ACC Education Settings Anti-Bullying Guidance September 2025

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Policy Statement

Bullying should never be viewed as a normal or inevitable part of growing up. Adults are not expected to be the subject of abuse by colleagues or friends, therefore it should not be any different for children and young people

Bullying behaviour impacts the wellbeing of our children and young people. Children and young people in Aberdeen have the right to live free from violence, abuse, and neglect, which includes protection from violence by other children. We are committed to creating safe, inclusive, and supportive environments where children and young people can thrive.

The updates made to this guidance will support the work to create inclusive environments that promote safety, respect and wellbeing and encourage positive relationships.

Our vision is that

• every child and young person In Aberdeen will grow up free from bullying and will develop respectful, responsible and confident relationships with other children, young people and adults;

• children and young people and their parent(s), will have the skills and knowledge to prevent and/or respond appropriately to bullying;

• every child and young person who requires help will know who can help them and what support is available; and

• adults working with, or caring for, children and young people will follow a consistent and coherent approach in preventing and responding to bullying from Early Learning and Childcare onwards.

Why is this guidance required?

Aberdeen City Council is committed to the safety and wellbeing of children and young people within the community. Bullying is not a normal part of growing up and Aberdeen City Council believe that children and young people have the right to be protected, supported and respected.
Bullying is a violation of rights set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, notably Articles 3, 12, 13, 19, 28, 29, 39.
Bullying behaviour is never acceptable within Aberdeen City Council's schools or early learning centres. All children and young people have an entitlement to work and play in a learning environment in which they feel valued, respected and safe and are free from all forms of abuse, bullying or discrimination.

A child who is being bullied may not feel safe, included or respected. A child who is bullied, and those causing bullying, may have wellbeing needs which should be assessed and supported using the eight indicators of wellbeing
https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/wellbeing-indicators-shanarri/
– Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included as part of the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) approach.
https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/principles-and-values/

The purpose of this Guidance is to encourage a proactive and inclusive approach to anti-bullying and to support all adults working with, or caring for, children and young people to create inclusive environments where bullying cannot thrive.
The Guidance will ensure that Educational establishments across Aberdeen City have a consistent and cohesive approach and response to anti-bullying.
This guidance outlines the policy ambition to embed a consistent approach to reporting, recording and monitoring incidents of bullying through SEEMiS, Bullying and Equalities Module (BEM).

Parents/Carers, pupils and Aberdeen City Council Education staff have a responsibility to work collaboratively to ensure an environment free from bullying behaviour.
Aberdeen City Council believes that everyone should be treated equally and with respect. 'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) is the underlying principle for Aberdeen City Education Children's Services in ensuring the needs of all pupils are met. The Scottish Government defines the GIRFEC approach:
- is child-focused - it ensures the child or young person – and their family – is at the centre of decision-making and the support available to them.
- is based on an understanding of the wellbeing of a child in their current situation - it takes into consideration the wider influences on a child or young person and their developmental needs when thinking about their wellbeing, so that the right support can be offered.
- is based on tackling needs early - it aims to ensure needs are identified as early as possible to avoid bigger concerns or problems developing.

- requires joined-up working - it is about children, young people, parents, and the services they need working together in a coordinated way to meet the specific needs and improve their wellbeing.

In order to prevent and / or deal with instances of bullying all Aberdeen City schools/Early Learning centres adhere to the principles of GIRFEC.

What is Bullying?

What is bullying?
Aberdeen City Council has adopted the national definition of bullying, as set out in Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People (Update 2024).Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People
All establishments must include the following definition of bullying in their antibullying policy.

"Bullying is face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in"

"The behaviour does not need to be repeated, or intended to cause harm, for it to have an impact. Bullying behaviour can be physical, emotional or verbal and can cause people to feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out."

(Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People (Update 2024)

• This behaviour can harm people mentally, emotionally, socially and physically

• The actual behaviour (for example, actions, looks, messages, confrontations or physical interventions) does not always need to be repeated for it to have an ongoing impact.

• Bullying is more likely to take place in the context of an existing imbalanced relationship, but may also occur where no previous or current relationship exists.

• Bullying may be carried out by an individual or can sometimes involve a group of people.

Bullying behaviour include:

| Physical | Being hit, tripped, pushed, poking, kicking, punching, hazing rituals, inappropriate touching. Having belongings stolen or damaged |

Verbal	name calling, threatened, spreading rumours, being put down, teased (face to face or online)
Emotional	Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face-to-face and/or online). Isolating others, tormenting, threatening gestures, manipulation, coercion. Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face-to-face and/or online).
Prejudice-based	Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online). Prejudice-based means any comment or action intended to taunt pupils because of difference, real or perceived, in their appearance, behaviour, personal circumstances or any other matter. This can lead to behaviour and language that could manifest into racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia or prejudice and discrimination towards disability or faith.
Online	Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or phones/tablets., sharing photos without permission, offensive texts, sexting, impersonating another person online, patterning

Bullying behaviours can be related to a variety of characteristics of a child or young person's identity or circumstance, for example, prejudice arising from socio-economic background, family circumstances or a child or young person's appearance. There are a wide range of factors which may come under this heading, such as comments made about someone's body or about wearing particular types of clothing. The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals with protected characteristics from discrimination, victimisation and harassment and supports progress on equality. In a school setting, the relevant protected characteristics include disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation (Appendix 2).

This is not an exhaustive list and it is important to consider the impact the behaviour is having on the child or young person's wellbeing and mental health.

Bullying, mental health and trauma
The mental health consequences of bullying for children and young people are well documented, and include reports of anxiety, depression, difficulty concentrating, sleep/ eating disorders, self-harm, somatic symptoms and suicidality.
Bullying can have detrimental effects that persist into late adolescence and beyond, and can contribute independently to mental health problems.
Children and young people can be exposed to experiences which impacts on the likelihood of them displaying or experiencing bullying behaviour.
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are highly stressful and potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood or adolescence.
https://www.gov.scot/publications/psychological-trauma-and-adversity/
These experiences can range from recurring issues like social exclusion or emotional neglect to single events such as physical abuse. While not all ACEs

result in trauma, they are strong predictors of bullying behaviour, with greater exposure to ACEs increasing the risk of either engaging in or experiencing bullying during adolescence.

Trauma leaves a lasting, harmful impact on how individuals perceive themselves and the world, making it crucial to respond to trauma in anti-bullying efforts. Creating inclusive environments helps practitioners understand and address the external stressors that can lead to bullying, enabling proactive prevention and effective responses.

Bullying may be a way for some to externalise anger, especially when linked to events like parental separation or family substance misuse. An analysis of the Growing Up in Scotland cohort data found that the risk of bullying others increased when young people were living with only one parent or parents who reported drug or alcohol misuse.

Certain groups, such as those with previous trauma, care-experienced individuals, refugees, and those with disabilities or mental health conditions, are at higher risk of experiencing trauma and subsequent bullying.

Signs that a young person may be experiencing bullying behaviour

Children and young people may display a wide range of signs that may indicate that they are being bullied or perceive that they are being bullied. Some of the signs that staff should look out for may be;

Psychological	increased levels of depression and anxiety, loss of confidence and self-esteem, mood changes, Suicidal thoughts, increased feeling of anger/aggressiveness, more emotionally unstable
Social	Social withdrawal/isolation, being ostracised or losing social relations, changing social media accounts
Physiological	increased stress levels, somatic complaints (headache or stomach ache), distress, unexplained injuries, loss of concentration, developing ticks or stammers, neglect of appearance, torn clothing, changes in eating patterns, missing personal items
Academic	Change in attendance at school, change in achievement levels, failing to achieve potential, school avoidance. Increased lateness to school. Afraid of the school journey.

What is not bullying?
Schools will deal with a variety of behaviours on a daily basis. However, while some of these behaviours may be reported or described by a child or young person, or their family, as bullying, it is important to recognise that not all such behaviour will be bullying or should appropriately be treated as such.
Early intervention and prevention are therefore essential for addressing these behaviours by disrupting the cycle, promoting understanding and empathy, and

fostering a culture and ethos that values respect and inclusion. This proactive approach reduces the likelihood of behaviours escalating to more intense levels.

Differentiating bullying from conflict

It is important for children and young people to discuss how they feel and to help them develop the social competence and communication skills needed to help them to manage their relationships. We know that children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they form and build relationships. This is not considered to be bullying; this is considered to be a normal part of growing up. It may be possible to differentiate conflict from bullying by having regard to the relationships and dynamics involved.

Conflict is normal and can happen in healthy, happy, equal relationships. Usually at least one party involved doesn't want the conflict to continue unresolved, and will try to take early action to make amends and improve the situation. Healthy relationship conflict is not the same as bullying and is unlikely to lead to bullying as the people involved have a vested interest in restoring equilibrium and staying connected to each other.

Those working with children and young people may be faced with increasing conflict between peers. The Behaviour in Scottish Schools Research 2023, https://www.gov.scot/publications/behaviour-scottish-schools-research-report-2023/ reported staff experiences of young people having less developed social skills compared to previous years following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Conflict	Bullying Behaviour
- Disagreement or argument in which both sides express their views. - Equal power between those involved. There is a mutual interest in restoring the relationship equilibrium - End or change of behaviour when they realise it is hurting someone and does not want the conflict to continue and reolve	- Bullying occurs within social relationships and typically involves an imbalance of power that allows a relationship of dominance and subordination to emerge. - Bullying can be intentional or unintentional, occurring once or repeated. - Continuation of the behaviour when they realise it is hurting someone.

Early intervention and prevention are therefore essential for addressing these behaviours by disrupting the cycle, promoting understanding and empathy, and fostering a culture and ethos that values respect and inclusion. This proactive approach reduces the likelihood of behaviours escalating to more intense levels.

Online Bullying

The nature of bullying has evolved. Online bullying, or cyberbullying, is a significant concern affecting children and young people. This form of bullying involves the use of digital technologies, such as social media, messaging platforms, gaming forums, and mobile devices to intimidate, isolate or humiliate individuals.

Online bullying should always be considered in context as a feature of the relationships involved and powerful emotions evoked, and not merely as a technological issue to be resolved.

Online bullying should be seen as related to where the bullying occurs, rather than as a different behaviour type; many common bullying behaviours such as spreading rumours, exclusion from group dynamics, and threats can occur both online and offline. However, technology has increased the complexity and reach of bullying through nonconsensual image sharing, video footage, photo editing, transient messaging, and fake accounts, creating a new global environment that demands careful, informed, and nuanced handling.

The landscape of online bullying has evolved significantly for children and young people due to increased screen time, the emergence of new social media platforms, and the growth of online gaming and virtual communities.

Online bullying can happen anywhere at any time, making it more pervasive and harder to find respite from than other forms of bullying.

> "Social media spreads sensationalism, so a post made about you publicly can spread like wildfire, and garner abuse from not just the people you know, but malicious strangers around the globe." (Quote from young person, Scottish Youth Parliament workshop, December 2023)

Online bullying should therefore be responded to with the same level of seriousness as any other form of offline bullying.

Supporting pupils' awareness of safe, secure and respectful use of digital devices and services is an important means for a school to support the development of responsible and global citizens, recognising and respecting children's rights, and creating an anti-bullying culture.

In schools, this learning can be delivered through the Curriculum for Excellence through the Health and Wellbeing https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/curriculum-for-excellence-documents/experiences-and-outcomes/#hwb and Digital Literacy experiences and outcomes https://education.gov.scot/curriculum-for-excellence/curriculum-for-excellence-documents/experiences-and-outcomes/#tech

Mobile phone guidance for Scotland's schools https://www.gov.scot/publications/mobile-phone-guidance-scotlands-schools/pages/1/ also sets out the features of a respectful and responsible use of mobile technology policy, including considerations for schools to support digital etiquette, digital rights and safe, responsible and secure use of mobile technology.

Prevention: Promoting Positive Relationships

Aberdeen City Council Education establishments must implement the following approaches in working to prevent bullying behaviour and raise awareness amongst pupils, staff and Parents/Carers.
Creating an inclusive ethos and culture is the most effective way of reducing and responding to incidents of bullying. All schools/early learning centres should promote the principles of GIRFEC and the responsibility of all to support children and young people in establishing and maintaining positive relationships. Developing positive and respectful relationships will make it difficult for bullying to take place. Anti-bullying work should be high profile and should include assemblies, class sessions and homework.
Programmes of education about bullying should be implemented from an early age and revisited at all stages of education. Establishments should ensure that they have visual displays relating to bullying and key aspects of anti-bullying policies. It may be appropriate to highlight work done during National Anti-Bullying week which takes place in November.

Schools/Early learning centres where positive relationships are based on respect and inclusion are more likely to develop effective resolutions and responses to bullying.

Preventing bullying

Anti-bullying strategies should not simply focus on steps that will be taken to respond when bullying occurs; preventing bullying is imperative. Preventative strategies which reduce the likelihood of bullying happening in the first place can be highly effective. Creating an inclusive, safe culture and ethos where the promotion of respectful relationships, development of the skills required to repair relationships where appropriate, and assurance of a meaningful response to all forms of prejudice will help drive a climate where bullying cannot thrive.

There are several approaches through which schools can work to prevent bullying, including:
• school culture and ethos, inclusive of youth voice
• policies and practice
• professional learning and development
• high quality learning and teaching
 • out-of-school activities, including social skills development.

Engaging with appropriate partners may form an element of both preventative and responsive approaches to bullying. Staff can call on a range of support from within education, health and local authority services, Community Learning and Development and other third sector organisations.
Culture and ethos
The most successful anti-bullying interventions are embedded within a positive climate, ethos and culture that clearly articulates and embeds inclusion, diversity and human rights.

By creating inclusive, safe and consistent environments, bullying can be openly acknowledged, candidly discussed and universally challenged as a form of unacceptable behaviour.

HM Inspectors have identified five practices that contribute to creating inclusive, safe and consistent learning environments.

https://education.gov.scot/resources/bullying/responding-to-bullying/anti-bullying-curriculum/anti-bullying-curriculum-at-aberdeen-grammar-school/

1. Effective partnership working helps senior leaders to plan, deliver, monitor, and evaluate approaches.
2. High-quality professional learning builds teacher confidence and skills in responding to bullying effectively.
3. Whole-school universal measures and targeted approaches help to prevent bullying.
4. High-quality curriculum improves understanding of bullying amongst staff, pupils and other stakeholders.
5. Involving children and young people creates a culture of collaboration and respect.

A school's Anti-Bullying policy should be complemented by other important documents such as positive relationships and behaviour policies which will support staff and learners to consider bullying as part of a continuum of behaviours.

Questions to help you think about the practice in your setting:

- How do we currently promote a culture of positive relationships in our setting?
- How do our values relate to positive relationships day to day?
- What visual prompts/reminders do we have in place to reinforce the message that our setting is based on respect for each other?
- What do children and young people in our setting tell us they need?
- Do they feel they need to create a culture where bullying is never acceptable and is not allowed to thrive?
- What evidence do we have on what our stakeholders say about our current ethos, culture and relationships within our setting? (Evidence, areas of strength and development, plans for improvement)
- How do schools know when they are getting it right?

Approaches to support establishing an ethos where bullying is never acceptable may include:

- Vision, Values and Aims statements which place an emphasis on mutual respect which have been agreed and discussed with all staff, learners and parents/carers.
- involvement of pupils and parents/ carers in the development of a school's anti-bullying policy and practice.
- Promoting active bystanders and promoting a culture where acting to stop the bullying of others is not seen as 'snitching'.
- rights respecting schools, restorative practices and solution-focused approaches.

- a Relationships Policy which makes clear that bullying is unacceptable and sets out everyone's responsibility in preventing and responding to bullying behaviour.
- visual prompts/reminders such as posters or on school website or school display screens to reinforce the message that our setting is based on respect for each other.
- discussions as part of PSE.
- activities such as role-play, artwork, drama and literature;
- featuring anti-bullying at school assemblies; making it clear how pupils can report bullying incidents and the potential outcomes.
- peer mediation.
- restorative approaches.
- Robust mobile technology policy and procedures.
- Parents/carers have a wealth of knowledge that schools should call on when reviewing their anti-bullying approaches.
- Parents and carers should also be made aware of their responsibilities and the setting's expectations if a bullying incident occurs involving their child and their responsibilities in relation to this.

Aberdeen City Council Education Services is committed to preventing and reducing the incidence and effects of bullying behaviour within its schools/early learning centres by:

- setting an ethos in schools/early learning centres which places an emphasis on respecting, valuing and caring for self and others;
- establishing a climate where all members of the school community, irrespective of age or status, promote and model positive behaviours and values;
- putting in place Anti-Bullying policies at Council and school/early learning centre levels;
- taking seriously any report or allegation of bullying behaviour, investigating and taking appropriate action where necessary;
- ensuring that staff, children and young people and parents/carers are fully conversant with the requirements of the school's/early learning centre's anti-bullying policy and that its terms and implications are discussed and reviewed on a regular basis;
- providing a variety of means to allow pupils to report bullying for themselves or their peers;
- providing support for children and young people who are experiencing bullying behaviour;
- helping the person displaying bullying behaviour to understand the impact of their behaviour and supporting them to change their behaviour in a more positive way;
- involving parents/carers, as appropriate, in supporting both children and young people who are bullied and those who are displaying bullying behaviour;
- ensuring the level of bullying in schools/ early learning centres is monitored by a member of the Senior Leadership Team and procedures are in place for recording incidents on the SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities Module;
- putting in place quality assurance procedures to monitor the effectiveness of the policy and reviewing as appropriate.

- Supporting effective communication with all involved parties

The above will be supported by:

- ensuring that young people have someone they feel they can trust/have a good relationship with to report and discuss any concerns they may have – have a positive ethos/culture within our settings;
- providing opportunities for peer support initiatives which promote skills of active citizenship;
- providing appropriate staff training in recognising and dealing appropriately with acts of bullying;
- ensuring that children and young people who have experienced bullying behaviour receive appropriate support and protection from further abuse;
- including anti-bullying education within the Personal, Social and Health Education curriculum for all young people as well as through cross curricular and whole school approaches;
- addressing anti-bullying through, for example, circle time, restorative approaches, and co-operative learning methodologies

Responding to Incidents of bullying

What to do if someone says they are being bullied?

All staff must be aware of their role in implementing 'Aberdeen City's Anti-Bullying Policy and Guidance' (Amended 2025).
To instil confidence that bullying is taken seriously, it is important for schools to take a consistent approach to responding to concerns or allegations of bullying behaviour.
All responses to alleged bullying incidents should be child-centred and reviewed individually, rooted firmly in the values of rights, fairness, respect, equality and inclusion. Consideration should be given to how to support the child or young person experiencing the bullying behaviour, and also the person displaying this behaviour, to prevent similar behaviour happening in the future.
A school's relationships policy is core to communicating the school's expectations of behaviour and how it will manage any situations which arise. It is likely that a range of different practices may be adopted before finding one that is an effective response, as what works for one person may not work for another.
Schools should be clear on how they will communicate their response to all relevant parties (children and young people involved and their parent(s)).
There may be instances where privacy concerns relating to the other child or young person involved means information cannot be shared with the person affected.

The initial response from the member of staff and their reaction is key. A child's experience may be directly affected by the response they get from the adult. It is crucial for school staff to listen and respond appropriately, sensitively and offer support whenever required. What matters most is that staff should listen to what the child or young person is saying and reassure them that they have done the right thing in telling. It is essential that the young person feels that they have been heard. Effective listening helps us understand how young people are being affected and

what we can do to help. We must listen carefully to what children and young people are saying **and** how they are saying it.

Consideration should be given to how to support the child or young person experiencing the bullying behaviour, and also the person displaying this behaviour, to prevent similar behaviour happening in the future. A school's relationships and behaviour policy is core to communicating the school's expectations of behaviour and how it will manage any situations which arise.

It is likely that a range of different practices may be adopted before finding one that is an effective response, as what works for one person may not work for another. Schools and organisations should be clear on how they will communicate their response to all relevant parties (children and young people involved and their parent(s)). There may be instances where privacy concerns relating to the other child or young person involved means information cannot be shared with the person affected.

Supporting the young person experiencing bullying

When supporting a young person who is experiencing bullying, it is crucial to listen to them, take them seriously, understand the impact the behaviour is having on them, and reassure them that the bullying taking place is not their fault. Children and young people need adult help to maintain perspective when they are feeling bullied to reduce the mental impact on them. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and the National Practice Model, https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/national-practice-model/ including the wellbeing assessment, should guide the support offered. Where there is not a child protection concern, staff should gain consent from children and inform them, where possible, before contacting families. Where there is not a child protection concern, the child is over the age of 12, has sufficient maturity and understanding and no criminal offence has been committed, they may decide that they do not wish for their parent(s) or families to be informed.

Support can include:

• **active listening/counselling/talking.** This can help them process what is happening, cope with the emotional impact of bullying and think about potential solutions, any consequences of these and support available.

• **reporting bullying**. Encourage them to share their experience with a trusted adult and report the bullying to the relevant authorities, such as school, youth leaders or the online platform where the bullying occurred.

• **peer support**. Peer support groups can provide a safe space for them to share their experiences and feelings.

• **developing a wellbeing plan**. Agreeing next steps, monitoring progress and making adjustments to the plan, particularly if initial actions are not successful.

Children and young people value choice when responding to bullying. Adults can support children and young people to explore a range of options that may suit them, and help them to make informed choices, whilst being aware of any potential consequences of their decisions. The child or young person should be included in decision-making about any plan put in place. If a child or young person discloses that they are being bullied in multiple settings (at school and an after-school club, for example), staff should follow agreed local processes and procedures regarding

confidentiality and sharing of information, respecting the child and young person's right to privacy, and in line with Getting it right for every child GIRFEC information sharing guidance, https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/information-sharing/ relevant data protection legislation and National Guidance for Child Protection https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/

Supporting the child or young person displaying bullying behaviours

Children and young people who exhibit bullying behaviour need adult support to understand the underlying thoughts and feelings driving their actions, and to develop healthier responses and relationships. It is crucial to help them recognise the harm their behaviour causes, repair relationships when possible and desired, and challenge prejudicial attitudes through education and building empathy. Responses should focus on challenging behaviour, encouraging reflection and preventing reoccurrence. A school's relationships and behaviour policy should set clear expectations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour, and the associated responses, including consequences, which staff can utilise, and staff should respond to bullying in line with this policy. https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/national-practice-model/

For young people displaying bullying behaviours, adult support can include:
• active listening. To understand what is lying behind the behaviour and help them develop healthier ways to cope with difficult feelings.
• education. Promote empathy and kindness, and help them understand the impact of their actions and why their behaviour is unacceptable.
• parental involvement. Where appropriate, and with the young person's consent, engage parents in monitoring the situation and guiding more positive behaviour.
• restorative actions. Encourage them to make amends and repair harm, where appropriate.
• developing a wellbeing plan. Setting out responses, monitoring progress and making adjustments to the plan, particularly if initial actions are not successful

It is important that the appropriate support is put in place for all children and young people involved in a bullying incident. In some instances, this will include children and young people who have witnessed an incident. This may be through pastoral support and could include counselling, peer support, solution-oriented approaches or restorative practice.

Staff should ensure that they **respect the right to privacy** for all children and young people involved in incidents of bullying. Given the potentially sensitive nature of the issue, conversations should be conducted confidentially and in private.

Roles Responsibilities and Expectations

If you are a young person who is experiencing bullying behaviour, a young person who is demonstrating bullying behaviour or a member of staff or parent/carer who is supporting someone who has experienced bullying behaviour, then it is important that you know what is expected of you.

Senior Leaders in Education Establishments have responsibility to:

- Outline the key roles and responsibilities that each member of the school community in accordance with GIRFEC has; regarding preventing and responding to bullying behaviour within the policy
- Explicitly refer in the policy to protected characteristics and set out a commitment to challenging all forms of prejudice-based bullying.
- Embed within anti-bullying policy action that will be taken to promote equality, diversity and children's rights..
- Ensure that their staff are aware of and adhere to their responsibilities under the policy and inducting new staff in the Council's commitment to anti-bullying
- Ensure that any bullying instance raised is dealt with quickly and appropriately in a confidential, supportive manner in accordance with this policy
- Ensure that they seek advice from within the organisation where they are unsure about their responsibilities in relation to managing anti-bullying;
- Actively challenging any form of bullying behaviour;
- Develop and implement good practice to promote a climate, culture and ethos of fairness, equality, inclusion and respect in line with Respect for All and related national guidance on promoting positive and respectful relationships and behaviour
- Ensure that Anti-bullying work is given high profile and should include assemblies, class sessions and homework.
- Establishments should work with Parents and Carers to address the holistic needs of the child consistent with the GIRFEC principles in response to an incident of bullying. Provide relevant anti-bullying updates annually to all staff.
- Ensure that Anti-bullying should be incorporated within the strategic remit of one member of each establishment's leadership team. However in accordance with GIRFEC the wellbeing of pupils is the responsibility of all.
- Provide all members of staff with access to a copy of the relevant school policy(ies).
- Provide access to anti-bullying professional learning/training and materials to support all those who work with children and young people in the setting.
- This includes ensuring compliance with mandatory training requirements around equality, diversity and inclusion
- Ensure key staff are trained in the use of restorative approaches.
- Ensure that Anti-bullying policies are 'child friendly' and are shared with and accessible to pupils and Parents/Carers.
- Ensure that Anti-bullying policies take into consideration the needs of our more vulnerable groups including those who are Looked after
- Ensure the recording of bullying incidents accurately and monitor this information systematically. This will allow them to identify more readily the scope and scale of bullying incidents and make improvements in policy and practice to support learners wellbeing
- Establishments must record the number of bullying incidents centrally using The Bullying and Equalities (B&E) Module within SEEMIS Click and Go. Any recording of incidents must include specific detail e.g., in the instance of transphobic bullying, specifically detail the transphobic elements
- Respond to incidents of bullying on an individual basis using SEEMIS recording systems to proactively case-manage each situation. Employ a respectful, proportionate and holistic approach, adopting responses which

take account of the impact of the incident as well as any underlying prejudice or other negative attitudes

- Ensure recording and monitoring of bullying incidents across all settings where possible, and use the information gathered to target preventative approaches, assess effectiveness of policy and practice, ensure the correct support is in place.

Staff

All Education staff must be aware of their key roles and responsibilities regarding preventing and responding to bullying behaviour and have a responsibility to:

- Challenge and report all bullying behaviour
- Listen and take children and young people seriously.
- Act in accordance with the relevant professional standards and codes of conduct, e.g. GTCS Standards, Common Core CLD/youthwork/volunteer adult SSSC. Share concerns appropriately within your organisation/service and seek support where necessary.
- Understand both local and organisational anti-bullying policy and procedures and act in accordance with these.
- Embed the promotion of equality, diversity and children's rights in own professional practice, seeking training relevant to these areas.
- Role-model respect and promote safe, positive, supportive and respectful relationships. Reflect this in all interactions with children and young people and their parents
- Ensure that they fully understand and follow the procedures for reporting, recording and monitoring bullying behaviour
- Ensure that there are suitable arrangements in place to encourage children and young people to report, with confidence, all incidents of alleged bullying
- Ensure that all incidents of bullying behaviour in school are investigated by relevant school staff and communicated to Parents / Carers as appropriate. Any support identified for pupils involved should be shared with Parents / Carers.
- Engage and access relevant training provided to build confidence and capacity to recognise and respond to bullying. This may include: restorative practice, resilience and mindfulness professional learning
- Educate pupils on the dangers of online and mobile technology communication.
- Work with relevant local authority and ensure school staff work in partnership with other agencies are appropriately trained.
- Work to educate pupils, staff and inform Parents/Carers about what to do when bullying behaviour is displayed, and how to support those involved
- Include within the curriculum work designed to inform children and young people on diversity and inclusion and the importance of respect and kindness.
- Raise the profile of anti-bullying work. Targeted lessons should be used to increase knowledge and understanding of anti-bullying policies and processes.
- Encourage pupils to teach and share key messages about bullying with other pupils and with Parents/Carers including the short and long-term impact of bullying

Children and Young People have a responsibility to:

- See bullying as a violation of children's rights and treat people with respect
- report any instances of bullying they are aware of (including Cyber-bullying)
- Abide by their school's Positive Behaviour Policy
- Access the school's anti-bullying policy and understand processes for reporting bullying incidents
- Where safe and appropriate, challenge bullying behaviour.
- Share concerns with a trusted adult and/or peers and work collaboratively with adults and peers to help create safe and positive environments where bullying cannot thrive
- Keep calm and not retaliate
- Not respond to abusive texts or messages
- Understand the impact of your actions on others.
- Fully participate in restorative conversations with all parties.
- Adhere to Aberdeen City ICT Policy and being aware of the dangers of online and mobile technology communication.

Parents and Carers have a responsibility to:

Schools should engage with parents/carers to work collaboratively in recognising, responding and preventing all forms of bullying. We recognise their vital role as influencers in children's and young people's lives. They have a key role to play in supporting their children when they experience bullying behaviour or display bullying behaviour.

- Report it. Contact the school as soon as possible should any incidents arise and ask to speak to your child's Pastoral teacher/member of the senior leadership team.
- Listen and take children and young people's concerns seriously.
- Be aware of anti-bullying policies and practice, including complaints procedures, in any school/clubs/groups attended by their child or young person.
- Share any concerns about a child as early as possible with a teacher, practitioner or coach.
- Engage directly, or through school Parent Forum/Parent Council or other appropriate forums, to contribute to and learn about anti-bullying policy and practice.
- Role model respect and promote safe, positive, supportive and respectful relationships for children and young people. Reflect this in all interactions with school/club staff and volunteers
- Expect to be informed that the matter has been addressed. All incidents of bullying behaviour in school will be investigated by school staff and communicated to Parents / Carers as appropriate but note you will not be advised of the outcomes of the investigation (although not of specific disciplinary action involving other young people).
- Engage and participate with the school in information sessions relating to bullying and anti-bullying.

- Participate in reviewing anti-bullying policies and procedures.

It is important that schools/early learning centres listen to and respond to the concerns of parents/carers and ensure that there is clear and effective communication between them when dealing with bullying incidents relating to their children. Schools should update parents and keep them informed on what the school is doing and what are the next steps.

Parents and Carers can support anti-bullying:

- Work collaboratively and respectfully with staff, children and young people and other parents/carers where appropriate to help ensure bullying cannot thrive
- Listen and take children and young people's concerns seriously.
- Be aware of anti-bullying policies and practice, including complaints procedures, in any school/clubs/groups attended by their child or young person.
- Share any concerns about a child as early as possible with a teacher, practitioner or coach.
- Role model respect and promote safe, positive, supportive and respectful relationships for children and young people. Reflect this in all interactions with school/club staff and volunteers
- Support their children in their learning about bullying behaviour. Address their children's behaviour when it affects others negatively and refrain from engaging directly in a negative way with any other children involved or their parents/carers/families.
- Monitor and manage their children's on-line activity and use of electronic devices, mobile technologies and social media. This may include setting parental controls, ensuring privacy settings are in place and adhering to age guidelines.
- Be given the opportunity to express their views and help shape policy development in this area.
- Be aware of the complaints process set out by the school and local authority and their rights regarding these procedures.

It is most likely that parents/carers will be informed of any incidents in relation to a young person being bullied or displaying bullying behaviours. Parents/carers play an essential role in prevention and addressing of bullying incidents. This may be face to face, by telephone or letter, however a record of all communication should be kept, ideally in pastoral notes. It is important to keep the young person informed about who their information has been shared with
The views of the child/young person should always be taken into account in the decision making process of whether to inform parents/carers. It is important to sensitively weigh up the risks and benefits of informing parents/carers, as there may be occasions where the child or young person thinks that in doing so might make the matter worse or may place the child or young person in a harmful situation, e.g. if a young person has been the recipient of, for example, homophobic bullying, the young person may not choose to have the parents/carers informed due to fears about how this would be received, or provokes a response that the young person wishes to avoid.

On those few occasions where it is felt by the Senior Leadership Team that respecting the confidentiality and best interests of the young person means a decision is taken not to inform parents /carers, then this must be formally recorded in the pupil's pastoral notes, with a clear rationale for not informing. This may form part of a wider risk assessment in managing the incident.

If appropriate, Schools/early learning centres should meet with parents. This will provide an opportunity for parents/carers to express their views and to establish an agreed way forward. It is very important that confidential/personal information about other pupils should not be shared with other parents/carers. RespectMe offers a training session for parents/carers and schools which can be accessd this through their website - www.respectme.org.uk

Prejudice-Based-Bullying

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals with protected characteristics from discrimination, victimisation and harassment and supports progress on equality. In a school setting, the relevant protected characteristics include disability; gender reassignment; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; and sexual orientation.

Preventing and responding to prejudice-based bullying will require a line of enquiry that directly addresses the prejudice(s) that has motivated the bullying behaviour. This will include proactively challenging the root causes of different forms of prejudice – such as harmful stereotyping, stigma, negative perceptions, and 'othering' – through the Four Contexts for Learning https://education.gov.scot/resources/resources-to-support-scotland-s-curriculum-framework/

Reactive approaches in response to prejudice-based bullying

A 'reactive' (or responsive) approach to prejudice-based bullying would include interventions that equip staff with the necessary tools and information to effectively address prejudice-based incidents when they occur.

This includes:
• an anti-bullying policy that includes the seven protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 relevant to school education (see Appendix 2) and provides clear information about recording procedures, next steps for staff, and processes for childled family engagement.
• provision of pastoral care for those who have reported that they are experiencing prejudice-based bullying.
• staff consistently responding to manifestations of prejudice, such as pejorative and derogatory language use, or harmful stereotypes.
• well-planned mechanisms for responding to prejudice-based incidents and ensuring they are not repeated.

These steps should be embedded across the curriculum and the whole-setting, as opposed to only standalone events and assemblies that can risk exacerbating prejudice-based behaviours

It will also include fostering good relationships between different groups, for example working with children and young people with disabilities to raise awareness of disabilities and their impact amongst their peers.

Schools and other organisations need both 'reactive' and 'proactive' measures in place to address prejudice-based bullying and should be mindful that distinct forms of prejudice may require targeted interventions. The reporting of bullying, without the inclusion of prejudice, can lead to the under-reporting of hate incidents such as racist incidents.

Staff should be mindful that issues of structural inequality are not diluted or avoided when responding and reporting prejudice-based bullying

Some groups of people are at particular risk of experiencing bullying behaviour motivated by prejudice against one or more of the protected characteristics covered by the Equality Act 2010.

Different forms of prejudice-based bullying are enacted differently, and some can be more prevalent than others and reflected in common usage or eg., homophobic or ableist language. Bullying based on or motivated by these characteristics is never acceptable.

Intersectionality and prejudice-based bullying

"Intersectionality" recognises that people's identities are multifaceted and therefore their experiences of inequality and discrimination can be shaped by several factors at once. Children and young people may have multiple characteristics, which combine to shape their identities and experiences of the world. Therefore, their experiences of prejudice are unlikely to be homogeneous. For example, a lesbian young woman may experience a form of misogyny interconnected with homophobia that a heterosexual young woman is less likely to experience.

It is therefore important to note that children and young people who are affected by more than one form of inequality or discrimination may experience bullying behaviours which are the result of multiple prejudices. School staff, parents and others working with children and young people should consider if and how intersecting inequalities may be a factor in bullying behaviours, and take account of this when determining how to respond. Structural inequalities refers to the economic, political, social and cultural structures, actions and beliefs that systemise an unequal distribution of privilege, resources, safety and power in favour of the dominant group at the expense of all other groups.

The effect of systematic and structural inequalities is that bullying based on protected characteristics can take place between or within groups that could share or be perceived as sharing the same characteristic.

Internalised prejudice

When children and young people are exposed to stereotypes and discriminatory viewpoints, they can internalise these views. Internalised prejudice can damage their self-esteem, confidence, their sense of belonging and their view of their own intrinsic worth, identity, family and community. In some instances, this may lead children and young people to "play down" or not recognise prejudice-based bullying when they experience it, especially if they share the protected characteristic the stereotypes or discriminatory viewpoints relate to. This means that school staff and organisations may have to take action to address prejudice underlying bullying behaviours, even if the child or young person targeted has not raised it themselves. This may include supporting the child or young person to understand the form of prejudice-based bullying they may have been subjected to and involving them in decisions about how the matter is to be addressed and appropriately responded to.
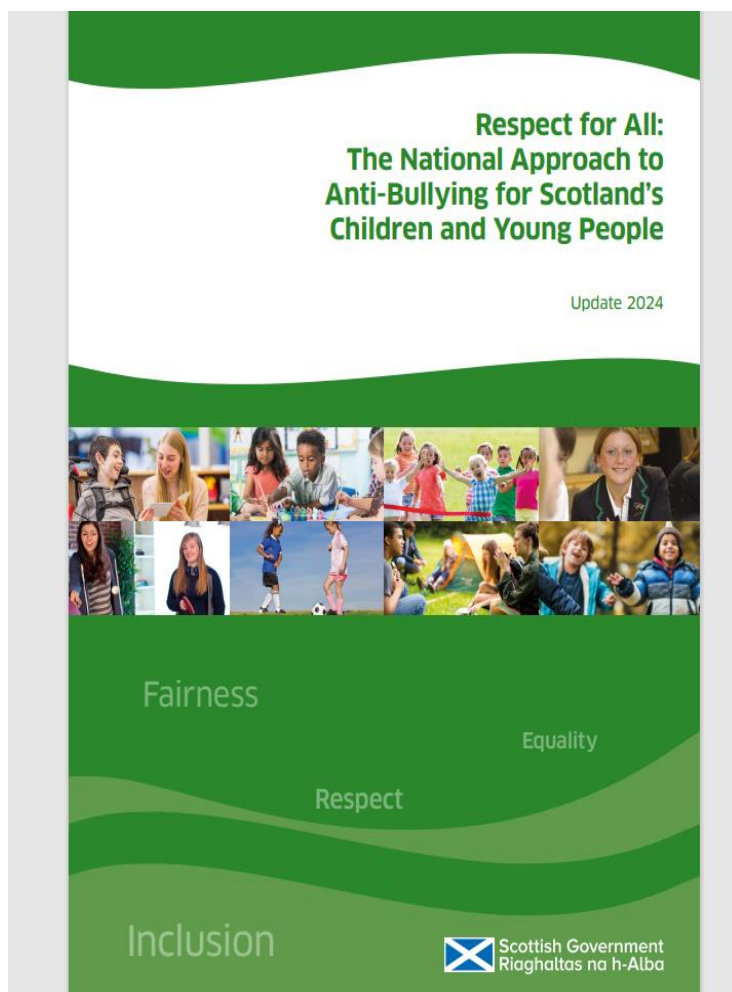
Intergroup prejudice

Learned prejudices can also result in intergroup prejudice-based bullying, for example, where children and young people from a minority ethnic group at risk of facing racism target other children and young people with bullying behaviours connected to race. In some cases, this could involve using a language not known to school staff observing this behaviour, making it difficult to detect. Girls and young women may also target each other with behaviours reflecting misogyny. It is important to be alert to the possibility of intergroup prejudice and to create an environment which empowers children and young people to recognise different forms of prejudice and feel comfortable to talk about their experiences and raise any concerns.

Aberdeen City Council and individual settings are committed to challenging prejudice-based bullying and make an explicit commitment to each of the protected characteristics and expect all education establishments to include each of these in its policy (**See Appendix 2**).

Reporting, Recording and Monitoring bullying incidents

**Respect for All:
The National Approach to
Anti-Bullying for Scotland's
Children and Young People**

Update 2024

Fairness

Equality

Respect

Inclusion

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Recording the incident/Concern

There are different ways in which a school may become aware of potential bullying behaviour.

• It may be raised by the child or young person who believes they are being bullied.
• It could be raised by another child or young person who has witnessed behaviour they perceive as bullying.
• It could be raised by a parent or other family member.
• It could be observed by a member of staff or adult volunteers/youth leaders

It is essential that children, young people and family members feel empowered to report allegations of bullying incidents. Their confidence to raise concerns will be informed by a number of factors including their understanding of the process for reporting, the transparency and rigour of the process for investigating allegations and confidence in the actions that will be taken in response.
There should be clear information within a school's anti-bullying policy of the mechanisms through which allegations of bullying should be reported.

All staff must be aware of their role in the reporting and recording of bullying incidents. Establishments will be required to record the number of bullying incidents centrally using The Bullying and Equalities (B&E) Module within SEEMIS Click and Go. Any recording of incidents **must** include specific detail e.g., in the instance of transphobic bullying, specifically detail the transphobic elements. This will allow us to identify more readily the scope and scale of bullying incidents and make improvements in policy and practice to support learners' wellbeing.

Once an incident or concern has been raised, this **must** be logged on a school's recording system (Bullying and Equalities Module) **as soon as possible**
It is not **necessary for an allegation to be substantiated before it is recorded**.
Details of the reported incident should be recorded, capturing information about the behaviour that took place, who was involved, where and when it is reported to have happened, any potential underlying prejudice, including details of any protected characteristics, and whether the impact indicates any wellbeing concerns or the need for additional support.
An investigation into the incident should follow. The recording system should be updated throughout the process on the outcome of this investigation, and any action taken as a result.

What information should be recorded?
It is important that a thorough picture of the bullying incident be recorded. When recording potential bullying incidents, the following information **must** be included:

• the children and young people involved, as well as staff/volunteers or any other adults who witnessed the incident or were involved in the initial response;
• where and when bullying has taken place;
• the type of bullying experienced, e.g. name-calling, rumours, threats; • any prejudice-based attitudes or behaviour presenting;
• details of any protected characteristic(s); • consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns;
• the outcome, including if the issue was resolved, not resolved or unfounded;
• the impact of the incident, including consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns; and
• actions taken including resolution at an individual or organisational level.

Accurate recording of bullying incidents serves a number of important purposes.

• It demonstrates that bullying is taken seriously, that children are listened to and is the first step in protecting children from bullying.
• It enables monitoring of specific incidents to ensure that an appropriate response has taken place and that the correct support is in place for children and young people.
• It enables monitoring of recurring patterns or trends, thereby encouraging early intervention and making improvements in policy or practice at a local level and centrally.

• It enables schools and Aberdeen City Council to assess the effectiveness of their policy and practice, which should be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. Where bullying has an element of discrimination or abuse based on a protected characteristic, this should be recorded as part of the incident report.
SEEMiS enables the person to record a range of 'perceived reasons for the incident', including if there is a belief that this incident is motivated by racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, or homophobia and whether any protected characteristic has been targeted.

Reporting of prejudice and discrimination incidents can be reported through Grampian Regional Equality Council (GREC) and other outlets using this online form accessible on the Aberdeen City Council website:
http://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/home/report_it.asp

Within SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities Module information is recorded about both the person experiencing the behaviour and the person displaying the behaviour. The nature of the incident and the specific perceived reason for bullying (formerly Characteristics) must be completed in all cases. If an incident is covered by more than one of these select all that apply under these headings:

Nature of Incident

• Name calling, teased, put down or threatened

• Hit, tripped, pushed or kicked

• Belongings taken or damaged

• Being ignored • Spreading rumours

• Abusive Messages -online/phone/ gaming/social media

• Online/phone/gaming/social media

• Targeted because of who they are/ perceived to be;

• Other (Please Specify)

Perceived Reason(s) for bullying (formerly Characteristics)

• Actual or perceived Sexual orientation (e.g. homophobic, bi-phobic)

• Additional support needs

• Asylum seekers or refugee status

• Body Image and physical appearance

• Care Experience

• Disability

• Gender identity or Trans identity

• Gypsy/travellers

• Marriage/civil partnership of parents/ carers or other family members

• Mental health

• Not known

• Other: please specify

• Pregnancy and maternity

• Race and racism including culture
• Religion or belief

• Sectarianism

• Sexism and gender

• Socio-economic prejudice

• Young carer

• If 'Other' is selected from the list and added to the incident, an additional 'Other' text box will be displayed to enable details of the 'Other' incident to be recorded.

As well as recording that an alleged incident has been reported, detail about the incident should be recorded. Information about how the situation is to be monitored and reviewed should be entered in the appropriate section and the views of the person experiencing, the person displaying, and, if appropriate the views of parent/carer should be recorded.

Investigation
Bullying is a combination of behaviour and impact and should be addressed with compassion and professionalism when investigating incidents. Although bullying is often persistent, a single incident can have a significant impact on the health and wellbeing of children and young people and instil a fear that it might happen again. Impact on the individual/group's health and wellbeing and/or learning and school environment can be established through an investigation of alleged, observed or reported bullying incidents. The National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023) https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-guidance-child-protection-scotland-2021-updated-2023/documents/ makes clear that individual agencies are responsible for ensuring that their staff are competent and confident in carrying out their responsibilities for safeguarding and promoting children's wellbeing.
We expect teachers and all those working with children to identify and act on any concerns to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the child or young person concerned, in line with our child protection procedures

A helpful approach would be to ask:
• what was the behaviour?
• what impact did it have?
• what does the child or young person want to happen?
• what do i need to do about it – for example, is there a child protection concern?
• what attitudes, prejudices or other factors may have influenced the behaviour?

Once an investigation has concluded, the system should be updated with the outcome of the investigation. This should include whether the incident was found to be resolved, not resolved or unfounded. Where an incident is found to be bullying, schools should record what supports/interventions were put in place for both for individuals/groups affected by the behaviour and those displaying the behaviour. If the incident is not bullying, there will still be a response from staff who can work with the child or young person and potentially peers to improve the situation.

Monitor and review

Data recorded on the module will be collated and interrogated centrally as part of Education Services quality assurance processes. Robust and consistent analysis of bullying incidents will help schools and authorities to identify trends or themes in bullying and support planning for improvements to both prevention and intervention in tackling bullying.
Monitoring data on bullying incidents provides valuable information on the scope and scale of the issue; the data can help identify numeric trends, specific issues around equality and diversity and other relevant data/patterns which will help schools and Aberdeen City to prevent and respond to bullying incidents efficiently. This information will be used to identify whether there are trends that indicate specific interventions would be beneficial or where improvements to policy or practice could be made. It can also be used to help identify how effective interventions are, whether there are matters which would benefit from training opportunities and where good practice can be shared across the authority.
An increase in reports of bullying, including prejudice-based bullying, does not necessarily mean an increase in such behaviour in the setting. This can sometimes be attributed to previous under-reporting of incidents and an improvement in staff confidence in identifying and reporting behaviours following professional learning, policy developments and improvement plans.
Recorded incidents of bullying should be monitored by the school Senior Leadership Team on a regular basis.

The monitoring of incidents will identify whether individual schools may require any bespoke support to address particular behaviours.

8 Policy implementation and training

Following approval of this policy it will be shared with and accessible to all Education and Children's Services staff, children and young people and parents and carers. As part of Workforce Development and Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL), Anti-bullying-related training will be made available to all staff.

This may be delivered in partnership with Respectme and GREC. This includes ensuring compliance with mandatory training requirements around equality, diversity and inclusion.

9 Policy monitoring and review

This policy will be monitored by the Quality Improvement team through the collation of data received from the outlined reporting mechanisms. Feedback will be gathered from staff using the policy and guidance.
This policy will initially be reviewed 12 months after implementation and subsequently every 3 years.

Appendices

Appendix 1- The legal framework and policy landscape

There are a number of legal obligations on education authorities and schools that must be considered as part of their approach to preventing and responding to bullying.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024 (the "UNCRC Act")

Following the introduction of the UNCRC Act, it is now unlawful for a public authority in Scotland, which is likely to include education authorities and some schools, to act (or fail to act) in connection with a relevant function, in a way which is incompatible with the UNCRC requirements. Although there is not an express right not to be bullied within the UNCRC, a number of rights are upheld through the furtherance of anti-bullying work. This includes the right of every child to live free from violence, abuse, and neglect, which includes protection from violence committed by other children, and places emphasis on their rights to education, health, and participation in decisions affecting their lives
https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/crc.c.gc.13_en.pdf

Schools should avoid basing policies on a single UNCRC article without considering broader implications. The UNCRC supports taking effective action against bullying to protect children's health and safety, and education authorities should take all appropriate measures to protect children from violence, including peer violence.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 protects individuals with protected characteristics (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation) from discrimination, victimisation and harassment and supports progress on equality.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has published guidance on the Equality Act 2010 https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance

Online bullying

There are various legal provisions designed to protect individuals from online harassment, abuse, and harm. Some online behaviour may be illegal under the following legislation:

1. The Equality Act 2010: this Act prohibits discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on protected characteristics, such as race, disability, and sexual orientation, which can encompass certain forms of online bullying.

2. The Communications Act 2003: Section 127 of this Act makes it an offence to send grossly offensive, obscene, or menacing messages through public electronic communications networks.

3. The Malicious Communications Act 1988: this Act covers the sending of letters or other articles with the intent to cause distress or anxiety, including online communications.

4. The Protection from Harassment Act 1997: this Act provides protection against a course of conduct amounting to harassment, which can include repeated online bullying incidents.

5. The Defamation and Malicious Publication (Scotland) Act 2021: this Act modernises the law on defamation, allowing individuals to seek redress for harm caused by false and damaging online statements.

6. The Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016: 21 criminalises the nonconsensual sharing of intimate images.

7. The Online Safety Act 2023: creates a number of new offences, including encouraging or assisting serious self-harm, cyberflashing, sending false information intended to cause non-trivial harm, threatening communications, intimate image abuse.

These legal provisions can empower parents, young people, schools, authorities, and Police Scotland to take action against online bullying.

Hate crime

Hate crime is the term used to describe behaviour which is both criminal and rooted in prejudice or which is intended (or can be considered) to stir up hatred. In Scotland, the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021 criminalises behaviour based on prejudice towards those with the following characteristics:

• age

• disability

• race

• religion

• sexual orientation

 • transgender identity

• variations in sex characteristics.

Where bullying occurs that is also linked to prejudice towards one of the above groups, this could also constitute a hate crime, under certain circumstances based on conduct and motivation. Bullying can be motivated by prejudice similar to hate crime. The distinction between bullying and hate crime is that the behaviour motivated in prejudice must be criminal in nature, such as assault, graffiti or a breach of the peace. For example, damage to property through graffiti may constitute a crime and this may be aggravated by prejudice towards a relevant characteristic. Sharing of discriminatory materials may, in some cases, constitute an offence of stirring up hatred.

Appendix 2 – Prejudice- Based Bullying

This section provides information regarding different forms of prejudice-based bullying behaviour. This includes those related to the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010 as well as broader characteristics or circumstances which may be the target of bullying behaviours

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012, we have a duty to assess all new policies and guidance to ensure it fulfils our duties under the Act. The Equality Act 2010 sets out a range of individual characteristics that are "Protected" from discrimination and unfair treatment including bullying. All children and young people have the right to feel safe regardless of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation. All anti- bullying guidance should include all of the protected characteristics as well as other issues that may see children discriminated against such as body image or socio-economic status.

Equality Act 2010 There are nine characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010. These are:

• age
• disability
• gender reassignment
• marriage and civil partnership
• pregnancy and maternity
• race
 • religion or belief
• sex
• sexual orientatio

Age: Part 6 (chapter 1) of the Equality Act 2010, which deals with school education, does not apply to the protected characteristic of 'age', however, people are protected from discrimination on the grounds of age in other settings including workplaces and further education.

Disability: the Equality Act 2010 defines disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. Increased knowledge and understanding about disability and the barriers and challenges they can face can help reduce bullying. The language and behaviour used may be a result of a lack of understanding about the nature of a person's disability. People who bully others may see disabled people as being more vulnerable and less able to defend themselves or tell an adult about the bullying.

Gender reassignment: the term 'gender reassignment' is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010 and refers to those who propose to go through, are going through, or have gone through a process for the purpose of reassigning the person's sex by changing physiological or other attributes of sex. The term 'transgender' or 'trans' is a term used to describe people whose gender is not the same as the sex they were assigned at birth. Gender identity is a person's innate sense of their own gender. Transgender people face significant societal prejudice largely because they are perceived as not conforming to gender stereotypes, expectations and norms. As a result, transgender young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying. Transphobic bullying is behaviour or language which makes a young person feel unwelcome or marginalised because of perceived or actual transgender identity or transgender expression. This can manifest in many ways including verbal abuse and slurs or deliberately mis-gendering them. A young person may also experience transphobic bullying if someone is perceived to be transgender or someone they are associate with is transgender, i.e. a parent, relative or other significant figure. The Scottish Government has published guidance on Supporting Transgender Pupils in Schools, which includes information on transphobic bullying.

Marriage and civil partnership: Part 6 of the 2010 Equality Act, which deals with school education, does not apply to the protected characteristic of 'marriage and civil partnership', however people are protected from discrimination on the grounds of marriage and civil partnership in other settings including workplaces and further education.

Pregnancy and maternity: young parents can experience bullying because of the stigma and judgement that is still associated with young parenthood. Staff should be aware of the increased possibility of bullying in relation to a young pregnant person or young parent and that this can occur face to face as well as online.

Schools and organisations should be cognisant of their anti-bullying practice and approach and ensure young people receive adequate information and guidance around this topic. For those who are pregnant/young parents, this can add to what is already a potentially highly emotional and stressful time. The Scottish Government has published guidance on Supporting young pregnant women and young parents in school

https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2021/08/someone-talk-someone-listen-supporting-young-pregnant-women-young-parents-school/documents/supporting-young-pregnant-women-young-parents-school/supporting-young-pregnant-women-young-parents-school/govscot%3Adocument/supporting-young-pregnant-women-young-parents-school.pdf

Sexual orientation: bullying based on sexual orientation is largely motivated by prejudice towards lesbian, gay or bisexual people, and those sexual orientations or gender identities which are not heterosexual or heteronormative. Homophobic or biphobic bullying is when a young person's actual or perceived sexual orientation is used to exclude, threaten, hurt, or humiliate them. Any young person can be homophobically bullied, irrespective of their actual sexual orientation. Sometimes young people can be homophobically bullied because others think that they are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT), because they have LGBT family or friends or, often, because they are seen as different or not conforming to gender stereotypes. Transgender children and young people can therefore also experience homophobic bullying. Homophobic or biphobic language and jokes around the school can create a climate of homophobia; for example, the use of the word 'gay' to mean substandard or have negative connotations. This type of language is prejudice-based and should therefore be addressed as part of a school culture and ethos which promotes equality and inclusion. Scottish Government and Time for Inclusive Education have produced guidance for school staff to **support the implementation of LGBT Inclusive Education**.

Racism and race: under the Equality Act 2010, race includes colour, nationality (including citizenship) and ethnic or national origins. Children and young people from groups who are at risk of experiencing racism may experience racist attitude and behaviour based on perceived differences which reflect wider societal patterns of inequality, power imbalance and discrimination. Prejudice towards the minority ethnic group a child or young person belongs to – or to which people assume they belong – in a school, community or organisation can often lead to a child or young person experiencing bullying behaviour. Racist behaviour and incidents can arise from a misguided and learned belief that children and young people from minority ethnic groups are less valued and 'deserve' to be treated differently, or with less respect. Children and young people from Gypsy/Traveller communities may be at greater risk of bullying. Some bullying behaviour against these groups may be of a racist nature which, given that race is a protected characteristic, can contravene equality legislation and have hate crime implications. Perceived risks about bullying and parents' own experiences of discriminatory and racist behaviour may lead to low levels of enrolment and poor attendance for Gypsy/Traveller children and young people as well as early exit from formal education. Other Traveller and Roma families may have similar concerns. Resources are available to support schools on responding to racism and racist incidents.

Religion or belief: people who have a religion or belief, as well as those who do not, are protected under the Equality Act 2010. Religious, belief- or faith-based discrimination may manifest through actions or words directed towards a person of faith or a faith community, for example, anti-Hinduism, antisemitism or anti-Sikh discrimination. Discrimination can also happen within groups who share the same religious belief, for example, Muslim or Christian sectarianism. Prejudice may centre on aspects of traditions, beliefs and etiquette of different faiths and can lead to religious intolerance. Differences in practices of religions such as prayer times, dietary requirements, fasting and the wearing of religious clothing or articles of faith can result in misunderstandings and stereotyping, which may lead to bullying. In some cases, racism is the underlying factor in religious discrimination against people from minority ethnic communities. For example, learners who are not Muslim may experience Islamophobic bullying or anti-Hinduism as a result of racially stereotypical assumptions linked to their skin colour or other aspects of their appearance.

Sex (including sexual harassment, sexism and misogyny): the Equality Act 2010 protects people from being treated differently because of their sex. Girls and young women can be subjected to a range of behaviours by boys and young men because of gender inequality. This includes sexism, misogyny, sexual harassment, and other forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Sexism is discrimination or discriminatory language which seeks to belittle women and girls. Misogyny is the hatred of women, often expressed with hateful, sexualised language which aims to imply that women are inferior. Sexism and misogyny create a context where GBV can thrive. Girls and young women often experience bullying which is based on sexism and misogyny. Girls experiencing more than one form of inequality are at higher risk of being subjected to misogyny, which can often be combined with racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism, and other prejudices
Sexual harassment is distinct from the behaviours above and can include catcalling, wolf whistling, sexual language and sexualised intimidation or threat. It is important that sexual harassment is treated as GBV. The Scottish Government has published guidance to support schools in preventing and responding to gender-based violence. https://www.gov.scot/publications/preventing-responding-gender-based-violence-whole-school-framework/ Many of these behaviours are caused by gender inequality – unequal social power between girls and boys – and create a context which can allow serious forms of violence to take place. It is often unseen and unreported. Bullying which draws on misogyny can also be directed against boys and young men For example, 'you throw like a girl'. Even when directed at boys, it still draws on the degradation and belittling of women, and thus causes girls further harm. It can be linked to homophobia.

Other characteristics The following characteristics may be the target of prejudice-based bullying; while they are not explicitly protected by law under the Equality Act 2010, there are aspects of the characteristics that may be caught depending on the circumstances. Irrespective of this, a robust response should be taken to any form of bullying. It is important for schools to consider whether there are patterns of bullying behaviour within their school communities which could be addressed by providing learning for children and young people about inequality and diversity.

Additional Support Needs: these can arise for any reason and be of short- or long-term duration. Additional support may be required to overcome needs arising from a school learning environment; health or disability; family circumstances or social and emotional factors, and therefore may relate to a protected characteristic. A child or

young person may be bullied because they have an additional support need and crucially, being bullied can also lead to an additional support need. Some with additional support needs may be protected under the disability protected characteristic. Children and young people with an additional support need may not realise that the behaviour happening to them is bullying. Staff should therefore be alert for behaviour that may constitute bullying, without the responsibility solely being on the child or young person to report it. Staff are able to report bullying incidents on SEEMiS without a child or young person reporting it.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees: children and young people who are asylum seekers or refugees may be at greater risk of bullying. Some bullying behaviour against these groups may be of a racist nature which, given that race is a protected characteristic, can contravene equality legislation and have hate crime implications. Stigma, due to lack of knowledge and reluctance to burden parents with extra worries can allow bullying to go undetected and continue.

Body Image and Physical Appearance: this can be hugely important to children and young people and significantly negatively impact their wellbeing. Body image and physical appearance can also be a highly sensitive area in which school staff will need to carefully consider their responses. In some cases, bullying relating to body image and physical appearance may intersect with a protected characteristic, such as race or disability, for example being bullied for female body/facial hair, facial deformities and scars (potentially from war/torture).

Care Experienced Children and Young People: care experienced children and young people can be particularly vulnerable to bullying. Children and young people can face bullying behaviour simply because they are care experienced and seen in some way as 'different'. Children and young people who are cared for away from home can also experience bullying behaviour in their residential care home, at school and in their community. Care experienced children and young people may not always have a stable support network to turn to when experiencing bullying. For some children and young people forming positive relationships with peers and adults can be more difficult due to their early childhood adversity. Developing trusting and supportive relationships between children, young people and practitioners is required to address bullying of all forms and in all settings.

Family and household circumstances: children and young people may experience discrimination for their family situation. For example, if the child or young person is from a single-parent family, a blended family or has a relative who is in a same-sex relationship. Bullying of children who endure parental substance use can also be prevalent. Family imprisonment: children and young people affected by family imprisonment are at risk of bullying for a range of reasons. Keeping in contact with a family member in prison can mean children and young people miss time at school, clubs, and socialising with friends. Having to explain or make excuses for their absence can pose challenges for peer relationships. Children and young people affected by imprisonment can also often feel left out in peer discussions about parents or other family members. The stigma of having a family member in prison can lead to children and young people trying to keep the experience hidden from their peers. This can make it difficult to form and maintain peer relationships. Where children and young people choose to disclose their family member's imprisonment, or where this information is shared by others in the community or the media, the stigma of imprisonment can make them a direct target of bullying behaviour.

Forces children: children from armed forces and veteran families can face significant challenges due to forces life. They may experience frequent moves around the country which for some are challenging due to the loss of friendships and disruption to education. Deployments and separation from parents are also events that can happen due to forces life. Some families may move up to once every two years which means children and young people re-establishing themselves in a new school and some feel there is no point even trying to make new friends which can lead to isolation. This group can sometimes feel different from their classmates and can be bullied for a number of reasons such as having a different accent, or simply for being in a forces family. Having a parent being away can also add to the emotional difficulties a child or young person may feel as they may not want to open up about the difficulties they face to their non-serving parent. Research has shown that children who attend schools which are more educated about military life face less bullying and discrimination, so it is important schools understand their lives more and are able to support this group.

Mental health stigma and discrimination: children and young people may feel uncomfortable to speak about their mental health for fear of the consequences. Fear of stigma and discrimination can prevent an individual from sharing their mental health concerns. Judgemental preconceptions about mental health may endorse negative stereotypes which can impact someone who experiences mental health problems, potentially making them feel worse about themselves and hindering recovery.

Sectarianism: most people understandably associate sectarianism with religion, which is a protected characteristic. The reality of prejudice however means that family background, supporting particular football teams, where a child or young person lives, which school they attend or the colour of clothing they wear can be a target of sectarian abuse, regardless of the individuals' beliefs. In Scotland, sectarianism is most often related to Protestant and Roman Catholic divisions within Christianity but can also relate to other religions, for example, Sunni, Ahmadi and Shia Muslims within Islam, and Orthodox and Reform Jews within Judaism.

Socio-economic/poverty prejudice: poverty contravenes a number of articles laid out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and denies children and young people many of their rights. Bullying due to socio-economic status can take place in any community. Small differences in perceived family income/family living arrangements/social circumstances or values can be used as a basis for bullying behaviours. These behaviours, such as mocking speech patterns, accents, belongings, clothing, etc., can become widespread through those considering themselves to be in the dominant socio-economic group. Where poverty-related bullying is witnessed or experienced, it is based upon the consequences of poverty, such as: poor appearance or lack of school uniforms, shoes and PE kits; type of clothing worn on non-school uniform day; lack of money to socialise with friends, being in receipt of free school meals; and not being able to have 'sleepovers'. Schools and organisations need to be aware and compassionate around both the emotional and financial consequences of poverty and how it affects children and young people in all areas of their life.

Young Carers: the lives of young carers can be significantly affected by their responsibility to care for a family member or friend to illness, disability, mental health

problems or an addiction. Young carers are at risk of bullying for a variety of reasons. Carers Trust survey work indicates that 36% of young carers who responded had been bullied about their caring role. Depending on their caring responsibilities, they may find themselves being unable to fully participate in school or after-school activities or 'fun stuff'. This can make it difficult for them to form and sustain relationships with peers; it can hinder successful transitions or lead to them not achieving their educational potential.

Appendix 3–Resources and Support

Support for children and young people

respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, has information available for children and young people to help them understand what bullying is, and what their options are if they are being bullied.

Childline offers direct emotional and practical support for children and young people about bullying at school or any other issues. Childline can also be contacted free on 0800 11 11. Young Scot provide a range of information to build young people's understanding of what they can do if they are being bullied, including support for online bullying.

Reach provides information and advice to children and young people who have, or might have, an additional support need on their rights.

Support for parents

respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, has a range of information resources and training opportunities to increase parent awareness of bullying behaviour and to consider the different ways they can respond if their child is being bullied, or is involved in the bullying of others. These resources also offer guidance on how schools and parents can work together to create inclusive environments and provide effective support for children and young people.

ParentLine Scotland can help parents or family members think about the best way to deal with a situation where their child is being bullied or is displaying bullying behaviour. Parentline Scotland can also be contacted free and in confidence on 0800 028 2233. Parentclub provides information to support parents where their child is being bullied at school. Connect works with with parents, parent groups and educators, providing information, advice and training.

National Parent Forum of Scotland is a volunteer-led organisation that works to ensure that parents play a full and equal role in education.

Enquire provides advice for parents of children who have, or might have, an additional support need. Coordinated by the Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights (CRER), Advocacy for Race Equality in Schools Scotland (AdRESS) is an advocacy and advice service launched to support parents and carers whose child has experienced racist incidents or racially motivated bullying in school.

Enquiries can be made by telephone on 0330 122 4600 or by email at support@adresscotland.org. They can also be submitted through the online contact form on the AdRESS website (www.AdRESSScotland.org) where further information and resources can also be found. The NSPCC has published advice for parents on keeping children safe online.

Support for schools/organisations

Support and guidance is available from respectme, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service, which offers free training to all those with a role to play in the lives of children and young people to prevent and respond to bullying effectively, aligned to 'Respect for All'. respectme have developed a template anti-bullying policy which can be adapted by schools, organisations or education authorities to meet their local circumstances. The template policy can be accessed from respectme's website.

The Scottish Government has published key guidance and resources to support schools:
• Preventing and responding to gender-based violence: a whole school framework
• Resources to support schools when responding to racism and racist incidents

• Supporting transgender young people in schools: guidance for Scottish schools
• Guidance on mobile phones in Scotland's schools

SEEMiS has produced a number of resources to support staff using the system. This includes help pages outlining the functionality of the Bullying and Equalities module, a video walking staff through the process of recording an incident as well as resources on using the Business Intelligence reporting tool. The resources are available from the SEEMiS website.

Appendix 5: Reporting, Recording and Monitoring of Bullying Incidents Flow Chart

Reporting, Recording and Monitoring of Bullying Incidents

Schools/Establishments should promote consistency of response to instances of bullying behaviour using the following steps:

All incidents of bullying MUST be recorded using the Bullying and Equalities Module within SEEMIS. Any recording of incidents must include specific detail of the incident e.g, the nature of bullying

Investigate the incident. Speak to the individuals involved and establish the facts. What was the behaviour and its impact?

Listen to the views of the child/Young person. What do they want to happen? Keep the child/Young person informed of the next steps

Parents/Carers should be informed and provided with updates as appropriate

Outcome: Where an incident is found to be bullying, schools should ensure that the appropriate supports/interventions are in place for individuals/groups to address any underlying prejudice

Monitor the situation assessing the need for further interventions

Review actions and respond accordingly. Once concluded the incident(s) should be resolve and closed off on SEEMIS

The Guidance should be read in conjunction with

Aberdeen City Council Education Settings - Anti-bullying Policy

https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/school-life/anti-bullying-policy