

BILLINGHAY CHURCH OF ENGLAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

HOMOPHOBIC BULLYING POLICY

September 2024

Believe to achieve, empowering a community of hope and aspiration.

‘Ask and it shall be given, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened.’ Matthew 7.7 ensures our community knows that with hard work, determination and God's help they can open doors to a brighter future.

We are inspired by the life of St Thomas and like him we are on a journey with our values supporting us as we travel. Our pupils will have the courage to challenge and ask questions with curiosity. St Thomas empowers us to learn from past and current events to be able to shine bright with hope and raise our aspirations to go out and change the world.

Our Vision statement:

Working together to raise aspirations, empowering a community of hope. We seek to develop resilient, curious and creative minds, inspiring everyone to shine bright and be positive members within our church school community.

We promote a culture of mutual respect between all the people who work in or visit our school. We aim to create an inclusive curriculum creating a culture where everyone can shine bright living well in their own skin and be happy for others. Our school is a place where everyone is able to flourish within a culture of love that accepts and forgives.

We involve our community in understanding and implementing expectations and systems to encourage this, and to act consistently and vigilantly within agreed guidelines. We work towards creating an environment in which all can achieve and shine brightly. Every person in our school is to be revered and respected as a member of a community where all are known and loved by God. By doing this we will create an environment which maximises the potential of everyone, ensuring they are resilient, curious, creative and aspirational for the future.

As a Church of England School, we have at our heart a belief that all everyone is loved by God, are individually unique and that we aim to express God's love by ensuring we offer a safe and welcoming place for all God's children. Everyone at Billingham Church of England Primary School should be able to grow freely and be comfortable and confident within their own skins without fear or prejudice. We at Billingham Church of England Primary School have a mission to help each person to fulfil their potential in all aspects of their personhood: physically, academically, socially, morally and spiritually. We have a duty to try to remove any factor that might represent a hindrance to a fulfilment. Our core purpose as a Church School is to maximise the learning potential of everyone within the love of God.

Homophobic bullying, alongside all forms of bullying, is a factor that can inhibit a pupil's ability to feel safe and have a sure foundation for learning. So, we have a particular duty to implement measures to combat it. We have a duty to protect pupils in Church of England schools from having their self-worth diminished and their ability to achieve impeded by being bullied because of their perceived/actual sexual orientation.

What is homophobia and homophobic bullying, and why does it need to be addressed as a specific type of bullying in Church of England schools?

Homophobia is “fear, rejection or aversion, often in the form of stigmatising attitudes or discriminatory behaviour towards those who are, or are perceived to be, gay” and homophobic bullying is “bullying on the basis of actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity”.

Tackling homophobia and homophobic bullying is crucial because of the impact it may have on the lives of young people in our schools, on their educational outcomes and on their physical and emotional wellbeing.

What form can homophobic bullying take in schools?

- Homophobic language is a common form of homophobic bullying. It can be casual and is therefore often dismissed as ‘harmless banter’. We will take a consistent approach to tackling any kind of inappropriate language. We recognise that homophobic language and abuse can start in primary schools, where pupils may call each other ‘gay’ or ‘lesbian’ without really understanding what these terms mean. If such usage is not challenged at this stage it can appear acceptable, making it more difficult to address in secondary school.

Children may experience verbal bullying because they have (or are thought to have) a homosexual parent.

Pupils may also experience indirect homophobic abuse, not directed towards a particular person or group but used when remarks are made to pass some kind of negative judgement, such as ‘your bag is so gay’ or ‘that ring-tone is gay’.

All our staff will challenge pupils on such occasions, explaining the consequences of using the word ‘gay’ in a derogatory way. While staff need to avoid appearing to overreact, and must show wisdom and sensitivity when tackling this type of language, consistency in doing so is crucial to creating an environment in which being homosexual is not thought of as being inferior.

- Direct homophobic abuse is directed towards an individual or group of pupils as either a one-off incident or repeatedly. A boy who is called ‘poof’ when he walks by or a girl who is called ‘dyke’ and avoided as she walks through a school corridor will suffer both short- and long-term consequences in terms of the harm caused.
- Physical abuse can include hitting, punching or kicking. Young people also report that they experience vandalism, theft of property, being threatened with a weapon and even death threats. Homophobic physical abuse can also include sexual abuse. Peer pressure can heighten the tendency for people to perform these acts of bullying. Physical abuse might indicate that staff need to take steps to safeguard the pupil. Physical homophobic bullying can affect anyone, regardless of whether or not they are homosexual.

Anyone can experience homophobic bullying:

- children or young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT);
- children or young people who are thought to be lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender;
- children or young people who are thought to be different in some way, for example, those who might work hard, or may not be as good at sport, or may have a particular hobby or interest (e.g. ‘I got called gay for writing poetry because I am a boy’);
- children or young people who have parents, carers, friends or family who are lesbian, gay or bisexual;

- teachers and other school staff who may or may not be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Who does the bullying and why?

There is no one type of person who bullies in these ways. Pupils may justify homophobic bullying because:

- they think that homosexual people should be bullied because they believe homosexual people are 'wrong';
- they do not think that there is anything wrong in bullying someone because of their sexual orientation;
- they do not realise that it is bullying;
- they may have low self-esteem, poor communication skills or were bullied themselves;
- they think that they might be homosexual themselves and this makes them uncomfortable and hostile to others who are;
- they think that it is acceptable to bully others who do not conform to their 'norm';
- they think that homosexual parenting is wrong and that pupils should be treated differently because of it.

In addition pupils tend not to intervene in cases of homophobic bullying in case the bully thinks that they might be homosexual or that they think it is acceptable to be homosexual. This makes the sense of isolation more profound for the person being bullied.

At Billingham Church of England Primary School there will be no justification for this type of bullying/ negative behaviour. Homophobic behaviour and/or language will not be tolerated and will be dealt with in accordance with the school's Behaviour and anti Bullying Policies.

The Law

All schools, including Church of England schools and academies, are subject to the laws of the land and must comply with their legal obligations in respect of equalities and diversity issues.

The Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects people from discrimination and harassment

The Education and Inspections Act 2006

There are a number of statutory obligations on schools with regard to behaviour which establish clear responsibilities to respond to bullying. In particular, Section 89 of the Education and Inspections Act 2006.

Bullying outside school premises

Headteachers have a specific statutory power to discipline pupils for poor behaviour outside of the school premises. Section 89(5) of the Education and Inspections Act 2006 gives headteachers the power to regulate, to such extent as is reasonable, pupils' conduct when they are not on school premises and are not under the lawful control or charge of a member of school staff. This can relate to any bullying (or prejudice-related) incidents occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre.

Where bullying, including prejudice-related incidents, outside school is reported to school staff it must be investigated and acted on. The headteacher should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify the police or local authority of the actions taken against a pupil. If the misbehaviour could

be criminal or poses a serious threat to a member of the public, the police should always be informed.

School will:

- Openly discuss the differences between people that could motivate bullying, such as religion, ethnicity, disability, gender or sexuality - also children with different family situations, such as looked-after children or those with caring responsibilities. We will also teach children that using any prejudice-based language is unacceptable.
- Use specific organisations or resources for help with particular problems.
- Work with the wider community such as the police and children's services where bullying is particularly serious or persistent and where a criminal offence may have been committed. Successful schools also work with other agencies and the wider community to tackle bullying that is happening outside school.
- Make it easy for pupils to report bullying so that they are assured that they will be listened to and incidents acted on. Pupils should feel that they can report bullying which may have occurred outside school including cyber-bullying.
- Create an inclusive environment - a safe environment where pupils can openly discuss the cause of their bullying without fear of further bullying or discrimination.
- Celebrate success - celebrating success is an important way of creating a positive school ethos around the issue.

This policy is to be read alongside our Behaviour, anti Bullying and Child Protection Policies.

This policy will be reviewed in Term 1 2025.