

The Holmesdale School

Anti-Bullying Policy

PERSON RESPONSIBLE	AHT Behaviour
DATE LAST REVIEWED	October 2025
DATE NEXT REVIEW	October 2026
DATE LAST APPROVED BY LGB	15th October 2025

In our Trust we work to ensure that there is equality of opportunity for all members of our community who hold a range of protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010, as well as having regard to other factors which have the potential to cause inequality, such as socio-economic factors. For further information, please see our Equalities Policy.

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and/or following any updates to national and local guidance and procedures.

Statement of Intent

The Holmesdale School is committed to ensuring that all students are able to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied. Bullying is an antisocial behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at The Holmesdale School. If bullying does occur, all students should know who to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. It is hoped that all students take ownership of the ECCO values both in and out of school.

Figure 1 – The ECCO Values



This policy is based on DfE guidance “Preventing and Tackling Bullying” July 2019 and supporting documents. It also considers the DfE statutory guidance “Keeping Children Safe in Education” 2025 and ‘Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges’ guidance’.

Links to other policies

This policy should be read in conjunction with the policies below:

Child Protection Policy
 Behaviour Policy
 Online Safety Policy
 Mental Health policy

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is any behaviour which is perceived by the target individual, or any other person, as intending to hurt, intimidate, frighten, harm or exclude. It is usually **persistent** and an abuse of power, leaving the targeted individual feeling defenceless.

Bullying can be:

Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures, spreading rumours).

Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence.

Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures.

Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments.

Homophobic/Biphobic/Transphobic: because of, or focussing on, the issue of sexuality.

Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing.

Cyber/E-bullying: all areas of internet, such as email and internet chat room misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging and calls. Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera and video facilities.

Cyber bullying differs from other forms of bullying in that it can take place at any time and can invade previously safe places such as the home. The audience can be very large and reached very quickly. The perpetrator may never be in the same physical space as their target and may attempt to remain anonymous. Many cyber bullying incidents can themselves act as evidence and it is important that in all settings staff and adults know how to deal with incidents.

Disability/SEN – because of, or focusing on, a disability or special educational need.

Home circumstance – targeting individuals who are looked after children or because of a particular home circumstance.

Bullying can therefore constitute any of the above activities within the context of the definition provided. Bullying may occur to anyone and this policy is inclusive of the bullying of school staff, whether by students, parents/carers or other staff. (Members of the school workforce suffering from or concerned about bullying may also contact their trade union or professional association for support and advice). Bullying should also be seen in acts of sexism and continual condescending, inappropriate and unwanted comments or attention due to a child or adult gender.

Bullying can seriously damage a person's confidence and sense of self-worth, and they will often feel that they are at fault in some way. Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness or taking unusual absences. There may be evidence in work patterns, lacking concentration or truanting from school. These signs and symptoms may indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and should be investigated.

Bullying can happen to anyone. This policy covers all types and forms of bullying including:

- Bullying related to physical appearance
- Bullying of young carers, children in care or otherwise related to home circumstances
- Bullying related to physical/mental health conditions
- Physical bullying
- Emotional bullying
- Sexual bullying
- Bullying via technology, known as online or cyberbullying
- Prejudicial bullying (against people/students with protected characteristics):
- Bullying related to race, religion, faith and belief and for those without faith
- Bullying related to ethnicity, nationality or culture
- Bullying related to Special Educational Needs or Disability (SEND)
- Bullying related to sexual orientation (homophobic/biphobic bullying)
- Gender based bullying, including transphobic bullying
- Bullying against teenage parents (pregnancy and maternity under the Equality Act)

The difference between bullying and friendship issues

At times students may become confused on the difference between bullying and friendship issues. Bullying is ongoing and repeated, whereas friendship issues are often single isolated events that are often a falling out between peers. As a school we still take friendship issues seriously and follow some of the same protocols outlined below.

Why is it Important to Respond to Bullying?

Bullying hurts. No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Students who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving. The school has a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

Aims of the Policy

- To assist in creating an ethos in which attending school is a positive experience for all members of the school community.
- To make it clear that all forms of bullying are unacceptable at school.
- To enable everyone to feel safe while at school and encourage pupils to report incidences of bullying.
- To deal effectively with bullying.
- To support and protect targets of bullying and ensure they are listened to.
- To help and support bullies to change their attitudes as well as their behaviour and understand why it needs to change.
- To liaise with parents and other appropriate members of the school community.
- To ensure all members of the school community feel responsible for combating bullying.

Parental Involvement

The school is firmly committed to working in partnership with parents and believes that the best outcomes emerge when professionals and parents/carers are able to work together when bullying occurs. We recognise the important influence which parents/carers have on their children and would wish to enlist their support when their child is involved in bullying – either as victim or a perpetrator. We kindly request that parents refrain from engaging with any perpetrator and allow the school to investigate and issue the appropriate consequence.

What will we do as a school?

The following strategies have been put in place to reinforce the anti-bullying ethos at the school:

- Use inclusive teaching materials and equipment.
- Encourage students to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This includes a review of what friendship really is.
- Recruit members of the school community to become community leaders, prefects and ambassadors to support with younger students where possible.
- Students to treat everyone with respect both in school, out of school and when communicating electronically.
- At whole school level – through assemblies, students to be informed of the schools’ zero-tolerance policy and the actions that will be taken to prevent bullying taking place.
- Anti-Bullying Week is used as an opportunity to raise the profile of this issue.
- At classroom level – especially through The Holmesdale School Code and PSCHE the focus will be on developing strong anti-bullying messages.
- Students can report incidents of bullying to any member of staff.
- Reports of bullying behaviour will be recorded on our DRB system and timely interventions put in place for all parties concerned.

The school recognises that there are particular times when students may be more vulnerable to bullying – lunch and break times and the beginning and end of the school day. Arrangements are made to ensure that at such times there is a high level of supervision available to reduce the risk of bullying incidents. Students can report incidents of bullying or friendship issues to a member of duty staff. Well-being staff are also identified through purple hi-vis and DSL team via a blue lanyard.

Anti-bullying ambassadors to be available for those students requiring extra support and be encouraged to organise anti-bullying campaigns in school and discourage the “bystander culture”.

Stereotypical views are challenged and pupils are encouraged to appreciate and positively view the differences in others whether arising from race, culture, gender, sexuality, ability or disability.

Action

If bullying is suspected, we talk to the suspected victim, the suspected perpetrator and any witnesses. All teachers who pick up a bullying incident will support the student and pass to the appropriate Student Support Manager/DSL team. The incident will also be recorded on the DRB system to ensure appropriate sanctions and support are put in place.

Help, support and counselling will be given as is appropriate to both the victim and the bullies:

We also support the victims in the other ways:

- By offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their student support manager, DSL or a Senior Leader or another teacher if they choose.
- Informing the victims' parents/guardians.
- Informing the parents of the perpetrator
- By offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- Arrange for them to be escorted to and from the school premises.

Consequences

Each incident of bullying is dealt with on a case by case basis. The following measures are a general guide to some of the strategies we may use when responding to cases of bullying.

- By talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- Informing the bully's parents/guardians.
- By continuing to work with the bullies through a series of specialist sessions that are designed to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- By taking one or more of the disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

Disciplinary steps

- They will be warned officially to stop offending.
- Informing the bullies' parents/guardians.
- They may be put in the inclusion room for a period of time.
- They may have a care and concern meeting with our local PCSO team.
- They may be suspended from the school premises at break and/or lunch times.
- We may arrange for them to be escorted to and from the school premises.
- If they do not stop bullying, they may be suspended for a fixed period or an alternative off-site inclusion to another local school can be put in place.
- If they then carry on, they will be recommended for suspension for a further fixed period.

Alternative strategies are also used to help the 'bully' and the 'victim'. These include individual and group counselling, peer group monitoring and other supportive measures.

Positive approaches to improve behaviour are also used.

While we are not complacent, we feel that bullying incidents at the schools are much less than the national figures quoted for schools. We also feel it is significant that many

of the incidents reported have 'roots' outside of school which make resolution more time consuming.

Parents must help us to ensure we have a culture of tolerance and respect at school by promoting this at home. We urge parents to contact their child's student support manager as soon as possible should they have a concern about bullying.

The school will maintain a log of all reported bullying incidents to ensure that all are reviewed and acted upon to a satisfactory conclusion.

Appendix 1 – Advice shared with Students

What can you do if you are being bullied?

Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon!

- Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is wrong!
- Be proud of who you are. It is good to be an individual.
- Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- Fighting back may make things worse.
- Generally, it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support.

Teachers will always take bullying seriously and will deal with bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse. It would be helpful to list some of the things that might happen.

If you know someone is being bullied

- Take action! Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.
- If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult immediately. Teachers have ways of dealing with people who bully without getting you into trouble.
- Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with someone who is a bully

Appendix 2 – Parental Guidance

Parents who believe their child is the victim of bullying should share their concerns with school at the earliest opportunity and be prepared to work with school to keep their children safe. All expressions of concern will be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. Where parents have concerns with regard to bullying they should contact their child's SSM in the first instance.

Look for unusual behaviour in your child. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard.

Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunch time was spent etc. If you feel your

child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the school immediately. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.

It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse. Make sure your child is fully aware of the school policy concerning bullying, and that they will not be afraid to ask for help.

Contact details to report incidents of bullying:

Tel no: 01634 240416

Email: ths_office@swale.at

Appendix 3 – THS Student Anti-Bullying Charter

The Respect Charter

At The Holmesdale School bullying is not tolerated.

In our school we have the right to feel safe. Bullying is extremely hurtful and can affect the victim both physically and mentally.

Bullying is a behaviour that is targeted at an individual or small group. It is repeated and is intended to cause physical or emotional harm.

To ensure that no student at our school has to suffer from bullying in any form, we have drawn up a charter of behaviour. This charter explains the behaviour that, we at The Holmesdale School find unacceptable.

We, as students, find the following behaviour unacceptable:

- Repetitive rude gestures or actions
- Verbal and physical attacks
- Threatening or intimidating behaviour
- Repetitive nasty comments
- Being threatened or attacked by e-mail, text message or social media
- Nasty comments or threats being posted on any and all social media sites
- Rumours being spread about individuals
- Forcing another into a state of isolation
- Being singled out because of age, gender, race, belief or sexual orientation
- Offensive comments about family members

We as students feel that any unacceptable behaviour towards other students is immoral and wrong. Every student is responsible for their own actions and should behave in a positive and respectful manner to their classmates.

We accept that if we bully another student we will be held accountable for our actions and we will accept the consequences.

By signing this charter, you are helping to make The Holmesdale School a **Bully Free Zone**.

I agree to follow the guidelines set down in this charter.

Name _____

Reg Group _____

Signed _____

Date _____