

National Thematic: Bullying

The purpose of this national thematic is to evaluate the approaches taken by schools to record and monitor incidents of bullying. HM Inspectors will provide a national overview of the approaches adopted in their national report

We will use the information below to draw out national messages and potential case studies of practice worth sharing.

Record of visit (ROV)

- The ROV contains all information gathered in relation to the work. Any other materials should only be retained in line with our records management policy.
- The ROV should be completed in line with confidentiality, information security and Freedom of Information policies.
- The ROV must be completed timeously and sent to [REDACTED]

Establishment/Setting	Aberdeen Grammar School	
Date/time of visit	11 th October 2022	
HMI	[REDACTED]	
Date ROV submitted	[REDACTED]	

Key contextual information (200 words)

This **should** include information about school roll and composition, demographics and leadership structure.

School roll	1120
Composition	
Demographics (SIMD, ethnicity, ASN)	Almost all young people live in the 20% least deprived data zones in Scotland. Around a third of learners have additional support needs.
Leadership structure	HT and 4 depute heads

1. Approaches schools have taken to record incidents of bullying (400 words)

The school's anti-bullying policy, written in 2018-19, is reviewed annually. A range of approaches that illicit the views of learners i.e. anti-bullying pupil focus group, and regular PSE curriculum surveys S1-S6; an analysis of emerging needs following the pandemic related to maintaining positive relationships such as the need to work on self-regulation and dealing with online conflict; and the wider political and social context of race equality developments led the senior leadership to re-evaluate and update the anti-bullying policy in August 2022.

A 'positive relationships policy' and 'equality and diversity' working group have ensured that the anti-bullying policy reflects national guidance, including alignment with the UNCRC. Commendably, learners led awareness of the revised policy and approaches to dealing with anti-bullying through assemblies and revamping the school poster. The new online bullying reporting form appears on the poster in the form of a QR code. This allows learners to report any incidents of bullying digitally. The poster, designed by learners themselves, makes very clear that bullying is not accepted and outlines expectations of how bullying will be addressed.

The school have plans to build further on their communication with parents to ensure that they are fully aware of these recent developments.

Time was also spent within PSE to discuss aspects of the anti-bullying policy. As a result, almost all learners in the pre-inspection questionnaires stated that they understand what bullying is, and know who they can go to for help. The school should build on this positive affirmation by ensuring that learners are fully aware of how and when incidents of bullying are recorded. [REDACTED]

Overall, the range of approaches used to measure the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy through for example, focus groups of learners, questionnaires and analysis of documentation is outstanding.

2. The arrangements for monitoring incidents of bullying (400 words)

Senior leaders and principal teachers in pupil support (PTPS) evaluated the updated SG guidance on recording and monitoring incidents of bullying. The evaluation indicated that the bullying tab on SEEMiS was used inconsistently by PTPS; that some incidents were recorded on pastoral notes; and communication about incidents of bullying between class teachers and middle leaders could be strengthened to ensure more accurate recording. As a result, a Google form was devised for all school staff and learners to report all bullying behaviours to ensure that PTPS could have an accurate overview. The form reflects national guidance in terms of the level of detail that is required when dealing with a bullying incident. This is allowing senior and middle leaders to identify trends and patterns more reliably. Once an incident has been raised, this is logged on SEEMiS within three working days. An investigation into the incident follows and SEEMiS is updated throughout the process. Once concluded, the incident(s) is closed off. Where an incident is found to be bullying, PTPS that appropriate supports/interventions are in place for individuals/groups to address any underlying prejudice.

Senior leaders through their persistent engagement with SEEMiS have additional functionality related to the equalities module that allows them to generate an overall report of all incidents of bullying behaviour. Senior leaders are very critical of the ease and effectiveness of SEEMiS. They believe that the report which is generated from SEEMiS is not fit for purpose. The raw data from SEEMiS equalities module does not provide easily extractable data on trends of bullying behaviour. The extrapolated data requires rigorous interrogation, which is a time consuming process. For example, one incident of bullying that involves a group of learners who are 'persons displaying' and that involve more than one 'perceived reason for incident' may result in multiple entries in the overall analysis of incidents. As a result, the school have developed their own bespoke digital tool which generates a written report allowing patterns and trends to be identified more easily. In addition, the equalities module includes 'monitor/review' that provides entry for 'person(s) experiencing' and 'person(s) displaying' yet the tabs are only limited to one entry and therefore can't include an overall assessment for incidents that involve groups of learners. Other challenges of the reporting system on SEEMiS relate the word limits in the entry sections e.g. incident detail. Despite these challenges, incidents of bullying are monitored on a monthly basis as part of a standing item on the pupil support meeting agenda.

Recording incidents of bullying is one part of the overall process in preventing and managing bullying incidents. The main focus for staff in schools is on supporting changes in behaviour among children and young people in school and promoting health and wellbeing.

3. The effectiveness of measures taken to respond to incidents of bullying and in supporting children and young people. (400 words)

The ethos of anti-bullying is embedded in day-to-day practices at Aberdeen Grammar. There is a respectful, equitable and inclusive culture and ethos where respect, celebrating difference and promoting positive relationships and behaviour are highly evident. As a result, incidents of bullying behaviour are rare. Young people have respectful, responsible and confident relationships with their peers. There are few instances of bullying, both generally and on the grounds of the protected characteristics, as a result of the strong ethos that promotes equality and diversity. Young people are able to articulate the school's ethos and explain its core values. The school has established a positive basis for dealing with bullying by helping young people understand their rights and using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Senior leaders have achieved success in countering the effects and incidence of bullying by using the convention to establish an ethos in which young people understand that they have and can exercise a right to be safe.

Young people regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the school's anti-bullying policy. Learners feel empowered to contribute to ideas of how the school might improve on current approaches such as revisions to the PSE programme to include the impact of social media apps, better sign posting of external sources of support if and when bullying takes place outside school. The PSE programme provides progressive opportunities for young people to explore the protected characteristics. A short term working group have revised the PSE programme to take better account of the views of young people. For example, LGBTI+ discrimination and racism are discussed within the context of tolerance, dispelling myths and understanding. As a result, young people feel confident in tackling bullying behaviour.

House Teams are skilled and experienced in using a range of approaches to resolve incidents of bullying. PTPS offer support to individual learners and will signpost them to external agencies, as appropriate. PTPS, with the consent of the young person involved, may facilitate restorative meetings. The outcomes are recorded on pastoral notes. A range of practical steps are also considered at different levels from classroom teachers considering altering group composition to the involvement of external agencies such as the school counsellor or police liaison officer.

Staff participated in developing a staff advice note that outlines different types of bullying behaviour, the impact on others and staff responsibility in responding to bullying behaviours. Staff have also audited the ways in which their curricular area provides knowledge of the Equality Act and protected characteristics. Staff have benefited from professional learning and completed an online learning module 'respectme'. As a result, the level of professional knowledge and understanding in the school of national guidance and expectations is outstanding. Teachers include discussions of all relevant protected characteristics, and the prevention of prejudice-based bullying into teaching practices. As a result, young people have the language, understanding and confidence to discuss prejudice and report prejudice-based bullying and be comfortable with the means of doing so.

Effective practice worth sharing if applicable

Rigorous and robust approaches taken to monitoring and evaluating anti-bullying practice, including through learners. The school will complete the pro-forma to capture highly effective practice in this area.

Quotes: Please add any quotes below with each one clearly separated by the use of "quotation marks". Please add in brackets who they are from (e.g headteacher).

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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