

## 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	Mount Carmel Primary School	
Date/time of visit	Wed 7 Sept 2022	9.10am – 3.45pm
HMI	[REDACTED]	
Date ROV submitted	[REDACTED]	

### Key contextual information (200 words)

School roll	183 children
Composition	Denominational (Roman Catholic) primary school
Demographics (SIMD, ethnicity, ASN)	SIMD 1 - 2: 61.33%, SIMD 3 – 7: 17.12%, SIMD 8 – 10: 21.55%. FSM: 29.83% ASN: 27%. Minority Ethnic: 7.57% (based on our records)
Leadership structure	The school has had significant changes to its leadership team since a school inspection (2017) and two subsequent further inspection visits (2018 and 2019). The headteacher has been in post since April 2022. The headteacher is supported by 1.0 DHT (covered by two staff members on a part time basis).
Bullying incidents logged on SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities Module	0

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

East Ayrshire Council has a clear and helpful anti-bullying policy. The council developed the policy in 2021 in collaboration with children, parents and staff. It reflects national guidance. The policy promotes children's rights, issues of equality, and has useful information relating to prejudice-based bullying, including protected characteristics. The document offers schools an effective template and instructions to create their own anti-bullying establishment statement. The template offers a framework to support senior leaders to review their anti-bullying processes. Senior leaders can record relevant staff professional learning relating to bullying, their approaches to raising children's awareness of bullying issues, how stakeholders can report

bullying, as well as sections to capture parents and children's views on bullying. It is unclear how and when the local authority intend to review this policy.

The headteacher acknowledges the school had not yet engaged with the East Ayrshire Council policy or produced an establishment statement. The school's anti-bullying policy is included within the Respectful Relationships policy. This document focuses primarily on behaviour management strategies and does not include a considered definition of bullying, nor information relating to recording bullying incidents, or how the school celebrates equality and diversity. Senior leaders recognise the need to improve the policy, through meaningful consultation with stakeholders, and ensure it reflects national and local guidance. The headteacher also intends to publish the updated policy on the school website. This is part of the school's improvement plan for session 2022-23. This has the potential to provide greater clarity of process and procedures to the school community. Most parents do not currently know how the school responds and records incidents of bullying and the current policy is not readily available to them. Parents and children are not aware of the complaints procedures if they are unsatisfied with the action taken by the school.

Senior leaders and staff recognise the need to improve systems for recording incidents of bullying. Staff currently use their own written pastoral notes on children to record relationship issues between children. Staff then use their professional judgement to determine whether concerns need to be passed on to senior leaders. When this happens senior leaders will log actions taken on SEEMiS pastoral notes. Staff report they address almost all relationships issues in the classroom without senior leader's involvement. This is leading to almost all bullying incidents not being appropriately recorded.

Staff explained they avoid using the term 'bullying' to avoid negative connotations. They also avoid using labels such as 'victim' and 'perpetrator', as per national guidance. The headteacher identifies the need for the school community to have an agreed definition of bullying and clarity over the thresholds for when behaviour should be defined as bullying. This lack of clarity is a barrier to the current systems having the desired impact. Staff would also benefit from professional learning focusing on bullying, such as the resources available on the Respectme website.

Senior leaders and clerical staff are responsible for recording information on the SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities module (BEM). They have not recorded any incidents of bullying on BEM.

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

Staff have informal systems for monitoring bullying issues. Teachers communicate well with pupil support assistants (PSA) and ensure PSA know of ongoing or new bullying issues between children. PSA monitor children during play and lunchtimes. PSA report they feel confident to support children and intervene if they witness bullying behaviours. Teachers are responsive to relationship issues between children and take appropriate action, such as restorative meetings, to address them. Most children and parents recognise that staff do not accept bullying in the school and take appropriate action when they witness bullying behaviours in children. Almost all children report that they feel safe in school and they would know who to speak to if they need help with bullying. Almost all parents and most children feel staff treat children with respect and fairness when dealing with bullying issues. Staff actively listen to all of the children involved in a bullying incident and encourage children to focus on the impact and consequences of their actions.

Senior leadership do not have recording systems to support whole school monitoring of bullying. They are unable to identify specific trends or patterns based on data. Senior leaders and staff identify and discuss current issues experienced within the school. These included online bullying on social media platforms and children who are relatives falling out due to family disagreements. These were identified from parents contacting senior leaders to raise concerns. This has led to well-planned partner agency involvement to offer targeted support to children and families. This includes the Campus Police Officer working with a small group of children to look at the impact and consequences of cyber-bullying. The home school partnership worker has also developed a targeted health and wellbeing programme for children who are struggling to form and sustain positive relationships.

From the pre-questionnaire, a majority of parents did not know how the school investigates incidents of bullying and most parents did not know how staff record incidents of bullying. The headteacher recognises the need to better inform parents of the processes and systems used. A few parents commented on wanting more information from the school when they have contacted the headteacher with concerns about bullying. They would like to know what actions have been taken to address issues and reassurance that the issue is taken seriously. The headteacher demonstrated her understanding of the importance of maintaining a child's privacy by not discussing them with another parent when an issue is raised.

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

Staff use wellbeing webs every term to support children to consider their wellbeing needs. Teachers review the information gained from wellbeing webs to conduct wellbeing check ins with children or to target whole class health and wellbeing lessons focusing on particular indicators, such as safety and respect. Staff could extend the use of the wellbeing indicators to support children to review the impact of bullying and as a tool to identify when a child needs additional emotional or wellbeing support.

Staff discussed the impact of the pandemic on children's social and relationship skills. They recognise children are struggling to play and interact positively with their peers. Children in P1 and P2 find it difficult to share and understand the need to take turns with their peers. The headteacher has introduced a peer mentoring initiative during social time where children in P6 work with children in P1 and P2 to encourage positive play. The children in P6 are positive about the training they receive to help them work with the younger children. They are introducing children in P1 and P2 to new and unfamiliar games and encouraging them to develop team work and social skills. Staff report this is leading to improved relationships and positive interactions between children. Staff have seen these improvements while observing children in the playground.

Staff have positively reviewed their approach to class charters to place a greater focus on children's rights. They believe this is supporting children to communicate what they need from each other in order to learn in a safe and positive environment. Children and staff review and agree class charters to ensure all children are aware of expectations.

Since 2018, staff have used the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATH) curriculum resource. This programme of health and wellbeing lessons aims to improve children's emotional intelligence, social skills, and self-control. Staff report that children benefit from the PATH staff professional learning which they feel is helping them to be more reactive to the children's needs. Senior leaders and staff report that the programme is improving children's resilience and

prompting greater consideration for their peers. The headteacher acknowledges the need to consider how best to evaluate the impact of this resource.

A few children stated that they would like to talk more about bullying and what they should do if they experience or witness bullying. Staff feel this aspect of the health and wellbeing curriculum could be enhanced. The headteacher discusses bullying as a theme during whole school assemblies, using the school values to support the message of kindness and compassion. A few children said they would be scared to report bullying in case it led to them being bullied.

Staff would benefit from further professional learning focusing on adverse childhood experiences, trauma-responsive practice and children's mental health. This has the potential to support staff to recognise behaviour as communication and consider the underlying reasons for a child's behaviour. Staff currently focus on responding to the behaviour being demonstrated in order to promote good order in the school.

**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].

[REDACTED].