



HOMEBROOK WOODS

Independent Special School
Ages 5 -11

Anti-Bullying Policy

Academic Year 2026 –2027

Independent School Standards - Part 3 – Welfare, Health and Safety of Pupils

Proprietor:	Vonika Shelley
Headteacher:	Vonika Shelley
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1. Policy Statement

Homebrook Woods is committed to maintaining a school environment where every pupil is safe, respected and valued. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will always be addressed promptly, proportionately and with the wellbeing of all pupils as the central priority.

As a specialist independent school for pupils with Autism Spectrum Condition (ASC) and Speech, Language and Communication Needs (SLCN), Homebrook Woods recognises that bullying can occur in ways that may be difficult for pupils to recognise, interpret, or communicate. Pupils with neurodevelopmental differences may also be more vulnerable to exploitation, exclusion or misunderstanding within peer relationships.

This policy therefore reflects a specialist understanding of:

- the social communication differences associated with ASC
- the impact of language and processing difficulties
- the importance of emotional regulation and sensory wellbeing
- the need for explicit teaching of social understanding
- the role of adult support in maintaining safe peer interactions

The school maintains a clear stance that bullying behaviour will never be tolerated, while recognising that in a specialist SEND context some behaviours may arise from misunderstanding, distress, communication difficulty or sensory dysregulation rather than deliberate harm.

Our approach therefore combines:

- clear protection for pupils who experience bullying
- structured support for pupils whose behaviour may be causing harm
- proactive teaching of respectful relationships
- close adult supervision and early intervention
- careful monitoring of patterns or vulnerabilities

Homebrook Woods aims to create a community where kindness, respect and inclusion are actively taught, modelled and reinforced.

The principles of this policy are shared with pupils in accessible and developmentally appropriate ways, including visual supports, modelling and supported discussion.

Preventing bullying at Homebrook Woods is a whole-school responsibility. All members of the school community, including staff, pupils and parents, play a role in maintaining a safe, respectful and inclusive environment.

This policy is informed by national guidance including Department for Education anti-bullying guidance and Keeping Children Safe in Education. It is applied in a manner appropriate to the specialist SEND context of Homebrook Woods.

Related Policies

This policy should be read alongside other key safeguarding and behaviour policies at Homebrook Woods. Together these policies form part of the school's framework for promoting pupil safety, wellbeing and respectful relationships.

Relevant policies include:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour and Positive Support Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- SEND Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Whistleblowing Policy

Where bullying behaviour meets safeguarding thresholds, the procedures set out in the **Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy** will be followed.

2. Leadership Responsibility and Oversight

At Homebrook Woods, responsibility for safeguarding and pupil welfare sits with the Proprietor, who also serves as the Headteacher and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

This unified leadership structure ensures clear accountability for the prevention, identification and management of bullying within the school.

The Proprietor/Headteacher/DSL holds overall responsibility for:

- ensuring a culture of safety and respect across the school
- ensuring this policy is implemented consistently
- responding to serious or repeated bullying concerns
- ensuring safeguarding procedures are followed where required
- monitoring patterns of bullying or peer conflict
- ensuring staff are appropriately trained
- maintaining oversight of incident records and actions taken
- communicating with parents and external agencies where necessary

Where appropriate, specific staff members may assist in implementing

interventions, supporting pupils or gathering information; however, overall accountability for decision-making and safeguarding oversight remains with the Proprietor/Headteacher/DSL.

3. Aims of the Policy

This policy aims to:

- ensure all pupils feel safe, respected and protected from harm
- provide clear definitions of bullying within a specialist SEND context
- promote a culture where kindness, empathy and inclusion are actively taught
- ensure staff understand how to identify and respond to bullying concerns
- ensure pupils know how to seek help if they feel unsafe
- support pupils whose behaviour may be causing harm to develop safer social strategies
- ensure consistent recording and monitoring of incidents
- ensure safeguarding concerns are identified and escalated appropriately
- promote partnership with parents and carers in supporting pupils

4. Understanding Bullying

Bullying is defined as behaviour that:

- is intended to cause harm, distress or intimidation
- occurs repeatedly or has the potential to become repeated
- involves a real or perceived imbalance of power

Power imbalance may arise through:

- physical strength
- social influence
- communication ability
- cognitive or emotional understanding
- group dynamics
- vulnerability linked to SEND

Bullying can take place in person or through digital communication and may occur between individuals or groups.

5. Forms of Bullying

Bullying may include, but is not limited to:

Physical bullying

- hitting, kicking, pushing or physically intimidating behaviour
- damaging or stealing belongings

Verbal bullying

- name-calling
- insults or mocking
- threatening language

Social or relational bullying

- deliberate exclusion
- spreading rumours
- encouraging others to reject or isolate a pupil

Cyberbullying

- harmful messages sent electronically
- online harassment
- misuse of images or digital content

Prejudice-based bullying

Bullying may target aspects of a pupil's identity including:

- disability or special educational needs
- race or ethnicity
- religion or belief
- gender
- sexual orientation
- family circumstances
- appearance or difference

Any form of discriminatory bullying is treated with particular seriousness.

6. SEND-Specific Considerations

Within a specialist SEND environment, it is essential to carefully distinguish between:

- deliberate bullying
- social misunderstanding
- communication breakdown
- emotional dysregulation
- sensory distress

For example, pupils with ASC may:

- struggle to interpret social boundaries
- persist in behaviours they do not recognise as upsetting
- misread humour or sarcasm
- repeat behaviours without understanding the emotional impact
- find it difficult to explain what has happened

Staff must therefore assess incidents with professional judgement and sensitivity, considering:

- intent
- understanding
- communication ability
- emotional regulation
- the impact on the other pupil

Even when behaviour is not intended to harm, if a pupil is experiencing distress or intimidation the situation will still be addressed and resolved.

7. Preventative Culture

Preventing bullying is a core priority at Homebrook Woods. Staff are expected to address early signs of unkind behaviour or relational difficulty before these develop into patterns of bullying.

The school actively promotes a culture where respect and inclusion are embedded through:

Strong adult relationships

Pupils are supported by trusted adults who know them well and can identify changes in behaviour or wellbeing.

Explicit teaching of social understanding

Pupils are supported to develop skills such as:

- recognising emotions
- understanding personal boundaries
- respecting differences
- resolving disagreements safely

Emotional regulation support

Staff support pupils to recognise and manage feelings through structured approaches appropriate to their communication needs.

Positive modelling

Staff model respectful interactions and intervene immediately when unkind behaviour occurs.

Structured supervision

High levels of adult supervision are maintained during lessons, transitions and unstructured times.

Environmental safety

Learning environments are structured to minimise opportunities for conflict or distress.

8. Teaching Pupils About Respectful Relationships

Pupils are supported to understand:

- kindness and empathy
- respecting personal boundaries
- recognising when behaviour may upset others
- how to ask for help
- how to resolve disagreements safely
- safe use of technology

Teaching approaches are adapted to pupils' communication needs and may include:

- visual supports
- structured discussions
- role play and modelling
- social narratives
- supported reflection after incidents

9. Identifying Bullying Concerns

Staff remain vigilant to possible signs that a pupil may be experiencing bullying.

Possible indicators may include:

- reluctance to attend school or specific activities
- avoidance of particular pupils or areas
- emotional distress or anxiety
- withdrawal from peers
- sudden behavioural changes
- increased dysregulation or meltdowns
- unexplained injuries or damaged belongings

Because pupils with SEND may not easily communicate concerns, staff actively observe social interactions and wellbeing.

10. Reporting Concerns

Concerns about bullying may be raised by:

- pupils
- parents or carers
- staff
- external professionals

Pupils are encouraged to speak to a trusted adult if they feel unsafe or upset.

Staff also respond proactively to observations or emerging patterns.

All reports of bullying are taken seriously and investigated appropriately.

11. Responding to Bullying Incidents

When bullying is suspected or reported, staff will respond promptly.

The response must include:

1. Immediate safeguarding and emotional support
2. Information gathering using appropriate communication methods
3. DSL/Headteacher review
4. Parental communication
5. Support plans and monitoring

Immediate action

- ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the pupil affected
- separating pupils where necessary
- providing emotional support

Information gathering

Staff will gather information from all involved pupils using communication methods appropriate to their needs.

Leadership oversight

The Proprietor/Headteacher/DSL will review incidents and determine appropriate action.

Communication with parents

Parents or carers of pupils involved will normally be informed and may be invited to discuss next steps.

12. Supporting the Pupil Experiencing Bullying

Support includes:

- reassurance and emotional support
- access to a trusted adult
- strategies to increase feelings of safety
- adjustments to routines or supervision where needed
- opportunities to rebuild peer confidence
- ongoing monitoring of wellbeing

The school prioritises restoring the pupil's sense of safety and belonging.

13. Supporting the Pupil Whose Behaviour Caused Harm

Where a pupil's behaviour has harmed another pupil, staff will seek to understand the underlying cause.

Support may include:

- structured reflection on the impact of behaviour
- teaching alternative ways to interact
- social communication support
- emotional regulation strategies
- review of individual behaviour or support plans
- increased supervision or adult guidance

The aim is to support positive behavioural change while maintaining accountability.

14. Restorative Approaches

Where appropriate and safe, restorative approaches may be used to help pupils understand the impact of their behaviour and rebuild relationships. Restorative work will always be carefully supported by adults and adapted to pupils' communication and emotional needs. Participation will only occur when both pupils feel safe.

15. Recording and Monitoring

All bullying incidents and concerns are recorded through the school's safeguarding and behaviour recording systems.

Records include:

- details of the incident
- pupils involved
- actions taken
- support provided
- follow-up outcomes

The Proprietor/Headteacher/DSL reviews records regularly to:

- identify patterns or emerging risks
- monitor repeated incidents
- ensure appropriate actions are taken
- review the effectiveness of interventions

16. Safeguarding Links

Bullying may sometimes indicate wider safeguarding concerns.

Examples include:

- peer-on-peer abuse
- exploitation
- discriminatory harassment
- emotional harm

- online abuse

Where concerns meet safeguarding thresholds, procedures outlined in the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy will be followed, including processes relating to peer-on-peer abuse.

The Proprietor/Headteacher/DSL reviews incident records regularly in order to identify emerging patterns, potential vulnerabilities, or any disproportionate impact on particular pupils or groups.

17. Working with Parents and Carers

Homebrook Woods works in partnership with parents and carers to support pupils effectively.

Parents will be informed when bullying concerns arise and will be involved in planning support where appropriate.

The school encourages parents to share any concerns about their child's wellbeing or peer relationships.

18. Equality and Inclusion

Homebrook Woods is committed to ensuring that all pupils are treated with dignity and respect.

The school promotes equality in line with the **Equality Act 2010**, ensuring that pupils are protected from discrimination or harassment related to protected characteristics.

Bullying related to disability, race, religion, gender identity or sexual orientation will be addressed robustly and sensitively.

19. Staff Responsibilities

All staff share responsibility for preventing and responding to bullying. All staff must remain alert to the possibility of bullying and take immediate action where concerns arise. Failure to respond appropriately to bullying concerns may place pupils at risk and will be addressed through the school's safeguarding procedures.

Staff must:

- model respectful behaviour
- remain vigilant to early signs of bullying
- intervene immediately when unkind behaviour occurs
- report concerns promptly
- record incidents accurately
- support pupils to develop safe and respectful relationships

20. Policy Monitoring and Review

This policy is reviewed annually by the Proprietor/Headteacher/DSL to ensure it remains effective, compliant and appropriate for the needs of pupils at Homebrook Woods.

Monitoring may include review of:

- incident records
- safeguarding trends
- feedback from pupils, staff and parents
- developments in national guidance

Where necessary, the policy will be updated to strengthen the school's approach to preventing bullying and promoting pupil safety.

Appendix 1

Homebrook Woods Being Safe and Kind (Anti-Bullying – Pupil Version)

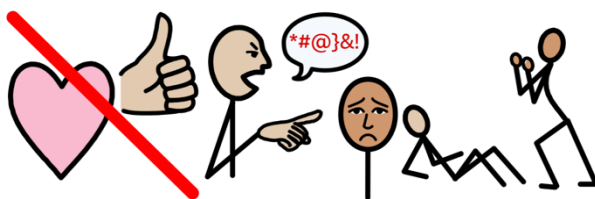
Everyone has the right to feel safe



At Homebrook Woods:

- Everyone should feel **safe**
- Everyone should feel **happy**
- Everyone should feel **included**

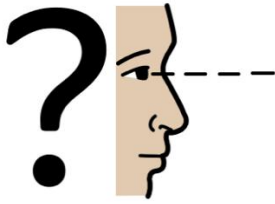
✗ Bullying is not OK



Bullying means:

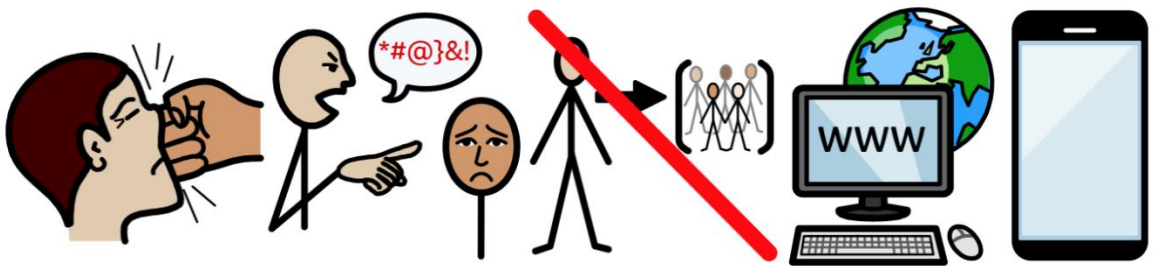
-  Someone is **unkind on purpose**
-  It **keeps happening**
-  It makes someone feel **scared, sad or worried**

What can bullying look like?

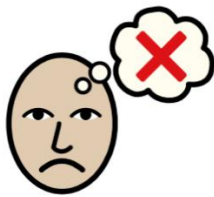


Bullying can be:

- **Hitting or pushing**
- **Mean words or shouting**
- **Leaving someone out**
- **Being unkind online**

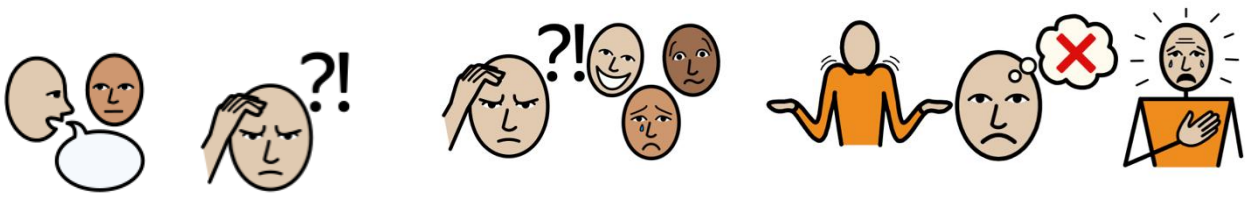


Sometimes children don't understand



Some children:

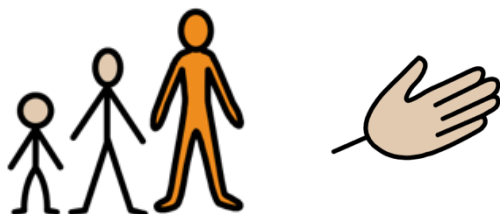
- Find talking hard
- Find feelings hard
- Don't know when something is upsetting



Adults help children learn.
And we always make sure everyone is safe.



Grown-ups will help



If something goes wrong, adults will:

 Listen

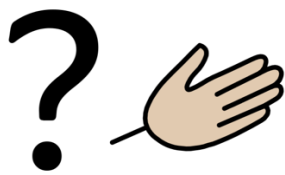
 Help you feel safe

 Stop the behaviour

 Help everyone learn

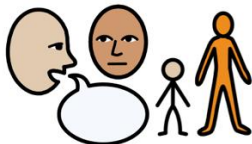
 Keep checking things are better

How can I get help?

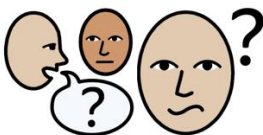
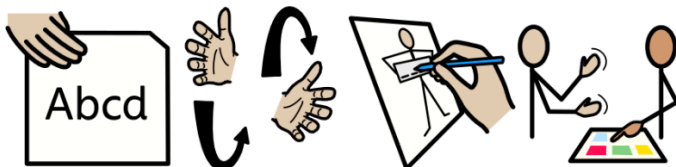


You can:

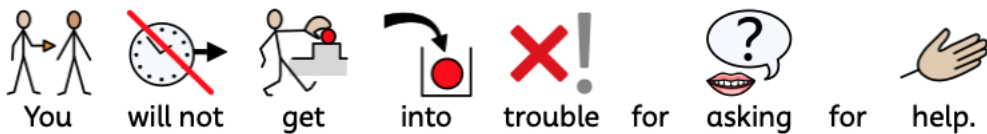
- Tell **any adult**



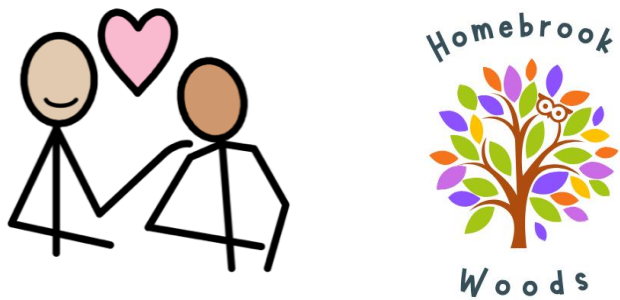
- Use **words, pictures or signs**



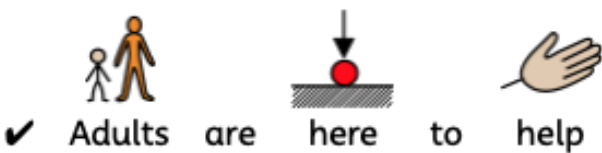
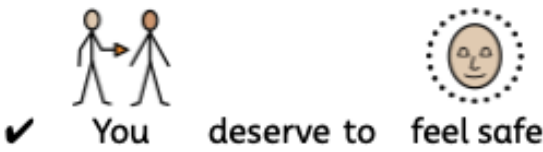
- Ask even if you are **not sure**



Being kind at Homebrook Woods



We practise:



Appendix 2

Staff Quick-Reference Flowchart – Anti-Bullying Response

