

Rutherglen High School Anti-Bullying Policy 2025-2026



Rationale

The ability to learn is absolutely crucial for life in our ever-changing world of education, work, and leisure. Rutherglen High School has a responsibility for developing successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. We provide a high quality of learning and teaching experiences for all children and young people in our care.

The purpose of an anti-bullying policy is to:-

- Ensure that there is a common understanding of what bullying is.
- Ensure that all young people are free to learn in a safe and secure environment without fear of bullying.
- Develop a partnership approach among parents, young people and staff which develops school ethos and tackles the issue of bullying.
- Promote a positive ethos within school that fosters the development of skills and self esteem within our young people.
- Equip young people with the necessary skills to tackle the problems associated with bullying both in Rutherglen High School and the wider world.
- Support young people who have been the victims of bullying.
- Provide a framework to discuss anti-bullying strategies.

Rutherglen High School has an agreed framework to ensure consistency and coherence in dealing with bullying incidents. As a school, it is our responsibility to protect our children from bullying, to educate them about bullying and to build their resilience.

Scotland's vision of anti-bullying for children and young people is as follows:-

"Every child and young person in Scotland 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 parents or carers will have the skills and resilience to prevent or respond to bullying. All children will expect help and know who can help them; while those adults working with them will follow a consistent and effective approach in dealing with and preventing bullying from early years onwards."

If we are *Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC)* then all our pupils should feel:

- Safe : Protected from abuse, neglect or harm at home, at school and in the community.
- Included : Having help to overcome social, educational, physical and economic inequalities and being accepted as part of the community in which they live and learn.
- Healthy: Including having good mental health.

According to *The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)*:-

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

The following are suggested by UNICEF as the responsibilities these rights engender.

1. *If every child, regardless of their sex, ethnic origin, social status, language, age, nationality or religion has these rights, then they also have a responsibility to respect each other in a humane way.*
2. *If children have a right to be protected from conflict, cruelty, exploitation and neglect, then they also have a responsibility not to bully or harm each other.*
3. *If all children have a right to a full life, then they should also lend help so the needy, the disadvantaged, and the victims of discrimination also enjoy this right.*
4. *If children have a right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, then they also have the obligation to respect other's thoughts or religious principles.*

Authority Policy – The National Approach to Anti-Bullying

Respect for All: the National Approach to Anti-Bullying Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People sets out the national approach to anti-bullying in Scotland. "Respect for All" (2024) focuses specifically on bullying between children and young people and aims to ensure that all sectors and communities, at a national and local level, are consistently and coherently contributing to a holistic approach to anti-bullying, including prejudice-based bullying. Respect for All is underpinned by the values of:-

- Children's rights
- Fairness
- Respect
- Equality
- Inclusion

As a school, we want all children and young people to feel safe, secure and able to build positive relationships with peers and adults. Respect for All aims to encourage a proactive and inclusive approach to anti-bullying and supports all adults working with, or caring for, children and young people to create inclusive environments where bullying cannot thrive. It aims to drive the implementation of a consistent and cohesive approach to anti-bullying in Scotland and describes how we define bullying and how we approach effective anti-bullying work. This document replaces previous Respect for All guidance, published in 2017, and supplementary guidance on recording and monitoring bullying incidents published in 2018.

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed promptly and effectively. Bullying is a violation of children's rights and is incompatible with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, now enacted in Scots law. Bullying should never be seen as an inevitable part of growing up. Children and young people living in Scotland should have equal opportunities to succeed; bullying compromises this ambition.

The Scottish government vision is that:-

- every child and young person in Scotland 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.

Defining Bullying Behaviour

In Scotland, bullying is defined as:-

“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, 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.
- The fear of behaviour reoccurring may have a lasting 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 can include the following:-

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened (face to face and/or online).
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked.
- Having belongings taken or damaged.
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face-to-face and/or online).
- Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or phones/tablets.
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face-to-face and/or online).
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online).
- Increasing the reach and impact of bullying or prejudice through the recruitment and/or involvement of a wider group.

Whilst bullying behaviour is most often considered in a school context, it can happen any time or any place that young people are together, including online. All those who work with children and young people therefore share a responsibility for ensuring they feel safe and supported, able to raise concerns about bullying, and confident that action will be taken in response. There is a difference between bullying and disagreements between children in the playground in which both sides are equal parties or which are a result of “heat of the moment” reactions. Although these may need to be dealt with as behavioural incidents they do not constitute bullying.

Bullying incidents involve a conscious and systematic persecution or harassment of an individual causing distress by undermining their sense of security and self-esteem. Something need only happen once for a child or young person to feel worried or scared to go to school. Staff should label the behaviour as opposed to the child. Titles such as “bully” and “victim” should not be applied to young people as they can permanently affect how they feel about themselves.

The Power Imbalances and Prejudices Underpinning Bullying

Complex social and relationship dynamics underpin bullying behaviour. There does not always need to be an existing relationship between the children and young people involved, but what is common is for there to be a perceived, or actual, imbalance of power. Whilst there can be several factors which create aspects of difference amongst children and young people – for example, popularity, physicality or economic advantage – these systemic, societal and structural inequalities often support unequal relationships that can generate and intensify bullying behaviours, making certain groups more vulnerable.

Such structural inequalities can manifest themselves in prejudice-based bullying. Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice, based on dislike of an individual's actual or perceived identity and reflects wider societal trends of inequality and power. Prejudice comes in a variety of distinct forms and prejudice-based bullying can have wide-ranging impacts on children and young people's health and wellbeing. Prejudice is escalatory by nature, can be both targeted and non-targeted, and can manifest in a variety of different ways. Not all incidents where prejudice-based behaviour occurs will be bullying incidents.

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.

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 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.

The evolving nature of bullying - online bullying

In the digital world, online bullying, or cyberbullying, is a significant concern affecting children and young people in Scotland. 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 non-consensual image sharing, video footage, photo editing, transient messaging, and fake accounts, creating a new global environment that demands careful, informed, and nuanced handling.

Online bullying can be as damaging as offline bullying and may have more serious consequences due to the digital footprint, lasting presence, group dynamics, and potential for illegality. Online bullying should therefore be responded to with the same level of seriousness as any other form of offline bullying. Where online bullying is impacting the wellbeing and learning of the children and young people affected, it is central to a whole-school or organisational approach to anti-bullying that these impacts are responded to appropriately.

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. 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.

What is not bullying?

Schools 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.

Any suspected incident will be context specific and should be considered on a case-by-case basis. In identifying what response is appropriate, it will often be necessary for staff to use their professional judgement to identify the nuanced differences between types of behaviour. Each set of circumstances will be fact specific, and staff should ensure they have gathered all relevant information before deciding, remembering that the nature of some behaviours may constitute criminal offences, and advice should be sought from Police Scotland where there are significant concerns.

There is added complexity in that some types of behaviour can overlap and/or without early intervention may escalate. For example, the normalisation of derogatory and pejorative language use or slurs about a social group, and the perpetuation of harmful social or cultural stereotypes or myths, if unaddressed can create a culture that can lead to more intense levels of behaviour, including violence or hate crime, for example. Similarly, bullying behaviour can mirror the absence of positive values, the presence of negative role-models, globally influential figures and social media trends prevalent across popular culture which can promote unhelpful and divisive messaging.

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.

Differentiating Bullying from Potentially Criminal Behaviour

There is no legal definition of bullying in Scotland and bullying is not, in itself, considered a crime. However, the nature of certain behaviour that could be perceived as, or reported as, bullying may include behaviour that is criminal in nature. Understanding the individual facts and circumstances present in any situation is important to distinguish between bullying and potentially criminal offences.

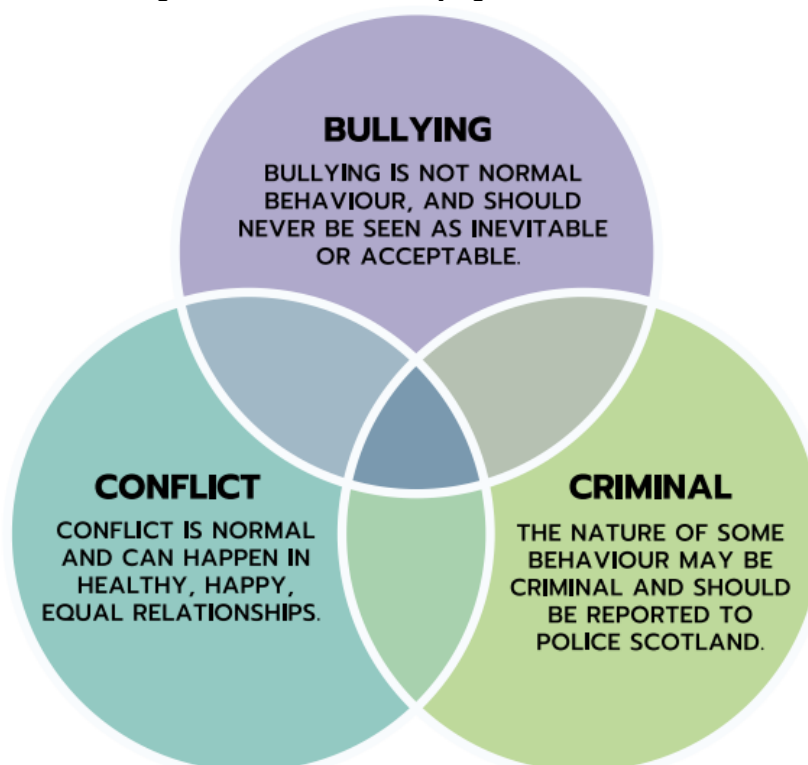
Physical behaviour - peer-on-peer violence can be verbal abuse, physical aggression and/ or physical violence, which can have both short- and long-term impacts on the mental and physical health and wellbeing of all involved. If there is an intent to cause harm, regardless of whether or not an injury occurs, this may amount to an assault.

Sexual behaviour - when someone is coerced or pressurised to do something sexual or is touched inappropriately, this is not bullying. This is sexual assault or abuse and a form of gender-based violence (GBV).

Online behaviour - there are various legal provisions designed to protect individuals from online harassment, abuse, and harm. Some online behaviour may therefore be illegal; further guidance on supporting pupils' awareness of safe and secure use of mobile technology is contained within the Scottish Government's guidance on mobile phones in Scotland's schools.

Hate Crime - bullying can be motivated by prejudice similar to hate crime. The distinction between bullying and hate crime is that for hate crime, the behaviour aggravated by prejudice must be motivated by malice and ill-will towards a group of people due to a relevant characteristic or intended to stir up hatred, and 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 an individual who possesses or appears to possess a relevant characteristic protected under the Hate Crime and Public Order (Scotland) Act 2021.

Differentiating Between Conflict, Bullying and Criminal Behaviour



Conflict

Usually at least one person doesn't want the conflict to go on unresolved, and will try to take action to improve the situation. It can highlight the importance of the relationship, providing a chance to build on strengths, solve problems, and move forward positively. Healthy relationship conflict is not the same as bullying and is unlikely to lead to bullying as the people involved have a mutual interest in restoring equilibrium and maintaining connection.

Bullying

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 repeatedly. Resolution usually requires adult support, meaningful intervention and a change of behaviour in the instigating person. There can sometimes be an escalation from bullying to violence.

Criminal

While bullying is not in itself a crime, some behaviour that may be reported or perceived as bullying could constitute a criminal offence, such as physical or sexual violence, online behaviours or hate crime. It is not for staff to determine if behaviour is criminal; they should seek immediate support from Police Scotland if they have reason to believe that a crime may have occurred or that a child or young person has been seriously harmed.

A Positive Ethos

Rutherglen High School seeks to provide a positive ethos of excellent behaviour, shared responsibility, inclusion and equality, partnership working and a sense of community.

Impact of Bullying Behaviour

There are a number of signs that may indicate a young person is being bullied and adults should be aware of these:-

1. The pupil may become withdrawn
2. They may have injuries they cannot explain
3. They don't want to go to school or socialise with friends.
4. Complain of being ill
5. Have low self esteem
6. Displaying these behaviours does not necessarily mean someone is being bullied.

Responsibilities of Staff

- All staff are committed to creating a positive ethos with a safe, welcoming environment.
- We seek to develop and maintain an ethos which is proactive in the prevention of bullying.
- We support children and young people who have been the subject of bullying and those who display bullying behaviours.
- We ensure that children and young people are aware both of their rights and responsibilities towards others in the creation of such an ethos.
- Ensure all stakeholders are involved in creating and reviewing school policies on anti-bullying.
- Demonstrate by example the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of pupils.
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
- Raise awareness of bullying behaviour and its unacceptability.

Responsibilities of Pupils

- Don't become involved in bullying of any kind.
- Report to a member of staff any instances of bullying to dispel the climate of "not grassing".
- Speak out about bullying.

Responsibilities of Parents

- Watch for the signs of distress and unusual behaviour which may be as a result of bullying.
- Encourage children to report bullying to a member of staff.
- Advise their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying.
- Be sympathetic and supportive towards your children reassuring them that action will be taken.
- Inform the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved.
- Co-operate with the school if your child is accused of bullying and try to ascertain the truth.

Prevention

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.

Organisational cultures that promote respect, recognise, celebrate and normalise difference, highlight the importance of equalities, social justice and rights, and encourage positive relationships serve as both protective and preventative interventions in anti-bullying work.

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

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.

In order to raise awareness of and prevent bullying in Rutherglen High School, we:-

- Ensure all pupils, staff and parents have an understanding of the school's definition of bullying and the procedures for prevention and tackling bullying behaviour eg. Displaying posters, Buddying systems, friendship groups, use of Prefects, discussions in PSE, staff supervision in street and pitches, Active Breaks Club and Assemblies
- Foster a positive ethos of mutual respect, diversity, positive behaviour, restorative practice and a culture of praise eg. Better Behaviour Better Learning policy, assemblies and awards ceremonies.
- Ensure that through Health and Wellbeing, children develop necessary skills such as self-awareness, self esteem, coping strategies, assertiveness and resilience.
- Ensure pupils are able to develop individual skills through provision of extra curricular activities and clubs. For example, sports activities, music, after school clubs.
- Ensure clear lines of communication between home and school.
- Enlist support of partner agencies where appropriate eg. Friendship Groups in Area Base, Home / school partnership, Educational Psychologist, Active Break

Responding to Bullying

To instil confidence that bullying is taken seriously, it is important for schools and other organisations working with children and young people to take a consistent approach to responding to concerns or allegations of bullying behaviour.

Step 1 - Reporting

There are different ways in which staff 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 or organisation's anti-bullying policy of the mechanisms through which allegations of bullying should be reported. Given some children, young people and families may be concerned about the potential for escalation of behaviour if they are found to have reported behaviour, consideration should be given to whether it would be appropriate to have mechanisms for anonymised reporting, alongside other reporting mechanisms.

Staff or volunteers who observe bullying should follow their internal procedures for raising concerns about behaviour. All adults should be adequately informed of the details they are expected to provide to the person responsible for recording, which will be related to the content of the recording system.

Step 2 - Recording the incident/concern

It is recommended that once an incident or concern has been raised, this should be logged on a school's or organisation's recording system as soon as possible.

It is not necessary for an allegation to be substantiated before it is recorded. Rather 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, as set out in the following section, with the recording system being updated throughout the process on the outcome of this investigation, and any action taken as a result

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.
- It enables schools and organisations 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 entering the data to identify and record multiple types of incidents ('nature of incident') under one incident. There is also the ability 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. This enables public schools and education authorities to analyse data to identify intersectionality which may be linked to the behaviour.

It is expected that organisations will use a digital recording system where possible and adhere to data protection principles. Public schools should refer to their own Data Protection Team within the education authority regarding local procedures for obtaining permission to record personal data. Other organisations supporting children and young people should refer to their own data protection policies.

Depending on the setting, different systems will be available to record bullying incidents.

For education authorities and public schools, the Bullying and Equalities Module within the SEEMiS system has been identified as the most appropriate tool for such schools and education authorities to record and monitor bullying incidents. Education authorities will have local guidance on recording and monitoring, and public schools should refer to this when developing their approach. Further information on training and support is available in the resources and support section. Where Community Learning and Development staff are working within schools and have access to SEEMiS, they should record incidents on the system but only where protocols have been agreed within the education authority and/or the school.

Whole-school/organisation approach to recording and monitoring

Bullying can be a sensitive topic for staff, children and young people and parents, due to the connotations associated with the term. Parents and young people may have concerns about unfounded allegations being on their record. It is therefore important to build understanding among the whole school community of what will be recorded, how and why.

Labelling children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims' can be disempowering and is unhelpful in supporting them to change their behaviour, or in scaffolding their recovery from a bullying experience. It is advised that stigmatising language be avoided when recording concerns about bullying behaviour. SEEMiS for example uses the language 'child displaying bullying behaviour' and 'child experiencing bullying behaviour.'

Labelling an action as bullying behaviour, rather than labelling the person themselves, distinguishes the behaviour from the individual and is a more effective way of helping a child or young person to develop empathy skills and reflect upon their behaviour. This can support and effect change, without stigmatisation. Challenging bullying behaviour in an authoritative, respectful way does not diminish its seriousness or impact and helps to maintain adult focus on the behaviour being the problematic issue, rather than the individual themselves.

All organisations should make parents, children and young people aware of their complaints procedures including any review or appeal process

Step 3 - Investigation

Bullying is a combination of behaviour and impact and should be addressed with compassion and professional curiosity 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

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, but due to other factors such as changing friendship groups or interpersonal conflict, it can still be difficult for a child or young person and their parents. In these situations it is important for those involved to understand that even though 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

Step 4 - Responding to bullying incidents

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 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. This lack of information may make the child or young person affected, or their family members, feel that nothing has been done in response to the incident. In such instances the need to respect privacy should be explained and reassurance given that corrective action has been taken.

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, 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 understanding¹⁷ 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 - 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, relevant data protection legislation and National Guidance for Child Protection. Data protection law allows relevant personal data to be shared lawfully if it is to keep a child or young person at risk safe from neglect or physical, emotional or mental harm, or if it is protecting their physical, mental, or emotional wellbeing. Public schools should contact their education authority for more information on this.

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/organisation'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.

Responses will vary depending on the children or young people and the nature of the incident. While individual responses will vary, there should be consistency in all approaches by focusing on repairing the harm caused where possible and preventing it from happening again. Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and the National Practice Model, including the wellbeing assessment, should guide the support offered. 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.¹⁸ Consideration should also be given to any additional factors that may impact upon a child or young person's wellbeing, including whether any additional support for learning input is required.

Step 6 - Monitoring

Monitoring data on bullying incidents can provide 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 may help organisations, schools and education authorities to prevent and respond to bullying incidents efficiently.

This information should 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 locally.

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.

Areas that schools, organisations and education authorities may wish to give particular consideration to when monitoring bullying incidents are:-

- Number, type, location, year group and timing of bullying incidents and whether there is change over time.
- Incidents of prejudice-based bullying and whether there is a change over time.

All education authorities have access to the SEEMiS Business Intelligence (BI) Reporting Tool which allows them to view and filter data recorded in the Bullying and Equalities module e.g. how many incidents of specific incident type have occurred across the authority and where incidents are occurring in their schools, for example. These reports can also be made available to individual schools for their own school data, should the education authority choose to make the reports accessible to them. As approaches vary across Scotland as to how or if education authorities use the Bullying and Equalities module, it would be for individual schools to contact their authority for further information on access to these Business Intelligence reports, if they cannot currently do so.

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 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.AdRESScotland.org) where further information and resources can also be found.

The NSPCC has published advice for parents on keeping children safe online <http://www.google.co.uk/>