



Girvan Primary School
South Ayrshire Council

Anti-Bullying Policy

Revised February 2026

Rationale

Young people have the right to learn and play in a positive, respectful and supportive environment, free from victimisation, harassment and fear, and we are committed to working in partnership with the wider school community to ensure our young people feel safe and happy within Girvan Primary School.

It is important to recognise that children and young people will fall out and disagree as they form and build relationships – this is a normal part of growing up. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed promptly and effectively. Bullying should never be seen as an inevitable part of growing up. Children and young people living in Scotland should have equal opportunities to succeed - bullying compromises this ambition.

Bullying is a violation of children's rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) which is enacted in Scots law.

This policy has been developed in consultation with our young people, staff and the wider school community.

Principles

At Girvan Primary School, our anti-bullying policy, and associated practice, upholds our statutory duties in relation to the UNCRC, The Equality Act 2010, Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People (Scottish Government) and Management Guidelines on Anti-Bullying (South Ayrshire Council). Our policy is also informed by our commitment to inclusion.

Aims and Objectives

- To identify, reduce and eradicate, wherever possible, instances in which young people are subjected to bullying in any form;
- To establish procedures for dealing with incidents of bullying in school; and,
- To ensure all children, staff and parents/carers are aware of our anti-bullying policy, allowing them to fulfil their obligations

Definition

Girvan Primary School has adopted the national definition of bullying, as set out in Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People (RfA) which states:

“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.”

(RespectMe, 2024)

- This behaviour can harm people mentally, emotionally, socially and physically.
- The actual behaviour (for example, actions, looks, messages, confrontations or physical interventions) does not always need to be repeated for it to have an ongoing impact. The fear of behaviour reoccurring may have a lasting impact.
- Bullying is more likely to take place in the context of an existing imbalanced relationship but may also occur where no previous or current relationship exists.
- Bullying may be carried out by an individual or can sometimes involve a group of people.

Bullying behaviour can include, but is not limited, to the following:

- Being called names, teased, put down or threatened (face to face and/or online).
- Being hit, tripped, pushed or kicked.
- 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 phones/tablets.
- Behaviour which makes people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face-to-face and/or online).
- Being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be (face to face and/or online).
- Increasing the reach and impact of bullying or prejudice through the recruitment and/ or involvement of a wider group.

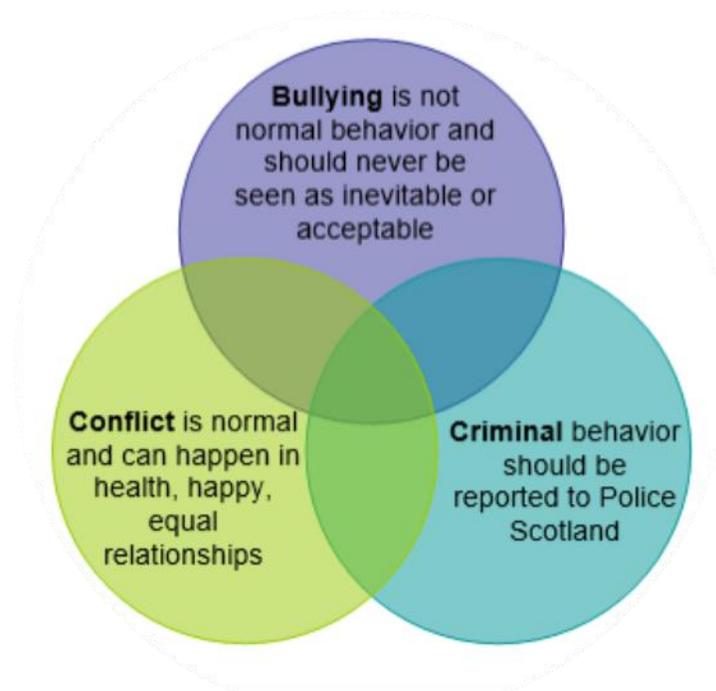
Bullying behaviour may be a result of prejudice that relates to perceived or actual differences. This can manifest into racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia or transphobia or prejudice and discrimination towards disability or faith. Bullying behaviour motivated by prejudice based on an individual's actual or perceived identity; can be based on characteristics unique to a child or young person's identity or circumstances such as socio-economic background, religion or appearance, with many of these characteristics protected under the Equality Act 2010.

Bullying can have both long- and short-term effects on children and young people's mental, emotional, social and physical wellbeing. It can affect their participation, attainment and inclusion, and can have an adverse and detrimental effect on childhood development, self-esteem, confidence, and future potential. Bullying can impact on a person's capacity for self-management, their internal feelings of control and their ability to take effective action. Being bullied is traumatic for the individual and may lead to a range of often unhelpful coping mechanisms and behaviours, such as self-blame or physical and verbal aggression. The impact of bullying behaviour can extend far beyond the individuals directly involved. Other children and young people who witness incidents may be impacted

as well as incidents having a broader impact on the culture of a setting. Impacts can also be felt within families and other relationships.

In the digital world, online bullying, or cyberbullying, is a significant concern affecting children and young people in Scotland. This form of bullying involves the use of digital technologies, such as social media, messaging platforms, gaming forums, and mobile devices to intimidate, isolate or humiliate individuals. Online bullying should always be considered in context as a feature of the relationships involved and powerful emotions evoked, and not merely as a technological issue to be resolved. Online bullying should be seen as related to where the bullying occurs, rather than as a different behaviour type; many common bullying behaviours such as spreading rumours, exclusion from group dynamics, and threats can occur both online and offline. However, technology has increased the complexity and reach of bullying through nonconsensual image sharing, video footage, photo editing, transient messaging, and fake accounts, creating a new global environment that demands careful, informed, and nuanced handling. Some behaviours, when conducted online, may constitute criminal offences. Online bullying can happen anywhere at any time, making it more pervasive and harder to find respite from than other forms of bullying. Online bullying can be as damaging as offline bullying and may have more serious consequences due to the digital footprint, lasting presence, group dynamics, and potential for illegality. Online bullying should therefore be responded to with the same level of seriousness as any other form of offline bullying.

It is important to differentiate between conflict, bullying and criminal behaviour as each will be managed in an appropriate way.



Conflict

Usually at least one person doesn't want the conflict to go on unresolved and will try to act to improve the situation. It can highlight the importance of the relationship, providing a chance to build on strengths, solve problems, and move forward positively. Healthy relationship conflict is not the same as bullying and is unlikely to lead to bullying as the people involved have a mutual interest in restoring equilibrium and maintaining connection.

Bullying

Bullying occurs within social relationships and typically involves an imbalance of power that allows a relationship of dominance and subordination to emerge. Bullying can be intentional or unintentional, occurring once or repeatedly. Resolution usually requires adult support, meaningful intervention, and a change of behaviour in the instigating person. There can sometimes be an escalation from bullying to violence.

Criminal

While bullying is not in itself a crime, some behaviour that may be reported or perceived as bullying could constitute a criminal offence, such as physical or sexual violence, online behaviours or hate crime. It is not for staff to determine if behaviour is criminal; they should seek immediate support from Police Scotland if they have reason to believe that a crime may have occurred or that a child or young person has been seriously harmed.

Setting Standards

The values and benefits underlying this policy statement may be considered in the context of the following:

- All bullying is unacceptable, regardless of how it is delivered or what excuses are given to justify it;
- The school recognises the detrimental effect, including mental health consequences, on pupils who may be subjected to bullying and all staff work actively to minimise the risks;
- Victims of bullying will always be treated in a supportive manner;
- Appropriate action will be taken for the perpetrators of bullying; and,
- The harmful effect on pupil performance which can occur as a result of bullying is acknowledged and our school is committed to investigating and combatting all reported bullying behaviour.

Prevention and Education

While bullying most often takes place in a school context, it can occur anywhere and therefore everyone involved in children and young people's lives in Scotland has a role to play in preventing and dealing with incidents of bullying.

Prevention is the most effective intervention when it comes to bullying and prevention is supported by the creation of inclusion, nurturing environments within the school. It is recognised that children and young people will fall out and disagree with each other as they form and build relationships. This is not considered to be bullying; this is considered to be a normal part of growing up. Early intervention and prevention are key elements in ensuring we get it right for all our children and young people. Where concerns are raised about behaviour that is deemed to be conflict rather than bullying, a child or young person may still need support to navigate the conflict or deal with the emotional impact.

Positive relationships are role modelled, promoted, and encouraged across the school. Children and young people demonstrating the qualities of being 'ready', 'respectful' and 'safe' are acknowledged and their achievements celebrated.

Through planned learning experiences, our Health and Wellbeing programme, 'PATHS' promotes the recognition and management of emotions. In addition, ad-hoc opportunities are taken to discuss bullying (what it is and the impact of it) through the curriculum and through anti-bullying awareness events.

Restorative conversations are used to address social and other issues and children and young people are encouraged to raise concerns with a trusted adult as soon as possible to allow them to be dealt with in an appropriate manner. Solution-orientated approaches are promoted to address issues in an effective and timely manner.

As a Rights Respecting School, at the start of each session, all classes work to create a class charter which details actions which they and adults agree to ensure all children and young people receive the rights they are entitled to. This is regularly referred to throughout the year to support conversations around rights.

Responding to Bullying Behaviour

We may become aware of potential bullying behaviours in a number of ways, including:

- Concerns raised by a child or young person who believes they are being bullied;
- Concerns raised by another child or young person who has witnessed behaviour they perceive as bullying;
- Concerns raised by a parent, carer or other family member; and/or,
- Observations of a member of staff or another professional.

Children, young people and supporting adults are encouraged to raise concerns about potential bullying behaviours as soon as possible. When a young person claims to have been experiencing bullying behaviour, it is ultimately crucial that each complaint is investigated swiftly and with impartiality. It is important not to label children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can isolate a child, rather than help them to recover or alter their behaviour.

Each incident of bullying which takes place in the school will be logged on the school's recording system, SEEMIS, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018. It is not necessary for an allegation to be substantiated before it is recorded.

The record will include:

- The children/young people involved as well as any adults who witnessed the incident or were involved in the initial response;
- Where and when the alleged bullying has taken place;
- The type of bullying experienced, e.g. name-calling, rumours, threats;
- Any prejudice-based attitudes or behaviour presenting;
- Details of any protected characteristic(s);
- Consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns;
- The outcome, including if the issue was resolved, not resolved or unfounded;
- The impact of the incident, including consideration of personal or additional support needs and wellbeing concerns; and,
- Any actions taken, including resolution at an individual or organisational level.

In line with the UNCRC (including Article 12, children and young people have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously, and Article 16, children and young people have the

right to a private life), where possible, the content of this record should be agreed with the child or young person.

Schools deal with a variety of behaviour on a daily basis however, whilst some of these behaviours may be described or reported as bullying, it is important to recognise that not all such behaviour will be bullying or should appropriately be treated as such. Staff will use their knowledge of children and young people, and their professional judgement, when responding to incidents based on evidence and investigation.

In some instances, immediate remedial actions can be taken to resolve incidents involving bullying behaviour and it should be assessed as to whether this is appropriate. This may be achieved through peer mediation or through initiatives where vulnerable children and young people receive support as part of a friendship group. It may be appropriate for other agencies to be involved in supporting the needs of young people.

The Named Person and relevant staff will be kept informed throughout the process. Where allegations or incidents are deemed to constitute a child protection issue, child protection procedures will be evoked. Parents/carers will be kept informed throughout the process.

Responsibilities of School Staff and Volunteers

Staff and volunteers should be expected to:

- Be aware of their establishment's anti-bullying policy and actively work to implement, monitor and review it;
- Model behaviour which promotes health and well-being and understand anti-discriminatory, anti-bullying and child protection policies; and,
- Establish respectful and supportive relationships with children and young people, parents and each other based on the ethos of that establishment and which models the expectations of the establishment's anti-bullying policy.

Responsibilities of Children and Young People

Children and young people should:

- Contribute to and have an awareness of the school's anti-bullying policy;
- Know that they can speak to an adult to talk about their concerns, when it is safe to do so;
- Report all incidents of bullying, in line with school procedures, to a trusted adult; and,
- Adhere to and promote the school vision and values, ensuring that they are Ready, Respectful and Safe at all times.

Parent/Carer Responsibilities

Parents and carers have responsibilities which are vital in combating bullying. They are reminded to:

- Contribute to and familiarise themselves with the school's anti-bullying policy;
- Stress to their child(ren) the importance of building positive relationships, and displaying the qualities of being Ready, Respectful and Safe at all times;
- Actively listen to your child(ren) when they share information on situations that may be considered as bullying;

- Report any concerns around bullying, acting in the best interests of the child/young person involved, by contacting the school office or speaking to a member of SLT;
- Work in partnership with the school to resolve the issue, keeping channels of communication open until the situation is resolved;
- Engage with any opportunities to develop knowledge of bullying, keeping up to date with developments in this area; and,
- Avoid telling your child/young person to retaliate – although a common response, this is not necessarily the most effective or safest option.

Should parents/carers not be satisfied with the steps taken in addressing bullying behaviour, they may exercise their right to take further a complaint following South Ayrshire Council's 'Listening to You' complaints procedures.

Evaluation

To monitor the effectiveness of this policy, an ongoing analysis of the number of reported incidents of bullying will be monitored. This will be used to inform any future policy amendments.

Links

- RespectMe – Scotland's anti-bullying service - <https://respectme.org.uk/>
- ThinkUKnow – Online safety resources - <https://www.thinkuknow.co.uk/parents/>
- Bullying – A Guide for Parents and Carers - <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/inc79-bullying-guide/>
- UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) - <https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>
- Equality Act 2010 - <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/equality-act-2010-guidance>
- Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) - <https://www.gov.scot/policies/girfec/>
- Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People - <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/self-evaluation/respect-for-all-the-national-approach-to-anti-bullying-for-scotland-s-children-and-young-people/> - updated 2024