



Standard Circular M6



North Ayrshire Council
Comhairle Siorrachd Àir a Tuath

COMMUNITIES DIRECTORATE (EDUCATION SERVICE)

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Bullying; It's Never Acceptable

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The emotional health and wellbeing of children and young people is at the heart of achieving the outcomes ensure that our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed. This involves building the four capacities of becoming successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens as well as having improved life chances where they are more at risk. The eight indicators of wellbeing in children and young people are that they are safe, included, responsible, respected, active, nurtured, achieving, and healthy.
- 1.2 Bullying behaviour has a negative impact on all of those indicators for both the young person participating in bullying behaviour and those experiencing it. Bullying can exist in all schools and we recognise the detrimental impact it has on the lives of children and young people. Everyone working with children and young people need to challenge behaviour and attitudes which lead to bullying behaviour before incidents arise. When incidents do arise, it is important there are agreed procedures in place to ensure the appropriate action is taken.

2. PURPOSE OF THE POLICY

The purpose of this Policy and Procedure is to:

- ensure a consistent approach across all educational establishments in North Ayrshire.
- establish and maintain a safe and emotionally nurturing environment, free from threat, fear or harassment, in order that each child/ young person may be able to achieve their full potential.
- provide educational establishments with a structure which will help them in their efforts to manage, systematically, incidents of bullying whether or not it is prejudice based.
- enable communities to build positive relationships within and outwith educational establishments.
- assist all educational establishments to fulfil their obligations under the relevant legislation to children/ young people, parents/carers and staff.

3. OUR VISION FOR PROMOTING POSITIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- 3.1 As an authority, through our policies and actions we will encourage and promote positive relationships; respect for each other; valuing each other, and celebrating our differences.

North Ayrshires Council's stance is that bullying behaviour of any kind is **never acceptable**.

4. SCOPE

4.1 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Reduce, prevent and respond effectively to bullying behaviour.
- Provide a clear and consistent approach to managing incidents of bullying behaviour across all our establishments.
- Ensure that anti bullying approaches are fully embedded in practice, ensuring fairness, respect, equality and inclusion.
- Ensure training, based on 'Respect Me'¹ principles, is made available to staff, young people, parents and carers.

4.2 The policy reflects the principles of:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC).
- Curriculum for Excellence; keeping the Health and Wellbeing of all our young people at its heart.

5. DEFINITION OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

5.1 North Ayrshire Council respects, supports and recognises the National Approach to Anti Bullying as set out in Respect for All (Scottish Government, 2017) and the definition:

“Bullying is both behaviour and impact. The impact is on a person’s capacity to feel in control of themselves ...bullying takes place in the context of relationships; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened or left out. This behaviour happens face to face and online.”
(Respect Me, 2015)²

5.2 Bullying behaviour is also a breach of the United Nation Convention on the Rights of the Child (**UNCRC**).

5.3 North Ayrshire Council promotes the values and principles of the UNCRC and supports an ethos of meaningful participation, respect and positive relationships with children and young people.

5.4 North Ayrshire Council recognises that it is every child’s right not to be bullied and we must all ensure that children and young people are protected from bullying behaviour in order that they feel good about themselves and give them the chance to achieve all they can in life.

5.5 Children and young people need to be “protected from abuse, or harm at home, at school and in the community”³. We want to make sure that everyone feels safe, happy, healthy and secure, both where they live and where they go to

¹ Respect Me respectme.org.uk

² Respect Me

³ GIRFEC Ayrshire 2017

school. Only by working in partnership can we ensure we are doing the best for our children and young people in North Ayrshire.

6. WHAT IS BULLYING BEHAVIOUR?

- 6.1 Bullying behaviours can affect you physically and mentally, and can be persistent over time or a one off incident.
- 6.2 Some bullying behaviours include:
- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened face to face and online, verbally, or non-verbally, directly or indirectly.
 - Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked or physically mistreated.
 - Having belongings taken or damaged.
 - Being ignored, left out or having rumours spread about you (face to face and or online).
 - Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media, online gaming platforms or by phone.
 - Being targeted because of who you are or who you are thought to be (face to face or online).
 - Behaving in such a way which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives.
- 6.3 Sometimes bullying behaviour can take place but have no impact on the other person. However, this behaviour must still be recognised and challenged – in such cases the behaviour cannot be ignored and is **never acceptable**.

7. IMPACT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

- 7.1 The impact of bullying behaviour may lead to:
- Health issues
 - Reduced self-confidence and/ or self esteem
 - Poor or non-attendance
 - Withdrawal from normal activities
 - Loneliness/ isolation
 - Anxiety and depression
 - Tearfulness
 - Humiliation
 - Feeling unsafe and fearful
 - Inability to share feelings and communicate with others
 - Changes to behaviour and/or physical appearance
 - Aggression

- Demonstrating bullying behaviour towards others
- Lowered aspirations
- Eating disorders
- Self-harm
- Suicidal thoughts
- Parental or family stress and anxiety

‘The impact an incident has had on a child or young person is more important than whether it is classified as bullying.’ (Scottish Government, 2010)

8. PREJUDICED BASED BULLYING

- 8.1 Bullying behaviour may be a result of treating people differently because they appear different or are thought to be different. This is what is meant by prejudice. This could lead to behaviour and/or the use of bullying language that could be racist, sexist, homophobic, bi phobic, transphobic or discriminatory towards disability or faith.
- 8.2 Bullying language can also be based on characteristics unique to a person’s identity or circumstance e.g. Socio-economic; family circumstances or appearance.
- 8.3 There is a need to address the root cause of prejudice as well as effectively respond to incidents in all settings as they arise.
- 8.4 North Ayrshire Council, under the Equality Act 2010, recognises the need to:
 - eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation
 - promote equal opportunities for all
 - create and maintain good relations between people who share protected characteristics and those who do not
 - ensure that bullying by pupils with these characteristics is treated with the same level of seriousness as any other form of bullying.

In North Ayrshire Council, we encourage everyone to celebrate differences and value individuality.

9. PROTECTED CHARACTERISTICS

- 9.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) it is unlawful to show discrimination against a person by referring to:
 - Age
 - Being or becoming a transsexual person
 - Being married or in a civil partnership
 - Being pregnant or having a child

- Being disabled
- Race including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origin.
- Religion or lack of religion or belief.
- Sex (gender)
- Sexual orientation

10. ONLINE BULLYING

- 10.1 North Ayrshire Council recognises that online bullying **should not be treated differently from face-to-face bullying**. The internet is a place, and like any social setting it has the potential to become a place where bullying behaviour can take place. Once again, it is **never acceptable**.
- 10.2 Within the technologies aspect of a Curriculum for Excellence and in line with the Scottish Government National Action Plan on Internet Safety for Children and Young People (April 2017)⁴ we will seek to develop digital literacy which will educate young people in becoming cyber resilient and support them to use the internet safely.

11. WHEN IS IT NOT BULLYING BEHAVIOUR?

- 11.1 We know that children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they make and build relationships. This is a normal part of growing up.
- 11.2 However, it is still important to discuss how they feel at these times. Restorative approaches⁵ provide learning opportunities which can also support young people, allowing them to bounce back and become emotionally stronger and resilient.

12. BULLYING OR CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR?

- 12.1 Some bullying behaviours are more serious and may be classed as criminal acts e.g. hate crime; child sexual exploitation or gender-based violence, including domestic abuse. Incidents where a child or young person feels they are being coerced or pressurised into something, such as engaging in sexualised behaviour, should be reported to Police Scotland.
- 12.2 Some online behaviour may be illegal, and it is essential that children and young people are aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content online. For example, in cases of sexual imagery, the Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016⁶, criminalises the *non-consensual* sharing of intimate images.

⁴ Scottish Government National Action Plan on Internet Safety for Children and Young People

⁵ Restorative Approaches

⁶ Abusive Behaviour and Sexual Harm (Scotland) Act 2016

13. HATE CRIME⁷

- 13.1 This is a crime motivated by ill will towards people who are seen to be different. This is criminal harassment and should be treated as such. Adults, children and young people can seek advice from Police Scotland if they feel a hate crime has been committed.

14. INTENT AND FREQUENCY OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

- 14.1 Every bullying incident should be looked at individually.
- 14.2 Understanding the impact of the behaviour rather than establishing whether someone acted deliberately is key to building an effective Anti-Bullying approach.
- 14.3 In some cases, children or young people may not be aware that their behaviour is **actually** bullying. They are perhaps modelling the behaviour of adults or other children and young people, not understanding that this type of behaviour is **never acceptable**.
- 14.4 In these circumstances, the **intent** may not be present but the **impact and effect on the person will be no less severe**.
- 14.5 It must be explained to the person showing bullying behaviour that their actions are unacceptable. Proving intent is difficult and young people often reframe their behaviour when challenged. It is much more important and effective to focus on the impact the behaviour has had on the other person. In other words intent is **not** required.

15. EXPECTATIONS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 15.1 The tables below show what children and young people in North Ayrshire should expect from the people in their lives in terms of responding to, and managing bullying behaviour:

Who	What is expected of you
North Ayrshire Council	• Develop and implement an anti-bullying policy in line with Respect for All, through consultation with stakeholders in order to challenge prejudice based bullying behaviour • Provide access to training and materials in order to • support all those who work with children and young people • Ensure parents/carers are provided with information on how to raise a concern/complaint in relation to bullying behaviour

⁷ Hate Crime

	• Take action to promote equality and diversity and children's rights • Monitor and record incidents of bullying behaviour in terms of all protected characteristics and other forms of prejudice-based bullying behaviour.
Educational Establishments	• Develop and implement an establishment anti-bullying policy that reflects North Ayrshire Council's policy. This should include an explicit commitment to challenging prejudice-based bullying and promoting fairness, inclusion and respect, in line with national guidance • Involve and consult meaningfully with children and young people. • Involve and consult meaningfully with all stakeholders to ensure awareness of organisational and local anti-bullying policies • Ensure parent(s) are provided with information • on how to raise a concern/ complaint with regard to bullying behaviour • Ensure there are clear monitoring and recording procedures and that everyone is aware of these • Monitor and review policy and practice on a regular basis • Take action to promote positive respectful relationships • Take action to promote equality, diversity and children's rights • Offer children and young people a range of ways to report bullying behaviour or to talk about any concerns they have in confidence • Resolve incidents of bullying behaviour proactively, using restorative approaches which takes account of the impact of the incident as well as any underlying prejudice or other negative attitudes • Ensure staff model Rights Respecting behaviour, Nurturing and Restorative Practice in their day to day contact with young people
Children and young people	• Treat people with respect and not engage in bullying behaviour • Be aware of any anti-bullying policies and practices in schools/clubs/groups attended • Where safe and appropriate, challenge bullying behaviour • Share concerns with peers/trusted adults if appropriate to the individual • Work collaboratively to help ensure bullying behaviour cannot thrive. • Share concerns with peers/trusted adult/establishment contact

Parent(s) and carers	• Be aware of any anti-bullying policies and practice in school/clubs/groups attended by their child or young person • Work collaboratively to help ensure bullying cannot thrive • Share concerns about their child as early as possible with appropriate teacher/practitioner • Engage through school Parent Forum/Parent Council or other appropriate forums to contribute to and learn about anti-bullying practice • Promote positive respectful relationships
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16. A RANGE OF STRATEGIES THAT WILL BE USED TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO BULLYING

Self-help Strategies

North Ayrshire Council support Respect Me in promoting a variety of options and advice in responding to bullying behaviour.

16.1 Below are some suggested strategies for children and young people on how to respond to bullying behaviour⁸.

- Inform a trusted adult if they are worried
- Look out for others if they need help
- Talk to Childline or refer to www.respectme.org.uk
- Keep a diary of events – mentioning how it makes them feel.
- Block users online- report offensive language and bullying behaviours.
- Do not bottle things up, as this can make them feel worse.

Remember - it really does help to talk to someone to plan a way forward

16.2 School and Establishment Strategies

North Ayrshire Council encourages the following practice to establish and maintain effective anti-bullying practice

- To promote a culture of positivity and respect by recognising that bullying behaviour takes place in the context of relationships.
- To provide opportunities for young people to engage in discussions about friendships and relationships; how to manage, repair and respond to changes within friendships and relationships - both in real life and online in order to create an environment where bullying cannot thrive.
- To promote a listening and calm approach in responding to reports of bullying behaviour.
- To provide a supportive environment in which people affected by bullying behaviours can have time to talk through the options they have to make bullying stop, or to help them manage how they are feeling.

⁸ Respectme.org.uk

- To ensure all children and young people are included, engaged and involved⁹ and have the opportunity to participate in school and community events.
- To know about and operate a clear policy and procedure in responding to bullying behaviours (see below).
- Consider factors that may impact upon a child or young person's wellbeing, including whether any support for learning or a Wellbeing plan is required.
- To think about how to stop bullying before it happens.
- To challenge inappropriate behaviour.

17. RESPONDING TO BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

17.1 Whether children and young people have been on the receiving end of harm or if they have been responsible for the harm through their bullying behaviour, needs can often be the same. A Restorative approach¹⁰ can provide both sides with a chance to be listened to, a chance to explain what has happened from their point of view, a chance to explore the impact of the bullying behaviour, to challenge prejudice and offer an opportunity to learn and change behaviour.

17.2 School staff have been given training on how to use restorative approaches. Further support and advice is available from psychological services.

17.3 Restorative conversations in practice

In all educational establishments in North Ayrshire, the same restorative enquiry questions are used:

Person experiencing bullying behaviour	Person exhibiting bullying behaviour
1. What happened (and then what happened?) 2. What were your thoughts at the time? 3. What have your thoughts been since? 4. Who have you or anyone else been affected by this? 5. What's been the hardest thing for you? 6. What would you like to see happen?	1. What happened (and then what happened?) 2. What were you thinking at the time? 3. What have your thoughts been since? 4. Who has been affected by this? How have they been affected? 5. What do you think needs to happen now?

18. RECORDING, MONITORING AND RESPONDING TO BULLYING INCIDENTS

18.1 North Ayrshire Council is committed to the accurate recording of bullying incidents by ensuring appropriate responses have taken place. From June

⁹ Included, Engaged and Involved 2

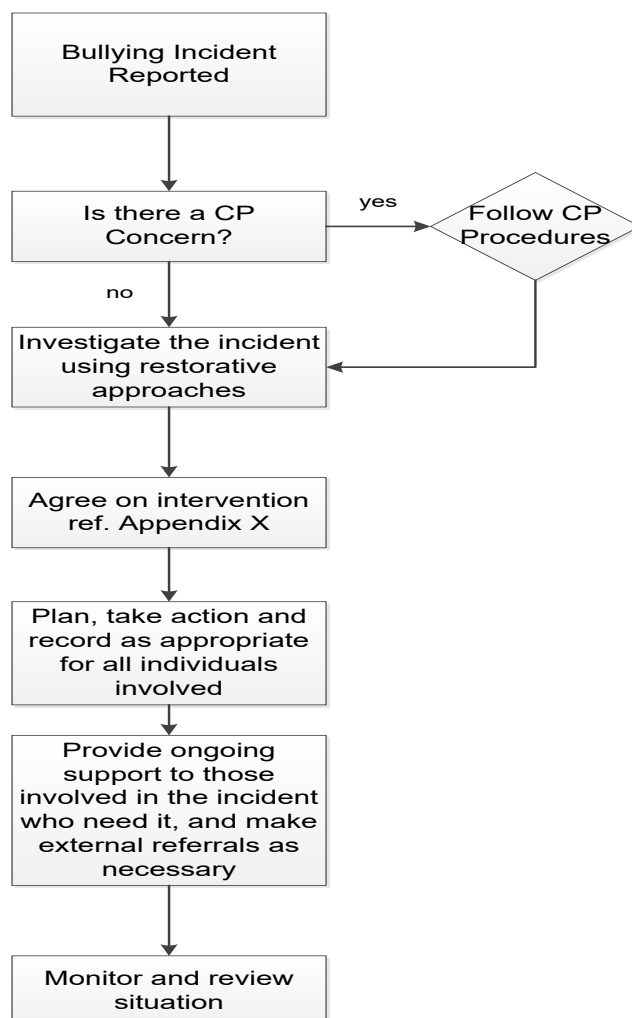
¹⁰ Restorative Approaches

2019, we will use the SEEMIS management system including Pastoral Notes to record and monitor instances of bullying behaviour.

18.2 For children and young peoples' organisations, recording systems¹¹ must include information on:

- The children and young people involved, as well as staff or other adults.
- Where and when bullying has taken place.
- The type of bullying experienced, e.g. name-calling, rumours, threats etc.
- Any underlying prejudice including details of any protected characteristic(s).
- Consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns.
- Actions taken including resolution at an individual or organisational level.

18.3 When responding to reports of bullying behaviour all North Ayrshire Educational Establishments, adhere to the following procedures. This flowchart is designed to give a clarity and an overview of the process only.



18.4 Our parents, carers and young people wish to stress the importance that throughout this process it is essential that educational establishments

¹¹ Seemis Recording
Procedure/ Respect for All (2017)

communicate with young people, parents/carers & relevant staff when appropriate.

This will ensure everyone involved can take part in responding and resolving the incident and is kept informed about process.

19. QUALITY ASSURANCE

- 19.1 Schools and establishments are required to monitor the effectiveness of their policy and practice through a process of self-evaluation.
- 19.2 This can be achieved through the use of the Quality Improvement guidance in the appendices using effective practice statements and challenge questions devised from How Good is our School?¹²/ How Good is Our Early Learning and Childcare?
- 19.3 Parents/ Carers and young people will be consulted on modifications to the policy at least every three years to ensure its relevance and should link clearly with the establishment's Vision, Values and Aims.
- 19.4 Guidance for best practice in policy development for educational establishments is available through:

"Policy through to Practice – Getting it Right" (Respectme 2017)
- 19.5 Monitoring bullying incidents is essential and helps organisations identify recurring patterns, thereby encouraging early intervention. This can help identify training needs for everyone working with children and young people.

20. TRAINING

- 20.1 North Ayrshire Council is committed to training/ supporting pupils, parents, staff and volunteers in Respect for All through annual training opportunities.
- 20.2 Educational establishments should provide annual training updates for pupils, parents and staff through the training packages provided by the North Ayrshire Anti-bullying steering group.

21. MAKING A COMPLAINT

- 21.1 If this policy is not enacted to your satisfaction you have the right to make a complaint in line with North Ayrshire Council's complaint policy.

<https://www.north-ayrshire.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback/make-a-complaint.aspx>

¹² HGIOS 4

22. SOURCES OF ADVICE AND GUIDANCE

- **Anti-Bullying Alliance:** Tackling homophobic, bi-phobic and transphobic bullying for disabled children and young people and those with special educational needs: www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/media/31665/tackling-hbt-bullying-for-disabled-cyp-and-those-with-sen-full-guide-final-sept15.pdf
- **Bullying UK:** www.bullying.co.uk Helpful resources and good information on cyber bullying.
- **Children in Scotland:** the national agency for voluntary, statutory and professional organisations and individuals working with children and their families in Scotland.
- **Changing Faces:** the charity which aims to support and represent children, young people and adults with disfigurements from a wide range of causes. <http://www.changingfaces.org.uk/Home>
- **ChildLine:** ChildLine anti-bullying helpline in Scotland (0800 44 1111) specifically for children and young people who are the victims of bullying or who are bullying other young people. The training and outreach team at ChildLine Scotland works with schools raising awareness of ChildLine and the issues faced by children and young people. <http://www.childline.org.uk/Pages/default.aspx>
- **CHILDREN 1st:** runs ChildLine Scotland on behalf of the NSPCC and works with Scotland's vulnerable children and young people to help change lives for the better. Bullying is addressed by their Safeguarding in Sport service, working with sports governing bodies and local authorities. <http://www.children1st.org.uk>
- **Count Us In:** Promoting understanding and combating sectarianism, Education Scotland (2007)
- **Children's Parliament (The):** <http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk>
- **Dealing with Homophobia and Homophobic Bullying in Scottish Schools:** Toolkit and lesson plans to help teachers understand and deal with homophobia and homophobic bullying in schools. http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/d/genericresource_tcm4512285.asp
- **Enable Scotland:** in partnership with respectme have created a web site specifically to help adults tackle the bullying of children and young people with learning disabilities (<http://www.enablemescotland.info>). Enable Scotland also provides training on disability awareness. <http://www.enable.org.uk>
- **Enquire:** Offers independent advice and information to parents, carers, practitioners, children and young people through a dedicated telephone helpline 0845 123 2303 or via the website. <http://enquire.org.uk>

- **How Good is our School?** Taking a closer look at Inclusion and Equality – meeting the needs of Gypsies and Travellers (HMIE 2005)
- **LGBT Youth Scotland:** Aims to improve services for LGBT young people and the wider LGBT community. Toolkit for teachers: Dealing with homophobia and homophobic bullying in Scottish schools funded by the Scottish Government and developed in partnership with Learning and Teaching Scotland. <http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/home.htm>
- **National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People (A):** <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/330753/0107302.pdf>
- **ParentLine:** (0808 800 2222) free confidential helpline for anyone concerned about or caring for a child in Scotland to call about any issues affecting their children or family life. <http://www.children1st.org.uk/parentline/>
- **Pupil Inclusion Network Scotland (PINS):** <http://www.pinscotland.org>
- **Respectme:** Government funded anti-bullying service managed by a partnership of SAMH, LGBT Youth Scotland and the Scottish Government. It provides free training and skills development and a website that provides guidance, support, advice, e-learning and further interaction through social networking to all stakeholders. <http://www.respectme.org.uk>
- **SAMH:** A national mental health charity dedicated to mental health and wellbeing for all and is committed to progressing anti-bullying work across Scotland as we understand the mental health impacts of bullying behaviour. <http://www.samh.org.uk/frontend/index.cfm?page=1>
- **Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP):** <http://www.sccyp.org.uk/>
- **Scottish Out of School Care Network:** the lead independent voice for school-aged childcare in Scotland. SOSCN is working in partnership with respectme to provide anti-bullying training. <http://www.soscn.org/>
- **Scottish Traveller Education Programme (STEP):** <http://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/>. STEP leaflet specific to bullying: http://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/wpcontent/uploads/STEP_bullying_yo_u_whattodo.pdf?phpMyAdmin=25644c053cf9e75454ed0055ea424327
- **Sense Over Sectarianism**
- **Stonewall Scotland:** Stonewall Scotland works to achieve equality and justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Scotland. They help schools tackle homophobic bullying and provide safe and positive learning environments for all children and young people by providing training for staff and a number of resources. <http://www.stonewallscotland.org.uk/scotland/>

- **What is Bullying?:** www.youngminds.org.uk/Bullying Advice and support for young people affected by bullying.
- **Youth Scotland:** Contributes to anti-bullying in Scotland through engagement in development of national policies and through the provision of advice, information and training for those working with young people on a range of issues which may contribute to bullying behaviours, for example racism and sectarianism. <http://www.youthscotland.org.uk/>
- **Zero Tolerance:** Zero Tolerance aims to raise awareness about the nature and prevalence of all forms of male violence against women and children. <http://www.zerotolerance.org.uk>