ANTI-BULLYING GUIDANCE:

BULLYING PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT

FOR

EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

March 2022

This guidance was originally shaped by the Youth Commission who were a group of young people tasked with developing an anti-bullying policy and guidance. They worked with an advisory panel who to address the following aims:

- To raise awareness and understanding of the impact(s) of bullying behaviour.

- To reinforce that bullying is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

- To ensure that everyone is treated equally.

- To respond to incidents of bullying in a consistent and effective way.

- To create comfortable and safe learning environments for pupils.

Aberdeenshire Council is obliged to meet the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010. Responsibilities extend to tackling unlawful discrimination and includes promoting and encouraging equal opportunities.

Aberdeenshire Council is under a legal duty to consider equalities as an employer, a policy maker, a service provider, a procurer of services and as a decision maker.

The Equality Act 2010 protects us all. Every person has one or more of the 9 defined protected characteristics. These are:

1. Age
2. Disability
3. Gender reassignment
4. Pregnancy and maternity
5. Race
6. Religion or belief
7. Sex (gender)
8. Sexual orientation
9. Marriage and civil partnership

The Youth Commission's research identified that bullying can be linked to some of the protected characteristics above. In addition, prejudiced based bullying can also occur. Prejudice-based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity; it can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstance. This can include: an additional support need, being an asylum seeker or refugee, physical appearance, gender identity, being part of the gypsy/ traveller's community, socio-economic status, being looked after and / or care experienced and being a young carer.

It is recommended that all establishments have and publish an anti-bullying policy which includes the following 6 key areas (a template is available in Appendix 1). This will ensure that schools have a pro-active and responsive approach to the prevention and management of bullying. These six areas are:

1.   Stance

2.   Definition

3.   Prevention

4.   Communication

5.   Response

6.   Reporting and Monitoring

1. Stance

Establishments must adopt the following stance in their anti-bullying policy:

'Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed quickly. Bullying should never be seen as a typical part of growing up.'
Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People 2017

Parents/Carers, pupils and Aberdeenshire Council Education staff have a responsibility to work collaboratively to maintain a high standard of behaviour and ensure an environment free from bullying behaviour. Aberdeenshire Council believes that everyone should be treated equally and with respect.

'Getting it Right for Every Child' (GIRFEC) is the bedrock for Aberdeenshire Children's Services in ensuring the needs of all pupils are met. The Scottish Government defines the GIRFEC approach:

- **is child-focused** - it ensures the child or young person – and their family – is at the centre of decision-making and the support available to them.
- **is based on an understanding of the wellbeing of a child in their current situation** - it takes into consideration the wider influences on a child or young person and their developmental needs when thinking about their wellbeing, so that the right support can be offered
- **is based on tackling needs early** - it aims to ensure needs are identified as early as possible to avoid bigger concerns or problems developing

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

In order to prevent and / or deal with instances of bullying all Aberdeenshire schools adhere to the principles of GIRFEC.

2. Definition

All establishments must include the following definition of bullying in their antibullying policy which is endorsed by Aberdeenshire Council:

'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.'
Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People 2017

A further exemplification of bullying from the same document states that bullying 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.'
Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People 2017

3. Prevention

Aberdeenshire Council Education establishments must implement the following steps in working to **prevent** bullying behaviour:

3.1 Work to **raise awareness** amongst pupils, staff and Parents/Carers.

- Promote the principles of GIRFEC and the responsibility of all to support children and young people in establishing and maintaining positive relationships.

- Recognise children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they form relationships. It is important for children and young people to discuss how they feel and help them develop resilience to manage their relationships.

- Implement programmes of education about bullying from an early stage. Revisit this topic at all stages of education.

- Ensure that establishments have visual displays relating to bullying and key aspects of anti-bullying policies. These may feature national campaigns and sources of support.

- Anti-bullying work should be high profile and should include assemblies, class sessions and homework. It may be appropriate to highlight work done during National Anti-Bullying week which takes place in November.

- Regular opportunities should be available for Parents/Carers to obtain information on school systems and strategies relating to bullying and how to respond in a supportive and appropriate manner.

- Educate pupils on the dangers of online and mobile technology communication.

- Inform Parents /Carers of the dangers of online and mobile technology communication and offer advice on how measures can be implemented at home to ensure the safety and wellbeing of their child.

3.2 Work to educate pupils, staff and inform Parents/Carers about what to do when bullying behaviour is displayed, and how to support those involved.

- Promote the principles of GIRFEC in ensuring the responsibility of all to support children and young people

- Use relevant, up to date resources which promote engagement by the target audience.

- Encourage pupils to teach and share key messages about bullying with other pupils and with Parents/Carers including the short and long-term impact of bullying.

- Ensure that pupils, Parents/Carers and staff are aware of support available beyond school (e.g. Childline, Samaritans, Police Scotland, Parentline).

- Within the curriculum include work designed to inform children and young people on diversity and inclusion and the importance of respect and kindness.

- Within the curriculum include work designed to boost the resilience of children and young people. This may include: restorative practice, resilience and mindfulness.

3.3 Establishments should access **training** and provide key information for staff.

- It is of key importance that relevant local authority and school staff working in partnership with other agencies are appropriately trained to build confidence and capacity to recognise and respond to bullying.

- Staff also need to be vigilant regarding what may be behind the bullying behaviour as all behaviours are a form of communication.

- Provide relevant anti-bullying updates annually to all staff.

- Provide all members of staff with access to a copy of the relevant school policy(ies).

- Outline the key roles and responsibilities that each member of the school community in accordance with GIRFEC has; regarding preventing and responding to bullying behaviour within the policy.

- Ensure key staff are trained in the use of restorative approaches.

- Ensure key staff are trained in the use of universal nurture approaches.

- Ensure key staff are trained in Solution Oriented practice.

4. Communication

4.1 Establishments should ensure that **communication** is at the heart of prevention strategies and responses to incidents of bullying behaviour.

- In accordance with GIRFEC principles the shared responsibility of supporting children and young people should be clearly understood.

- Anti-bullying policies should be shared with and be accessible to pupils and Parents/Carers.

- Anti-bullying policies should be highlighted regularly. This may be done through the school newsletter, and/or the school website.

- Key aspects of anti-bullying policies should be included in homework diaries/planners where these are in use.

- Targeted lessons should be used to increase knowledge and understanding of anti-bullying policies and processes.

- The profile of anti-bullying work should be raised through focussed assemblies at key points in the year (e.g. National Anti-Bullying Week).

- Timescales and methods for ongoing communication should be negotiated on a case by case basis to ensure that the needs of pupils are met. Communication should be used to build relationships and in the early identification of further or ongoing difficulties.

4.2 **Pupils and Parents/Carers** should be included in communication relating to prevention of bullying and incidents of bullying.

- Pupils and Parents/Carers should be supported through involving them in information sessions relating to bullying and anti-bullying.

- Pupils and Parents/Carers should be involved in reviewing anti-bullying policies and procedures.

- All incidents of bullying behaviour in school should be investigated by school staff and communicated to Parents / Carers as appropriate. Any support identified for pupils involved should be shared with Parents / Carers.

- Establishments should work with Parents and Carers to address the holistic needs of the child consistent with the GIRFEC principles in response to an incident of bullying.

- Establishments should arrange for regular contact between key staff and pupils involved in the immediate days and weeks following an incident.

- Establishments must ensure that progress is maintained and that effective communication is used to build relationships and identify further ongoing difficulties.

5. **Response**

Establishments should promote consistency of **response** to instances of bullying behaviour using the 6 step approach:

1. All incidents of bullying MUST be recorded using the Bullying and Equalities (B&E) Module within SEEMIS Click and Go
2. Speak to the individuals involved having frank and honest dialogue
3. Speak to Parents / Carers
4. Utilise Restorative approaches
5. Monitor the situation
6. Review and increase response accordingly

The principles of GIRFEC should underpin the implementation of the 6 step approach

5.1 **Restorative Practice**

- Restorative approaches aim to restore and maintain good relationships where there has been conflict and harm.

- Supports people to face up to any harm and distress they have caused.

- Helps individuals think about how they can repair that harm.

- Gives people who have been harmed the chance to share their experience, which is sometimes what we need to emotionally move on from a situation where we've felt wronged.

- Staff member trained in Restorative Practice in each cluster. For further information or support contact Aberdeenshire Inclusion, Equity and Wellbeing Team.

- Universal Nurture and Solution Oriented approaches complement and strengthen Restorative approaches. Further information or support can be sought from the Educational Psychology Service.

5.2 **Taking Action**

- In accordance with GIRFEC principles the shared responsibility of supporting children and young people should be clearly understood.

- The language 'victim' and 'bully' should be avoided as this labels those involved in bullying incidents and this can be unhelpful. Labelling an action as bullying is a more effective way of motivating a child to change their bullying behaviour.

- Taking action to resolve a bullying situation must be given **high priority**. In some circumstances, immediate action may be required.

- Pupils and Parents/Carers should be aware of and included in communication strategies used by establishments.

- A visual 'step by step' guide could be used to highlight the process of addressing and resolving a bullying incident to Parents/Carers, pupils and teachers.

- Each situation may require a different response. A risk assessment can be done through speaking to pupils involved, and their Parents/Carers as is appropriate.

- Consideration should be given to whether a school devised plan of support is required for any individual involved in the incident.

- Communication with the person who has displayed the bullying behaviour should be frank and honest and be in accordance with the guidance on: Nurture, Restorative Approaches and Solution- Oriented Practice.

- Ongoing support to Parents/Carers and pupils involved in bullying behaviour will come from effective, honest and regular communication, and a shared understanding of the steps that are being and have been taken to address identified issues in line with this policy.

- Staff adhere to the Seemis Guidance: [Bullying and Equalities: Recording and Monitoring Bullying Incidents in Schools (RAMBIS)](#) in order to record the details of all incidents of bullying.

- Education staff in partnership with Parents / Carers must monitor how relationships develop over the weeks and months that follow an incident of bullying behaviour.

- Repeat displays of bullying behaviour must be followed up with an immediate response building on what has already been done (which will be recorded in the Bullying and Equalities (B&E) Module within SEEMIS Click and Go). Appropriate responses will be decided on a case by case basis, taking account of factors relevant to each person involved, and the mental/emotional and physical wellbeing of pupils involved.

6 Reporting and Monitoring

6.1 Roles and responsibilities

- All staff must be aware of their role in implementing 'Aberdeenshire's Anti-Bullying Policy: Bullying Prevention and Management for Educational Establishments 2022' to ensure effective implementation.

- Anti-bullying should be incorporated within the strategic remit of one member of each establishment's leadership team. However in accordance with GIRFEC the wellbeing of pupils is the responsibility of all.

- Staff holding any strategic responsibility for anti-bullying must have a professional knowledge in this area.

- Pupils need to report any instances of bullying they are aware of. Options for sharing this information will be identified by schools.

- Establishments will be asked to record the number of bullying incidents centrally using The Bullying and Equalities (B&E) Module within SEEMIS Click and Go. Any recording of incidents must include specific detail e.g., in the instance of transphobic bullying, specifically detail the transphobic elements.

- Pupils, Parents/Carers and all Education staff to be aware of the mobile phone/device policy of the school and adhere the Aberdeenshire ICT Responsible User Agreement that all pupils and staff are required to complete.

6.2 **Pupil Voice**

- Establishments should gather pupil feedback relating to how schools prevent and respond to bullying behaviour.

- Surveys, Onsite Comment boxes or other means could be used and should consist of a mixture of ages.

- School Pupil Councils / Pupil Forum should raise the issue of bullying on their agendas at least once per academic session. Discussion should not centre on identifying pupils perceived to be displaying bullying behaviour.

- Information gathered through pupil council bodies should be shared with Leadership Teams through existing school channels.

6.3 Data should form part of the monitoring of bullying behaviour.

- Incidents should be recorded in line with the Seemis Guidance: Bullying and Equalities: Recording and Monitoring Bullying Incidents in Schools (RAMBIS) .

6.4 Anti-Bullying policies should be evaluated

- Evaluation should focus on the impact of policies at establishment and local authority level. Impact can be measured in part using statistical data, but must also take account of pupil experience, and the opinions of Parents/Carers and Education staff.

- Anti-bullying policies should be revised every three years.

APPENDIX 1: Template for Writing an Anti-Bullying Policy:

Header	• Name of school • Name of Authority
Dates	• Date Policy to be initiated and reviewed
Title	• Anti-Bullying Policy: Bullying Prevention and Management for (name of school)
Stance	• Establishments must adopt the following stance in their anti-bullying policy: *'Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed quickly. Bullying should never be seen as a typical part of growing up.'* Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People 2017 • In order to prevent and / or deal with instances of bullying all Aberdeenshire schools adhere to the principles of GIRFEC
Definition	• All establishments must include the following definition of bullying in their antibullying policy which is endorsed by Aberdeenshire Council: *'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.'* Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People 2017 • A further exemplification of bullying from the same document states that bullying 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.'* Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People 2017

Prevention	• GIRFEC • Curriculum • Training • Sharing of information to Parents / Carers e.g. online, mobile technology
Communication	• GIRFEC • Raising awareness of bullying through the curriculum and sharing the policy • Consultation process involving stakeholders to ensure the policy meets the needs
Response	• GIRFEC • Taking action • Restorative Practice, Nurture, Solution Oriented Practice • Communication with Parents / Carers • Monitoring pupils involved following bullying incident • Signposting school mobile phone policy
Reporting and Monitoring	• Refer to use of the Aberdeenshire Bullying and Equalities Recording and Monitoring Bullying Incidents in Schools (RAMBIS) • Methods for pupils to report instances of bullying • Review policy every three years • Highlighting Aberdeenshire ICT Responsible User Agreement • Pupil Council to discuss Bullying