



## **Anti-bullying Policy**

Claystone School is an independent school which provides an appropriate, specialist education for children aged 4-11 who hold a Statement of Special Educational Needs for Autistic Spectrum Disorders and associated social and communication difficulties. This will include children and young people with moderate or severe learning difficulties.

This policy sets out Claystone School's procedures for dealing with bullying and pays regard to the Department for Education publication Preventing and Tackling Bullying: advice for Head Teachers, staff and Governing Bodies (July 2017). This policy should also be read in conjunction with the following Claystone School Policies

- Positive Behaviour Reinforcement System Policy
- Restrictive Physical Intervention Policy
- E-safety Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection policy
- Meeting the Needs of Individuals Policy
- Keeping Children Safe in Education

The school is committed to providing a safe environment for children and is compliant with national and local guidance and compatible with the School's Safeguarding Children Policy and Procedures.

The nature of their disability means that children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASDs) may not have sufficient understanding or awareness that certain behaviours directed towards others may be undesirable or that they might be construed as bullying. Similarly, children with ASDs who are targeted by such behaviours may be unable to express or communicate their distress due to such behaviours or to tell adults. This means that all staff at Claystone School have a duty to not only be aware of such behaviours and of any child involved, but also to respond appropriately to instances of bullying behaviours. Claystone School can draw upon skilled and knowledgeable professionals, including psychologists, to help devise strategies to manage and reduce bullying behaviours and their effects.

### **Defining Bullying Behaviours**

The DFE anti-bullying pack for schools suggests that the bullying behaviour which may occur in a school usually has three common features:

- It is deliberate, hurtful behaviour
- It is repeated, often over a period of time
- It is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves

And that there are three main types of bullying behaviour

- Physical; e.g. hitting, kicking, taking belongings

Emotional, which can include:

- Verbal; name-calling, insulting, racist or discriminatory remarks attributed to gender or sexual orientation.
- Indirect; spreading nasty stories, excluding from groups, cyberbullying

## **The Behaviours of Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders and the Characteristics of Bullying Behaviours**

The children attending Claystone School have a diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This means that some learners are likely to have a limited ability to comprehend that they may be engaging in activities which have the characteristics of bullying behaviour.

Nevertheless, it is possible that a learner may develop an obsession with another child which may cause distress or anxiety to the recipient and some learners may also engage in bullying behaviours listed above. Such behaviour might include wanting to be near the "target" child or an interest in making physical contact with that child, such as touching a particular part of his or her body, or demonstrating potentially physically harmful behaviours such as kicking or pinching the skin. Staff have a duty to be vigilant and alert to these behaviours. For example, the child who is the target may show fear or anxiety when he sees the child who targets him. This information must be shared amongst all members of the class team, and also shared with other members of staff as soon as possible particularly with those on duty during playtimes and lunchtimes. As the DFE anti-bullying guidance notes, children with special educational needs and disabilities may not be able to articulate their experiences.

## **Strategies for managing Bullying Behaviours in Children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders**

Staff need to be skilful in observing the outcomes of the behaviours described above. As such Claystone School uses the Wellbeing Support Plans, which help to identify a student's function of behaviour. These can be categorised as seeking Attention, to Escape/Avoid, seeking a Tangible, Sensory Stimulation or an Emotional response.

For example, some learners with ASDs may seek adult attention and use a behaviour directed against another child as a way of achieving this attention. Learners with ASDs are likely to be unaware that certain behaviours are socially unacceptable. Therefore, adult intervention could potentially reinforce the bullying behaviour. In these circumstances, the strategy should be to break this cycle to eliminate the reinforcement of the behaviour. This could be in a calm space in the school where the learner finds it easiest to reflect. Self-directed reflection time can be an effective way of withdrawing adult attention without the response becoming a punishment. Upon reintegrating the child must be helped to develop understanding for being given time to reflect and how they can identify instances of such behaviour re-occurring and what they can do to manage their behaviour. This leads to the learner becoming self-governing. The 'Zones of Regulation' is a working intervention across the school which all learners are encouraged to use when thinking about their emotions and behaviour and supporting their self-regulation.

Communicating the reason for disapproval of the behaviour can for example be achieved by saying or signing keywords, for example, "sad!" Learners are supported by TAs and their Class

Teachers throughout the day with AAC and with ongoing support from the Speech and Language Therapist, all staff encourage learners to use their AAC strategies.

The strategies being employed to overcome a child's potential, or actual (unintentional or not) bullying behaviour must be recorded in the learner's Wellbeing Support Plan. This may involve consultation with the well-being team and must include discussing the plan with the Headteacher and the learner's parents or carers as well as including the learner. The Wellbeing Support Plan will be shared with the learner's parents or carers. Strategies need to be carried out over a specific period and their effectiveness reviewed. Strategies must be shared with parents and carers of the children involved so that there is a consistent approach at school and home.

It may be the case in exceptional circumstances that the child's bullying behaviour continues even though a variety of strategies have been employed. In such cases the school may request the learner's LA to consider a change of provision, or it may be necessary to consider sanctions up to and including permanent exclusion. It is also important to help the child with ASD who is the target of bullying behaviour, particularly as he or she may have difficulty communicating about their experiences. The learner should be able to communicate in his or her preferred mode for example using augmentative communication or speech to an adult skilled in this preferred communication mode. Social stories may support the learner in being able to express their worries and say or sign "No!" There must also be a designated adult to whom the learner can go to communicate about anxieties or fears, particularly if these concern bullying behaviours. Class staff need to reassure the child that he or she has "done the right thing" if they confide in them. This designated adult will normally be a member of the child's class team. Each adult has a duty of care to share any concerns with the Class Teacher.

### **Bullying and the Claystone School Curriculum**

In all work with learners, staff emphasise the importance of developing social and emotional skills, including respect for the feelings of others. Where learners have difficulties interacting appropriately with their peers or with adults, then staff aim to help them develop an awareness of why particular behaviours are valued socially and what is inappropriate. The Claystone School Curriculum builds on this through activities which include PSHE, Circle Time, Outdoor Learning, PE, Snack Time, Language and Communication sessions and group work to develop an ethos of cooperation and respect for everyone.

Staff are important role models for the children. The behaviour of adults towards each other and towards the children is a potentially highly effective tool for preventing and for decreasing bullying behaviours in children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

**Policy Reviewed – January 2026**

**Next review – January 2027**