incident, unless part of a significant pattern, will be assessed on individual merit and with reference to individual contexts. Immediate consideration will be given to how best support and protect the victim and alleged perpetrator as well as any linked students such as witnesses or siblings.</p> <p>The starting point regarding any report is always that we have a zero-tolerance approach to sexual violence and sexual harassment; it is never acceptable and has no place in our school family. We do not pass off any sexual violence or harassment as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or “girls being girls/boys being boys” as this can lead to a culture of unacceptable behaviours and an unsafe environment for our students.</p> |

8 The options available to us include, but may not be limited to, the following.

1. **Internal Management:** in some cases of child on child abuse or sexual harassment, for example one off incidents or needs driven behaviour as communication, we may take the view, based upon the facts and big picture, that the students concerned are not in need of early help or other referrals to statutory services. Handling the report and resultant actions may be best done through our pastoral and specialist support staff and services. Our response is driven by our values and zero tolerance to harassment, abuse or actions that intend to cause harm or are sustained and without reason. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded via our school systems.

2. **Early Help.** We may decide that the students involved do not require referral to statutory services but may benefit from early help referral. Early Help means providing support as soon as a problem emerges, at any point in a child's life. Providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later. It can be particularly useful to address non-violent Harmful Sexual Behaviour and may prevent escalation of sexual violence. Our connections with Early Help, in the areas of Devon our students live, are strong and we work closely with the Mid-Devon Team to undertake assessments, Team Around the Family meetings and other community support services. Early Help and the option to manage a report internally are not mutually exclusive: we may manage reports internally and seek early help for both the victim and perpetrator(s). All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded via our school systems.

3. **Referrals to children's social care (CSC) via Devon MASH.** Where a student has been harmed, is at risk of harm, or is in immediate danger, we will make a referral to Devon CSC. At the point of referral to CSC, we will generally inform parents or carers, unless there are compelling reasons not to (if informing a parent or carer is going to put the child at additional risk). Any such decision should be made with the support of CSC. If a referral is made, CSC will then:

1. make enquiries to determine whether any of the students involved need protection or other services.
2. Where statutory assessments are appropriate, an appropriate member of our safeguarding team will work alongside, and cooperate with, the relevant lead social worker. Collaborative working will help ensure the best possible package of coordinated support is implemented for the victim and, where appropriate, the alleged perpetrator(s) and any other students that require support.
3. We will not wait for the outcome (or even the start) of a CSC investigation before protecting the victim and other students involved. We will work closely with CSC to ensure any actions we take do not jeopardise a statutory investigation. The risk assessment in place for the individuals will help inform any decision. Consideration of safeguarding the victim, alleged perpetrator(s), any other students directly involved in the safeguarding report as well as all students in our school community.
4. In some cases, CSC will review the evidence and decide a statutory intervention is not appropriate. We are always prepared to refer again if we believe the student(s) remains in immediate danger or at risk of harm. If a statutory assessment is not appropriate, we will consider other support mechanisms such as early help, specialist support and pastoral support.

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded via our school systems.

4. Reporting to the Police: Any report to the police will generally be in parallel with a referral to CSC. We, as a safeguarding team remain up to date with the local processes for referring and reporting cases of suspected or actual Peer On Peer Abuse, Harmful Sexual Behaviour and other issues connected to these areas. Where a report of rape, assault by penetration or sexual assault is made, our starting point is that this will be reported to the Police. Where a report has been made to the police, we will work closely with them to agree what information can be disclosed to staff and others, in particular, the alleged perpetrator(s) and their parents or carers. We will also discuss the best way to protect the victim and their anonymity. At this stage, schools and colleges will generally inform parents or carers unless there are compelling reasons not to. In circumstances where parents or carers have not been informed, it will be especially important that the school or college is supporting the child in any decision they take. This should be with the support of children's social care and any appropriate specialist agencies. It may become clear very quickly that the police (for whatever reason) will not take further action; we will continue to engage with specialist support for the victim and alleged perpetrator(s) as required. Whilst protecting students and /or taking any disciplinary measures against the alleged perpetrator(s), the named Lead Safeguarding Team member will work closely with the police and other agencies as required), to ensure any actions the school or college take do not jeopardise the police investigation. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded via our school systems.

5. Considering Bail Conditions: The police will consider what action to take to manage the assessed risk of harm which could involve the use of police bail with conditions, alternatively, the person suspected of an offence could be 'released under investigation' (RUI). People released under RUI can have no conditions attached to their release from custody and it is possible for a person on bail also to have no conditions. Whatever arrangements are in place, we will need to consider what additional measures may be necessary to manage any assessed risk of harm that may arise within their school experience. Particular regard will be given to the additional stress and trauma that might be caused to the victim, the potential for the suspected person to intimidate the victim or a witness; our risk management measures will strike a balance between management of risk and the rights of an unconvicted person (e.g. rights to privacy, family life, etc). Throughout any risk assessment process and investigation, we will carefully liaise with the police to ensure the best balance of arrangements. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded via our school systems.

6. Considering Malicious, Unsubstantiated, unfounded or false reports: 453. Records should be reviewed so that potential patterns of concerning, problematic or inappropriate behaviour can be identified, and addressed. If a report is determined to be unsubstantiated, unfounded, false or malicious, we will consider whether the child and/or the person who has made the allegation is in need of help or may have been abused by someone else and this is a cry for help. In such circumstances, a referral to Early Help, CSC or other agencies may be appropriate. If a report is shown to be deliberately invented or malicious, we will consider whether any disciplinary action is appropriate against the individual who made it as per our behaviour policy. All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded via our school systems. **Further Advice,**

Guidance and Resources:

- DfE: [Keeping Children Safe in Education: 2023 and Sexual Harrassment and Harmful Behaviours In School](#)
- NSPCC: [NSPCC Learning: Protecting children from harmful sexual behaviour and NSPCC - Harmful sexual behaviour framework.](#)
- StopItNow:- [Preventing harmful sexual behaviour in children - Stop It Now provides a guide for parents, carers and professionals to help everyone do their part in keeping children safe, they also run a free confidential helpline.](#)

All concerns, discussions, decisions and reasons for decisions should be recorded via our school systems.

