



St. Columba's High School

Anti-Bullying Policy



This Anti-Bullying Policy has been created to help everyone in our school community understand what bullying is, how we can prevent it together, and what to do if it happens. It reflects our school's values of Faith, Ambition, Inclusion, and Perseverance and aligns with local and national Scottish guidance including *Respect for All* (2024) and the *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Introduction

Everyone deserves to feel safe, valued, and included in school. Bullying prevents this from happening. Our school is a place where everyone should be treated with kindness and respect. This policy explains what bullying is, how we can prevent it, how to report it, and what will happen if bullying behaviour takes place.

This policy is guided by:

- The Scottish Government's *Respect for All* (2024)
- The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- The Equality Act (2010)

1. What Is Bullying?

We use the national definition from *Respect for All* (2024): "Bullying is face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in."

Bullying can look like:

- Calling someone names or teasing them.
- Hitting, pushing, or kicking.
- Spreading rumours or leaving someone out.
- Sending hurtful messages online or on phones.
- Taking or damaging someone's things.
- Being unkind because of someone's race, gender, disability, body image, religion, who they love, or how they identify.

Bullying is not always repeated – even one incident can be serious. It is how the behaviour makes someone feel that matters most.

2. Our School's Stance

At our school, bullying is not acceptable — ever. Everyone has the right to feel safe and be treated with dignity and respect.

We use our school values to guide us in preventing bullying:

- **Faith** – Believing in ourselves and in the goodness of others.
 - **Ambition** – Striving to create a supportive and inclusive school.
 - **Inclusion** – Making sure everyone feels they belong.
 - **Perseverance** – Standing up for ourselves and others.
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3. Preventing and Responding to Bullying

We believe the best way to deal with bullying is to stop it before it starts. We do this by:

- Building strong, respectful relationships.
- Learning together about equality and diversity.
- Having restorative conversations when things go wrong.
- Using trauma-informed and nurturing approaches.
- Including anti-bullying themes in learning, including through anti-bullying week.

If bullying happens:

- We will investigate what happened.
 - We will support anyone affected.
 - We will help people understand the impact of their behaviour and support them to change.
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4. Children's Rights

The UNCRC says children have the right:

- To be protected from harm (Article 19).
- To give their opinion and be listened to (Article 12).
- To be treated fairly (Article 2).

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- To get help to recover from difficult experiences (Article 39).

We treat bullying as a breach of these rights and work to uphold and protect them.

5. Equality and Respect for Everyone

Under the law, it is wrong to treat people badly because of:

- Their age
- Disability
- Their gender or if they are transgender
- If they are pregnant or a young parent
- Their race, culture, religion, or belief
- Whether they are male or female
- Who they love (sexual orientation)

Our school also protects people who may be treated unfairly or teased because of:

- Mental health
 - Coming from a different family or country
 - Being a carer
 - Poverty or appearance
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6. Everyone's Role in Stopping Bullying

Children and Young People:

You will:

- Be kind and respectful to others.
- Tell an adult if you experience or see bullying.
- Help write the school's anti-bullying pledge or charter.
- Join anti-bullying activities (like Anti-Bullying Week).

Parents and Carers:

They will:

- Take children's concerns seriously.
- Help the school understand any issues raised.
- Set a good example by being respectful towards others.

Staff/Partners and Volunteers:

They will:

- Listen carefully and take action.
- Make sure children feel safe and supported.
- Treat everyone with fairness and respect.
- Keep records of any bullying behaviour.

7. Respectful Behaviour Every Day

We show respect by:

- Listening to each other.
- Celebrating differences.
- Solving problems in a kind and fair way.
- Being responsible for the way we act in school and online.

Staff show respect by modelling positive behaviour and working in line with their professional standards.

8. Positive Language

We try not to use the words "victim" or "bully".

Instead, we say:

- "Child or young person who experienced bullying behaviour"
- "Child or young person displaying bullying behaviour"

This helps us focus on the behaviour, understand what happened, and support everyone involved.

9. What to Do If Bullying Happens

Step 1: Speak Up – Tell Someone

Tell a trusted adult, use the school's anonymous box or online form, or share your worry with a peer mentor or staff member.

Step 2: We Write It Down

Staff will write down what has been reported and record details including:

- Who was involved
- What happened and where
- How it made the person feel
- Any patterns or protected characteristics

Step 3: We Investigate and Act

- The school will investigate within three working days.
- Everyone involved will be supported.
- Young people with communication difficulties will be supported by an appropriate member of staff.
- Incident will be logged in SEEMiS (Bullying and Equalities module).
- Guidance Teacher/DHT assess whether concern is bullying, conflict, or other concern.
- Actions will be recorded and support put in place.
- Restorative conversation will be held, if appropriate, and parents/carers will be informed.
- Progress will be reviewed after two weeks, one month and three months, by meeting with young person to seek their views, checking on their wellbeing and then following up with parent to review agreed actions.
- Records in SEEMiS will be updated appropriately.

10. Young People Helped Write This Policy:

Our Anti-bullying Ambassadors and Learner Council helped shape the Inverclyde Council policy by:

- Sharing what respectful behaviour looks like.
- Saying they wanted policies to be clear and accessible.
- Asking for mascots, slogans, and QR codes for support.

Our Anti-bullying Ambassadors and Learner Council then helped create this policy and designed our anti-bullying charter and anti-bullying support cards. They will present at year group assemblies throughout the year to ensure all young people are reminded of the charter and know exactly what to do if they witness or experience bullying behaviour.

We are committed to ensuring our young people are central to our anti-bullying approach and will consult with them on any further policy updates and keep them fully informed, should they be involved in any bullying incidents.

11. Parents and Carers Helped Too:

Parents gave feedback through the St. Columba's Parent Council and helped us make sure the policy was easy to understand. Their ideas helped shape how we communicate and share this information. We will continue to liaise with parents to seek their views and update them on our anti-bullying approaches.

12. School Staff and Partners helped too:

Staff and partners shared their views in meetings and surveys. They asked for:

- Clear definitions of online bullying.
 - Reminders about not using labels.
 - Ongoing training to support them in understanding how they can best support young people affected by, or displaying, bullying behaviour.
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13. Keeping This Policy Up-To-Date

We will review this policy by 2028. Your voice matters, so we will keep asking pupils and parents what works and if anything should change.

14. Staff Training and Support

We are committed to ensuring that school staff are confident and consistent in their approach to tackling bullying and will:

- Be supported to understand and follow this policy by regular inputs at collegiate meetings or Inset days.
 - Receive training on the use of restorative approaches.
 - Have access to training from *RespectMe* and Inverclyde Council, such as the *RespectMe* Learning Academy.
 - Learn how to respond to bullying behaviour in a caring and effective way.
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15. Appendices

- **Appendix 1** – What bullying is not (e.g. friendship fallouts or conflict).
 - **Appendix 2** – Your rights and laws that protect you.
 - **Appendix 3** – Prejudice-based bullying and how it affects different groups.
 - **Appendix 4** – How we work with parents.
 - **Appendix 5** – How staff and volunteers are supported.
 - **Appendix 6** – More information from pupil consultations.
 - **Appendix 7** – Restorative Conversations
 - **Appendix 8** – Responding to a Bullying Concern Flow Chart
 - **Appendix 9** – Anti-bullying Charter
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“Our school will always stand together to stop bullying. We believe in kindness, respect, and everyone being included and treated fairly.”

This pupil-friendly policy aims to promote our school values and ensure everyone feels safe and valued.

📍 Created during session 2025-2026.

🔄 To be reviewed by August 2028.

📢 Find out more at: [RespectMe](#)

✉️ For questions or support, speak to a Guidance teacher or Depute Head Teacher.

Email: office@st-columbashigh.inverclyde.sch.uk for attention of the appropriate member of staff (see below)

Telephone: 01475 715250

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Year Group Responsibilities for session 2026-27:

Year Group	Guidance Teacher	Depute Head Teacher
S1	Mrs Mitchell	Mrs McGeehan
S2	Mrs Donnachie	Mr McLean
S3	Mr Begley	Mr Bonnar
S4	Mr Stevenson	Mr McLean Mrs Miller
S5	Mrs Quinn	Mrs McGeehan
S6	6C – Mr Stevenson 6O – Mrs Donnachie 6L – Mrs Mitchell 6M – Mrs Quinn 6B – Mr Begley	Mrs Mitchell

We will always endeavour to find a resolution swiftly, however, if dissatisfied, please contact Education Headquarters at: admin.educationhq@inverclyde.gov.uk : [How to make a complaint - Inverclyde Council](#)

Appendices

Appendix 1: What bullying is not

Establishments and organisations encounter a wide range of behaviours in daily school life. While children, young people and families may sometimes describe incidents as bullying, it is important to recognise that not all challenging behaviour meets that definition. Context matters, and each situation must be considered carefully on a case-by-case basis. Staff should use professional judgement, gather relevant information, and distinguish between behaviours that may appear similar but require different responses.

A key distinction is between bullying and conflict. Conflict is a normal part of developing relationships. Children and young people will fall out, disagree and experience tension as they learn to manage friendships and social interactions. In healthy relationships, conflict usually involves an imbalance that can be repaired through communication, apology and support from the people involved. By contrast, bullying is associated with an imbalance of power and may involve dominance, repetition or the intention to cause harm. It often requires adult intervention to resolve effectively.

It is also important to recognise that some behaviour reported as bullying may actually be criminal in nature. Examples include physical assault, sexual assault, online harassment or hate crime. Staff should not attempt to determine criminality themselves; where there are significant concerns, they should seek immediate support from Police Scotland and follow child protection procedures. This is particularly important where a child or young person may have been seriously harmed.

Early intervention is essential. Derogatory language, slurs, harmful stereotypes and prejudice, if left unchallenged, can normalise disrespect and create a culture in which more serious harm can develop. A preventative approach helps to disrupt escalation, strengthen empathy and promote a school ethos grounded in respect and inclusion.

Appendix 2: Your rights and the laws that protect you

The legal and policy framework underpinning anti-bullying work in Scotland is designed to protect children and young people's rights, safety and wellbeing. A rights-based approach ensures that schools and education authorities consider the child as a rights holder and act in ways that support dignity, participation and protection.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 places duties on public authorities to act compatibly with UNCRC requirements. Although the UNCRC does not contain a specific right not to be bullied, several rights are highly relevant to anti-bullying practice, including the right to protection from violence, the right to education, the right to health and the right to be heard in matters affecting the child. Anti-bullying work therefore supports broader children's rights and the commitments within Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).



The Equality Act 2010 is also central. It protects individuals from discrimination, victimisation and harassment on the basis of protected characteristics such as disability, race, sex, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

There are further legal protections for online behaviour. Depending on the circumstances, harmful online conduct may be covered by legislation relating to communications, harassment, malicious communication, defamation, intimate image abuse and the Online Safety Act 2023. Schools should ensure children and young people understand safe and responsible use of digital technologies and know where to seek help.

Hate crime legislation is also relevant where behaviour is motivated by prejudice and is criminal in nature. In Scotland, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 protects against criminal behaviour linked to characteristics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, transgender identity, disability, age and variations in sex characteristics. Where there is concern that a crime may have occurred, or that a child or young person has been seriously harmed, adults should involve Police Scotland immediately.

The Age of Criminal Responsibility (Scotland) Act 2019 is also important. Children under 12 cannot be arrested, charged or prosecuted, although serious harmful behaviour may still require police involvement for investigation and welfare reasons.

Appendix 3: Prejudice-based bullying and its impact on different groups

Prejudice-based bullying refers to bullying rooted in dislike, bias or stereotyping towards a person because of a protected characteristic or another aspect of identity or circumstance. It may be explicit or subtle and can overlap with wider inequalities, including racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia, ableism, sectarianism and poverty-related prejudice. It may also appear through micro-aggressions, exclusion, misrecognition or harmful language that is normalised over time.

A broad range of groups may be affected. Children and young people with disabilities or additional support needs may be targeted because of assumptions about vulnerability, difference or dependence. Transgender young people may experience transphobic bullying through misgendering, slurs or social exclusion. Bullying related to pregnancy and maternity, sexual orientation, race, religion or belief, and sex can all be deeply damaging and may intersect with other forms of prejudice.

Some groups who may not be explicitly protected under the Equality Act in all circumstances, but may still be vulnerable to bullying. These include care-experienced young people, asylum seekers and refugees, young carers, those affected by family imprisonment, pupils from armed forces families, and young people experiencing mental health stigma, body image pressure or poverty-related prejudice. Each group may face particular barriers to participation, belonging and wellbeing.

The impact of prejudice-based bullying is often wider than the immediate incident. It can affect attendance, attainment, relationships, self-esteem and a sense of safety. In some cases, it can lead to social isolation, disengagement from education, or reduced confidence in seeking help. Staff should therefore recognise patterns of behaviour early and ensure that responses are based on inclusion, equity and preventative learning across the school community.

Appendix 4: How we work with parents

Parents and carers play a vital role in preventing and responding to bullying. Collaborative working helps ensure that procedures are clear, that families understand how concerns will be addressed, and that there are open routes for feedback, complaints and escalation where needed.

Parents and carers can contribute to our policy development and communications through the Parent Council and parental surveys. In addition, parents and carers can support anti-bullying work by remaining alert to signs such as distress, loss of concentration, avoidance behaviours or unexplained changes in mood and attendance. They should report concerns promptly, encourage safe and appropriate online behaviour, and understand that friendship fallouts and disagreements are not the same as bullying. Where support is needed, families should contact the school as soon as possible.

Appendix 5: How staff are supported

Staff are central to the successful implementation of an anti-bullying policy. Adults working with children and young people must be equipped with the knowledge, confidence and organisational support required to create safe, respectful environments.

Key responsibilities include modelling positive relationships, responding to concerns seriously, reporting and recording incidents, and ensuring that pupil voice is respected. Senior Leaders and Pupil Support staff will use the Bullying and Equalities module in SEEMiS to record incidents, allowing trends to be monitored and responded to appropriately. They will also avoid labelling children and young people as “bully” or “victim”, and instead focus on behaviour, impact and change.

Support for staff includes anti-bullying training, opportunities for professional dialogue, clear procedures, and reinforcement of the school’s values. They will be supported to recognise warning signs, intervene appropriately and work in line with the principles of Respect for All.

Appendix 6: More Information from Pupil Consultations

The Inverclyde Council pupil consultation highlighted several clear messages about how anti-bullying information should be presented and accessed. Children and young people wanted establishment-based policies and pupil-friendly versions to be bright, colourful and visually engaging. They suggested the use of images, characters, mascots and straplines to make key messages more memorable and appealing.

St. Columba’s Learner Council and Anti-bullying Ambassadors wanted our policy to be actively shared rather than simply published. They designed our Anti-bullying charter and emphasised the importance of anti-bullying week as a visible opportunity to reinforce the policy and promote positive relationships.

Our young people also suggested, pocket-sized information cards, the use of QR codes and the ‘Pupil Voice’ box for reporting issues. They wanted to ensure it is easy for pupils to seek help discreetly and quickly.

Appendix 7: Restorative Conversations

At St. Columba's High School, restorative conversations are an important part of our approach to resolving conflict and repairing relationships. Staff use these to help young people reflect, take responsibility, and find positive solutions.

Key elements:

- Show positive regard for all individuals – valuing the person for who they are.
- Work on the assumption that young people can learn and change their behaviour.
- Support young people to positively influence their feelings, thoughts, and actions.

Staff role in restorative conversations:

- Listen to all involved.
- Remain neutral and non-judgemental.
- Respond calmly and empathetically.
- Use language that reframes and summarises.
- Explore the feelings of everyone involved.
- Aim to resolve issues and “put things right” through helping young people to find solutions.

Structure of a restorative conversation:

Beginning:

- Set expectations: everyone gets a chance to speak, and we listen respectfully.
- Establish the situation clearly by repeating back and clarifying what happened.
- Remain calm and help children see the situation from another perspective.

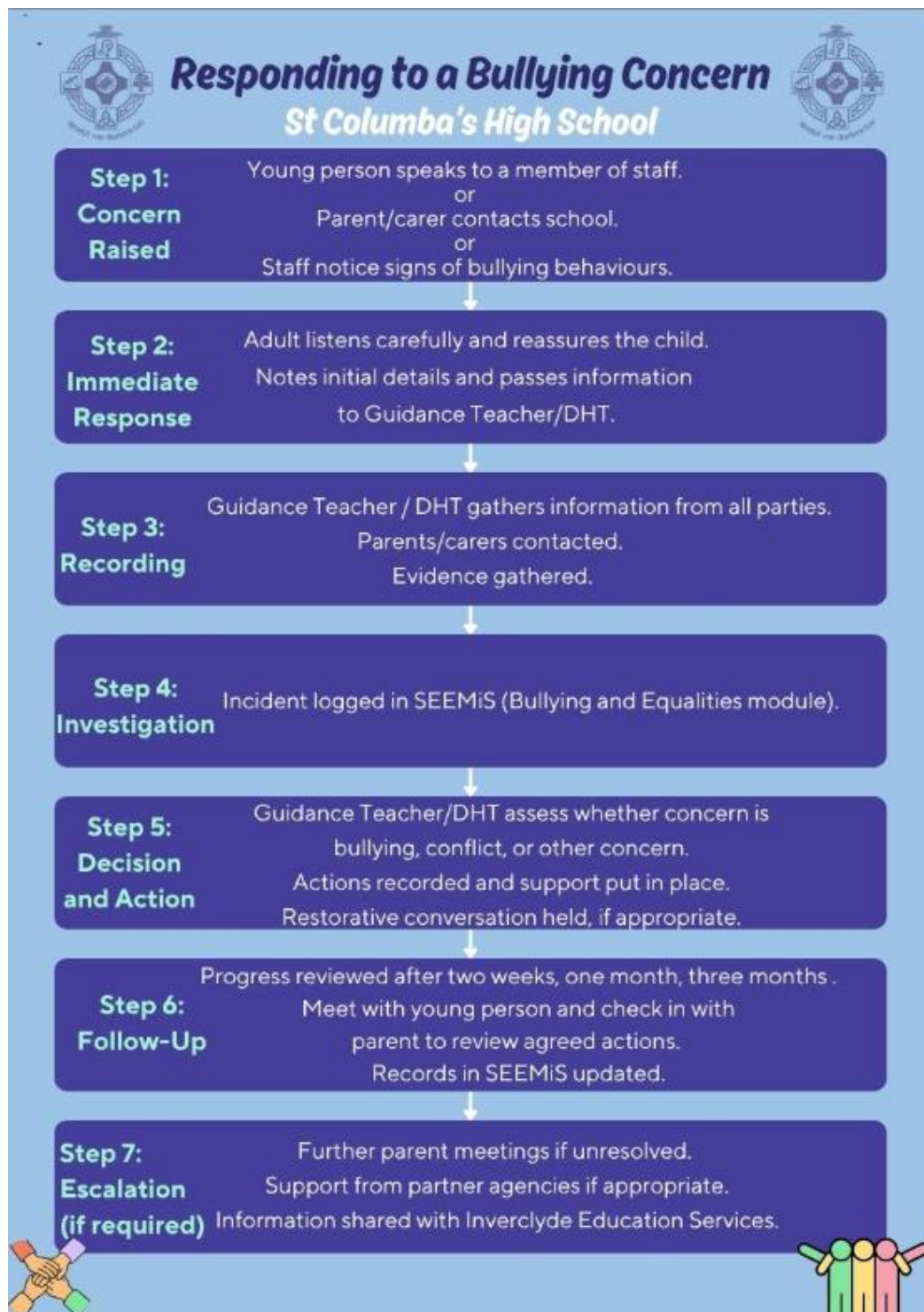
Questions to support the conversation:

- What has happened?
- How did you feel?
- How are you feeling now?
- Who else has been affected?
- How do you think they might be feeling?
- On reflection, what choices did you make that were not the best? Why?
- What can we do to put things right?
- How can we stop this happening again?

Action points and follow-up:

- Young people agree actions they can take to repair harm or prevent recurrence.
- A follow-up meeting is arranged, and progress is reviewed.

Appendix 8: Responding to a Bullying Concern Flow Chart



Appendix 9: Anti-bullying Charter





St. Columba's High School

ANTI-BULLYING CHARTER



EVERYONE in our school deserves to feel safe, valued and included.
Bullying prevents this from happening.

Our school values guide us in preventing bullying:

FAITH - Believing in ourselves and in the goodness of others
AMBITION - Striving to create a supportive and inclusive school
INCLUSION - Making sure everyone feels they belong
PERSEVERANCE - Standing up for ourselves and others

We are committed to learning together about equality and diversity and using trauma-informed and nurturing approaches.

We ALL have a role to play....

YOUNG PEOPLE will....

- Be kind, respectful and inclusive to others
- Tell an adult or senior pupil if they experience or witness bullying behaviour
- Be open to discussion and accepting support



Indie says....
BE KIND

PARENTS/CARERS will....

- Take any concerns their child raises seriously
- Work together with the school to find a solution to the issues raised
- Set a good example by being respectful towards others

Report it!

(information on support cards)



STAFF will....

- Listen carefully and take action
- Treat everyone with fairness and respect
- Keep records of any issues raised
- Ensure all young people feel safe and supported