



Darlinghurst

ACADEMY

Anti Bullying Policy

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Our commitment

At Darlington Academy, we are committed to creating a safe, inclusive and respectful environment where every pupil feels valued, secure and a strong sense of belonging. We recognise that children learn best when they feel confident and supported within their academy community.

Bullying undermines this and can have a lasting impact on a child's wellbeing, relationships and ability to learn. It is therefore not tolerated in any form and will always be taken seriously.

Bullying is recognised as anti-social behaviour and may occur in physical, verbal, emotional, social or online forms, including cyberbullying, prejudice-based bullying and racism. At Darlington Academy we adopt a zero-tolerance approach to all forms of bullying, discrimination and harassment.

Our response is vigilant, proactive and in line with national safeguarding guidance. Incidents are addressed promptly, consistently and effectively to ensure pupils are supported, harm is resolved, and every child's right to feel safe is protected.

Definition of bullying

There is no single legal definition of bullying, consequently Darlington Academy follows nationally recognised guidance.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance defines bullying as:

"The repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where there is an imbalance of power."

The NSPCC and Department for Education also recognise bullying as:

repeated, intentional behaviour that causes harm and may target individuals or groups based on personal characteristics.

Cyberbullying is defined as:

the intentional and repeated use of electronic communication to harm someone who may find it difficult to defend themselves, taking place through online platforms such as messaging, social media or shared images.

Prejudice-based bullying, including racist bullying, *targets an individual's identity or perceived differences, such as race, religion, gender or disability.*

At Darlington Academy, we define bullying as:

Deliberate and repeated behaviour that causes physical or emotional harm to an individual or group, where there is a real or perceived imbalance of power.

We explain this to pupils in a simple and accessible way as: **"Several Times On Purpose."** and to **"Start Telling Other People." S.T.O.P.**

All incidents are taken extremely seriously due to their potential harm and impact. Incidents are responded to promptly, consistently and in line with safeguarding procedures, with a clear commitment to challenge discrimination, support those affected and promote equality, respect and inclusion across the academy.

Key Features of Bullying

Bullying is characterised by four key features:

- Intentional
- Repeated over time
- Harmful (physically or emotionally)
- Involves a power imbalance

Forms of Bullying

Bullying may take place in different forms, including:

- Physical – hitting, kicking, damaging property
- Verbal – name-calling, insults, threats, derogatory language
- Emotional/Psychological – intimidation, humiliation, manipulation
- Social/Relational – exclusion, spreading rumours
- Cyberbullying – online messaging, social media abuse, image sharing

These behaviours may occur individually or in combination and can take place both face-to-face and online. Bullying may be carried out by an individual or group and can cause lasting emotional or social harm.

Understanding Bullying Dynamics

Bullying situations can be complex and often involve different roles within a group. At Darlington Academy, we recognise that understanding these roles is essential to respond effectively and support all pupils involved.

Bullying may involve:

- Ringleader – the person who initiates or leads the bullying behaviour
- Target – the pupil experiencing the bullying (victim)
- Assistants / Reinforcers – those who actively join in or encourage the behaviour
- Bystanders – those who witness the behaviour but do not intervene
- Defenders – those who support the target or seek help

We recognise that pupils may move between these roles, and that group dynamics can influence behaviour.

In response, staff will:

- Address group dynamics to understand the wider context of the behaviour
- Support all individuals involved, including both the pupil experiencing bullying and those displaying the behaviour
- Prevent recurrence by identifying underlying causes, reinforcing expectations and promoting positive relationships

This approach ensures that bullying is not only addressed at the point of incident but is understood, challenged and reduced over time, supporting a safe and inclusive academy environment.

Understanding Behaviour

At Darlington Academy, we recognise that:

- Conflict is a normal part of development and can provide valuable opportunities for learning
- Pupils are supported to repair relationships, reflect on their behaviour and develop positive social skills

However, repeated, intentional behaviour that causes harm and involves an imbalance of power is always treated as bullying and responded to accordingly.

It is important to clearly distinguish bullying from other behaviours to ensure that incidents are identified accurately and responded to appropriately.

Bullying is not:

- A one-off disagreement or argument
- Occasional name-calling or unkind behaviour
- A temporary friendship fall-out

At Darlington Academy, we recognise that these situations are part of normal social development. However, all unkind or hurtful behaviour is taken seriously and addressed promptly to prevent escalation into bullying.

Recognising the Signs of Bullying

Staff are vigilant in identifying possible indicators that a pupil may be experiencing bullying. These may include:

- Withdrawal, anxiety or low self-confidence
- Reduced academic performance
- Changes in behaviour or routine
- Sleep difficulties or nightmares
- Reluctance or refusal to attend the academy
- Emotional distress, loneliness or social isolation
- Self-harm or increased risk-taking behaviour

We recognise that these signs may not always indicate bullying alone and could be linked to wider safeguarding concerns.

Therefore, all concerns are:

- Taken seriously
- Investigated promptly
- Considered alongside the academy's safeguarding procedures

Key Principles

At Darlington Academy our approach to bullying and discrimination is underpinned by the following principles:

- Intent does not remove impact – all incidents are taken seriously, regardless of whether harm was intended
- All discriminatory language and behaviour is challenged and reported
- Bullying and racism can occur in any context, including online, physical and social environments

These principles guide our daily practice, decision-making and responses, ensuring a consistent, fair and inclusive approach across the academy.

Our Approach at Darlington Academy

At Darlington Academy, our approach goes beyond simply responding to incidents. We prioritise prevention, early identification and strong relationships, ensuring that pupils feel safe to speak up and that concerns are acted upon promptly.

Our practice is embedded through:

- Positive relationships and daily interactions – building trust, respect and connection between pupils and staff

- Consistent adult responses – ensuring all staff respond calmly, fairly and in line with safeguarding expectations
- Inclusive values in action – promoting equality, diversity and respect across all areas of academy life
- Pupil, parent and community voice – listening to experiences and working together to maintain a safe and supportive environment

We take a vigilant and proactive approach, recognising that bullying can sometimes be hidden or unreported. Staff are trained to identify early signs, listen carefully to pupils and act on any concerns without delay.

We are clear that only when bullying is effectively prevented and addressed can pupils fully benefit from the opportunities available at the academy, develop positive relationships and thrive both academically and emotionally.

Key Responses

In line with these principles and our relational approach, Darlington Academy is committed to the following actions:

- Bullying, racism, discrimination (including homophobic and disability) and sexual harassment are not tolerated under any circumstances
- All concerns and incidents are taken seriously and acted upon swiftly
- Incidents are recorded promptly and accurately using the academy's reporting systems
- All incidents are investigated thoroughly, with appropriate action taken in line with safeguarding procedures
- Staff respond consistently and proportionately, prioritising pupil safety and wellbeing
- Pupils are educated through the curriculum (including RSHE) about respectful relationships, equality and inclusion
- We work in partnership with families and external agencies, where appropriate, to support positive outcomes
- Patterns of behaviour are monitored closely to inform early intervention, prevention and ongoing support strategies

Supporting Pupils: “Use Your Power for Good”

We empower pupils to be active participants in preventing bullying by developing five key skills:

- Speak Up - Use your voice if you see bullying or unkindness.
- Have Courage - Be brave and do the right thing, even when it is difficult.
- Show Kindness - Demonstrate care through everyday actions.
- Show Teamwork - Include others and celebrate differences.
- Ask for Help - Seek support from a trusted adult when needed.

These skills are embedded through teaching, assemblies and daily practice

Reporting Concerns

All members of the Darlington Academy community have a shared responsibility to report bullying or any concerns.

Pupils are encouraged to:

- Speak to a teacher or member of staff
- Tell a parent or carer, who can then inform the academy

We actively promote a culture where pupils feel safe, confident and supported to speak up, knowing they will be listened to.

We ensure that:

All concerns are taken seriously

- Pupils feel safe, heard and supported
- Clear and appropriate action follows every report

Parents and carers are expected to:

- Inform the academy promptly of any concerns
- Work in partnership with the academy to support positive outcomes

Responding to Bullying: Our 3-Step Approach

We follow a clear and consistent approach when responding to bullying to ensure that concerns are addressed swiftly, fairly and effectively.

Step 1: Respond and Record

Staff will:

- Stop the behaviour calmly and confidently
- Reassure and support all pupils involved
- De-escalate the situation

All incidents will be recorded, including:

- What happened
- Who was involved
- Any witnesses

All incidents are recorded using the academy's agreed systems and monitored over time to identify patterns and ensure appropriate follow-up.

Step 2: Understand and Prevent

Staff will:

- Investigate thoroughly and sensitively
- Use open, non-accusatory questioning
- Allow all pupils to share their views and experiences
- Identify the impact on the pupil(s) and any underlying causes
- Consider and address group dynamics and wider context

Our aim is to understand behaviour, prevent recurrence and support all pupils appropriately.

Step 3: Reflect and Learn

Where appropriate, staff will:

- Support pupils to repair relationships and restore trust
- Use incidents as opportunities for learning and development through:
 - RSHE lessons (well-being lessons)
 - Assemblies
 - Class discussions

This ensures that pupils develop empathy, understanding and positive behaviour.

Investigating Incidents

When bullying is suspected or reported:

- It is addressed immediately
- A clear and detailed record is made
- All pupils involved are spoken to individually

- Staff remain neutral, professional and solution-focused
- Parents and senior leaders are informed where appropriate

Serious or repeated incidents are escalated, monitored closely and addressed in line with safeguarding procedures.

Supporting Pupils

Pupils experiencing bullying will be:

- Kept safe and protected
- Listened to and reassured
- Given appropriate emotional support
- Supported to rebuild confidence and resilience
- Supported in partnership with parents/carers

Pupils displaying bullying behaviour will be:

- Supported to understand the impact of their actions
- Given opportunities to repair harm and rebuild relationships
- Supported to change behaviour and make positive choices
- Supported in partnership with parents/carers

Consequences

Where appropriate, consequences will be applied. These may include:

- Verbal warnings
- Restorative actions
- Meetings with parents/carers
- Internal reflection or removal from class (e.g. isolation)
- Fixed-term suspension
- Permanent exclusion (in the most serious cases)

All responses are:

- Proportionate and consistent
- Focused on safeguarding and learning
- Restorative wherever possible, helping pupils to reflect and improve behaviour

Our approach ensures that all incidents are addressed promptly, fairly and effectively, while promoting positive behaviour, safeguarding pupils and maintaining a safe and inclusive learning environment.

Bullying Outside the academy

Bullying can occur outside the academy, including online.

Where incidents impact pupils:

- The academy will take appropriate action
- This may involve parents, external agencies or the police

Prevention and Education

We promote a positive culture through:

- RSHE curriculum/Wellbeing lessons
- Assemblies and themed events
- Anti-Bullying Week
- Roleplay and discussion

Concerns

Concerns should be raised with:

- Class teacher
- Pastoral team
- Senior Leadership Team

If unresolved: Follow formal complaints procedures

Final Statement

At Darlington Academy everyone has a role in creating a safe, inclusive and respectful community. Through strong relationships, clear expectations and shared responsibility, we ensure every child:

- Feels safe
- Feels heard
- Feels they belong

This policy is reviewed biannually by the Inclusion Leader Tracy Grant