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PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY: PART 1



Education and Learning

INTRODUCTION

This strategy sets out the approach in Perth and Kinross Council Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to responding to and reducing bullying. It is informed by the work of the national anti-bullying service [respectme](#) and addresses the current issues and concerns of our school communities.

By recognising the importance of positive and respectful relationships between all the children, young people and adults in our schools and communities, we can achieve our ambition of preventing and addressing bullying behaviour and the impact it may have. We want our learning environments to be free from intimidation, harassment and fear, to be places where bullying cannot thrive; to be learning environments where our children and young people can be happy, confident and feel safe and in control of what happens for them.

'Bullying is both behaviour and impact; the impact is on a person's capacity to feel in control of themselves. This is what we term as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online.'
(Scottish Government 2017)

By building and managing relationships and understanding diversity, our children, young people, staff and families reduce the potential of bullying behaviour. This strategy will support children, young people and parents to feel informed on approaches to bullying and be confident that bullying can be addressed wherever it happens. Alongside the related operational guidance, it will form the basis for individual school policy to respond to bullying and reduce incidents over time.

This strategy has been developed through extensive stakeholder engagement involving:

- Children and young people
- Parents and carers
- Teachers
- School Staff
- Head Teachers and Deputies
- Community Link Workers
- Parent Councils

The support of an independent anti-bullying consultant, Brian Donnelly, Orbis Consultancy, has been valuable in gathering the views of many members of our school communities.

The strategy and operational guidance are set out in two sections which can be accessed through the following links:

Part 1 explains the strategy and provides the guiding vision and values, the expectations of our schools and the importance of building respectful and inclusive school communities;

Part 2 provides information on operational procedures and some easy-to-follow flowcharts and checklists to help school staff manage situations.

The term parent(s) will be used throughout this document to apply to anyone with parental or carer responsibility, including the local authority where full parental responsibility rests with them.

ANTI-BULLYING STRATEGY AND OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE: PART 1

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BACKGROUND

In 2013 Perth and Kinross Council established a robust Anti-bullying Strategy developed in collaboration with the children and young people, their families and staff in schools at that time.

In 2021/2022, children and young people in P5 to S6 within Perth and Kinross Council schools took part in a Health and Wellbeing Census covering a range of topics, including bullying. The results of this survey told us that 37% of the children and young people (P5 – S2) who responded to questions on bullying identified that felt they had been bullied, only 68% of those that had been bullied reported the behaviour to someone, and 34% of those who had reported the behaviour felt nothing changed as a result. The responses gathered also told us that 15% of those that responded had bullied someone else in the past two months, at least once or twice.

In addition to this survey data, the information gathered through engagement activity by ELC settings and schools, as well as focused work undertaken with children, young people, parents, carers, and staff, supported by external consultancy, has helped to build a greater understanding of how bullying is viewed. When those involved in engagement events were asked about the definition of bullying, there was not a consistent view and in the most part, people were not aware of the national definition, despite this being in place since 2011. Many of the adults who provided their views expressed uncertainty about how to respond to bullying.

In general, children and young people told us they know who to tell, but from an early age they risk assess what impact sharing this information might have. They wanted this strategy, and the actions that come from it, to ask adults to not “overreact” and to “listen to them” when they share information about bullying. Staff told us they want clearer guidance on how to consider the impact of behaviour and on the steps to take when there is an incident of bullying.

By supporting children and young people to understand and respond appropriately to their feelings, and embed skills to repair relationships where appropriate, we help them to build skills for life. By fostering a school community that is tolerant and works together to understand and embrace difference, we can achieve a solid foundation where bullying and prejudice cannot thrive.

VISION, VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Plan sets out our vision of

“a Perth and Kinross where everyone can live life well, free from poverty and inequality.”

This is supported by the Perth and Kinross Council values:

- Ambition
- Compassion
- Integrity

This vision and the values support our approach to nurturing relationships that support all our children, young people, families and staff in our schools. It is our approach to relationships that should guide our responses to bullying. If bullying or unkind behaviour happens, it must be addressed in such a way that the child or young person who has been bullied remains at the centre of decision making. This aims to support their ‘agency’, their sense of feeling in control of their life, and reduce the impact of any behaviour.

It is important that this commitment is communicated to all children, young people, parents and staff members to ensure everyone is aware of the importance of positive relationships, the impact bullying behaviour can have on children and young people’s lives and what is being done to prevent it. Tools within in Part 2 - Operational Guidance and the [PKC Statement and Relationships Policy Guidance for Schools](#) can help with this.

The guiding principles that underpin the strategy are outlined below.

Positive relationships support the creation of **good learning environments** that enable children and young people to thrive. Bullying can interrupt the development of these relationships and in turn can impact on children’s and young people’s wellbeing, inclusion, participation and attainment. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) creates an obligation on governments to protect children from abuse and in relation to education, the curriculum supports children to both understand and respect rights.

It is vital that Perth and Kinross Council **education establishments are safe, secure, healthy and happy places** for our children and young people to attend. Getting it right for every child is the responsibility of everyone; ensuring that all children and young people are nurtured and supported to become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens.

This strategy confirms the Council’s commitment to **positively addressing the issue of bullying** for all our children and young people to ensure that they can learn and develop in **environments that are free from intimidation, harassment, prejudice and fear**.

This strategy provides information to ensure that **everyone is as informed as possible about how to respond to a bullying incident** to ensure children and young people know who to go to for help and support, what will happen when they do and what action has been taken as a result.

Early intervention and prevention are key elements of an approach focused on ensuring we get it right for all our children and young people.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BULLYING?

Children and young people can at times be unkind towards each other, do things without thinking about the consequences or do things that they then regret. This can lead to the feelings of others being hurt at the time but the relationship able to be repaired. Unkind behaviour requires a prompt response to focus on how it affected others, but it alone is not bullying. However, unkind/ hurtful behaviour may have a different impact on each child or young person depending on the factors that affect them.

To understand what bullying is, it is important to consider both behaviour and impact. Bullying is behaviour that is both unkind or hurtful and has an impact on the individual that has been targeted because it changes their feeling of being in control and in charge of themselves.

'Children who are bullied do not feel like themselves, they feel like they have something taken away from them. They feel they lose the ability to manage what is happening to them and worry a great deal about what might happen if they tell, if they speak up or if they ignore it.' (<https://orbistc.com/antibullying/>)

An individual's feeling of being in control and in charge of themselves is what we term as their sense of 'agency'. Bullying can negatively impact a child or young person's sense of agency. How adults respond to bullying can help them to restore their feeling of being in control.

Bullying is:

Behaviour that is unkind or hurtful **and** has an **impact** on a child or young person's feeling of agency, their ability to feel in control and complete actions as they would have done previously. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that affects the individual's self-confidence and can make them feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out.

This definition is based on the description of what is bullying by Scotland's anti-bullying service, [respectme](#).

This behaviour may happen in person or online and can include hurtful comments and name calling, threats of violence, unkind, abusive messages and behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives. In some instances, bullying may be motivated by prejudice. This list is not exhaustive.

Unlike falling out and disagreements with other children or young people, bullying should never be seen as a typical part of growing up. Therefore, this strategy lays out our shared commitment to building relationships that promote values, principles and approaches that will help prevent, reduce and potentially eliminate bullying behaviour within our schools.

Bullying can affect the individual, their family and relationships as well as their education and participation. A child or young person who is bullied might not feel safe, included or respected and their wellbeing may be affected. A child or young person who is bullied, and those causing bullying, may have wellbeing needs that should be assessed and supported using the eight GIRFEC indicators of wellbeing - Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected and Responsible, Included.

It is recognised that it is everyone's responsibility to prevent, respond to and reduce incidents bullying over time and to support children and young people to develop healthy relationships. By working together, we will develop a culture of mutual respect and responsibility amongst all children and young people in our schools and the adults around them.

PREJUDICE MOTIVATED BULLYING

Perth and Kinross Council, is legally obliged by the [Equality Act 2010](#) to pay 'due regard' to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, victimisation and harassment; to advance equality of opportunity and to foster good relations between those people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The Equality Act 2010 provides a framework of protection against direct and indirect discrimination, particularly in relation to nine protected characteristics, which are:

- Age
- Disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy or maternity
- race
- religion or belief
- sex
- sexual orientation

Within the protected characteristics disability, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation and transgender identity are relevant in relation to hate crime or hate incidents. A [hate crime](#) is criminal behaviour which is rooted in prejudice, malice or ill-will because of their actual or perceived disability, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity; it can be verbal or physical.

In a situation where a child or young person perceives that a bullying incident has been motivated by prejudice, it is important to note that their perception or belief is the defining factor in determining whether the incident is treated as a hate incident or crime. They should not be asked to justify or provide evidence of their belief.

Perth and Kinross schools will ensure that bullying by pupils that is related to a protected characteristic is treated as seriously as any other form of bullying. Where there is indication that an incident is prejudiced-based, this should be reported to Police Scotland who will give consideration to whether it is a crime.

Stereotyping, including gender stereotyping, does not support respectful and empowering relationships and may be further reinforced through prejudice-based bullying. By challenging prejudice-based bullying, schools can address some of the behaviours that may lead to future instances of prejudice-based violence.

Gender based violence such as sexual assault or harassment may be a safe-guarding concern and constitute a criminal offence which requires a response beyond the scope of this strategy. This should also be reported to Police Scotland. In addition, all forms of gender-based bullying should also be addressed in school through the procedures outlined to respond to a bullying incident.

ONLINE BULLYING

Online bullying, or 'cyberbullying' as it is often referred to, can involve a child or young person being called names, threatened or have rumours spread about them online, usually on social networking sites and online gaming platforms. This may be in school time, at home or in the community. The different environment where the bullying happens does not change the approach that should be taken, the adults involved should still focus on behaviour and impact. This is aligned to respect [me guidance on online bullying](#):

“Our responses will be more consistent and effective if we address online bullying as part of our whole anti-bullying approach, not as a separate area of work or policy”.

Parents and other agencies may lead in addressing these incidents if they happen out with school, however it is important for schools to be aware of the incident and able to provide support if it has an ongoing impact on the child or young person's ability to access their learning. If incidents happen within school, guidance on responding to a bullying incident should be followed. Some additional practical actions that the adults involved can take are outlined in the Operational Guidance.

FOSTERING INCLUSION, REDUCING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

All ELC settings and schools work with their children and young people, their families and staff to establish the ethos and values for the setting or school.

There are also a range of strategies and programmes already used in schools to support children, young people and parents in these areas. This includes:

- modelling of good relationships
- Staff vigilance around potential for bullying or unkind behaviour
- Nurturing Relationships and Whole School Nurturing Approaches
- Anti-bullying professional learning
- Rights Respecting Schools
- Restorative Approaches
- Bounce Back
- Creating inclusive and supportive learning environments
- Mentoring and peer support (including Mentors in Violence Prevention [MVP])
- Curriculum for Excellence – health and wellbeing curriculum

Effective preventative strategies must involve all members of a school community in building a culture where everyone feels safe, secure and nurtured. All adults in a school should be aware of their responsibility to be role models for children and young people.

Careful planning of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum will provide opportunities to support the prevention of unkind and bullying behaviours. It is essential that this curriculum provides opportunities for children and young people to explore and develop understanding of diversity, and to develop self-awareness and awareness of other's attitudes and behaviours. This will promote an ethos and culture of inclusion. Children and young people will have opportunities to influence what is included in this curriculum.

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Children and young people told us during the stakeholder engagement for this strategy that adults don't always listen to what they want to happen in response to bullying; they want their views to be heard and be central to planning how to respond to bullying. This will help a child or young person who has been bullied to regain a sense of feeling in control of their life, their 'feeling of agency'.

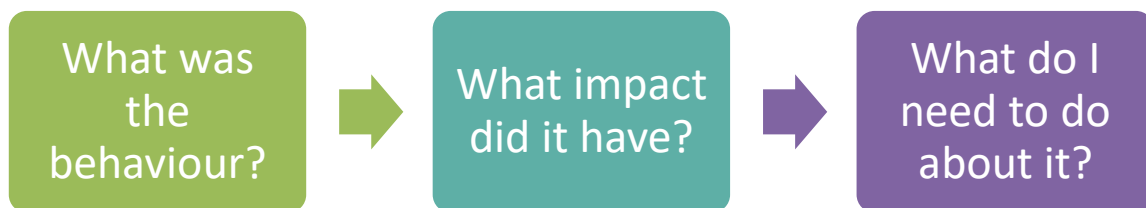
Staff supporting children and young people involved in an incident of bullying behaviour will respect the rights of children and young people and develop consistent and effective approaches to addressing the issue of bullying.

Therefore, ensuring the views of the child or young person are at the centre of approaches to address bullying is prioritised in this strategy. This is consistent with Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - right to give your opinion and for adults to listen and take it seriously.

RESPONDING TO BULLYING AND UNKIND BEHAVIOUR

Schools actively promote their values to develop positive relationships and behaviour that help prevent bullying, however, when bullying does take place, schools need to respond by supporting both the needs of children and young people who experience the impact of the behaviour as well as those who exhibit these behaviours.

Adults supporting children and young people who have experienced unkind behaviour and bullying must consider both behaviour and impact when managing an incident. Children and young people have told us how important it is that adults listen to their views on what should happen once they have spoken to an adult about bullying. It is important that school staff managing an incident keep the views of the child or young person at the centre of decision-making to reduce further impact on them. Key questions that should always be asked are:



All bullying and unkind behaviour must be challenged, and there may need to be consequences depending on the situation. It is important to maintain the adult's focus and response on the behaviour that is problematic and impact it has had, whilst distinguishing between a person and their behaviour. Labelling children and young people as 'bullies' can be unhelpful in changing their behaviour.

"Many people may believe that children and young people who bully others must be punished for their behaviour. This type of response can be ineffective, dangerous, breed resentment and make situations worse as a child or young person can be resentful of punishment rather than reflective of their actions. Children and young people require the opportunity to hear about and face up to the harm and distress they have caused others" ([Parentzone](#)).

Within Perth and Kinross Council, our schools are encouraged to use a problem-solving approach. This will generally include a restorative approach, if this would be helpful in this situation; this is where relational approaches are used to resolve bullying incidents and relationship difficulties. There may be some situations where restorative approaches are not appropriate due to the nature of the incident, the wishes of the child or young person or the ability of the child or young person to engage in the approach. More information on restorative approaches is available in the Operational Guidance.

Once bullying behaviour has been reported, the ELC setting or school will identify an Incident Owner who will follow the arrangements for recording and investigating the incident of bullying. The person identified to undertake the named person function for the child or young person, and Lead Professional if the child or young person is care experienced, should be kept informed and involved as appropriate.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN/YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED IN BULLYING INCIDENTS

Children and young people should be confident they will be listened to and taken seriously and know that appropriate action will be taken. When a child or young person has reported an incident, it is important that their views inform the actions taken by the school and that they are kept informed of what has happened. If a child or young person does not want any direct action to be taken, this should be respected unless the risk to any individual's wellbeing requires the staff member to take safeguarding action. The school Child Protection Officer should be contacted immediately if there is a safeguarding concern.

If the child or young person does not want direct action to be taken, and there is no safeguarding concern, then relevant staff, including the child or young person's named person, should consider any unintrusive support that could be put in place to prevent a recurrence of the behaviour. This should include monitoring of the situation and the wellbeing of the child or young person involved. Care should be taken to ensure any actions do not identify the child or young person.

In all situations, children and young people will be encouraged to identify the importance of resolving situations and supported to understand and build their experience that it is possible to do so.

If children or young people require support to manage their experience of bullying, they can access this through the school's pastoral staff, such as their named person or Guidance Teacher. Schools can also provide other supports for a child or young person such as, a Community Learning Assistant, Community Link Worker or Youth Worker, or from an Educational Psychologist if required. Any child who is 10 years or older can access Counselling in Schools if this is felt this would be the most appropriate intervention to support them.

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH PARENTS

Many parents have welcomed the opportunity to share their views to inform this strategy and have been part of face-to-face sessions and an online survey.

Parents know their children's behaviour and well-being needs best and have a central role in supporting their child or young person when they experience bullying or display behaviour

that bullies. Parents are therefore well placed to support the school in identifying additional personal supports or in finding solutions to improve the situation.

Schools will work with parents to develop an anti-bullying approach that is clearly laid out in a school policy. This collaborative working approach will provide parents with opportunities to be engaged in promoting positive behaviour in line with the school's ethos and values. Parents should also be supported to understand the definition of bullying and the processes in place within their school to identify, investigate and respond to bullying. Parents should be aware of *Bullying: A Guide for Parents and Carers* from *respectme*, Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service ([Bullying-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers-2016.pdf \(respectme.org.uk\)](https://www.respectme.org.uk/Bullying-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers-2016.pdf))

To help foster an inclusive school community where bullying cannot thrive parents are asked to:

- be aware of *respectme*, Scotland's Anti-bullying Service information on bullying;
- report any concerns of bullying to the school as soon as they become aware of it;
- address the behaviour of their child if it affects others negatively and refrain from engaging directly in a negative way with any other children involved or their families;
- understand we seek to understand the experiences, and address the needs of all children and young people, who experience bullying behaviour as well as those who present bullying behaviour, within a framework of respect, responsibility, resolution and support;
- manage their child or young person's use of electronic devices, mobile technologies and social media, setting parental controls where appropriate and ensuring privacy settings are enabled;
- report any online abuse to website providers in the first instance, and ensure their child unfriends or blocks persons potentially perpetrating abuse;
- delete unkind or offensive online messages unless they have content that should be reported to the police, in this instance messages or images sent or received should be screenshot and retained as evidence.

When reporting incidents of bullying, the views of the child or young person should always be considered when making the decision to inform parents/carers. There may be occasions where the child or young person thinks that doing so might expose information they don't yet want to share, for instance, if a young person has been the recipient of gender-based or homophobic bullying but has not yet shared with their parent(s) they are gay or transgender.

Confidence that their confidentiality will be respected will be key to building the trust of children and young people in the reporting system and encourage earlier reporting. In the small number of cases where, in the best interests of the child or young person, it is decided not to inform parents, this decision should be made by a promoted member of staff, in most instances this should be the child or young person's Named Person. Information on the incident will be recorded in the pupil's pastoral notes with a clear rationale for the decision not to inform parents. In all situations school staff will work with the child or young person to consider how they are best supported.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EDUCATION AUTHORITY AND ELC SETTINGS/SCHOOLS

Education Authority

- Establish an Anti-bullying Strategy that is developed in conjunction with children and young people, parents and carers, staff and partners and compliant with equalities and human rights legislation and, where applicable, UNCRC;
- Provide a [Relationships Framework](#) and training/materials that support relationship building and managing behaviours;
- Take action to promote equality and diversity and children's rights and eliminate discrimination in ELC and school communities, and provide training relevant to these areas;
- Provide guidance on the process that should be followed by ELC settings and schools when managing and recording incidents of bullying;
- Monitor and report on incidents of bullying in ELC settings and schools;
- Provide support to Parent Councils on related issues.

- **ELC Settings/Schools**

- Work with the ELC setting/school community to establish a respectful and inclusive ethos and values;
- Develop, monitor and regularly review an anti-bullying policy for the ELC setting/school that reflects its ethos and values and aligns to this Perth and Kinross Council strategy;
- Ensure an explicit commitment to challenging prejudice-based bullying;
- Involve and consult meaningfully with children, young people, parents and the Parent Council when formulating or refreshing the school policy;
- Ensure children, young people and their parents are aware of the positive relationships and anti-bullying policies;
- Promote positive respectful relationships, inclusion, fairness and equality, diversity and children's rights;
- Ensure children, young people and parents/carers are provided with information on how to raise a concern through different routes in accordance with the PKC strategy;
- Respond to incidents of bullying proactively, ensuring the views of the child or young person are heard, using a respectful, proportionate and holistic approach which takes account of the impact of the incident;
- Ensure there is clear monitoring and recording procedures and everyone in the school are aware of these and are using them consistently.

EXPECTED BEHAVIOURS

Individual Children and young people

- Treat each other with kindness and respect and not engage in bullying behaviours;
- Be aware of the school values and anti-bullying policy and know what to do if they have a concern;
- Where safe and appropriate, challenge unkind behaviour;
- Work with others to help ensure bullying does not happen.

Individual parents

- Be aware and respectful of the values and anti-bullying policy and practice in your child(ren)'s school(s);
- Work with others in the school community to help ensure a culture of inclusion where bullying cannot thrive;
- Share concerns about your child as early as possible with appropriate school staff;
- Engage through school Parent Forum/Parent Council or other appropriate forums to contribute to and learn about anti-bullying practice in schools;
- Provide a positive role model by treating people with respect;
- Promote positive respectful relationships;
- Listen and take the views children and young people seriously.

School staff

- Be aware and respectful of the values, principles and commitments of both school and PKC anti-bullying strategy and procedures;
- Act with kindness and as positive role models to establish open, positive, respectful and supportive relationships;
- Act in accordance with the relevant professional standards and codes of conduct,
- Listen and take the views children and young people seriously;
- Promote good communication and positive relationships with parents/carers, respecting their role and the importance of working in partnership to support their child;
- Share concerns about bullying appropriately within your school and seek support on how to respond where appropriate;
- Take action to promote equality and diversity and children's rights;
- Work collaboratively to help ensure bullying cannot thrive through implementation of your school's relationships policies.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF STRATEGY

The implementation of this Strategy will be monitored by the Education Service Management Group. This will include regular scrutiny of data on bullying and feedback from schools during Quality Improvement visits. An annual report will be produced in March each year and analysed with Local Management Groups and the Depute Headteacher (Support) group. The purpose of this report is to support the evaluation of current practice and to assist improvement planning including identification of training and development needs.

The number of recorded incidents of bullying will be monitored termly by Inclusion Services with reports made available to link QIO's to enable focussed support and challenge to schools. By recording and monitoring bullying incidents at a local level, emerging trends or themes will be identified and a proactive, early intervention approach will be able to be taken where improvement can be made. The data will be cross-referenced with analysis of data from the national Health and Wellbeing Census. Particular attention will be given to identifying any trends in relation to protected characteristics.

Schools will use [How Good is Our School? 4](#) (HGIOS4), to self-evaluate and monitor the progress of their anti-bullying approaches. This has a strong focus on inclusion and equity and includes quality indicators covering Personalised Support (2.4) and Ensuring Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion (3.1). Schools should include relevant improvements in their School Improvement Plans.

The Anti-Bullying Strategy will be reviewed by June 2027.