West
Dunbartonshire
C O U N C I L

Policy: PP10.6 - Promoting Positive Relationships and Reducing Bullying Behaviour in Educational Establishments

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Children have the right to protection from all forms of physical or mental violence. They must be kept safe from harm and they must be given proper care by those looking after them.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 19

1   Purpose of the Policy

1.1   The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance on the procedures that should be followed to Promote Positive Relationships and Reduce Bullying Behaviour in Educational Establishments

2.   What this policy aims to do

2.1   West Dunbartonshire Council aims to create safe places where children and young people can learn in an environment where they will be treated with respect and behave in a responsible way. No one should experience any kind of discrimination or bullying behaviour. Learning environments include Early Learning and Childcare Centres, schools, outdoor centres, libraries and museums.

2.2   The policy will:
- recognise that bullying behaviour prevents children and young people from enjoying their rights, and can have an effect on their ambitions and quality of life;
- require schools and other learning environments to create an atmosphere where people feel safe and included and which prevents bullying behaviour from happening;
- raise awareness of the effects of bullying behaviour on the person being harmed, the person creating the harm and everyone else around them;
- offer guidance to staff and learners on how they can deal with incidents and reports of bullying behaviour;
- require all learning environments continue to review, record and report incidents, and provide guidance on what kind of behaviour should be reported (see Appendix 2).

2.3 Who is the policy for?
- It is everyone's responsibility to make sure that all children and young people are learning in environments that are safe from bullying behaviour and harm. Children, young people, staff, parents, carers and all members of the community should read this policy and understand how bullying behaviour will be dealt with.

2.4 National Framework
Children and young people should feel happy, safe, respected and included in the school environment and all staff should be proactive in promoting positive behaviour in the classroom, playground and the wider school community. Robust policies and practice which ensure the safety and wellbeing of children should be in place.

3. Promoting Positive Relationships

3.1 Where good relationships are valued and are part of the ethos of a learning environment, children and young people thrive. Adults and children have a responsibility to help each other develop positive attitudes and behaviour. All learning environments in West Dunbartonshire will promote positive relationships through a range of programmes and strategies as outlined in Promoting Positive Relationships in West Dunbartonshire's Schools and Early Learning and Childcare Centres.

3.2 In schools and Early Learning and Childcare Centres children practice the social skills they need to develop good relationships throughout life. Adults play an important part in helping young people develop mature and happy relationships with those around them. This does not mean that children have to be friends with everyone or even necessarily like them but they must learn to treat everyone with respect.

3.3 West Dunbartonshire Council identifies a need to support schools to tackle prejudice based bullying. Schools can identify programmes best suited to their individual needs. West Dunbartonshire Council promotes a Rights Based Learning approach. This approach promotes children's rights from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and also encourages adults and children to model rights based behaviour and language in all their relationships.

3.4 An ethos that promotes good relationships will lead to the following outcomes:

- A welcoming environment for pupils, staff, parents and visitors.
- Everyone in the learning environment feeling valued, listened to and supported regardless of age, gender, pregnancy/maternity, race, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or gender reassignment.

- Children and young people are supported to develop appropriate strategies to overcome difficulties.
- The extended learning environment recognises the responsibility of all partners in promoting positive relationships.
- Children and young people receive support and information to empower them to make informed decisions and choices about how they interact with others.
- A safe and ordered environment encouraging pride and mutual respect.
- All staff take responsibility for creating a learning environment that combines high expectations with a stimulating and enjoyable educational experience.
- Adults model positive and respectful relationships.

4. What is Bullying Behaviour?

4.1 "There have been many different definitions and theories about what constitutes bullying, but it's not helpful to define bullying purely in terms of behaviour.

4.2 Bullying is a mixture of behaviours and impacts which can impact 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.

4.3 This behaviour can include:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened;
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked;
- Having belongings taken or damaged;
- Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you;
- Receiving abusive messages electronically, or in other ways such as graffiti;
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves;
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be.

4.4 This behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally and, although the actual behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be sustained over time, typically by actions: looks, messages, confrontations, physical interventions, or the fear of these. But this is not an exhaustive list, and it is important to consider impact, intent and persistence when defining bullying behaviour.

4.5 Online bullying
4.5.1 Online bullying, or Cyberbullying, is often the same type of behaviour as

other bullying, for example name-calling, spreading rumours and leaving people out, but it takes place online, on social networking sites, in chatrooms, and via mobile technologies, gaming and instant messaging platforms. The impact of this is as hurtful and damaging as other forms of bullying behaviour. Advances in technology are simply providing an alternative means of reaching people – where malicious messages were once written on school books or toilet walls, they can now be sent via mobile phone or the internet, making their reach greater, more immediate and much harder to remove or erase.

4.5.2 Some online behaviour is illegal. Children and young people need to be made aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content on forums, websites, social networking platforms, etc.

IT'S IMPORTANT NOT TO GET HUNG UP ON 'HOW' SOMEONE IS BEING BULLIED, BUT INSTEAD FOCUS ON THE IMPACT THAT IT'S HAVING ON THEM

4.5.3 Is intent required?
Every bullying incident should be looked at individually. In some cases, children or young people may not be aware that their behaviour is actually bullying. They are perhaps modeling the behaviour of adults or other children and young people, not understanding that it is wrong because they have never been taught otherwise. In these circumstances, the intent to bully may not be present, but the impact and effect on the person being bullied will be no less severe because of this.

It must be explained to the person bullying that their behaviour is unacceptable and why. Intent is difficult to prove and it's more important to focus on the behaviour and the impact it had, rather than trying to establish whether someone acted deliberately or not.

4.5.4 Does the behaviour have to be persistent?
The issue with persistence is that the behaviour has to take place more than once, but the impacts of bullying can be felt after a single incident. Bullying doesn't need to be persistent to have an effect on the mental health and well-being of a child or young person. For those who have been bullied, the fear and anticipation of further bullying can affect their ability to be themselves and interact with others in a healthy fashion. Bullying behaviour and its potential impacts on children and young people should be addressed as they arise.

How persistence is viewed by one person - for example daily, weekly or monthly - may be quite different to how it's viewed by someone else, leading to inequality and inconsistency of practice.   It isn't helpful to wait and see if a pattern or repetition emerges before taking action. **It is vital**

to respond to the behaviour that you see and the impact this is having, rather than relying on a rigid definition.

4.5.5 What about impact?

Bullying can affect people in different ways and this should be taken into consideration. If you are unsure if behaviour is bullying, look at the effect it is having on the child or young person. If they are unable to respond effectively and regain their sense of self and control in the situation, adults need to intervene to help restore it. **What you do about bullying is more important than how you define it.** Keeping the focus on impact and response reduces the likelihood of getting caught up with issues of persistence and intent.

We should always remember that children will tease each other, fall in and out with each other, have arguments, stop talking to each other and disagree about what they like and don't like. This is a normal part of growing up and should be distinguished from bullying. However, in an environment where this behaviour is left unchecked, it can lead to bullying, making those being bullied feel afraid, uncomfortable and unsafe in their environment.

4.5.6 Labelling

Another core message that underpins the work we do is in our approach to labelling; we don't label children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Care needs to be taken because labelling is not without its risks. Labelling a child or young person on the basis of bullying behaviour can result in a confirmed identity as a 'bully' or 'victim' resulting in ongoing behaviour patterns based on this identity. We have developed approaches to working with bullying which hopefully avoid the labelling dilemma. A core theme in training, policy development and campaigning has been the exploration of the value judgements that lie behind labels.

This is not about diluting behaviour but is to keep the focus of the adult's responses on the behaviour that is problematic, rather than the assigning characteristics to those involved. This is a solution focussed approach that is designed to help people change the way they behave, rather than attempt to change who they are. We help people change by telling them and naming the behaviour that is unacceptable, being clear that what they are doing is bullying and that it needs to stop". [1]

In the first instance if children, young people, parents or carers are unhappy with the way a bullying incident has been dealt with, they should discuss this directly with the school. If they are still not satisfied with the outcome they can complain to the Quality Improvement Service. They will

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[1] Respect *me* website. Respect *me*

investigate and attempt to find a resolution to the complaint that all involved are satisfied with.

5. What will be done to promote positive relationships and reduce bullying behaviour?

5.1 West Dunbartonshire Education Authority will:
- promote positive relationship approaches;
- ensure anti bullying is part of the health and wellbeing curriculum;
- offer help to establishments in building anti bullying policies and approaches;
- provide relevant support and training for staff;
- involve children and young people in discussion of the issues and consult with them on the development of the policy;
- involve parents in discussion of the issues and consult with them on the development of the policy;
- offer information through the website and web links to support organisations;
- monitor incidents in all schools[2];
- gather and analyse data to inform future practice.

5.2 Schools and other learning environments will:
- Produce a revised anti-bullying policy within **one year of publication of this guidance**, which learning environments will thereafter review every 3 years
- ensure all staff are skilled and supported in promoting positive relationships and reducing bullying behaviour through accessing relevant training;
- value all members of the education community and promote high aspirations and ambition;
- continue to create an ethos where adults and children demonstrate respectful behaviour and language;
- develop ways of empowering children and young people to enable them to contribute to the decision making process;
- develop ways of empowering parents to enable them to contribute to the decision making process;
- give young people the confidence, attributes and capabilities to make valuable contributions to society;
- ensure anti-bullying is part of the health and wellbeing curriculum;
- make sure children know exactly who to go to and what to do if they experience **or** witness bullying behaviour;

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[2] SEEMiS Bullying and Equalities Module

- build an awareness of children's rights and responsibilities through recognition of the values underpinning the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- report and record incidents that are aggravated by discrimination;
- record incidents of bullying behaviour;
- ensure that reported incidents of bullying behaviour, by children or adults, are treated seriously;
- in consultation with the child, have suitable systems in place to ensure parents and carers are informed of incidents of bullying relating to their child where appropriate;
- ensure all staff, pupils and parents are aware of anti-bullying policy and procedures through consultation, communication and training;
- provide clear support systems.

5.3   Children and young people will be encouraged to:
- speak out if they are being bullied or see it happening to others. Ignoring bullying behaviour very rarely makes it go away;
- make it clear that they do not accept bullying behaviour in their friends;
- take action when others are being bullied:
    - get help;
    - discourage others from accepting the behaviour as normal;
- discourage behaviour that may lead to bullying:
    - Use of discriminatory language.
- in cases of cyber bullying:
    - speak out;
    - do not respond;
    - block or delete people;
    - save or print out evidence and show it to someone.

5.4   Everyone in an education community has a part to play in responding to bullying behaviour. Children and young people can have a powerful voice in changing attitudes and creating an environment where people see bullying behaviour as unacceptable.

5.5   Parents can help by:
- talking openly to their children about what to do if they are being bullied;
- making sure their child is aware of the establishment's procedures for responding to bullying behaviour;
- contacting the establishment at the earliest possible stage;
- being prepared to take part in meetings to try to resolve conflict;
- supporting their child to take part in measures to try to resolve conflict;
- working in partnership with the establishment to put an end to bullying behaviour;
- setting a good example as role models.

6.   Reporting and Recording Incidents

6.1   It is acknowledged in the National Approach to Anti Bullying that *'*Accurately recording incidents of bullying'[3] allows establishments to ensure that an appropriate response and follow up has been issued. It helps to monitor the effectiveness of its policy and practice and can also help identify a need for training. Monitoring bullying incidents can provide information on recurring patterns including:

- involvement of particular children and young people; staff or other adults;
- where and when bullying takes place;
- aspects of prejudice or discrimination underlying bullying;
- action taken or resolution at an individual or organisational level;
- consideration of personal or additional support needs'[4].

6.2   All educational establishments are required to record incidents of bullying in line with the Equality Act (2010). Professional judgement based on the IMPACT of the bullying behaviour should be used to guide recording and monitoring, where appropriate. There is an additional requirement to report incidents which involve discrimination under any of the protected characteristics named in the Equality Act.

6.3   All educational establishments should record and report incidents of bullying by using the Bullying and Equalities module in SEEMiS Click+Go. This can be accessed using the Click+Go menu Application>Management>Bullying & Equalities>Maintain Incident. The SEEMiS Help Pages to support you in using this module can be accessed from the following link: https://www.seemis.gov.scot/site3/index.php/component/rsfiles/files?folder=Click-Go%2FMANAGEMENT+-+BULLYING+AND+EQUALITIES

6.4   This policy recommends that all staff members are aware of these processes and how to identify and record incidents in school.

6.5   Initially, this process will likely result in a rise in the number of recorded incidents across West Dunbartonshire, reflecting a more robust recording system as opposed to a higher number of incidents than any other area.

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[3] See Appendix 2 for guidance.

[4] A National Approach to Anti Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, Scottish Government, 2010

Recording incidents will give schools an accurate picture of the extent of the problem and the areas in which to target prevention work. In the longer term the number of actual incidents will fall if we successfully challenge negative attitudes and behaviour.

7.   Monitoring and Evaluation

7.1   Within one year of this guidance being published, all educational establishments will be required to submit a revised anti bullying policy to the quality improvement team. Revised policies should include evidence of involvement of children and young people, parents and staff in the production of the policy.

7.2   The implementation of this policy and all its requirements will be monitored through existing quality assurance processes.

7.3   This policy will be reviewed no later than every three years and will involve consultation with pupils, parents, school staff and members of the Education Support Services. Policies from Educational Establishments will also be reviewed using this approach.

7.4   In order to support establishments in the production of their revised policy, information about developing anti-bullying policies can be accessed via the respect *me* website[5]. As part of the review process it is advised that establishments carry out consultations with those who the policy affects. A list of exemplar consultation questions has been included to support you with this[6].

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March 2017

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[5] Respect *me*

[6] See appendix 4