



Merchant Taylors' Schools, Crosby

Anti-Bullying Policy

Policy Owner	Deputy Head – Pastoral
Last reviewed by Date	Deputy Head – Pastoral April 2026
Last approved by <u>Date</u>	Board of Governors Education & Safeguarding Committee
Frequency of review	Annual
Next policy review by owner	April 2027
Next policy approved by Board of Governors (if applicable)	April 2027
Circulation:	All staff and Governors Parents and Pupils Website
Related Policies:	School Parents Handbook Staff Handbook ICT Acceptable User Policy Safeguarding and ChildProtection Policy Mobile Phone Policy PSHE Policy RSE Policy Behaviour Policy
Regulatory Body (if applicable)	Department for Education Independent Schools Inspectorate
Relevant legislation/guidelines	Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), especially Part 3 Equality Act 2010 DfE Preventing and Tackling Bullying (July 2017) DfE Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff (2014) DfE Behaviour in schools: advice for headteachers and school staff (updated February 2024) DfE Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 DfE Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 DfE Filtering and monitoring: core standard

1. Context

Merchant Taylors' School is committed to providing a safe, respectful and inclusive environment in which every pupil can learn and flourish. In accordance with the Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014 (as amended), bullying must be prevented so far as reasonably practicable through the drawing up and effective implementation of an anti-bullying strategy.

This policy should be read alongside the School's Behaviour Policy, Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy, ICT Acceptable User Policy, Online Safety / E-Safety Policy, Mobile Phone Policy, PSHE Policy and relevant staff guidance. It also takes account of current Department for Education guidance, including Preventing and Tackling Bullying, Behaviour in schools, Keeping Children Safe in Education and Working Together to Safeguard Children.

In line with KCSIE 2025, the school recognises the **Four Cs of online risk**:

- **Content** – exposure to harmful material, including inappropriate images, extremist content, and **misinformation, disinformation, and conspiracy theories**.
- **Contact** – harmful interactions such as grooming, coercion, or exploitation.
- **Conduct** – risks from pupils' own behaviour online, including cyberbullying and oversharing personal data.
- **Commerce** – financial risks such as scams, gambling, and exploitative in-game purchases.

The school will teach pupils how to identify and manage these risks, review filtering and monitoring systems regularly, and promote digital literacy to help pupils critically evaluate online information.

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2. Rationale

The school will not tolerate bullying and will do everything possible to discourage it. We believe that all students have the right to be educated in an environment where there is mutual respect and cooperation. Merchant Taylors' School aims to provide a safe and caring environment in which each of its pupils feels secure in an environment where they can express themselves freely, form relationships and learn at their own pace.

If bullying does occur, we aim to ensure that the person being bullied is safe, we work to stop the bullying from happening again and we provide support to the person being bullied and, where appropriate, the perpetrator. Parents, teachers and support staff must be alert to signs of bullying, and all members of the school community must report any bullying they experience or witness to the victim's form teacher.

All staff will always take reports of bullying seriously and will always ensure they are thoroughly investigated. Serious instances of bullying may be regarded as safeguarding issues and as such may be reported to the designated staff safeguarding leads and dealt with under the school's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. In some instances, and where a criminal offence may have been committed it will be appropriate to liaise with the Police.

Because bullying is prevalent in the news and is a form of real anxiety for parents and carers it is important that we inform them about our approach to bullying, so that they are able to distinguish between what is bullying and what is not.

3. Aims of the Anti-Bullying Policy

The School aims:

- To prevent bullying from happening by proactively teaching pupils about what it is and the harm it can do
- To create an atmosphere in which all pupils feel secure and valued
- To recognise that within the School Community no one deserves to be a victim of bullying
- To increase awareness and to encourage pupils to report concerns regarding bullying by being *upstanders* and *reporters*
- To respond appropriately and effectively to instances of bullying and have a consistent approach to any bullying incidents that occur
- To provide protection, support and reassurance for victims
- To develop the self-confidence and self-esteem of all pupils

- To cultivate pupils' talents, free from the envy of their peers
- To promote appreciation of diversity – all pupils are accepted for who they are, no matter how different they are to peers
- To nurture students to be empathetic, respectful and considerate of others
- To ensure that parents, pupils and members of staff understand what bullying is and understand the school's policy on bullying and follow it, including by reporting any instances of bullying they come across
- To work with those students who engage in bullying activities to ensure that they recognise and learn different ways of behaving

- To ensure all staff are aware of and take into consideration the different needs of pupils challenged by issues such as visual or auditory impairment, reduced mobility, poor mental health, dyslexia and other SEND considerations
- To keep governors updated about serious instances of bullying and for governors to review the policy annually and to check on its effective implementation

4. Definition of Bullying

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally, and which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be verbal, physical, relational or online.

A serious one-off incident may not meet the strict definition of bullying, but may still be dealt with under the School's Behaviour Policy and, where appropriate, the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

5. Roles involved in bullying incidents

- The Target – the person at whom the bullying is aimed.
- The Ringleader – initiates and leads the bullying.
- The Assistant – actively involved in 'doing' the bullying but does not lead it.
- The Reinforcer – supports the bullying or encourages what is going on but doesn't do it.
- The Outsider – ignores or doesn't see the bullying and doesn't get involved.
- The Defender – stands up for someone who is being bullied. Knows that bullying is wrong and feels confident enough to defend. They might talk to an adult in school.

6. Examples of Bullying

6.1 Bullying can be (but is not limited to):

- Physical assault including playfighting
- Derogatory name calling of an insulting and / or personal nature
- Verbal abuse and threats
- Abusive or threatening emails, texts, instant messages or calls on mobile phones
- Hijacking or cloning email or social networking accounts, or using email or social networking to impersonate a person
- The use of mobile phone camera images to cause distress, fear or humiliation
- Demanding money, material goods or favours by means of threat or force
- Ridiculing an individual because of physical, economic, sexual, intellectual, cultural or racial difference or religious belief
- Graffiti designed to intimidate or embarrass

- Sending unpleasant texts or making threats or mocking someone online (see the section on cyberbullying at the end of this document)
- Posting threatening, abusive, offensive or humiliating material or comments on websites (including blogs, personal websites and social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat or YouTube)
- Incitement of others to commit acts of bullying
- Prejudice based: Racist, sexist, misogynistic, homophobic, biphobic or transphobic
- behaviour
- Mocking their contributions in class
- Saying or doing hurtful things to or about someone on the basis of their or their family member's actual or perceived sexual orientation
- Saying or doing hurtful things to or about someone on the basis of their, ethnic, social, cultural or religious background, a disability or special educational need, because they are in the care of the Local Authority or are acting as a carer, or because of an issue in their family
- Hitting, kicking, or otherwise inflicting physical pain

6.2 Bullying related to a protected characteristic is taken particularly seriously. The School recognises its duties under the Equality Act 2010 and will respond robustly to bullying, harassment or discriminatory language relating to race, religion or belief, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity. The School will also respond seriously to bullying linked to special educational needs, caring responsibilities, being looked after, family circumstances, appearance, health conditions or any other actual or perceived difference or vulnerability. Prejudice-based incidents will be challenged, recorded and reviewed for patterns and trends so that appropriate action can be taken to safeguard pupils and promote an inclusive culture.

Examples can include:

- Race (racist bullying)
- Religion or beliefs
- Culture or class
- Gender (sexist bullying)
- Sexual orientation (homophobic or biphobic bullying)
- Gender identity (transphobic bullying)
- Special Education needs or disability
- Appearance or health conditions

The school recognises that pupils who identify as being LGBTQIA+ or who are perceived as such may be subject to bullying. The school seeks to foster a culture of tolerance and acceptance of diversity and addresses issues of homophobia, biphobia

and transphobia in PSHE, in other subjects where appropriate, and through assemblies.

All members of the school community are reminded to use language that is respectful of, and kind towards, others and to avoid language that perpetuates stereotypes or offends others. The school does not tolerate the use of derogatory language and its use will be challenged and recorded by staff.

6.3 Relational aggression is described as behaviours that harm others through damage to relationships or feelings of acceptance, friendship or group inclusion (Crick and Grotpeter 1995). It refers to deliberate actions that intend to negatively affect an individual's friendships or reputation. Such actions, if ignored, can lead to social exclusion. The school takes relational aggression seriously and addresses the issues associated with it through our PSHE and assembly programmes. Examples include:

- Deliberately excluding someone
- Spreading rumours and gossip
- Breaking secrets
- Imitating or mocking a pupil
- Teasing or embarrassing a pupil

7. Bullying outside of school (including cyber bullying)

Any report of bullying by one member of the school community against another will be taken seriously and considered under this policy, regardless of when or where it took place, where it has an impact on a pupil's safety, wellbeing, behaviour or education, or on the orderly running of the School.

The School recognises that cyberbullying and online abuse can take place at any time and can be persistent, far-reaching and highly distressing. The School will respond to such concerns in line with this policy and, where appropriate, the Behaviour Policy and Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

The School teaches pupils about online safety, respectful online conduct, reporting concerns, and the safe use of personal devices and social media. The School also maintains appropriate filtering and monitoring arrangements and reviews these regularly in line with current guidance.

Where cyberbullying may involve a safeguarding concern, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, coercive behaviour, sharing of nude or semi-nude images, criminal conduct or risk of significant harm, the matter will be referred immediately to the DSL or a Deputy DSL and, where appropriate, to external agencies including the police.

Preventative measures for the prevention of cyberbullying

The School:

- Expects all pupils to adhere to its ICT Acceptable User Policy and Mobile Phone Policy for Pupils.
- Blocks certain sites through our filtering system, as well as through our 'Light Speed' monitoring system to monitor pupils' use, alerting DSLs to inappropriate usage via email.
- Offers guidance on the safe use of social networking sites and cyberbullying in PSHE lessons, which covers blocking, removing contacts from "friend" lists and sharing personal data.
- Offers guidance on keeping names, addresses, passwords, mobile phone numbers and other personal details safe.
- Restricts the pupils' use of mobile phones, as described in the School's Mobile Phone Policy
- Does not allow the use of cameras or mobile phones in any area of the school campus, especially toilets, washing and changing areas.

Parents should:

- Place Internet-accessible computers in an open living area. This naturally reduces the temptation to view / deal in inappropriate or harmful content.
- Visit www.thinkuknow.co.uk and read the advice about technical filters. It is possible to have filters on smartphones and mobile devices to protect your child.
- As a School, we ask that you read our ICT Acceptable User Policy and Mobile Phone Policy, so that you and your son fully understand what we deem to be the use and misuse of technology.

Pupils should:

- Respect other people's privacy.
- Never do online what they would not do face-to-face.
- Consider how other people would feel and not communicate anything which would cause alarm or distress deliberately or 'by mistake'.

8. Signs that someone might be a victim of bullying

Please note, this is not an exhaustive list but a summary of some common indications that someone is being bullied. They could also be signs of other difficulties but should give rise to investigating the possibility of bullying. Parents and teachers should look out for a pupil:

- Seeming afraid of the journey to or from school, asking to be taken to school when they have previously been happy to walk or take public transport unaccompanied
- Making unexplained changes to their routine

- Trying to get out of going to school, e.g. by claiming to be ill when nothing really seems wrong with them, playing truant
- Becoming anxious and withdrawn, appearing to have lost confidence.
- Changes to behaviour such as stammering, easily becoming tearful, having a disturbed sleep pattern
- Possessions or clothes being frequently lost or damaged, asking for money without explaining why they need it
- A sudden decline in school-work
- Becoming aggressive towards siblings
- Unwilling to use mobile phones or computers or using them obsessively
- Unexplained cuts or bruises, self-harming, preoccupied with suicide

Any indication of self-harm, suicidal ideation, serious emotional distress or other safeguarding risk must be treated as a safeguarding concern and referred without delay in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

9. Preventing bullying: How we set the right ethos of being a "telling" school

- 9.1** The School acknowledges that bullying happens in all schools, including this school. It is distressing to the victims; can have a detrimental impact on mental health and represents a problem that has to be addressed seriously.
The school takes proactive measures to foster positive relationships and mutual respect.
- 9.2** A telling school is one where students do inform staff when bullying is taking place.
- 9.3** If students who feel they are being bullied are to tell us about bullying we must work together to create an atmosphere of trust. Students who are classed as targets must know that their concerns will be taken seriously and recognise that investigations take time.
- 9.4** We must also make it as easy as possible to report bullying. They must understand that these may result in a number of different outcomes, some of which might be subject to confidentiality.
- 9.5** It will be made clear to all pupils that bullying is not acceptable. Pupils are encouraged to report any incidents to their Form Teacher or any member of staff and these are investigated promptly. Such reports are recorded by school staff on CPOMs. The School aims to create a climate of trust in which reporting to an adult is the normal response to bullying rather than passive acceptance or violent reaction. Pupils with learning difficulties may be particularly at risk of bullying and, therefore, staff should be particularly aware of potential problems with these pupils

- 9.6** We educate pupils through assemblies, form time, PSHE/RSE and the wider curriculum so that they understand bullying, prejudice-based bullying, child-on-child abuse, online abuse, sexual violence and sexual harassment, and how to report concerns. These areas are addressed in an age-appropriate way in line with the School's safeguarding arrangements.
- 9.7** Anti-Bullying ambassadors, at KS3 and 4, have been selected and trained to support their peers.
- 9.8** The school's programme of extracurricular activities enables pupils to achieve and to develop self-esteem and good relationships beyond the classroom.
- 9.9** The school has a clearly defined pastoral system based around Form Teachers, Heads of Year (At the secondary school) and the Assistant Heads-Pastoral. Pupils may also seek support from the School Medical Team and the School Counsellors. The House System fosters integration and community, allowing younger pupils to be supported by older students.

Staff training

Appropriate training is provided to promote staff understanding of bullying, cyberbullying, online safety, prejudice-based bullying and the needs of pupils who may be more vulnerable, including pupils with SEND, disabled pupils, looked-after children, young carers, and pupils who are LGBTQ+ or perceived to be LGBTQ+. Staff are also supported to identify patterns, locations and times where bullying risk may be heightened.

10 How to deal with Bullying and who to tell.

10.1 Each year at the start of the Autumn Term we will remind all our students to take the following action if they feel they are being bullied. These messages will also be reinforced throughout the year:

- if you feel able to, then let the perpetrator know that you do not like what is happening to them and ask them to stop.
- if the bullying doesn't stop, tell someone in school who will initiate action to sort out the problem.
- Use the Whisper app. to notify the Assistant Head, Pastoral (Senior School)
- Use the Worry Boxes to notify the Assistant Head, Pastoral (Stanfield)

Pupils are supported in understanding the clear distinction between bullying and friendship issues. While disagreements or fallouts can occur in any relationship, bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour that is repeated over time and involves an imbalance of power. Helping pupils to recognise this difference is essential in ensuring that genuine concerns are appropriately addressed, and that all students feel safe, supported, and understood.

- 10.2** If bullying behaviour is witnessed by our students, as part of taking on the role as defender, we ask that they too report their concerns using the above protocols. However, we emphasise that students must not use physicality or verbal abuse to try and resolve a matter.
- 10.3** If a parent or carer has a concerns regarding bullying behaviour, we ask that it is reported to their child's Form Tutor (Senior School) or Class Teacher (Stanfield) in the first instance. This will be logged and the matter investigated. If a parent does not know who the appropriate member of staff is, they should contact the School and the Receptionist will advise them.

Parents are able to discuss bullying by speaking at Parents' Forum Events and at Parents' Evenings.

- 10.4** Any member of staff who witnesses bullying should ensure that all parties, in the first instance are safe. All staff are aware that they must:
- Listen carefully to what you are being told. Alleged victims must feel listened to.
 - Clarify what you are told – where, when, who how etc.
 - Take immediate action to safeguard the victim in line with the School's Safeguarding Policy
 - Do not offer confidentiality. Make it clear that you may have to report it elsewhere. Ensure that the student knows who else will be told.
 - Reassure the alleged victim that they will be taken seriously.
 - As soon as possible, write down what you have been told – using the pupil's own words. It may be appropriate for the child to write down their own version of events.
 - It should then be reported to the Form Tutor (Senior School) or Class Teacher (Stanfield) in the first instance. On occasion, it may be necessary to report the incident directly to Division level or a member of the SLT

Any concern that indicates risk of harm, child-on-child abuse, sexual harassment, sexual violence, coercive behaviour, online exploitation or any other safeguarding issue must be referred immediately to the DSL or a Deputy DSL and managed in accordance with the School's Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy.

11 Who should investigate and recording of incidents

- 11.1** In the first instance we would expect the pupil's Form Tutor (Senior School) or Class Teacher (Stanfield) to discuss any issues with their tutees and suggest possible solutions. They will make a judgement as to whether this is a friendship issue or a more serious issue of bullying behaviour.

If this is ineffective or the Form Tutor believes he/she needs help in resolving an issue or believes that there is a more serious issue of bullying behaviour he/she will liaise with the pupil's Head or Assistant Head of Division (Senior School) or Assistant Head, Pastoral (Stanfield).

- 11.2** Where further investigation into a complaint of bullying behaviour is required it will be carried out in most cases by either the Head of Division or Assistant Head of Division (Senior School) or Assistant Head, Pastoral (Stanfield.) On occasion, in the Senior School, this could be the Form Tutor or either the Assistant Head or Deputy Head, Pastoral.

The School adopts an open conversation approach to dealing with bullying. Staff involved in managing bullying incidents ensure ongoing communication to keep all relevant colleagues informed. This includes maintaining regular conversations with the student's Form Tutor, Division staff, and members of the Senior Leadership Team (SLT). Such collaboration ensures a consistent and supportive approach, allowing all staff to monitor the situation effectively, provide appropriate support, and respond swiftly to any further concerns.

- 11.3** The need for gathering evidence
If we are to deal with incidents fairly, we must gather as much evidence as soon as possible in order to try to establish the facts.

Pupils will be spoken to and witness statements written. Whilst we try to avoid pupils being removed from class to facilitate this, it has to be acknowledged that on occasion, this is unavoidable.

Parents do not need to be informed prior to nor do they need to be present during their child being interviewed as a witness.

- 11.4** A written record of all bullying concerns, allegations, investigations, actions and outcomes will be kept securely on CPOMS. Records should distinguish, where appropriate, between friendship difficulties, poor behaviour, bullying, prejudice-based incidents and safeguarding concerns.
- 11.5** Records will note any relevant protected characteristic, vulnerability, location, timing, online element, repeated pattern or other contextual feature so that the School can identify themes, respond proportionately and take preventative action.
- 11.6** Governors will review this policy annually and receive appropriate information about bullying patterns, trends and the effectiveness of preventative and responsive measures, while maintaining appropriate confidentiality.

12. Sanctions

- 12.1** Sanctions are applied fairly, proportionately, consistently and reasonably, taking account of any SEN or disabilities that pupils may have, and taking into consideration the needs of vulnerable children. Bullying by children with disabilities or SEN is no more acceptable than bullying by other children and it should be made clear that their actions are wrong and appropriate sanctions imposed. We expect all students to be proactive and seek help from members of staff if they witness another student being hurt or they are concerned about others.

The sanctions that could be used are those found in the School's Behaviour Policy and can include suspension or permanent exclusion.

- 12.2** Often it will be necessary to apply a hybrid approach of sanction combined with restorative conversations and/or further education on specific matters.
- 12.3** Any sanctions will be confidential between the school, the pupil receiving the sanction and their parents/carers.
- 12.4** In certain cases, where bullying is particularly serious or involves safeguarding concerns, it may be necessary to refer the matter to external agencies. This can include Children's Services or the police, especially if the behaviour constitutes harassment, threats, or other criminal actions. These steps are taken to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all pupils and to demonstrate that such behaviour is treated with the seriousness it warrants.

13. Engaging with parents and carers

We believe it is important for our school to work with parents/carers to help them to understand our approach with regards to bullying and to engage promptly with them when an issue of bullying comes to light, whether their child is the student being bullied or the one doing the bullying. We will ensure parents/carers are made aware of how to work with us on bullying and how they can seek help if a problem is not resolved. Some parents may need specific support to help deal with their child's behaviour. Where our school identifies that this is the case, we will initially provide support ourselves or signpost the parents to appropriate channels of help.

The School will:

- make sure that key information (including policies and named points of contact) about bullying is available to parents/carers.
- ensure that all parents/carers know who to contact if they are worried about bullying.
- ensure all parents/carers know about our complaints procedure and how to use it effectively.
- ensure all parents/carers know where to access independent advice about bullying.
- work with all parents/carers and the local community to address issues beyond the school gates that give rise to bullying.
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If parents/carers remain dissatisfied after the matter has been considered by the School, they should follow the School's Complaints Procedure.

Particularly during a lengthy investigation, or when there is a repetition of bullying behaviour, a target's parents may feel very anxious. It is very important that the investigator and the parents keep in contact but parents must understand that teaching staff do have other demands on their time. We will always endeavour to ring parents on the same day that the incident occurred; however, phone calls may not always be able to be made as soon or as frequently as the parent would ideally like.

All parents/carers should:

- Regularly remind their child of the school's expectations of behaviour as found in the school's Behaviour Policy. This will reinforce the aims of the school and minimise the chance of their child's involvement in bullying
- Be alert to signs that their child may be a victim of bullying. Such signs may include problems with attendance, illness, any unusual money requests, missing or damaged equipment and physical injuries
- Be aware of, monitor and control their child's use of social media
- If any parent/carer suspects that their child is being bullied, they are recommended to encourage their child to inform a member of staff.
- Contact the school directly if they feel that their child is subject to bullying. In the first instance, they should contact the appropriate Form Teacher or Head of House.
- If parents/carers feel that their concerns have not been fully dealt with they should report the matter, in writing, to the Headteacher. If this does not prove to be conclusive the Chair of Governors.

16. Review and Evaluation

The Pastoral Team will keep the effectiveness of this policy and the prevalence of bullying under ongoing review through regular meetings, incident analysis and discussion of emerging patterns. This review will include consideration of prejudice-based incidents, online safety concerns and any locations, times or groups associated with heightened risk.

The policy and its effectiveness will be reviewed at least annually by Governors, together with appropriate trend information, in order to evaluate the impact of preventative measures and identify any further action required.

Appendix 1:

Statement on bullying for display in classrooms at Merchant Taylors' School

Any member of the Merchant Taylors' community, pupil, staff member or volunteer, has the right to learn and work without fear of bullying. Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally, and which involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can take many forms, including verbal, physical, relational and online bullying.

Main points:

- When bullying has taken place, those who know of it, besides the bully and the pupil, will probably include other pupils and, possibly, parents
- It is vital that all who know of bullying should report it to a Tutor or any other member of staff who will, if they think fit, pass the information on to Heads House or, in serious cases, to the Head.
- The reporting of bullying, even anonymously, is by no means to be regarded as 'grassing' or 'snitching': it is absolutely and always the right thing to do. **Indeed, it is a duty for every member of the School to be an upstander and a reporter.**
- Bullying is unacceptable and will not be tolerated at the School. This means that a bully can expect, as appropriate, advice, reprimand or punishment. Serious or persistent offence may incur suspension or expulsion.
- A concern for others lies at the heart of the School. Each and every one of us can help to create an atmosphere of friendly co-operation, respect and tolerance by refraining from bullying behaviours and by speaking out if we see it happening.

Please report any form of bullying to Your Form Tutor, Head of Division, or ANY member of staff

Appendix 2

Supporting Organisations and Guidance

Government guidance

- DfE: Preventing and Tackling Bullying
- DfE: Cyberbullying: Advice for Headteachers and School Staff
- DfE: Keeping Children Safe in Education
- DfE: Working Together to Safeguard Children
- DfE: Behaviour in schools
- DfE: Filtering and monitoring: core standard
- Equality Act 2010: advice for schools

Support for pupils, parents and schools

- Anti-Bullying Alliance
- Childline
- NSPCC
- Kidscape
- Family Lives
- YoungMinds
- Childnet
- UK Safer Internet Centre
- Internet Watch Foundation
- PSHE Association
- The Diana Award
- Victim Support
- Carers Trust