

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	Balfron High School (Stirling Council)	
Date/time of visit	20.09.22	8.50am – 4.00pm
HMI	[REDACTED]	
Date ROV submitted	[REDACTED]	

Key contextual information (200 words)

School roll	894
Composition	
Demographics (SIMD, ethnicity, ASN)	
Leadership structure	1 x HT, 3 x DHT, 7 x Curriculum PTs, 4 x PTs Pupil Support, 1 x PT ASN.

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

A working group of staff, young people and parents developed the school's anti-bullying policy in 2019. Young people updated the policy this session to include their LGBT charter. The school's policy is based on the local authority policy created in 2018 to reflect the latest national guidance. Young people, staff and parents agree that the school does not tolerate bullying. Parents and staff agree that the policy is available on the school website. However, young people do not demonstrate knowledge of the policy. They are not aware of how staff respond to bullying. This is a barrier to many young people reporting instances of bullying. Senior leaders are aware that they need to revisit and clarify the school's approaches with young people.

Middle and senior leaders record all bullying incidents promptly in the SEEMiS Bullying and Equalities module. They report challenges with this system as young people are still recorded on the module after an investigation has found a reported case of bullying to be unfounded. Senior leaders also find this method of recording bullying to be bureaucratic.

[REDACTED]. Young people understand the different types of bullying behaviours and describe bullying in school as mainly of a verbal nature. A minority of learners have

experienced bullying or are aware of bullying incidents. Most young people can describe a range of ways to report bullying. However, a minority of young people do not feel confident to report incidents. Senior leaders need to consider and promote a range of ways for young people to report their concerns.

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

Staff monitor incidents of reported bullying very well. They review data on a weekly basis to identify trends and patterns. Staff value the regular sharing of information as this helps them to monitor and support young people better.

Senior leaders were concerned with the patterns identified and introduced measures to gather further information. They survey young people regularly in order to uncover the behaviours associated with bullying. Staff find the results of these surveys insightful in terms of challenging their assumptions. Staff believe the number of bullying incidents to be very low. However, young people feel that bullying is more common than perceived by staff.

The school community agrees that the nature of bullying is mainly of a verbal nature in school and online out of school. [REDACTED]

Young people have a reasonable understanding of the wellbeing indicators. They do not always feel confident in reporting bullying or feel that it would be taken seriously. Most young people are unaware of the school response and this is a barrier to reporting. Senior leaders are worried about the culture among young people that discourages reporting of concerns to staff.

Senior leaders ensure that the right to privacy for all young people involved in bullying incidents is maintained throughout the process. This causes challenges with a few parents who do not agree with the school's approaches.

Staff respond to bullying issues in a few areas of the curriculum. Young people feel that the quality of personal and social education needs to be improved, particularly in the senior phase. They would like to explore issues of relevance to them in greater depth.

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

Senior leaders and pastoral staff have implemented strategies to respond successfully to reported cases of bullying. The pupil support team determine the appropriate response, which is bespoke to the needs and wishes of the young people involved. Most young people are aware of the availability and accessibility of their pupil support teacher. Senior leaders are aware of the need to continue to explore ways for all young people to access support.

Staff are flexible and responsive to emerging issues. They offer a wide range of clubs and an inter-house programme, supported by senior learners. This helps provide activities at lunchtime as well as developing a positive and respectful ethos. Staff also provide safe spaces at breaks for young people who have experienced bullying. Most staff provide supervision in corridors and during breaks. A minority of young people feel that staff are inconsistent in their approach as a few do not always challenge bullying behaviour. A few learners feel that not all staff are

respectful towards them. Senior leaders recognise the need to develop a more consistent response from all staff.

Senior leaders report that periods of remote learning have adversely impacted on learners' experiences of anti-bullying education in the curriculum. Young people confirm that they need greater opportunities in lessons to explore the root causes of prejudice. They feel that staff should focus particularly on sexism, racism and homophobia.

Senior leaders have targeted professional learning towards improving approaches to wellbeing. They are investing in a range of initiatives as part of a wider strategy to promote a relational approach. This includes Mentors in Violence Prevention and a range of inputs led by private providers for staff and young people to lead change. Senior leaders are aware of the need to help staff to link their professional learning to their role in providing universal support.

Senior leaders acknowledge that there must be a culture shift across the school community. This includes all staff challenging the widespread use of unacceptable language from groups of learners. Senior learners should clarify their approach to encouraging young people not to be bystanders.