

Anti-Bullying Policy

Category: Pupils - Relationships and Learning

Risk Management and Legal Implications

Failure to manage risk may impact on the delivery of Service objectives and the outcomes achieved by Service users. The Education Service aims to mitigate the implications by ongoing management and review of risk in all elements of work activity.

The production of this document is one way in which we aim to reduce our exposure to risk. By providing staff with information on good practice, making reference to other guidance that is available across the Council and providing clarity on how we should do things, we can ensure that the management of risk is intrinsic to what we do.

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1. Purpose and Context

This guidance is an updated version of our previous Anti-Bullying policy. It aligns with the Scottish Government's "Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People" (2024). It reflects the current context giving guidance on issues such as online bullying, prejudice-based bullying and how to interpret the definition of bullying.

This guidance also reflects our commitment to The Promise, ensuring that responses to bullying are rooted in trusted relationships, trauma-informed practice, and an understanding of the needs of care-experienced children and young people.

Preventing Bullying in Fife Schools

Fife's updated guidance on Anti-Bullying helps schools create environments that are safe, inclusive, and nurturing for everyone. It builds on national frameworks like GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child), Curriculum for Excellence, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In line with The Promise, Fife schools prioritise strong, stable relationships and a sense of belonging for every child, recognising these as protective factors against bullying

Preventing bullying is part of a wider commitment to building respectful relationships. Fife's policy supports schools to:

- Use consistent, rights-based approaches across all staff and settings
- Understand and respond to the changing needs of children and young people
- Promote inclusion, equity, and emotional safety for all
- Every school is expected to use the policy to reflect on current practice and identify areas for improvement. As part of this, each school should create a clear action plan showing how they will:
- Build positive relationships and behaviour
- Prevent and respond to bullying
- Put in place the right supports and structures for pupils and staff

Anti-bullying responsibilities are shared across the Directorate, schools, individual staff, children and young people, and families. In keeping with The Promise, families are valued as equal partners, and schools commit to communication that supports meaningful engagement.

Children and young people will be involved in shaping anti-bullying approaches, ensuring their voices influence both prevention and response. This collective approach reflects national guidance, including *Respect for All* and the UNCRC, and ensures that bullying is addressed as a shared priority rooted in rights, relationships, and inclusion. (Appendix 1)

The Nationally agreed definition of bullying is as follows:

“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: The National Approach to Anti Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People](#)

2. Understanding Bullying and Building Positive Relationships

It is important to tell the difference between bullying and other types of conflict or fallouts. Not every disagreement between children is bullying and calling all relationship problems “bullying” can take away from the seriousness of real bullying and the harm it causes.

Our anti-bullying work is part of a wider approach to relationships, behaviour, and trauma-informed practice. We know that bullying does not happen in isolation, it is shaped by the social environment around a child. Bullying can make a child feel unsafe, powerless, and unsure how to respond in their relationships. That is why we focus on helping children feel safe, confident, and supported.

To build positive relationships and behaviour, we focus on:

- Helping children and young people understand what bullying is and isn’t
- Teaching skills such as empathy, respect, and problem-solving
- Supporting children and young people to make good choices in how they treat others

We also work closely with parents and carers. Preventing bullying is a shared responsibility, and we’re committed to:

- Supporting children and young people who have been bullied
- Challenging and helping those who have bullied
- Listening to families and communities when shaping school policies

When staff respond to bullying, they should always consider the child’s background, experiences, support needs, and the behaviour of everyone involved. Every situation is different, and our response should reflect that.

To prevent bullying and help everyone feel safe, schools should build a positive culture where respect, fairness, and inclusion are part of everyday life. When children and young people learn how to build healthy relationships and treat others with kindness, it helps create a bullying-free environment.

We use approaches that support good behaviour, promote equality, and build emotional wellbeing. These include:

- **Rights Respecting Schools** – helping children understand their rights and respect the rights of others
- **Mentoring and peer support** – giving pupils someone to talk to and learn from
- **MVP (Mentors in Violence Prevention)** – encouraging pupils to speak up and support each other
- **Restorative approaches** – helping people repair relationships after harm
- **Nurturing approaches** – creating safe, caring spaces for learning
- **Pupil voice and participation** – making sure children and young people are heard and involved in decisions

Families play a key role in supporting children and young people. This includes helping them manage online behaviour outside of school and working with schools around mobile technology use during the school day.

3. Whole-School Approaches to Preventing Bullying

Preventing bullying is not a standalone task confined to specific times or activities it must be embedded across all aspects of school life. In line with The Promise, this means creating environments where every child feels loved, safe, respected, and able to rely on trusted relationships. Anti-bullying work should be integrated within the curriculum, whole-school initiatives, and targeted support where appropriate. A proactive, inclusive approach ensures that respectful relationships are consistently promoted and modelled.

When children and young people feel part of a caring and connected school community, bullying behaviours are more likely to be identified early and addressed collaboratively, fostering a culture of safety, empathy, and shared responsibility.

Schools should make sure their anti-bullying policies are located on their school websites and that these are easy to understand. Families should know who to contact if they have a concern and pupils should feel confident that they'll be listened to and supported. This reflects The Promise's commitment to children's voice, dignity, and the right to be involved in decisions that affect them.

Personal and Social Education (PSE) lessons—and other parts of the curriculum—can help pupils:

- Understand what bullying is and isn't
- Feel confident talking about it
- Know how to report it safely
- Learn how to support others

Learning about bullying should be empowering. Pupils should feel safe, supported, and able to take part in creating a respectful school culture. Reporting systems should be simple, private, and easy to use.

Schools should regularly check how well their anti-bullying work is going. They can do this by:

- Looking at data and trends
- Listening to pupil and family feedback
- Sharing updates like “You said / We did / This is the impact”

This helps everyone to see what is working and where improvements are needed without sharing personal details about individual cases.

To support school in addressing bullying behaviours a range of approaches are adopted across Fife, these are detailed in Appendix 2.

4. Reporting, Recording and Monitoring

Reporting Bullying

In line with *Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland’s Children and Young People* and The Promise, all schools must ensure that bullying concerns can be reported safely, respectfully, and consistently by both children and adults.

Children and Young People

Children and young people should be supported to:

- Speak to a trusted adult—such as a teacher, support assistant, or pastoral staff member, someone they feel safe with and who knows them well
- Use agreed reporting routes—this may include verbal conversations, written notes, digital forms, or pupil voice systems
- Share how the behaviour made them feel and what support they need
- Be involved in decisions about how the concern is responded to

Reporting systems must be:

- **Clear and accessible** for all learners, including those with additional support needs
- **Emotionally safe**, protecting children from retaliation or shame
- **Rights-based**, upholding the UNCRC Articles 12 and 16 (right to be heard and right to privacy)
- **Regularly promoted** through assemblies, posters, pupil councils, and wellbeing programmes

Parents, Carers and Staff

Adults should also feel confident and supported to report bullying concerns. This includes:

- **Parents/carers** contacting the school directly—via phone, email, or in person—to raise concerns about their child’s experience or behaviour
- **Staff** following internal procedures to record and escalate concerns, including using SEEMiS Bullying & Equalities

- **All adults** knowing who to speak to (e.g. the Child Protection Coordinator or Named Person) and what steps will follow

Schools must:

- Ensure reporting routes are clearly communicated to families and staff
- Respond to adult concerns with empathy, transparency, and timely action
- Involve families in resolution planning and follow-up support
- Record all incidents consistently and use data to inform improvement

This shared approach ensures that bullying is addressed as a relational issue, not just a behavioural one and that everyone in the school community feels safe, heard, and supported.

5. Recording Bullying Concerns in Schools

When someone raises a concern about bullying, it's important that the school records it quickly—ideally within three working days. In line with *The Promise*, this process must protect the child's dignity, emotional safety, and right to be heard.

This also make sure the issue is followed up promptly, supports the wellbeing of the pupil involved and allows the school and local authority to track patterns and progress across schools.

All schools in Fife use the **SEEMiS Bullying & Equalities** system to record bullying concerns. This is part of our commitment to safe, consistent practice and data protection.

Within our **Early Learning Centres** all incidences should be recorded on incident sheets and on SEEMiS. [Anti-Bullying Early Years](#)

It is important to know that:

- A concern should be recorded even if it has not yet been fully investigated or proven
- The record should include the key details about what was reported
- The system should be updated as the school investigates the concern and takes any action

This process helps schools respond fairly and consistently, while making sure pupils feel heard and supported.

What should be included

When a bullying concern is raised, it is important to record a clear and accurate picture of what happened. This helps schools respond properly, support everyone involved, and track patterns over time.

Below details what should be included when recording a bullying incident:

- **Who was involved** – children, young people, staff, or other adults
- **What happened** – the type of behaviour (e.g. name-calling, rumours, threats)
- **Where and when** – the time and place the incident took place

- **Any protected characteristics** – such as disability, race, gender identity, or sexual orientation
- **Impact** – how the incident affected the child or young person, and whether they need extra support
- **Outcome** – whether the issue was resolved, not resolved, or found to be unfounded
- **Actions taken** – what the school did to respond and support those involved

In line with children's rights (UNCRC Articles 12 and 16), schools should involve the child or young person in agreeing what is recorded, wherever possible. Their voice matters, and they have the right to be heard and to have their privacy respected.

If the incident includes discrimination or abuse linked to a protected characteristic (e.g. racism, sexism, ableism, transphobia, homophobia), this should be clearly recorded. SEEMiS allows staff to log multiple types of behaviour and note whether prejudice may have played a role.

A helpful way to guide the recording process is to ask:

- What was the behaviour?
- What impact did it have?
- What does the child or young person want to happen?
- What needs to be done now—does this raise any child protection concerns?
- What attitudes or prejudices may have influenced the behaviour

All incidents should be followed up within 2 weeks of the incident date. All actions should be recorded in SEEMiS and it should be noted if the parent/carers of both the pupil displaying the behaviour or experiencing the behaviours are satisfied or not with the outcome.

6. Monitoring

Monitoring bullying is a critical part of creating safe, inclusive school environments. In line with *Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People*, *The Promise* and Fife Council's Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour framework, schools must have robust systems in place to record, review, and respond to bullying concerns.

Monitoring of bullying should involve using data to inform practice. Schools should monitor their bullying data through PowerBI to identify trends, emerging concerns, and areas where additional support or training may be needed. This includes looking at:

- recurring patterns involving particular groups or contexts
- identity-based or prejudice-based harm
- the impact of transitions, relationships, or environmental factors
- whether children feel safe, heard, and supported throughout the process

Patterns in behaviour, relationships, and wellbeing help schools identify where additional relational scaffolding, staff training, or targeted support may be needed—particularly for children who are care-experienced, have experienced trauma, or may be more vulnerable to stigma or exclusion.

Feedback from children, young people, and families is also essential to monitor effectively. Schools are expected to seek input from those affected by bullying about how incidents were handled and how safe and supported they felt throughout the process. This qualitative feedback should be used to strengthen emotional safety and relational approaches.

As part of Fife's quality improvement process, Education Managers work with schools to review their anti-bullying policy and practice, ensuring that monitoring is meaningful and that data is being used to drive positive change. This collaborative approach ensures that bullying is not only addressed but understood and prevented.

7. Staff Training and Development

All education staff will be required to undertake regular training (every 2 years) in anti-bullying approaches, aligned with *Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People* and supported by guidance from *Respectme*, Scotland's national anti-bullying service. This training ensures that staff understand the definitions, dynamics, and impact of bullying, including identity-based harm and are equipped to respond in ways that are restorative, trauma-informed, and rights-respecting.

In line with *The Promise*, this training will equip staff to build strong, trusting relationships with children and young people, respond in trauma-informed ways, and recognise the importance of belonging as a foundation for safety and wellbeing.

The **National Anti-Racism Framework for Initial Teacher Education (ITE)** embeds **anti-racist practice and racial literacy** into teacher training, preparing new teachers to challenge racism in classrooms. In Fife, probationer support builds on this training by offering structured mentoring, professional learning, and opportunities to reflect on real incidents. This strengthens consistency across schools and ensures that anti-bullying approaches are applied collaboratively.

8. Responding to Bullying: Consequences and Supportive Actions

Establishing clear, age-appropriate behavioural boundaries is essential to healthy child development. These boundaries provide structure, safety, and consistency—helping children and young people build social competence and key skills for life, learning, and work. Promoting positive behaviour is central to wellbeing and is reflected in the **GIRFEC wellbeing indicators**.

In line with *The Promise*, Fife's **Promoting Positive Relationships and Behaviour** guidance and our **anti-bullying policy**, expectations should be developmentally appropriate, inclusive, and rights-based. This includes recognising the difference between conflict and bullying and responding to behaviour in ways that support emotional safety and relational repair.

The **Scottish Government** defines consequences as actions taken in response to behaviour. These may be:

- **Supportive and restorative**—to address behaviour that falls short of expectations
- **Reinforcing**—to recognise and strengthen positive behaviour

When behaviour causes harm, including bullying, consequences should be used constructively. This means:

- Understanding the underlying factors influencing the behaviour
- Implementing supports that reduce the likelihood of recurrence
- Ensuring responses are proportionate, trauma-informed, and aligned with the child's rights under the **UNCRC (Appendix 3)**

In line with Respect for All and Fife Council's Anti-Bullying Policy, schools adopt restorative, inclusive, and trauma-informed approaches when responding to incidents of bullying. The aim is to support all children and young people involved, promote accountability, and prevent recurrence. This includes recognising that both the child experiencing harm and the child displaying harmful behaviour may require support, connection, and opportunities to repair relationships.

Consequences and interventions may include:

- Restorative conversations to help pupils understand the impact of their behaviour and repair relationships
- Targeted support such as mentoring, wellbeing check-ins, or access to counselling and nurture provision
- Behaviour support plans or agreements co-developed with pupils and families to promote positive change
- Increased supervision or temporary adjustments to routines to ensure safety and rebuild trust
- Parental engagement through joint planning and solution-focused dialogue
- Referral to multi-agency partners where additional needs or risks are identified

Exclusion is considered only in exceptional circumstances and in accordance with national guidance. In line with *The Promise*, exclusion is not used as a punitive measure and should only be considered when necessary to ensure immediate safety and enable appropriate planning. Schools must consider the potential impact of exclusion on a child's relationships, wellbeing, and sense of belonging, particularly for care-experienced children.

All responses must be applied consistently and fairly, and be proportionate, rights-respecting, and designed to meet the needs of both the person experiencing bullying and the person displaying harmful behaviour. Schools are supported to evidence impact through both qualitative and quantitative data, ensuring that interventions are meaningful, inclusive, and sustainable

9. Understanding the Difference Between Conflict and Bullying

As children and young people grow and build relationships, it's normal for them to fall out, disagree, or have arguments. These moments are part of learning how to manage friendships and communicate with others—and they're not the same as bullying.

Conflict can happen in healthy relationships. Often, at least one person involved wants to fix things and make amends. They care about the relationship and want to move forward. This kind of conflict is usually short-term, and both people have equal power in the situation.

Bullying is different. It's not just a one-off disagreement—it's a pattern of behaviour that causes harm and makes someone feel unsafe, excluded, or powerless. Bullying breaks down trust and respect in relationships and can seriously affect a child or young person's emotional wellbeing and sense of belonging.

That is why it is important to help children talk about how they feel, build strong communication skills, and learn how to manage their relationships in positive ways. When schools and families understand the difference between conflict and bullying, they can respond in the right way and support children effectively in ways that protect dignity, strengthen relationships, and uphold every child's right to feel loved, safe, and respected.

Prejudice-Based Bullying

Prejudice-based bullying is recognised as a serious breach of a child's right to feel loved, safe, and respected. In line with The Promise, schools must actively challenge all forms of prejudice and stigma including those linked to protected characteristics, poverty, care experience, or family circumstances and respond in ways that protect dignity, rebuild trust, and strengthen every child's sense of belonging.

Prejudice-based bullying happens when someone is targeted because of who they are, or who others think they are. It's often linked to unfair attitudes about identity, such as race, disability, gender, or religion.

The Equality Act protects people from discrimination based on nine “protected characteristics,” including age, disability, race, sex, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage or civil partnership.

Although poverty is not a protected characteristic, the **Fairer Scotland Duty** reminds us that schools must still challenge stigma and support children affected by material deprivation. This means recognising how poverty can impact wellbeing and relationships and taking steps to reduce unfair treatment.

By understanding and respecting all identities, schools can respond to prejudice-based bullying and create environments where every child feels safe, valued, and included.

Online Bullying

Online bullying (cyberbullying) is recognised as a significant and evolving concern. It involves the use of digital technologies—including social media, messaging apps, gaming platforms, and mobile devices—to intimidate, isolate, or humiliate individuals.

Online bullying must be understood as a form of relational harm, not solely a technological issue. It often mirrors offline behaviours such as exclusion, threats, and the spreading of

rumours, but is amplified by features such as non-consensual image sharing, transient messaging, and anonymous accounts.

Online bullying should be addressed within the wider context of peer relationships, emotional wellbeing, and safeguarding. Schools must ensure that systems for reporting and responding to online bullying are accessible, trusted, and trauma-informed.

Certain forms of online bullying may constitute criminal offences. Staff should be aware of the following legal provisions:

- **Equality Act 2010** – prohibits discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on protected characteristics, which may include online abuse.
- **Communications Act 2003 (Section 127)** – criminalises the sending of grossly offensive, obscene, or menacing messages via public electronic communications.
- **Malicious Communications Act 1988** – covers communications intended to cause distress or anxiety.
- **Protection from Harassment Act 1997** – provides protection against repeated conduct amounting to harassment, including online behaviour.
- **Defamation and Malicious Publication (Scotland) Act 2021** – enables individuals to seek redress for false and damaging online statements.
- **Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016** – criminalises the non-consensual sharing of intimate images.
- **Online Safety Act 2023** – introduces new offences including cyberflashing, threatening communications, intimate image abuse, and encouraging serious self-harm.

Schools must ensure that staff are trained to recognise when online behaviour crosses legal thresholds and to respond appropriately in partnership with families, Police Scotland, and other agencies. Online bullying should be recorded using SEEMiS Bullying & Equalities, with reference to protected characteristics and any relevant legal concerns.

Bullying on School Transport

Fife Council is committed to ensuring that all children and young people travel to and from school in safety, comfort, and with respect. While the Council provides transport assistance in line with national guidance, **parents and carers remain responsible for their child's behaviour while using school transport.**

The **Scottish Government School Transport Guidance (2021)** outlines shared responsibilities between local authorities, schools, and families. Although there is **no statutory requirement** under the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 to provide adult supervision on school transport, schools and families play a key role in promoting respectful and responsible behaviour.

Bullying on school transport is treated seriously and should be addressed in line with the school's anti-bullying policy. This includes:

- Recognising bullying as relational harm, not just isolated incidents
- Recording concerns promptly using **SEEMiS Bullying & Equalities**, including any prejudice-based elements
- Ensuring pupils know how to report concerns safely and discreetly

- Engaging with families to support resolution and wellbeing

Promoting Positive Behaviour on School Transport

Schools are encouraged to:

- Develop a **Code of Conduct** for pupils using school transport, in partnership with families and pupils
- Consider seating plans, peer support roles, or temporary supervision where needed
- Use restorative and relational approaches to address incidents and rebuild trust

Sanctions and Withdrawal of Transport

Where behaviour—including bullying—is persistent or serious:

- Fife Council may withdraw travel assistance or apply other sanctions
- **Schools may use disciplinary measures**, including detention or exclusion, in line with their behaviour policy
- **CCTV footage** may be reviewed to support investigations
- **Parents/carers may be charged** for damage caused by vandalism
- **Police Scotland will be informed** if a criminal offence is suspected

If transport is withdrawn, it becomes the **parent/carer's responsibility** to arrange and fund alternative travel to ensure the child continues to attend school.