ANTI BULLYING POLICY

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About Us

Access Further Education Ltd ('The College') has subsidiary companies, trading names and trading partnerships through which it operates. The trading names and partnerships might have their own names or brands, but the legal entity for the purpose of this policy is Access Further Education Ltd. Trading subsidiaries, trading names and trading partnerships include Access Creative College ('ACC'), Access Industry ('AI') and Access Sport College ('ASC'). The dBs Institute (DBS Music UK Holdings and its subsidiaries), whilst a separate legal entity, shares common Directorships with the College.

Aim and Purpose

The College is committed to creating a safe, inclusive and respectful learning environment where bullying, harassment, discrimination and abuse are never tolerated. Every learner has the right to study free from intimidation, victimisation, or fear.

This policy supports the College's duties under:

- Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025
- Working Together to Safeguard Children (HM Government, 2023, updated 2026)
- Equality Act 2010 & Public Sector Equality Duty
- Education Act 2011
- UK GDPR & Data Protection Act 2018
- Prevent Duty Guidance (2015, updated 2023)

Bullying can seriously harm a learner's wellbeing, academic progress and mental health. The College acts promptly, fairly and consistently whenever bullying is reported.

The College aims to:

- Prevent bullying through education, awareness and a positive culture.
- Provide clear, accessible reporting routes for all learners.
- Ensure all complaints are taken seriously and investigated promptly.
- Support victims effectively and sensitively, including mental health support.

- Provide structured interventions for those who bully others.
- Apply disciplinary action where behaviour breaches expectations.
- Record and monitor incidents to identify patterns and improve practice.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour—repeated or one-off—that causes harm, distress or fear, where there is an imbalance of power (physical, social, emotional or digital). Bullying can be, but is not limited to:

- **Physical**
  - Hitting, kicking, pushing, unwanted physical contact, damaging belongings.
- **Verbal**
  - Name-calling, taunting, mocking, threats, insults, slurs.
- **Emotional / Psychological**
  - Humiliation, excluding someone, manipulation, intimidation, coercive control.
- **Cyberbullying**
  - Abusive messages, online harassment, posting harmful content, impersonation, image-based abuse, sharing private images or information without consent.
- **Prejudice-Based / Hate Incidents**, Bullying related to:
  - Race, ethnicity or nationality
  - Religion or belief
  - Sex, gender or gender identity
  - Sexual orientation
  - Disability, learning difficulty or mental health
  - Appearance or socio-economic background

Some behaviours may constitute a hate crime and will be reported to the police.

Peer-on-Peer Abuse

The College recognises that bullying can be a form of child-on-child abuse and will be treated as a safeguarding concern where appropriate.

Peer-on-peer abuse can include:

- Physical abuse or violence
- Emotional abuse or coercive control
- Sexual harassment or sexual violence
- Online abuse, including cyberbullying and image-based abuse
- Sharing of nudes or semi-nudes

All incidents will be managed in line with the Safeguarding, Child Protection & Prevent Policy.

Victims will be:

- Listened to and taken seriously
- Supported appropriately
- Never made to feel they are to blame

Learner Rights

All learners have the right to:

- Be treated with dignity and respect.
- Learn in an environment free from bullying.
- Report concerns confidentially.
- Be listened to and taken seriously.
- Receive support to feel safe and continue learning.

Responsibilities

Learners	• **Treat others with respect.** • **Report bullying affecting themselves or others.**
Staff	• **Model positive behaviour.** • **Respond to all reports of bullying.** • **Log and escalate concerns immediately via safeguarding procedures.**
DSL & Safeguarding Team	• **Ensure safeguarding procedures are followed.** • **Assess risk** • **Support victims** • **Maintain accurate records.** • **Refer externally if required**
Senior Leaders	• **Ensure the policy is implemented consistently.** • **Oversee disciplinary processes where needed.** • **Review bullying data and ensure ongoing improvement.**

Recognising When Bullying Becomes a Safeguarding Concern

Bullying becomes a safeguarding issue when it causes or risks:

- Significant emotional or physical harm
- Self-harm or suicidal ideation
- Abuse, exploitation or coercion
- Hate-based incidents
- Online risks (grooming, blackmail, image sharing)

In these cases, the DSL must be notified immediately.

Responding to Reports

Immediate Actions

- The learner is listened to without judgement, taken seriously, and reassured they are not to blame
- Staff record key details.
- Risks are assessed
- The concern is logged on the College's safeguarding/recording system.

Responding to Online Bullying (Cyberbullying)

Where bullying occurs online, the College will take additional steps:

- Secure digital evidence (screenshots, messages, images)
- Remove harmful content where possible

- Work with IT to block or restrict access
- Assess for criminal activity (harassment, stalking, image sharing)
- Consider safeguarding risks (coercion, grooming, exploitation)
- Support learners to report content on platforms

Where incidents involve:

- Explicit image sharing
- Threats or blackmail
- Exploitation

These will be escalated immediately to the DSL.

The College will also use incidents to educate learners on safe online behaviour.

Investigation

Includes:

- Interviews
- Witness statements
- Review of digital evidence
- Risk assessment

Possible outcomes include:

- Informal resolution
- Restorative approaches
- Behaviour contracts
- Safeguarding support
- Disciplinary action

Disciplinary Actions for Bullying

- Warning
- Behaviour plan
- Suspension
- Removal
- Permanent exclusion

Police or External Agency Referral

Required for:

- Hate crime
- Assault
- Sexual misconduct
- Online criminal activity

1. Related Documents

- Safeguarding, Child Protection, Prevent and Online Safety Policy
- Learner Disciplinary Policy & Procedure