Anti-Bullying Policy

Approved by:	Lauren Meston	Date: 01/09/2026
Last reviewed on:	01/09/2026	
Next review due by:	31/08/2027	

Introduction:

At Future Pathways we are committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which every young person is able to learn, participate and develop without fear of bullying, harassment, discrimination, victimisation or abuse.

Future Pathways is an alternative provision and recognises that young people attending the setting may have experienced disrupted education, exclusion, trauma, social difficulties or other vulnerabilities. This makes a consistent, relational and safeguarding-led response to bullying particularly important. All reports will be taken seriously, responded to promptly and considered in the context of the individual young person and the wider peer group.

Bullying will never be dismissed as “banter”, “just having a laugh”, “part of growing up” or similar language. Behaviour that is prejudiced, discriminatory, sexualised, threatening, intimidating or abusive will be challenged and dealt with in accordance with this policy, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Behaviour Policy.

Key roles:

Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL): Lauren Meston

Anti-Bullying Ambassador: Kacey Dart

Lauren Meston, as DSL, has lead responsibility for safeguarding responses where bullying may constitute child-on-child abuse, harassment, exploitation, a hate incident or other safeguarding concern. Kacey Dart, as Anti-Bullying Ambassador, supports preventative work, learner voice, awareness, reporting routes and the promotion of an inclusive anti-bullying culture. These roles work together but do not replace the responsibility of every member of staff to act on concerns.

Legal and statutory framework:

This policy has been developed with regard to current legislation and Department for Education guidance, including:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026 (in force from 1 September 2026)
- Department for Education: Preventing and tackling bullying
- Department for Education: Behaviour in schools - advice for headteachers and school staff
- Department for Education: Preventing and tackling the bullying and harassment of school staff (2026)
- Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026
- Equality Act 2010 and Department for Education advice for schools
- Education and Inspections Act 2006, including duties relating to behaviour and the prevention of bullying where applicable
- Education Act 2002 and safeguarding duties where applicable
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Protection from Harassment Act 1997
- Malicious Communications Act 1988 and Communications Act 2003 where relevant to online abuse
- Public Order legislation and hate crime provisions where relevant
- UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018

Future Pathways will review this policy when national guidance, legislation or local safeguarding arrangements change.

Aims of this policy:

Future Pathways aims to:

- prevent bullying, discriminatory behaviour and harassment wherever reasonably possible
- create a culture where young people feel safe to report concerns and know they will be listened to
- identify bullying at the earliest opportunity and prevent escalation
- respond consistently, fairly and proportionately to incidents
- protect and support young people who have experienced bullying or discrimination
- challenge and change harmful behaviour while holding those responsible appropriately accountable
- recognise when bullying is a safeguarding matter and refer it to the DSL without delay
- address online, off-site and community-based bullying where it affects the safety, welfare or education of young people at Future Pathways
- monitor patterns, including prejudice-based and discriminatory incidents, so that emerging concerns can be addressed
- promote equality, respect, dignity and positive relationships throughout the setting

Definition of bullying:

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally. Bullying can involve an imbalance of power. That imbalance may be physical, psychological, social, based on popularity or status, linked to access to information or images, or created through technology and social media.

A single serious incident may not meet a narrow definition of repeated bullying but can still amount to harassment, discrimination, violence, sexual harassment, child-on-child abuse or another safeguarding concern and will be dealt with accordingly.

Forms of bullying and harmful behaviour:

Bullying and harmful behaviour may be direct or indirect, face-to-face or online, and can include:

- physical bullying - hitting, kicking, pushing, spitting, unwanted physical contact, damaging or taking property, threatening violence or encouraging others to use violence
- verbal bullying - name-calling, insults, threats, humiliating comments, mocking, taunting or persistent derogatory language
- social or relational bullying - exclusion, isolation, spreading rumours, manipulating friendships, encouraging others to reject someone or deliberately damaging a person’s reputation
- cyberbullying - abusive or threatening messages, posts, images, videos, group chats, gaming activity, impersonation, doxxing, exclusion from online groups, sharing private material or using digital technology to humiliate, harass or intimidate
- prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying - behaviour connected to a person’s actual or perceived identity, background, protected characteristic, association with another person, or other difference
- sexual bullying and sexual harassment - sexual comments, jokes, rumours, unwanted sexualised behaviour, unwanted touching, pressure, image-based abuse or online sexual harassment

- identity-based or appearance-based bullying - targeting a person because of appearance, body shape, clothing, family circumstances, care experience, socio-economic circumstances, accent, language or perceived difference
- bullying connected to SEND, disability or medical conditions, including exploiting communication needs, vulnerabilities or differences
- initiation or hazing-type behaviour involving humiliation, coercion, intimidation or violence
- retaliation or victimisation against someone because they reported bullying, supported another person or participated in an investigation

Prejudice-based and discriminatory bullying:

Future Pathways has a zero-tolerance approach to racism, sexism, misogyny, misandry, homophobia, biphobia, faith-based prejudice, disability-related abuse, sexual harassment and other discriminatory or derogatory behaviour. Staff will challenge such behaviour whenever it occurs and will not normalise it as humour or banter.

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation. Future Pathways will act to prevent and respond to behaviour connected to protected characteristics and will make reasonable adjustments for disabled young people where required.

Prejudice-based incidents will be recorded in sufficient detail to allow the setting to identify patterns, repeated targeting, locations, peer-group dynamics and any disproportionate impact on particular groups.

Child-on-child abuse and safeguarding:

Keeping Children Safe in Education identifies bullying, including cyberbullying and prejudice-based or discriminatory bullying, as a form that child-on-child abuse can take. A bullying concern must therefore be considered through a safeguarding lens, not only as a behaviour matter.

The DSL must be informed where an incident involves or may involve:

- significant physical harm or threats of serious harm
- sexual violence or sexual harassment
- coercion, exploitation, extortion or intimidation
- sharing of nude or semi-nude images
- upskirting or image-based abuse
- persistent discriminatory harassment or hate-related behaviour
- weapons or threats involving weapons
- serious online abuse, blackmail, impersonation or threats
- a young person who appears frightened to attend, is being controlled by peers or is at risk in the community
- any concern that a young person is at risk of significant harm

Where appropriate, the DSL will consider referrals to children’s social care, the police, the local authority, the commissioning school or other relevant agencies in line with safeguarding procedures. The wishes and feelings of the young person affected will be considered, while recognising that staff cannot promise confidentiality where safeguarding action is required.

Sexual harassment and harmful sexual behaviour:

Sexual comments, unwanted sexual attention, sexualised name-calling, sexual jokes, rumours, online sexual harassment and other harmful sexual behaviour are not acceptable. Staff must not treat these behaviours as an inevitable part of adolescence.

Reports of sexual violence or sexual harassment will be managed in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the relevant sections of Keeping Children Safe in Education. The immediate safety of the young person affected will be prioritised and the DSL will consider risk assessment, support, information sharing and external referral.

SEND, communication needs and additional vulnerability:

Future Pathways recognises that children and young people with SEND, disabilities, medical needs, communication difficulties or other vulnerabilities may be more prone to peer isolation or bullying and may be disproportionately affected without showing obvious signs.

Staff will consider communication barriers, sensory needs, cognitive understanding, social communication differences and the possibility that a young person may not recognise or be able to describe what is happening to them. Additional pastoral support, accessible reporting methods and reasonable adjustments will be put in place where needed.

Online bullying and social media:

Online bullying can take place at any time and can rapidly reach a wide audience. It may continue beyond the setting day and can have a significant impact on attendance, wellbeing, peer relationships and safety.

Future Pathways will respond where online behaviour involves young people attending the provision or where it has an impact on the safety, welfare, learning environment or reputation of the setting. This includes behaviour occurring outside Future Pathways and outside normal provision hours.

Staff should preserve relevant evidence where safe and appropriate, such as screenshots or message details, without unnecessarily sharing harmful content. Incidents involving sexual images will be managed in line with safeguarding guidance; staff must not ask young people to forward illegal or indecent images to them.

Where appropriate, Future Pathways may work with parents/carers, commissioning schools, platform providers, the police or other agencies and may apply consequences under the Behaviour Policy for harmful online behaviour that affects the setting community.

Bullying outside the Future Pathways site:

Bullying may occur on journeys to or from the setting, in the community, at partner venues, during educational visits or through online activity. Where off-site behaviour affects a young person’s safety, wellbeing or ability to access Future Pathways, staff will take reasonable action within the setting’s powers and safeguarding responsibilities.

Where a commissioning school remains responsible for the placement, Future Pathways will share relevant concerns promptly and work with the school to ensure a coordinated response. Where criminal behaviour may have occurred, the DSL will consider whether police involvement is required.

Preventing bullying:

Prevention is a whole-setting responsibility. Future Pathways will promote clear values and standards that support respect, equality and positive relationships. Preventative work may include:

- explicit teaching and discussion about respectful behaviour, healthy relationships, consent, equality, discrimination and online conduct
- challenging racist, sexist, homophobic, biphobic, ableist, faith-based and other prejudiced or derogatory language
- promoting learner voice and ensuring young people know how to report concerns
- staff modelling respectful communication and appropriate conflict resolution
- supervision and risk management in locations or activities where concerns are more likely to arise
- considering peer dynamics when grouping young people for practical, vocational and off-site activities
- working with parents/carers, commissioning schools and external professionals where patterns or vulnerabilities are identified
- using restorative or relational approaches where appropriate and safe, without requiring a victim to participate
- reviewing incident data and adjusting practice in response to patterns or emerging risks

Reporting bullying:

Young people can report bullying to any member of staff. They may also speak directly to Lauren Meston, DSL, or Kacey Dart, Anti-Bullying Ambassador. Reports may be made verbally, in writing or through any agreed accessible communication method.

Staff must listen carefully, remain calm, take the concern seriously and avoid making promises that information will remain confidential. The young person should be reassured that reporting is the right thing to do and that the concern will be acted upon.

A young person does not need to use the word “bullying” for staff to respond. Changes in attendance, presentation, mood, peer relationships, engagement, behaviour or reluctance to attend particular activities may indicate a concern and should prompt professional curiosity.

Staff response to a report:

When bullying or discriminatory behaviour is reported or witnessed, staff should:

1. Ensure immediate safety and separate young people where necessary.
2. Listen to the young person affected and record the concern accurately, using their own words where possible.
3. Inform the DSL immediately if there is any safeguarding element, sexual harassment, serious violence, discriminatory targeting, coercion, exploitation, significant online abuse or risk of harm.
4. Inform Kacey Dart, Anti-Bullying Ambassador, where appropriate so that preventative and pastoral follow-up can be coordinated.
5. Avoid public confrontation, forced apologies or mediation where this may increase risk or place pressure on the young person affected.
6. Preserve relevant evidence and identify witnesses where appropriate.

7. Record the incident on the appropriate Future Pathways safeguarding/behaviour system and notify parents/carers and the commissioning school as appropriate.
8. Agree immediate support and any risk-management measures.
9. Ensure follow-up takes place to check whether the behaviour has stopped and whether further support is needed.

Investigation and decision-making:

Incidents will be investigated promptly and proportionately. The investigation may include speaking separately with the young person affected, the young person alleged to have caused harm, witnesses, staff, parents/carers and the commissioning school. Digital evidence may also be considered where relevant.

Staff will avoid automatically labelling young people as a “bully” or “victim”. The focus will be on the behaviour, impact, safety, accountability and support needs of everyone involved. However, avoiding labels will never be used to minimise serious or repeated behaviour.

The DSL will lead or oversee cases involving safeguarding concerns. Decisions will take account of the nature, frequency and severity of the behaviour, any imbalance of power, protected characteristics, SEND, trauma, previous incidents, intent, impact, risk of recurrence and the views of the young person affected.

Supporting the young person who has experienced bullying:

Support will be individualised and may include:

- a trusted adult and regular check-ins
- a safety or support plan
- changes to seating, groups, timetables, break arrangements or supervised areas where appropriate
- support with attendance and re-engagement if bullying has affected access to education
- pastoral, emotional or therapeutic support where available
- support to report online content or preserve evidence
- reasonable adjustments for SEND or communication needs
- contact with parents/carers and the commissioning school
- referral to external services where additional support is needed

The young person affected will not be expected to resolve the matter themselves and will not be required to meet or take part in restorative work with the person who harmed them unless this is safe, appropriate and genuinely voluntary.

Responding to the young person responsible for bullying:

Future Pathways will combine clear accountability with work to understand and change behaviour. Responses may include consequences under the Behaviour Policy, increased supervision, restorative or reflective work, targeted education, changes to activities or peer group arrangements, parental involvement, risk assessment and additional pastoral or specialist support.

Where behaviour is serious or persistent, Future Pathways will consider stronger sanctions and safeguarding action, including referral to the commissioning school, local authority, children’s social care or police where appropriate. Any sanction will be lawful, reasonable and proportionate and will take account of SEND and other relevant individual circumstances without excusing harmful behaviour.

Parents, carers and commissioning schools:

Future Pathways will work constructively with parents/carers and commissioning schools. Information will be shared on a proportionate need-to-know basis, taking account of safeguarding and data protection requirements.

Parents/carers are encouraged to report concerns promptly and to avoid direct confrontation with other young people or families. Where a concern cannot be resolved informally, the Future Pathways Complaints Policy may be used.

Bullying, harassment or intimidation of staff:

Future Pathways does not accept bullying, harassment, intimidation or discriminatory abuse of staff by young people, parents/carers, other staff, contractors or members of the wider community, whether online or offline.

Incidents involving staff will be addressed through the appropriate behaviour, safeguarding, complaints, employment or health and safety procedures. Threats, hate-related abuse, harassment, stalking, malicious communications or other potentially criminal conduct may be reported to the police. Staff who experience bullying or harassment will be offered appropriate management support and will not be expected to manage serious abuse alone.

Allegations or concerns about adults:

Where a young person reports bullying, harassment, discrimination or abuse by a member of staff, volunteer or other adult working with Future Pathways, the concern must not be managed solely under this Anti-Bullying Policy. It must be referred immediately in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, including procedures for allegations and low-level concerns. Where the concern relates to the DSL, it must be referred to the appropriate senior/proprietor or safeguarding authority in line with those procedures.

Recording, monitoring and analysis:

Future Pathways will maintain appropriate records of bullying, discriminatory incidents and safeguarding concerns. Records should distinguish, where possible, between general conflict, bullying, prejudice-based behaviour, sexual harassment, online abuse and other forms of child-on-child abuse.

Lauren Meston, DSL, and Kacey Dart, Anti-Bullying Ambassador, will contribute to monitoring patterns and themes. Monitoring may consider:

- repeated incidents involving the same young people
- protected characteristic or prejudice-related themes
- locations, sessions, online spaces or times where incidents occur
- links to attendance, absence, disengagement or changes in behaviour
- whether young people with SEND or other vulnerabilities are disproportionately affected
- whether interventions have successfully stopped the behaviour
- whether staff training, supervision or curriculum work should be strengthened

Information will be handled in accordance with data protection requirements. Records will be sufficiently detailed to support safeguarding decisions, identify patterns and demonstrate action taken.

Police and external agency involvement:

Some bullying behaviour may constitute a criminal offence. This may include assault, theft, threats, harassment, hate crime, stalking, malicious communications, sexual offences, sharing illegal images or other serious conduct. Where there is immediate danger, staff must call 999. In other cases the DSL will consider police or other agency involvement in line with safeguarding procedures and local arrangements.

A decision to involve the police does not prevent Future Pathways from taking its own safeguarding and behaviour action where appropriate.

Confidentiality and information sharing:

Information about bullying and discrimination will be shared only where necessary and lawful. Staff cannot promise absolute confidentiality to a young person because information may need to be shared to protect them or another person. Information will be shared with the DSL and relevant professionals on a need-to-know basis.

Training and staff awareness:

Staff will receive appropriate safeguarding and behaviour training so that they understand how to identify, challenge, record and respond to bullying, discrimination and child-on-child abuse. Training and briefings will reinforce that all staff must challenge inappropriate language and behaviour and must report safeguarding concerns to the DSL.

The Anti-Bullying Ambassador will support awareness activity and learner engagement. The DSL will ensure safeguarding practice remains aligned with current statutory guidance.

Learner voice and anti-bullying culture:

Future Pathways will seek opportunities for young people to contribute to the development of a respectful culture. Kacey Dart, Anti-Bullying Ambassador, will support learner voice and awareness work so that young people understand what bullying is, how to report it and how to support peers safely.

Young people will be encouraged to be active bystanders who report concerns rather than joining in, sharing harmful content or remaining silent when another young person may be at risk.

Reviewing incidents and preventing recurrence:

Following a significant bullying or discriminatory incident, Future Pathways will consider whether individual risk assessments, behaviour plans, safeguarding plans or learner profiles need updating. The setting will also consider whether changes are needed to supervision, timetabling, groupings, activities, online safety arrangements, staff practice or preventative education.

A case will not be regarded as resolved simply because an immediate incident has stopped. Follow-up should establish whether the young person feels safe, whether attendance and engagement have recovered, and whether there has been retaliation, online continuation or movement of the behaviour into the community.

Complaints:

Parents/carers or young people who are dissatisfied with the response to bullying may raise the matter with Lauren Meston, Managing Director and DSL. Where the concern is not

resolved, the Future Pathways Complaints Policy will apply. Safeguarding concerns will continue to be managed under safeguarding procedures regardless of any complaint.

Policy review:

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and sooner where there is a significant incident, a change in legislation or statutory guidance, identified patterns of concern, or learning from safeguarding practice. The review will take account of incident data, learner voice, staff feedback and relevant information from commissioning schools and partner agencies.

Related Future Pathways policies:

- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Behaviour Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Online Safety / Acceptable Use Policy
- SEND Policy
- Staff Code of Conduct
- Complaints Policy
- Educational Visits Policy
- Attendance Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Health and Safety Policy

Reference guidance:

- Department for Education - Keeping Children Safe in Education 2026
- Department for Education - Preventing and tackling bullying
- Department for Education - Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff
- Department for Education - Preventing and tackling the bullying and harassment of school staff, July 2026
- Department for Education - Equality Act 2010: advice for schools
- HM Government - Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026

Appendix 1 - Bullying / Discrimination Incident Record:

Date and time of incident:

Young person(s) affected:

Young person(s) alleged to have caused harm:

Location / online platform:

Type of concern: bullying / cyberbullying / prejudice-based / discriminatory / sexual harassment / physical / verbal / social / other

Protected characteristic or prejudice-related factor, if relevant:

What was reported or witnessed:

Immediate safety action taken:

Was the DSL informed? If yes, time/date:

Was the Anti-Bullying Ambassador informed?

Parents/carers informed:

Commissioning school informed:

Safeguarding referral or police involvement, if applicable:

Support provided to the young person affected:

Action/support for the young person responsible:

Follow-up date:

Outcome / evidence that behaviour has stopped:

Further actions required:

Appendix 2 - Staff Quick Response:

If you witness or receive a report of bullying or discrimination:

1. Act to make the situation safe.
2. Listen and take the report seriously.
3. Do not dismiss it as banter or normal peer behaviour.
4. Record what happened accurately.
5. Tell Lauren Meston, DSL, immediately if there is any safeguarding element or risk of harm.
6. Inform Kacey Dart, Anti-Bullying Ambassador, where appropriate for anti-bullying follow-up and learner support.
7. Follow the Behaviour Policy and safeguarding procedures.
8. Check back with the young person - do not assume the issue is resolved because the immediate incident has stopped.

Signed: _____

Lauren Meston

Managing Director and Designated Safeguarding Lead, Future Pathways

Date: _____

Next review: 31/08/2027