



ABERDEEN
CITY COUNCIL

ANTI-BULLYING



**POLICY ON
POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS
AND ANTIBULLYING APPROACHES IN SCHOOL**

ANTI-BULLYING

Aberdeen City Council, April 2009

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Supporting information, which extends the information in this document, is available online on the Aberdeen Grid for Learning at www.aberdeen-education.org.uk/enterprise/positiverelationships

positive relationships and antibullying approaches in schools

1 positive relationships in schools

Relationships in schools should be characterised by respect, kindness and consideration. In a school, all adults, children and young people have a responsibility to help each other to develop positive attitudes and behaviour, and to avoid using their power to bully or to prevent others from learning. Everyone has the right to feel valued and respected, and to develop self-esteem, a sense of belonging, and a feeling of being safe.

Our responsibilities are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

"Children have the right to be protected from being hurt and mistreated, physically or mentally. Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them." (article 19)

UNICEF are promoting Rights Respecting Schools which not only teach about children's and human rights but also model rights and respect in all their relationships: adults-pupils; pupils- adults; pupils-pupils .

School staff play an important part in helping young people to develop mature and happy relationships, which is an important part of the curriculum and central to their present and future success in life. Schools are places where young people can learn and practice the skills of positive interpersonal relationships.

Positive relationships among all members of the school community produce an environment that is conducive to all aspects of learning and without which learning can be greatly impeded.

We do not tolerate bullying behaviour of any kind.

2 the objectives of this policy

- to increase the effectiveness of preventative practice
- to increase awareness of the causes and effects of bullying
- to offer guidance on dealing with bullying

3 what is bullying behaviour?

There is a difference between bullying and other hurtful behaviour and many disagreements do not constitute bullying behaviour. There are many definitions of bullying behaviour, but there are several important things to remember.

- it is hurtful it is repeated over a period of time
- it is difficult for those being bullied to stop it happening

Bullying isn't always deliberate and people are sometimes not aware of the suffering they are causing.

Bullying is not the same as falling out, although people may, of course, still need support when they do fall out with someone. It is also important to remember that individual incidents of hurtful behaviour still need to be dealt with.

4 types of bullying

Bullying can take many forms such as

- verbal
- social
- physical
- emotional
- prejudice-based

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5 finding out the situation in your school

If you wish to target action against bullying in your school, listening to pupils combined with a survey can help you to understand what is happening, and also give you some information about the impact of your strategy.

Your survey is likely to have most impact if pupils are involved in the design and implementation of questionnaires, and in discussing and deciding what needs to be done as a result of the survey.

Questionnaire design can be difficult. It will be most helpful if your questionnaires are designed in such a way that comparisons can be made from one year to the next. You are likely to want to analyse the results by class and year group and gender.

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6 why does bullying take place?

Behaviour often communicates feelings, and it is important to try to understand the feelings that have led a person to bully others. Bullies often target people on whom they can displace their aggression, and one focus in dealing with the problem should be on what the bullies, through their behaviour, get out of being a bully.

It may seem that the bullies are popular, but those who appear to be friends may do so out of fear rather than real friendship.

The overt "reasons" for bullying include wearing glasses, being tall, short, fat, thin, being from a different race or culture or indeed possessing any characteristic that the bully can use as an "excuse" for the bullying. If the person does not possess any obvious difference, then the bully may well invent one. All these so-called reasons are irrelevant, and it is important not to blame the person being bullied for what is happening.

Pupils who are bullied can be intelligent, popular, creative and caring with a strong sense of values. If a pupil is socially less popular than the rest of the group, then it is this pupil who is most likely to be bullied. If there is no such obvious target then the bully will pick on any pupil they think is unlikely to fight back.

7 developing positive relationships and preventing bullying

A school is a community in which everyone – parents/carers, pupils and staff - have an interest in developing an atmosphere conducive to learning and personal development.

If the whole-school ethos is positive

- antibullying issues will be firmly embedded in the school's behaviour policy.
- kindness and a respect for human dignity will pervade relationships in the school
- senior management will offer a clear lead and actively support pupils, staff and parents/carers
- a culture will exist in the school that bullying is unacceptable
- pupils will have regular opportunities for receiving information and having discussion about bullying issues, for example, within the Personal and Social Education (PSE) programme.
- staff, pupils and parents/carers will be involved in development of policies and action plans relating to positive relationships and antibullying
- positive relationships and antibullying statements will be prominently displayed and frequently promoted (eg through assemblies)
- helpline numbers (eg for ChildLine) will be prominently displayed
- there will be supervision of areas of the school where pupils feel vulnerable
- there will be a record keeping system to monitor the incidence of bullying in the school and to monitor the progress of dealing with individual incidents.

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8 responding to incidents of bullying

While sanctions may be appropriate in some circumstances, it is vital that the school supports both bullies and those who have been bullied. To this end a school will

- recognise that everyone has a right not to be bullied and that bullying is always unacceptable
- try to ensure that incidents of bullying are always reported and are taken seriously
- encourage pupils to talk to an adult if bullying occurs and will have a variety of mechanisms to make this as easy as possible
- take every report of possible bullying seriously, no matter how small it may appear

When an incident has been reported a school will

- always take action
- attach no blame for the bullying, even by implication, to the pupil who has been bullied
- involve the pupil who has been bullied in considering what strategies might work, and give them a voice in decisions that are made about them
- enable the pupil who has been bullied to see that it is achievable for things to be better
- take care not to over-react, especially to rumours that may be unfounded
- inform parents about bullying incidents at an early stage and continue to support and inform them if bullying continues
- inform relevant staff about actions taken and keep them up to date with progress
- keep a record of incidents and action taken, and complete any appropriate form (eg the reporting of racist incidents)
- involve other agencies where appropriate
- monitor the results of its actions after dealing with incidents
- attempt to help bullies to understand why their behaviour is unacceptable and to understand the consequences for them and for those they bully.

Pupils are sometimes afraid that things may become worse for them if they talk to an adult about bullying, particularly if the bully suspects this has happened. It is particularly important for adults to be aware of this possible fear and to take it into account in what they do to help.

There are many strategies available for dealing with bullying. Each incident of bullying is different, and there is no particular strategy that will work in every case.

The first decision that has to be made in each instance is to try to identify which strategy or combination of strategies is most likely to work. It is likely that multiple strategies will be needed for those pupils who persistently and seriously bully others.

Some incidents can be dealt with easily, and a few words from the teacher will make young people aware of what they are doing and how it is causing distress to the other person.

However, other incidents of bullying are extremely difficult to deal with and it may seem as though there is no solution. Talking to a teacher or another adult is often a first important step, but there are no magic solutions. Dealing effectively with bullying involves self-reflection, willingness and patience.

9 developing and reviewing a school policy on positive relationships and antibullying approaches

Each school will have its own antibullying policy that should be drawn up, as far as possible, through involvement of staff, pupils and parents, and will be regularly reviewed. The policy should include

- how this (Aberdeen City) policy will be implemented in the school
- a clear and consistent approach to dealing with bullying, taking account the issues in section 8 (above)
- what staff should do and whom they should contact when they notice possible bullying
- the specific roles of all members of the school community in dealing with bullying including
 - pupils
 - parents
 - senior management team
 - class/subject teachers
 - personal support staff (eg Guidance staff, behaviour support staff, school nurse)
 - non-teaching staff (eg administrative staff, catering staff, support staff, community liaison officer etc)
- the local support available to bullies and those being bullied
- the sanctions available and the circumstances in which they will be applied
- how the school will raise and maintain awareness of issues relating to bullying among all staff, pupils and parents
- how the policy will be communicated to pupils and parents
- how the policy will be maintained and reviewed.

The contents or changes to the school policy should be communicated to parents every time it is reviewed. This may be done in the form of a leaflet or newsletter written specifically for parents. The policy document should be freely available (eg on the school's website).

10 what Aberdeen City will do

Aberdeen City Council will

- be proactive in raising the awareness of staff in schools by ensuring that relevant information is communicated to schools
- provide continuing professional development (CPD) for staff about bullying issues and methods of dealing with bullying
- offer help to schools as they consider possible solutions to incidents of bullying (with the support of Education Officers)
- involve pupils through the Aberdeen Student Forum and pupil councils in schools in the discussion of positive relationships, bullying issues and antibullying strategies
- organise pupil seminars and conferences on antibullying from time to time
- consider the possibility of offering courses for pupils, for example to rehabilitate those excluded from school for bullying
- offer information about bullying through its websites (schools will remind parents of this at intervals through their newsletters)
- inform schools when the information on a city council website has been updated

11 what pupils should do

Bullying is unacceptable and should never be ignored. Everyone in a school has a part to play in preventing and dealing with bullying.

Schools should encourage and support pupils to talk to an adult if they are being bullied, or if they know bullying is happening. If someone is hurting them or another person or causing them to worry, they should be encouraged to know that there are people who can help them and whom they can trust and feel comfortable with.

It is important that pupils know that there are people who are able to help, so that they can have the confidence to talk to an adult. Pupils who have been bullied may need help so that they don't feel ashamed nor that it is their fault.

If the bullying does not stop they should be encouraged to speak to an adult again.

It may be appropriate in some cases to encourage pupils to keep a keep log of incidents.

If a pupil feels they are being bullied through a social networking site because of nasty comments, rumours, the display of embarrassing photos or in other ways they should

- not respond
- block the bully's messages
- print any evidence
- inform an adult
- inform the school

12 involving pupils

Children and young people have lots of ideas about how bullying should be prevented and how it should be dealt with. Pupil councils or young people's groups in schools can be extremely helpful both in gathering information about the extent of bullying and in suggesting and helping to implement strategies.

Schools should involve young people in

- collecting information through surveys and questionnaires
- contributing to the discussion of bullying issues in school
- suggesting practical ways of dealing with bullying
- peer support programmes that help in developing positive relationships and in dealing with bullying

13 what parents should do

Parents have a responsibility for ensuring that their sons and daughters receive appropriate education, which should include educating them about bullying.

Parents should inform the school at the earliest possible stage, even if it is just a "be aware" call to alert the school to possible bullying.

Parents should work closely with the school in dealing with bullying. It is important to understand that there are no magic solutions and that dealing with bullying involves a willingness to work patiently in partnership with the school.

Parents should cooperate with mediation meetings of pupils, parents and staff, where this is appropriate.

14 monitoring, recording and reporting bullying

Schools will involve staff, pupils and parents/carers in developing policy and strategies. They may also find it helpful to conduct a survey of bullying incidents, pupil attitudes and their understanding of what they should do if they are aware of bullying.

However, the interpretation of statistical data on the frequency of incidents should be done with care as such data often reflects awareness of the issues rather than the actual extent of the problem. It is well known, for example that reported incidents tend to rise when bullying issues are given a higher profile, but this does not necessarily mean that the actual number of incidents has increased.

However, it is important that schools keep a record of bullying incidents to enable them to maintain effectiveness in dealing with such incidents.

15 bullying of staff

Staff are sometimes bullied by other staff or by pupils. Such incidents should be treated just as seriously as bullying among pupils. The headteacher should be notified immediately.

For example, teachers in some places have reported bullying by pupils who use mobile phones to film them losing their temper and then send the videos to their friends. It has also been reported that sometimes pupils goad staff into losing their temper in front of the camera to make the video more entertaining.

Pupils in some parts of the country have sometimes posted abuse and offensive video clips of teachers online. YouTube has examples from several countries of teachers being held up to ridicule. There are also other sites on which comments can be made about teachers.

16 links to other policies

Aberdeen city has a number of related policies and guidelines, such as

- Child Protection Guidelines (North East Scotland Child Protection Committee)
- Policy on Behaviour of Staff Towards Children and Young People (Aberdeen City Council, 2007)
- Internet & Communications Technology Safety (Aberdeen City Council)
- Antiracist Policy (Aberdeen City Council)

17 materials and resources

Information about materials, resources and organisations involved in antibullying work is available online at www.aberdeen-education.org.uk/enterprise/positiverelationships

