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Anti Bullying & Antagonism Policy

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Anti Bullying & Antagonism Policy			
Approved / Accepted by	The Lowry Academy (UL Academy School) The Local Governing Board		
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Scope

This policy sets out the Academy's approach to preventing, identifying, reporting and responding to bullying and antagonistic behaviour, including the support available to students and the relationship between bullying, behaviour and safeguarding procedures.

Philosophy

The Lowry Academy is committed to creating a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which all students can learn, participate and thrive.

Bullying, antagonism, harassment and discrimination are not accepted. The Academy will seek to prevent harmful behaviour, encourage students to report concerns and respond promptly and proportionately when concerns arise.

Our approach is rooted in the Academy's values and recognises that effective anti-bullying practice requires both clear behavioural expectations and appropriate support. We seek to understand the context and impact of behaviour, protect students from harm, address the behaviour identified and reduce the likelihood of recurrence.

Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. Where bullying or antagonistic behaviour raises a safeguarding concern, the Academy's safeguarding procedures will take precedence.

Definition of Bullying and Antagonism

The Lowry Academy is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which all students can learn and thrive. Bullying and antagonistic behaviour are not tolerated and will be addressed promptly and proportionately.

Antagonism is behaviour that causes or is intended to cause upset, conflict, intimidation or harm to another person. Antagonistic behaviour may be a single incident or form part of a developing pattern of behaviour. Antagonism will be challenged even where the behaviour does not meet the definition of bullying.

Conflict occurs where there is a disagreement or breakdown in a relationship between students. Conflict may involve inappropriate behaviour by one or more students but does not necessarily constitute bullying. The Academy will assess the circumstances and respond to the behaviour identified.

Bullying is the purposeful choosing of behaviour that threatens, intimidates or hurts another person, often, but not always, repeated over time, and involving a real or perceived imbalance of power.

Bullying may occur in person or online and may be physical, verbal, relational, prejudicial or discriminatory. It may relate to a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 or to another aspect of a student's identity, circumstances or perceived difference.

The Academy will take reports of harmful behaviour seriously whether or not, following investigation, the behaviour is found to meet the definition of bullying.

Identifying and supporting students who may be vulnerable

The Academy recognises that some students may be more vulnerable to bullying, antagonism, prejudice or social isolation because of their individual circumstances, identity or additional needs. This may include, but is not limited to, students with SEND, children who are looked after or previously looked after, young carers, students from minority ethnic groups, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, refugees or asylum-seeking families, LGBT+ students, students joining the Academy during the school year, and students experiencing other circumstances that may affect their relationships or sense of belonging.

The Academy will seek to identify and respond to these vulnerabilities through appropriate pastoral, safeguarding and SEND support. Where additional support is required, this will be tailored to the individual student's needs and may include trusted-adult support, mentoring, peer support, support with friendships and social relationships, or facilitated access to enrichment and wider Academy opportunities.

Forms of Bullying and Antagonism

Bullying and antagonistic behaviour can occur **in person or online** and may take a number of forms. These may include:

- **Physical behaviour**, such as hitting, kicking, pushing, intimidating someone, taking or damaging belongings, or threatening physical harm.
- **Verbal behaviour**, such as name-calling, threats, insults, humiliating comments, discriminatory or derogatory language, or comments intended to cause distress.
- **Relational or social behaviour**, such as deliberately excluding someone, spreading rumours, manipulating friendships, encouraging others to isolate an individual, or deliberately damaging someone's relationships with others.
- **Non-verbal behaviour**, including threatening or intimidating gestures or other behaviour intended to cause fear, humiliation or distress.
- **Online behaviour**, including bullying, harassment, intimidation, impersonation, deliberate exclusion, spreading harmful content or using digital platforms to target another person.

Bullying and antagonistic behaviour may move between the online and offline environment. The Academy will therefore consider the **overall context, pattern and impact of behaviour**, rather than viewing individual incidents in isolation.

Discriminatory, prejudicial or derogatory language will be challenged and responded to whether it occurs as an isolated incident or forms part of a pattern of bullying or antagonistic behaviour.

A prejudice-related incident does not need to meet the definition of bullying for the Academy to take action. Such incidents will be recorded, responded to and monitored in accordance with the Academy's behaviour, safeguarding and equality procedures.

Bullying and Safeguarding

Bullying may constitute or form part of child-on-child abuse and may raise a safeguarding concern. Not all bullying will constitute child-on-child abuse, but the Academy will consider the nature, seriousness, context and impact of the behaviour when determining the appropriate response.

Staff will not dismiss harmful or abusive behaviour as "banter", "part of growing up" or an inevitable part of childhood.

Where bullying or antagonistic behaviour raises a safeguarding concern, staff will report this in accordance with the Academy's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), or a Deputy DSL where appropriate, will determine the safeguarding response alongside any action taken under this policy and the Academy's Behaviour Policy.

Safeguarding concerns may include, but are not limited to:

- harmful sexual behaviour;
- sexual harassment or sexual violence;
- exploitation;
- serious violence;
- discriminatory abuse;
- coercive or controlling behaviour; and
- abuse occurring online.

Where there is reason to believe that an offence may have been committed, or where a student may be at risk of significant harm, the Academy will consider whether referral to relevant external agencies, including Children's Social Care or the police, is appropriate.

Where necessary to protect a student or manage an identified safeguarding risk, the Academy may implement temporary safeguarding arrangements, including separation of students. Safeguarding separation is not a disciplinary sanction or suspension and will be implemented in accordance with the Academy's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, the United Learning Exclusion Policy and current statutory guidance.

Preventing Bullying and Antagonism

The Academy recognises that effective anti-bullying practice is not solely about responding to incidents. We aim to build a culture in which students understand respectful relationships, feel confident to report concerns and know that harmful behaviour will be challenged.

The Academy seeks to prevent bullying and antagonism through:

- clear expectations for behaviour and relationships;
- consistent promotion of the Academy's values;
- Personal Development, PSHE and RSE education;
- assemblies, tutor time and wider curriculum opportunities;
- education about healthy relationships, consent, equality and respect;
- teaching students about safe and responsible online behaviour;
- challenging discriminatory, prejudicial and derogatory language;
- promoting inclusion and celebrating diversity;
- student voice and opportunities for students to raise concerns;
- early identification of emerging friendship difficulties or patterns of antagonistic behaviour; and
- targeted pastoral, SEND or safeguarding intervention where additional needs or vulnerabilities are identified.

Information arising from incidents, student voice and wider safeguarding or behaviour trends will be used to identify emerging themes and inform preventative education and intervention.

Student Leadership and the Diana Award

The Academy participates in The Diana Award Anti-Bullying Programme as part of its preventative approach. Trained Anti-Bullying Ambassadors will contribute to peer-led activity, awareness raising and campaigns that promote respectful relationships and challenge bullying behaviour.

Student leaders will work with Academy staff to strengthen student voice and help develop a culture in which students feel confident to report concerns and support one another appropriately.

Reporting Bullying and Antagonism

Students are encouraged to report bullying, antagonism or other behaviour that is causing them concern as early as possible.

A student may report a concern to any trusted member of staff, including their tutor, Head of Year or a member of the pastoral or safeguarding team. Students may also use the Academy's established student reporting systems.

Students are encouraged to report concerns about the treatment of **other students**, as well as behaviour they experience themselves.

Parents and carers who have concerns about bullying or antagonistic behaviour should contact the Academy so that the concern can be investigated appropriately.

All staff have a responsibility to respond to concerns about bullying or antagonism. Where a concern is raised, staff should ensure that relevant information is recorded and passed to the appropriate pastoral or safeguarding member of staff.

Where information suggests that a student may be at risk of harm, safeguarding procedures will take precedence.

Responding to a Report

All reports of bullying and antagonistic behaviour will be taken seriously. A report does not automatically establish that bullying has occurred. The Academy will consider the available evidence and determine the nature of the behaviour and the appropriate response.

The response may include:

1. **Listening to the student raising the concern** and establishing their immediate safety and support needs.
2. **Recording the concern** through the Academy's agreed systems.
3. **Considering safeguarding**, including whether the DSL/DDSL should be informed.
4. **Gathering information**, which may include accounts from students, staff observations, relevant records and other available evidence.
5. **Considering the context and pattern of behaviour**, including any previous incidents or concerns.
6. **Determining the finding**, including whether the behaviour constitutes bullying, antagonism, conflict, a prejudice-related incident, a safeguarding concern or another breach of the Behaviour Policy.

7. **Providing appropriate support** to the student or students affected.
8. **Responding to the behaviour identified**, including appropriate education, intervention and consequences.
9. **Informing parents/carers where appropriate.**
10. **Monitoring following the incident** to assess whether the behaviour has stopped and whether further support or intervention is required.

The Academy will avoid assumptions about responsibility before an incident has been appropriately considered.

Digital Material and Images

Where an incident involves an image, video, audio recording, message, social media content or other digital material, staff will consider whether the material may provide relevant evidence and whether its content raises a safeguarding concern.

Students should not be asked to distribute or forward potentially harmful material to staff or other students in order to evidence a concern. Where appropriate, relevant information will be managed in accordance with the Academy's safeguarding, behaviour and online safety procedures.

Where material may constitute sexual imagery involving a child, or otherwise raises a safeguarding concern, staff will not investigate the content independently and will refer the matter immediately to the DSL/DDSL in accordance with the Academy's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The Academy may take action in relation to harmful online behaviour occurring outside the Academy where there is a sufficient connection to the Academy, its students or staff, in accordance with the Behaviour Policy.

Supporting Students Who Have Experienced Bullying

Support will be based on the individual student's circumstances and the nature and impact of the behaviour experienced.

This may include:

- a trusted adult or regular pastoral check-in;
- safety planning where appropriate;
- support with friendships and peer relationships;
- mentoring or other pastoral intervention;
- SEND or safeguarding support where relevant;
- reasonable adjustments where appropriate;
- support with accessing lessons, social times or enrichment;
- support from external services where an identified need requires it; and
- continued monitoring following the incident.

The Academy will work with the student and, where appropriate, their parent/carer to understand what support would help them feel safe and able to participate fully in Academy life.

Restorative approaches

Restorative approaches may be considered where they are appropriate and safe.

They will not be used where they may increase risk, minimise the seriousness of the behaviour or place pressure on a student who has experienced harm.

Participation in a restorative meeting will be voluntary and will follow an appropriate assessment of the circumstances and needs of the students involved.

Responding to Students Responsible for Bullying or Antagonistic Behaviour

Where an investigation identifies bullying or antagonistic behaviour, the Academy will respond promptly and proportionately.

The response will take account of:

- the nature and seriousness of the behaviour;
- its impact;
- whether behaviour was repeated or persistent;
- the student's intent and understanding where relevant;
- previous incidents or interventions;
- safeguarding considerations;
- SEND, disability and reasonable adjustments;
- other individual circumstances; and
- the need to prevent further harm.

Responses may include:

- targeted education or behavioural intervention;
- parent/carer involvement;
- pastoral or safeguarding support;
- Reflection or other sanctions in accordance with the Academy's Behaviour Policy;
- an Individual Behaviour Plan;
- escalation through the Academy's Behaviour Support model;
- suspension where warranted;
- Off-Site Direction where appropriate as a temporary intervention intended to improve future behaviour; and
- consideration of permanent exclusion where the statutory threshold is met.

Repeated bullying will normally result in escalating intervention and consequences. However, a serious single incident may warrant a significant response without progression through earlier interventions.

Suspension and permanent exclusion decisions will be made in accordance with the **United Learning Exclusion Policy** and current statutory guidance.

Training and Awareness

The Academy will ensure that staff understand their responsibilities for preventing, identifying and responding to bullying and antagonistic behaviour.

Appropriate training and guidance will be provided to staff and will include:

- recognising bullying, antagonism and prejudice-related behaviour;
- understanding the distinction between conflict, antagonism and bullying;
- responding appropriately to reports and disclosures;
- recognising when behaviour may constitute a safeguarding concern or child-on-child abuse;
- recording and escalating concerns appropriately;
- supporting students who have experienced bullying or antagonism; and
- promoting respectful, healthy relationships through the Academy's culture and curriculum.

Relevant information and guidance will also be made available to governors, volunteers and other adults working with students, appropriate to their role.

Recording, Monitoring and Evaluation

The Academy will maintain appropriate records of reported bullying, antagonistic and prejudice-related incidents using its agreed recording systems.

Records will enable the Academy to identify patterns and trends, including repeated behaviour, students involved in multiple incidents, locations or times of increased concern and themes relating to prejudice, safeguarding or other vulnerabilities.

The Vice Principal responsible for pastoral strategy will oversee the analysis of bullying and antagonism data and use this information to inform preventative education, pastoral intervention and wider Academy improvement.

Relevant trends and assurance information will be reported to the Principal and Local Governing Board through the Academy's agreed governance arrangements.

Monitoring will consider not only the number of reported incidents, but also the effectiveness of the Academy's response, whether behaviour has been repeated following intervention, and the experiences of students.

Student voice will be used, where appropriate, to evaluate students' understanding of bullying, confidence in reporting concerns and perceptions of safety and belonging.

Roles and Responsibilities

All staff are responsible for challenging bullying and antagonistic behaviour, responding appropriately when concerns are raised, recording concerns through the Academy's agreed systems and escalating safeguarding concerns in accordance with the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

Heads of Year and pastoral staff are responsible for coordinating the investigation and response to reported bullying and antagonism, ensuring appropriate support and intervention is implemented, communicating with parents/carers where appropriate and monitoring whether the behaviour has stopped.

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and Deputy DSLs will provide safeguarding oversight where behaviour raises or may raise a safeguarding concern and will determine whether further safeguarding action or referral is required.

The Vice Principal responsible for pastoral strategy will oversee the Academy's approach to preventing and responding to bullying and antagonism, monitor patterns and trends, and provide appropriate assurance to the Principal.

The Principal retains overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy and for ensuring the Academy has appropriate systems for preventing, identifying and responding to bullying.

The Local Governing Board provides appropriate scrutiny and challenge through the Academy's governance arrangements.

Links to Other Policies and Guidance

This policy should be read alongside the Academy's and Trust's relevant policies and procedures, including:

- Behaviour Policy
- Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- Equality Policy
- Relationships, Sex and Health Education Policy
- Online Safety / Responsible Use Policy
- SEND Policy
- United Learning Exclusion Policy
- Restrictive Intervention Policy