ACADEMY
GREAT BARR

Anti-Bullying Policy

2026-27



Policy owner	Mr M Kulyna
Approval	Local Governing Body
Effective from	November 2026
Next review	November 2027

1. Purpose and scope

Q3 Academy Great Barr does not tolerate bullying. This policy explains what bullying is, how to report it, and how the school will prevent and respond to it.

This policy is the school's anti-bullying strategy. It aims to prevent bullying, so far as is reasonably practicable, and to provide a safe environment in which students can learn.

This policy applies to bullying by students:

- on school premises
- during school-organised or school-related activities and journeys
- while students are under the lawful charge of staff
- outside school, including online, where the school has authority to act

It covers bullying directed at another student, a member of staff, or someone else in the school community.

Any concern that an adult may have harmed a child or may pose a risk of harm will be handled first under safeguarding procedures. The same applies where an adult may have committed an offence involving a child or may be unsuitable to work with children.

Other adult conduct will be handled under the relevant complaints or Trust employment procedure.

'Parent' includes carers and anyone with parental responsibility. The school will handle information about students aged 18 or over in line with the law.

2. What bullying means

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another person or group physically or emotionally.

Bullying often involves an imbalance of power which makes it difficult for the person experiencing it to defend themselves. The imbalance may arise from physical strength, social status, access to personal information, a group, or the ability to isolate someone in person or online.

Bullying can include:

- verbal bullying, such as name-calling, threats, teasing, or spreading rumours
- physical bullying, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, or throwing objects
- social or emotional bullying, such as deliberate exclusion, humiliation, intimidation, or hiding belongings
- damage to property or theft
- online bullying through messages, calls, voice notes, gaming, social media, livestreams, impersonation, altered images, or false accounts
- sexual or sexist bullying
- prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying

Bullying may focus on an actual or perceived difference, or a person's association with someone else. This includes race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, disability, pregnancy and maternity, or special educational needs.

It may also focus on a student's appearance, health, family circumstances, care status, caring responsibilities, poverty, parenthood, or another personal characteristic. The school recognises the additional vulnerability that may affect, among others:

- looked-after and previously looked-after children
- students with SEND, medical needs, mental health needs, or attendance or behaviour concerns
- Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller students
- refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants
- young carers and students affected by the criminal justice system
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, and trans students, and students perceived to be

These examples are not exhaustive.

Online bullying can reach a large audience, continue at any time, and involve people who forward or encourage the content. A post or message may form part of repeated bullying when it is reposted, forwarded, or used in a continuing campaign.

3. Bullying, conflict, and child-on-child abuse

A one-off disagreement, conflict, or unkind act will not usually meet the definition of bullying. The school will still address harmful, abusive, discriminatory, threatening, or disruptive behaviour. A serious one-off incident does not need to be bullying before the school can act.

Bullying can be a form of child-on-child abuse, but the terms are not interchangeable. Child-on-child abuse can be a single incident or a pattern and can happen in person, outside school, or online. It includes:

- physical abuse or threatened serious harm
- abuse in intimate personal relationships between children
- harmful sexual behaviour, sexual violence, and sexual harassment
- causing someone to take part in sexual activity without consent
- non-consensual making or sharing of nude or semi-nude images
- upskirting
- initiation or hazing involving violence, abuse, harassment, or humiliation

Any concern about the consensual or non-consensual making or sharing of nude or semi-nude images requires a safeguarding response. This includes images made or altered using artificial intelligence.

Child-on-child abuse is a safeguarding concern for the student who may have experienced it and the student whose behaviour is reported.

The school has a zero-tolerance approach. It will not accept or minimise abuse or pass it off as 'banter', 'just having a laugh', 'part of growing up', or 'boys being boys'. This does not predetermine a disciplinary finding or sanction.

The school will respond under its 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy' whenever a report raises a safeguarding concern. This may happen alongside action under this policy and the 'Behaviour Policy'.

4. Reporting bullying

Students should report bullying or suspected bullying, whether they experience it, witness it, or learn about it. They do not need proof before making a report.

A student can report bullying to:

- any member of staff they trust, including their personal tutor or head of year
- the pastoral team
- bebrave@gbr.merciantrust.org.uk
- anti-bullying@gbr.merciantrust.org.uk

An anti-bullying ambassador can help a student speak to staff but does not replace reporting to an adult. A friend or another trusted person may support a student when they report.

The school will consider a report even if it does not identify the reporter. This may limit the school's ability to investigate, protect the person affected, or explain the outcome.

Parents should report concerns to their child's personal tutor. The personal tutor will pass the concern to the pastoral team. A parent can also help their child preserve relevant messages, dates, usernames, or screenshots without forwarding harmful content.

Parents should discuss their child's school day with them, reassure them that bullying is not their fault, and help them understand this policy and how to ask for help.

Students should go to a safe place and tell an adult. Parents should encourage their child not to fight back or retaliate where this can be safely avoided, as it may increase the risk of harm.

Possible signs of bullying include a marked change in attendance, routine, friendships, confidence, sleep, eating, work, or use of technology. Missing or damaged possessions, unexplained injuries, distress after messages, or self-harm concerns may also be signs. These signs can have other causes, but adults should take them seriously and seek help.

Anyone who believes a child is in immediate danger should contact the emergency services. Staff will pass safeguarding concerns to the designated safeguarding lead or a deputy.

A member of staff who experiences bullying or harassment by a student should report it to the headteacher or designated senior lead.

5. How the school will respond

The school will respond promptly and proportionately. The time needed will depend on the seriousness, complexity, and evidence available.

The response will normally include:

- considering immediate safety, welfare, and safeguarding needs
- listening to those involved and making proportionate enquiries
- deciding whether bullying occurred and whether another policy or procedure also applies
- providing support and taking proportionate action
- informing parents where appropriate and following up when needed

The pastoral team will normally coordinate the response. Students whose conduct is reported will have a fair opportunity to give their account, subject to any safeguarding or police advice.

For disciplinary purposes, the school will decide what happened on the balance of probabilities. This means deciding whether it is more likely than not that the conduct occurred. An immediate protective measure is not a finding that a student has behaved wrongly.

Some bullying may also be a criminal offence. The school may involve a senior leader, the designated safeguarding lead, children's social care, the police, or another agency. It will consider whether doing so could affect another investigation and will not delay action needed to keep a child safe.

Confidentiality and information

Staff cannot promise confidentiality or guarantee anonymity. The school will share information only with people who need it to investigate, provide support, or protect a child. It may share information without consent where there is a lawful safeguarding reason.

The school will take reasonable steps to protect the privacy of students involved. Students must not retaliate against or intimidate a reporter, spread rumours, or redistribute information or material publicly or in a way likely to cause harm.

This does not prevent a student or parent from preserving or sharing evidence with the school. It also does not prevent them from seeking support, making a safeguarding report or complaint, contacting the police or children's social care, or using a statutory challenge route.

The school will tell a student who reports bullying, and their parents where appropriate, about support and steps affecting that student. It will not normally disclose another person's confidential information, witness material, or disciplinary outcome.

An unsubstantiated or unfounded report is not necessarily false or malicious. Any underlying safeguarding concern will be handled under the 'Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy'.

Where the school establishes, on the balance of probabilities, that a report was deliberately false or malicious, it may take disciplinary action under the 'Behaviour Policy'.

6. Support for students

Students who report or experience bullying

The school will consider the student's wishes, safety, education, and individual needs. Support may include:

- an opportunity to talk to a trusted adult

- support from the pastoral or Inclusion team, including mentoring
- agreed contact and follow-up with parents
- changes to supervision, movement, or social arrangements
- an escort to or from school where appropriate
- support from an external service
- a safety or support plan

The school will work to stop further bullying and reduce the risk of retaliation.

Mediation, a meeting, an apology, or another restorative action may be offered only when it is safe and appropriate. The school will consider the wishes of the student who experienced the behaviour. It will not require face-to-face restorative work where this could cause further harm.

Students whose behaviour is reported

The school will consider support before and after any finding. Support does not remove accountability and may accompany a sanction.

Support for a student responsible for bullying may include:

- work with a pastoral leader or mentor to understand the harm caused and what contributed to the behaviour
- a meeting with parents
- supervised break or lunchtime arrangements
- an 'On Report' card completed by staff in each lesson
- help to apologise or put matters right where appropriate
- referral to the Inclusion team, a mentor, or an external service

Witnesses and groups

Bullying may involve students who lead, assist, encourage, laugh at, forward content, or remain silent despite knowing what is happening. Students must not join in or reinforce bullying. They should report it to an adult.

The school will consider each student's actions separately. It may provide support or take action where a student has encouraged or assisted bullying.

7. Behaviour responses and sanctions

The school will deal with each case individually. It will consider the seriousness, repetition, harm, evidence, intent, safeguarding, equality, SEND, and other relevant circumstances.

Responses may include:

- a discussion about the behaviour and its effect
- support or a restorative action
- contact or a meeting with parents
- supervised social times or an 'On Report' card

- internal isolation
- suspension
- permanent exclusion where the statutory test is met

Repeated bullying will normally lead to escalating sanctions, subject to the individual circumstances of the case. The school may use a serious sanction for a single grave incident.

Only the headteacher or acting headteacher may suspend or permanently exclude a student. The school will follow its 'Behaviour Policy' and the statutory procedures. The written decision notice will explain any separate representation or review rights.

For a student aged 18 or over, the exclusion decision notice and statutory representation or review rights will be given to the student.

8. Preventing bullying

The school will use education, supervision, student participation, clear reporting routes, and consistent responses to reduce bullying.

Preventative work can include:

- teaching respectful relationships, online safety, and the effects of bullying through Wellbeing Inspire, assemblies, and relevant subjects
- taking part in Anti-Bullying Week activities
- regularly reminding students how to report concerns
- using anti-bullying ambassadors to promote reporting and support
- supervising break and lunchtime areas
- using student voice to identify concerns and improve the strategy

Students must sign the school's safe and acceptable use rules before accessing school devices or internet services. They should keep passwords secure and log out of their accounts after use.

This policy is available on the school website.

9. Online bullying and mobile phones

The same standards of respect apply online and offline. Students must not create, post, forward, like, or encourage content intended to bully or humiliate another person.

Students who experience or witness online bullying should:

- report it to a trusted adult or through a school reporting route
- avoid replying or retaliating
- preserve messages, dates, usernames, links, or screenshots where it is safe to do so
- use the platform's blocking and reporting tools where appropriate
- avoid forwarding harmful content

Students should report online bullying even if evidence has disappeared or the account is anonymous. They must not save, copy, or forward a nude or semi-nude image and should tell an adult immediately.

Students must not access or use personal mobile phones, smart watches, earphones, or other personal digital devices during the school day. This includes lessons, movement between lessons, break, and lunchtime, subject to authorised exceptions.

Students are encouraged to leave phones at home. If a student brings a phone to school, they must switch it off and store it as directed.

Students in Years 7 to 11 must secure their devices in their school-issued phone pouch as directed and keep it locked in their bag during the school day. Sixth-form students must follow the GB6th arrangements in the 'Behaviour Policy'. Any authorised GB6th phone use is limited to the designated Sixth Form study area, away from younger students. The 'Behaviour Policy' explains the full rules, exceptions, confiscation, searching, and sanctions.

The school may authorise an exception or reasonable adjustment for a medical, disability-related, safeguarding, or other exceptional need.

10. Bullying outside school

The school may investigate and sanction bullying outside its premises, including online bullying, to the extent that it is reasonable.

This may include conduct when a student:

- takes part in a school-organised or school-related activity
- travels to or from school
- wears school uniform
- is otherwise identifiable as a student at the school
- is under the lawful charge of staff

The school may also act where the conduct has a reasonable connection with the school and:

- disrupts its orderly operation
- threatens or harms a student, member of staff, or member of the public
- affects the safety or welfare of the school community
- could harm the school's reputation

The school will consider each case individually. It may offer safeguarding or pastoral support even where it cannot take disciplinary action.

The school will decide on and impose any sanction only on school premises or while the student is under a staff member's lawful charge.

Parents may contact the police about bullying outside school if they choose to do so.

11. Equality, SEND, and individual circumstances

Treating students fairly does not always mean treating them identically.

The school will consider relevant protected characteristics, SEND, communication needs, health, safeguarding, and other individual circumstances when preventing, investigating, and responding to bullying.

The school will make reasonable adjustments for disabled students. This may include an accessible reporting method, communication support, adjusted meetings, or different support arrangements.

Support and sanctions may be used together.

12. Recording, monitoring, and communication

The school will record bullying concerns, findings, actions, and outcomes. Records will distinguish an allegation from an established finding.

The school will use records and student feedback to monitor bullying patterns and its response. Information for governance oversight will be aggregated or anonymised where appropriate.

The senior leader responsible for behaviour will review this strategy each year.

Concerns and complaints

Students and parents should first raise a concern about the school's response with the relevant pastoral team. Parents may use the Trust's 'Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy and Procedure' if their concern is not resolved.

Suspension and permanent exclusion have separate statutory representation and review procedures. The relevant decision notice will explain these.

The school will handle requests for personal information under the Trust's 'Data Protection Policy'.