



Anti-Bullying and Cyber Bullying Policy

Date	October 2025
Written By	Lulu Stanier-Martin
Approved By	Executive Headteacher
Date Approved	October 2025
Review Date	October 2027

Introduction

This document is a statement of the aims, principles and strategies for creating an environment where everyone is valued and incidents of bullying, including cyber bullying, are managed effectively. At Ridgeway School we aim to:

- Promote an ethos where all pupils and staff are valued and treated with respect and bullying is regarded as unacceptable by all members of the Ridgeway community
- Set out the legal framework for the prevention of and response to bullying
- Set out the proactive steps that the school takes to prevent bullying
- Set out the steps that the school will take in response to incidents of bullying
- To ensure pupils, staff and parents/carers understand what bullying is and how it can be prevented (including online/cyberbullying)

It is important to understand what bullying and cyber bullying are in order to effectively monitor bullying at Ridgeway:

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups. It might be motivated by actual differences between pupils or perceived differences. Bullying often involves an imbalance of power between the perpetrator and the victim. This could involve perpetrators of bullying having control over the relationship which makes it difficult for those they bully to defend themselves. The imbalance of power can manifest itself in several ways. It may be physical, psychological, derive from an intellectual imbalance, or by having access to support of a group, or the capacity to socially isolate someone. Bullying can result in the intimidation of a person or persons through threat of violence or by isolating them either physically or online (DfE, 2017). Ridgeway recognises that bullying behaviour can be the result of adverse childhood experiences of the bully or other trauma.

Cyber-bullying is bullying (as defined above) that is through the medium of technology. This 'virtual' bullying can happen inside or outside of school and at all times of day. The audience for this type of bullying can be much bigger and can involve a greater number of people (DfE, 2017). Cyber-bullying can be particularly challenging for staff to deal with due to the rapidity of technological development and the viral nature of certain applications.

Examples of bullying can include discrimination on the grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs and disabilities, or because a child is adopted or in care. Bullying can happen through a variety of media including text messages, mobile applications, online forums, computer games and memes. Bullying can involve sexual violence and harassment.

Bullying is a form of *child-on-child abuse*; there is a significant amount regarding this in our Safeguarding & Child Protection policy.

The purpose of this policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is a considered, clear and consistent approach to bullying and cyber bullying at Ridgeway that all stakeholders can easily access and understand, in order to ensure that our pupils receive the support that they deserve. This policy should be viewed in the context of the nature of our pupils and their difficulties. Our pupils have a variety of special educational needs and disabilities, including (but not limited to) autism, cerebral palsy and Down's syndrome; all pupils have learning disabilities, and many require additional support in order to meet their social, emotional and mental health needs.

Procedures

Prevention

Prevention of bullying is the most important aspect of Ridgeway's anti-bullying approach; Ridgeway takes a number of measures to prevent bullying from taking place. An ethos of respect, tolerance and care is integrated into the culture of the school and 6th form. This is communicated to pupils, parents/carers, staff, governors and the wider community through clear, articulated values and in our pupil-centred approaches. Examples of our proactive and preventative measures to prevent bullying from taking place are:

- Expectations of a high standard of behaviour at all times is communicated to pupils
- Pupils are taught how to share concerns, including what to do if they are being bullied. Pupils are also taught how to be safe at Ridgeway, including how to seek help when they need it or see something that concerns them. More information about this can be found in our safeguarding policy, which is shared with pupils via the accessible safeguarding policy that can be found in all classrooms – see below.
- All members of the Ridgeway community promote an inclusive environment where pupils' individuality is celebrated and respected, and staff support open conversations about difference and mutual respect.
- Values are clearly shared through the school 'Golden Rules', which staff refer to during conversations with pupils, and are well-embedded into life at Ridgeway. At Ridgeway 6th Form, the rules change to being 'Expect Respect' to reflect age-appropriateness for the college students.
- The Golden Rules include: '*We are kind to others*', '*I always try my best*', '*We listen to each other*'. These Golden Rules are reinforced throughout the school day, with Class Dojo points awarded to pupils who follow them.
- The Expect Respect rules include: '*We treat each other with respect*', '*We treat others as we would like to be treated*', '*We take responsibilities for our choices*'. These Expect Respect rules are reinforced throughout the day in 6th Form.
- Ridgeway is proud to have a Positive Behaviour Support culture, driven forward by the Positive Behaviour Support (PBS) Leader. Concerns are identified early, and proactive strategies are put in place, such as regular emotional wellbeing check-ins. These are supported by the PBS Leader, Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and Family Support Worker (FSW).
- Classroom-based staff are trained in Teach Team, to build staff confidence in implementing positive behaviour support strategies. We also weave trauma-informed approaches into this training.
- SLT maintain an overview of behaviour through the CPOMS system, which enables low level concerns to be identified, and SLT can set expectations around interventions.
- Teachers draw on support from external organisations where appropriate, for example using resources developed for Anti-Bullying Week.
- Staff are made aware of this policy and references to this policy are included in Team Teach training courses.
- Parents/carers have access to this anti-bullying policy and are made aware of the core values and rules described above. Parents/carers have clear lines of communication into the school and college through Class Dojo, telephone calls, home/school books (where appropriate) and email.

Immediate response

Allegations of bullying must be directly reported to a member of the Senior Leadership Team, following the guidance around reporting in the safeguarding policy. The DSL must then be made aware as soon as possible.

- The allegation and all subsequent actions will be recorded using CPOMS.

- All reports of bullying will be assessed on a case-by-case basis, with the DSL or deputy taking a leading role using their professional judgement. Support will be sought from other agencies such as social care or the police as required.
- It is important to deal with a situation of bullying immediately and sensitively. It is necessary to gather the information as soon as possible to get the true facts.
- It is important to deal with information gathering sensitively and think about the language used and the impact of that language on both the children and the parents/carers when they become involved. Staff will avoid language that may create a 'blame' culture.
- The assessment of the incident might need to consider:
 - o The chronological ages of those involved
 - o The levels of cognition of those involved
 - o All alleged physical and verbal aspects of the behaviour and incident
 - o Whether the behaviour involved inappropriate sexual knowledge or motivation
 - o Any degrees of physical aggression, intimidation, threatening behaviour or bribery? The effect on the victim
 - o Any attempts to ensure the behaviour and incident is kept a secret The child or young person's motivation or reason for the behaviour Whether this was a one-off incident, or longer in duration
- If the allegation involves sexual violence, the DSL or deputy must make an immediate risk and needs assessment.
- There is further information regarding child-on-child abuse in the safeguarding policy, and further information regarding cyber bullying in the online safety policy.
- If the pupils involved are in the same class, the DSL and Senior Leadership Team must carefully consider whether a move needs to be made to support or safeguard the pupils.
- If required, advice could be sought from relevant agencies around offering support, such as police, Children's Services or health.

Intervention - for those who are bullied

Ridgeway will support all pupils who are bullied and, in all cases, will prioritise the immediate safety and welfare of pupils. Support will be determined by the class teacher in consultation with the pupil's parents/carers and a member of the Senior Leadership Team, as well as listening to the voice of the pupil who has been bullied – it's important to allow them to identify what they need.

Support *may* include one or more of the following:

- Support from a member of staff who is familiar to and trusted by the pupil
- Pastoral support from the Family Support Worker
- Discussions with and support for parents/carers from the class teacher and a member of SLT
- Direct support from the PBS Lead
- Daily check ins and support with additional supervision during the day
- Referral to safeguarding partners
- Referral to CHUMS or Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
- Additional support and teaching regarding protective behaviours
- Ongoing monitoring of the pupil's mental health
- Play or music therapy

Intervention - Discipline and tackling underlying issues for the perpetrator

The response to bullying will very much depend on the assessment outlined above: different incidents will be responded to in different ways.

When considering disciplinary actions, it is important to remember that all pupils at Ridgeway have a learning disability, and we have a high proportion of Looked After pupils, and trauma-experienced pupils. When young people have SEND, it can be complex to try and identify the driver behind the inappropriate behaviour, and there are often a high number of contextual factors that must be considered in these circumstances.

With this in mind, Ridgeway, ensures that *appropriate* disciplinary actions and measures are put in place for pupils who perpetrate bullying, applied with fairness and consistency. The PBS Lead may need to support with developing a PBS plan, if one isn't already in place.

It is important that careful consideration is given to what could have led the perpetrator to act in the way that they did – some children have experienced abuse and trauma that impacts their decision-making; some might be recreating their own personal experiences of experience – and therefore staff need to be aware that they might require high levels of support. The DSL will consider whether the perpetrator is at risk and whether a referral to local safeguarding partners or any other services is required. The DSL will work with safeguarding partners to agree a joint approach where bullying is likely to have resulted in a criminal offence or where a pupil has been put at risk of harm.

Records and reporting

Staff will record all incidents of bullying on CPOMS; there is a 'bullying' specific tag, alongside specific tags for sexual harassment, homophobia and racism. This allows senior leaders to examine incidents of bullying alongside other possibly pertinent information. Staff will write a factual account of what they have witnessed or what has been reported to them.

The Lead Practitioner for Positive Behaviour Support will report on bullying to the governors each term. This will include an analysis of any bullying related to a protected characteristic.

Support for staff

Staff who are bullied, whether that is by other staff, parents/carers or by pupils will be supported by the **Head of School**/Assistant Headteacher for their department, or the School Business Manager if non-education staff. Confidential advice and support lines are available for all Ridgeway staff through our Employee Assistance Programme. Other support will be determined and provided on a case-by-case basis. More information can be found in the Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance Policy.

Roles and responsibilities

Governors

- Oversee and quality assure this policy. Governors will review and approve this policy every two years
- Hold senior leaders to account in relation to this policy, scrutinise reports on bullying as part of Full Governor Meetings

Executive *Headteacher*

- Ensure that the policy is fairly and consistently applied for all pupils
- Ensure that the procedures outlined in this policy are followed by all staff
- Review the impact of this policy in relation to the Public Sector Equality Duty, ensuring that the application of the policy doesn't discriminate against, victimise or cause harassment against any person as a result of that person's protected characteristic(s)
- Oversee the work of the staff via CPOMS and direct intervention from senior staff where appropriate
- Ensure that the legal frameworks that apply to this policy are given due consideration
- Report to the governing board (or delegate this reporting) on the success of this policy

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL)

- Coordinate and respond to any welfare or safeguarding concerns arising from incidents of bullying
- Coordinate referrals to police and/or other safeguarding partners as appropriate, including where a criminal act may have occurred. Liaise with the **Executive** Headteacher around complex cases

- Ensure that all concerns around the welfare of victims or perpetrators are recorded and acted upon appropriately.

Lead Practitioner for Positive Behaviour Support (PBS Lead)

- Oversee the work of the staff via CPOMS; direct intervention from senior staff where appropriate
- Report to the governing board on the success of this policy
- Ensure that the policy is fairly and consistently applied for all pupils
- Provide support to staff managing incidents of bullying and putting into place effective intervention
- Carry out direct preventative work with identified individuals

Staff

- Comply with all aspect of this policy
- Follow all procedures that are set out as part of this document
- Support pupils to develop the British values of tolerance and respect through open discussions about difference
- Ensure that pupils' internet access is supervised at all times whilst in school
- Require pupils to adhere to the Golden Rules / Expect Respect
- Teach pupils about the importance of the safe use of ICT, how to stay safe online, how to adhere to the school acceptable use policy, and knowing where to find help
- Support pupils to understand the pupil accessible 'Safeguarding at Ridgeway' policy
- Ensure that their social media profiles are private and setup in such a way that pupils are not able to access compromising material or information
- Support pupils' understanding of this policy
- Teach pupils how to report problems and where to go for help
- Remain alert for signs of bullying, for example, a pupil becoming withdrawn or isolated
- Will not bully, harass or victimise other staff members

Pupils

- Abide by the Ridgeway Golden Rules and Expect Respect
- Comply with this policy
- Engage with teaching to build their understanding that bullying, in all its forms, is unacceptable
- Do not bully others, either online or in person
- Report all incidents of bullying (including cyber-bullying) to staff
- Allow the inspection of their mobile phones and/or other devices when required by a member of staff authorised by the Headteacher (see legal framework below)

Parents/Carers

- Have this policy made available to them on the website
- Report any incidents of bullying (including cyber-bullying) to the school
- Support the application of this policy by reinforcing anti-bullying messages at home
- Support any disciplinary measures that may be taken for their child as a result of this policy
- Encourage their child(ren) to report any issues of bullying to staff
- Make every effort to follow professional advice from Ridgeway in the tackling of bullying
- Will not harass, victimise or bully staff members
- Will use the complaints policy (available on the website) in the case of unresolved or disputed issues.

Legal framework & statutory guidance

Linked national guidance:

Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, Department for Education (July 2017). This document is referred to throughout this policy as ‘the advice’ or ‘DfE advice’. This advice informs the vast majority of this policy and the procedures for tackling bullying.

The Education and Inspections Act 2006. Section 89 of this act provides that maintained schools must have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying amongst pupils.

The Equality Act 2010. The Equality Act 2010 sets out the public sector equality duty that is incumbent on Ridgeway School as a maintained special school. Ridgeway School will not discriminate against any member of the school community and will have particular regard to the protected characteristics set out in the Act. Additionally, the duty requires Ridgeway School to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

In addition to the Equalities Act, Ridgeway School is also required to abide by the *Children and Families Act 2014* and the *SEND Code of Practice 2015* in relation to pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. As an area special school, Ridgeway School staff and governors are particularly aware of the pertinence of these documents in relation to the activities of the school.

Children Act 1989 sets out schools’ responsibilities to consider a bullying incident as a child protection concern where there is ‘reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, it is likely to suffer significant harm’. Ridgeway School safeguarding policy can be found on our website; this includes the reference to the school’s responsibilities as defined by the latest version of Keeping Children Safe in Education.

Criminal Law can apply in some circumstances, although bullying itself is not a criminal offence in the UK. However, some types of harassing or threatening behaviour, or communications, could constitute a criminal offence. For example, the *Protection from Harassment Act 1997*, *Malicious Communications Act 1988*, the *Communications Act 2003*, the *Public Order Act 1986*.

Education and Inspections Act 2006. The Act sets out that the school’s disciplinary powers can be used to address pupils’ conduct outside the school gate and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of Ridgeway School staff. More information about this can be found in the school’s behaviour policy on the website and *Behaviour and discipline in schools: advice for headteacher and school staff*. Ridgeway School will take action to investigate and address bullying where it is reported to have happened outside of the school gate, where possible. Ridgeway School staff have the power to discipline pupils for behaviour outside school and will implement disciplinary actions where appropriate. This includes instances of cyber-bullying. Staff will refer matters to the police where they suspect that a crime has been committed, even when it has happened outside of school premises or when pupils are not under the lawful control or charge of school staff.

The Education Act (2011). The Act allows a member of staff who has been authorised by the Headteacher, and where there is good reason to do so, examine data or files on an electronic device, including mobile phones, and delete these files where necessary. There is no need to have parental consent to search a mobile phone.

If staff suspect that a file contains evidence in relation to a possible offence they will not delete it. Ridgeway School staff will confiscate and/or search electronic devices if they feel it is necessary and where they have been authorised to do so by the Headteacher.

Linked policies:

- Allegations against staff procedure
- Behaviour policy
- Exclusions policy
- Online safety policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Staff Discipline, Conduct and Grievance policy
- Positive Handling Policy

Equalities & inclusion

Ridgeway School will apply this policy fairly and without prejudice. We recognise and abide by our duties to ensure that pupils and staff are protected from discrimination in relation to their protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010. This policy has been written with due regard to the Equalities Act 2010. Senior leaders will look at bullying data in the behaviour data generated by CPOMS to ensure that this policy doesn't unintentionally discriminate against pupils based on their protected characteristics.

Safeguarding implications

Safeguarding all children involved needs to be a primary focus when considering cases of bullying, and this is reflected in the procedures above. Ridgeway School recognises that bullying may be an indicator that a pupil is in need of help or protection. We will consider whether a pupil's behaviour of challenge or concern may be linked to them suffering, or being likely to suffer, significant harm. Where this may be the case, we will follow our safeguarding policy, and consider whether pastoral support, an early help intervention or a referral to children's social care is appropriate. Please refer to our safeguarding policy for further information.