

Anti-Bullying Policy

Star Soccer Academy – Season 2026/27. To be read with the Safeguarding Children Policy, the Equality Policy and the club's codes of conduct.

Our commitment

Every child at Star has the right to enjoy football without being bullied, and every child has the right to be listened to if they say they are being bullied. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at the club, and any child who reports it can expect to be taken seriously and supported.

What bullying is

Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another person physically or emotionally. It often involves an imbalance of power. It can be:

- Verbal: name-calling, mocking, insults, threats, comments about ability, appearance, background or identity.
- Physical: hitting, kicking, pushing, taking or damaging belongings.
- Emotional or social: excluding someone, spreading rumours, humiliating them, turning others against them.
- Online: abusive or mocking messages, posts, images or videos, in group chats or on social media, including by parents about children.
- Discriminatory: any of the above related to race, religion, disability, sex, sexual orientation or any protected characteristic. This is also dealt with under the Equality Policy.

A single hurtful comment in the heat of a game is not bullying on its own, but it is a breach of the Players' Code of Conduct and the club will always address it, because unchallenged comments can quickly become a pattern. Bullying can be carried out by children or adults, and adults' behaviour on the touchline or in group chats is covered by this policy too.

Signs a child may be being bullied

A child may become reluctant to attend, withdrawn, tearful or anxious, may lose confidence in their play, may avoid certain teammates, or may say they no longer enjoy football. These signs do not always mean bullying, but coaches and parents should notice them and ask.

What we do to prevent bullying

- Every parent accepts the club's codes of conduct in the Star app, on their own behalf and on behalf of their child. The codes set out how teammates and adults treat each other.
- Coaches promote a culture where mistakes are part of learning, and challenge put-downs and blame between players straight away.
- Coaches know their squads and watch for changes in groupings, confidence or mood.
- Team group chats are for practical information only and are not used to discuss individual children or families.
- Every child is told who they can go to at the club if something is wrong, and that they will not be in trouble for speaking up.

How to report bullying

A child can tell any coach, their parents or the Club Welfare Officer. A parent can raise a concern with the coach or the Club Welfare Officer in person, by phone or in writing. Reports are recorded and acknowledged, normally within two working days.

Contact	Details
Club Welfare Officer	Matt Finnigan – matt@starsocceracademy.co.uk
Leicestershire & Rutland County FA safeguarding team	0116 286 7828 (option 1) – safeguarding@leicestershirefa.com
Childline (for children)	0800 1111

How the club responds

- The Club Welfare Officer speaks to the child affected first, with a parent present where appropriate, and agrees a named adult at the club they can go to.
- Accounts are gathered from the children involved and from adults who were present. Where the club holds video footage, it is reviewed.

- Interim measures are put in place to protect the child while the matter is looked into, such as managing groupings at training and matches. These are recorded in a written risk assessment and shared with the child's parents.
- The club considers whether the behaviour is a one-off, a repeat or part of a pattern, and whether any earlier warning applies.
- Action is proportionate and consistent. It may include a reminder, a formal warning, an apology, restorative work between the children where both are willing, a period out of selection, involvement of the County FA, or, for serious or repeated bullying, removal from the club.
- The child responsible is also supported to understand the effect of their behaviour and to change it.
- Both families are told the outcome. The club follows up with the child affected after two weeks and again at the end of the term.
- Records of the report, accounts, decision and reasons are kept securely by the Club Welfare Officer.

A parent who is not satisfied with the club's response may raise the matter with the Leicestershire & Rutland County FA safeguarding team. Raising a concern will never be held against a child or family. This policy is reviewed annually by the owner and Club Welfare Officer.

Approved by Matt Finnigan, Owner and Club Welfare Officer, September 2026. Next review due September 2027.