



**HILL
STREET**
Presbyterian Church

Anti-Bullying Policy

Approved by the Kirk Session June 2026

Review every 3 years

1. Policy Statement

The congregation is committed to providing a **safe, respectful, and welcoming environment** for all children and young people. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any organisation or activity connected with the Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Every child and young person has the right to:

- Feel safe
- Be treated with dignity and respect
- Participate without fear of intimidation, exclusion, or harm

All leaders have a responsibility to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying behaviour.

2. What Is Bullying?

Bullying is behaviour that:

- Is **intentional**
- Causes **physical or emotional harm**
- Involves a **misuse of power**
- Is **repeated**, or is a **single serious incident**
- Creates fear, distress, or humiliation

Bullying may target individuals because of characteristics such as race, religion, disability, gender, additional needs, or sexual orientation. This includes **prejudicial bullying**.

Bullying can occur:

- Child to child
- Child to adult
- Adult to child
- Between leaders or volunteers

3. Forms of Bullying

Bullying can include, but is not limited to:

3.1 Verbal and Emotional

- Name-calling, teasing, mocking
- Threats, intimidation, humiliation
- Spreading rumours
- Excluding or isolating someone

3.2 Physical

- Pushing, hitting, kicking
- Damaging property
- Forcing someone to do something against their will

3.3 Cyberbullying

Bullying that takes place through digital means, including:

- Text messages
- Social media (WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok)
- Gaming platforms
- Sharing images or personal information without consent

Cyberbullying may occur **outside church hours** but still impact a child's wellbeing and must be taken seriously.

4. Why This Policy Matters

- Bullying causes real harm.
- Everyone has the right to be treated with respect.
- Bullying can be a form of **emotional abuse** and therefore a **safeguarding concern**.
- The church has a legal and moral duty to respond effectively.
- Children, parents, and leaders must know that bullying will be addressed promptly and fairly.

5. Prevention

Leaders will:

- Promote a culture of kindness, inclusion, and respect
- Model positive behaviour

- Encourage children to include those who are alone
- Discuss bullying openly and regularly
- Remind children they can talk to leaders about anything worrying them
- Challenge discriminatory or harmful language immediately
- Ensure activities are well-supervised and safe

6. Reporting Bullying

6.1 Children and Young People

Children should be encouraged to speak to **any leader they trust** if they feel bullied or see bullying happening.

6.2 Leaders and Volunteers

Any leader who becomes aware of bullying must:

- Listen carefully and take the concern seriously
- Reassure the child that they have done the right thing
- Record the concern
- Report it to the **Designated Person for Safeguarding**

6.3 Parents

Parents should be informed unless doing so places a child at further risk.

7. When Bullying Is a Safeguarding Concern

Bullying **must** be treated as a safeguarding issue when it involves:

- Fear, coercion, or threats
- Significant emotional harm
- Prejudicial or discriminatory behaviour
- Sexualised comments or behaviour
- Physical injury
- Online harassment or image-sharing

In these cases, leaders must follow the church's safeguarding procedures and report to the **Designated Person**, who may consult statutory agencies.

8. Responding to Bullying

The response will depend on the seriousness of the behaviour.

8.1 Early Intervention

For minor or first-time incidents:

- Leaders may speak with the children involved
- A supported conversation may help resolve misunderstandings
- A genuine apology may be appropriate
- Mediation must **never** be forced if a child feels unsafe.

8.2 Formal Response

If bullying continues or is more serious:

- Leaders will meet with the child who has been bullied and their parent(s)
- Leaders will meet separately with the child displaying bullying behaviour and their parent(s)
- Appropriate consequences will be applied
- A behaviour plan may be put in place
- The situation will be monitored and reviewed

8.3 Safeguarding Response

If the bullying is serious, persistent, or harmful:

- The Designated Person will be informed immediately
- Safeguarding procedures will be followed
- External agencies may be contacted if required

9. Consequences for Bullying Behaviour

Consequences may include:

- Verbal warning
- Loss of privileges
- Temporary removal from activities
- Behaviour contract
- Suspension from the organisation
- Permanent exclusion (in serious cases)

Consequences must be:

- Proportionate
- Recorded
- Communicated clearly to parents
- Focused on helping the child change their behaviour

10. Record-Keeping

Leaders must keep written records of:

- What was reported
- Who was involved
- Actions taken
- Meetings with parents
- Follow-up and outcomes

Records must be stored securely and shared only with those who need to know.

11. Monitoring and Review

The Kirk Session and Designated Person will:

- Review bullying incidents regularly
- Identify patterns or recurring issues
- Ensure leaders receive appropriate training
- Review this policy every 3 years or sooner if needed