

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	St. Michael's Primary School	
Date/time of visit	Thurs 8 Sept 2022	9.00am – 4:30pm
HMI	[Redacted]	
Date ROV submitted	[Redacted]	

Key contextual information (200 words)

School roll	172 children
Composition	Non-denominational primary school
Demographics (SIMD, ethnicity, ASN)	The headteacher stated that there were 14 children with additional support needs. Children with English as an Additional Language (EAL): 20% The school support 13 children from Ukraine.
Leadership structure	Headteacher is supported by a 0.3 FTE principal teacher. The headteacher has been in post for 13 years.

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

The anti-bullying policy is contained within the school's Promoting Positive Behaviour policy. The policy was updated in February 2020 in order to reflect the 'Respect for All' national guidance. The former principal teacher planned to complete a wider consultation involving staff and parents. The first period of lockdown impacted on these plans and the policy was launched with limited consultation with staff and no involvement from other stakeholders. The policy is planned for review in February 2023.

The policy offers a clear definition of bullying. It also identifies what would not be considered bullying, such as everyday fall-outs. The policy clearly establishes the school's zero tolerance for bullying and offers limited information as to how staff deal with bullying incidents. It outlines prejudice-based bullying relating to the protected characteristics. The policy would benefit from review involving wider engagement with stakeholders. Some of the language used is outdated and does not reflect 'Respect for All'. It also lacks clarity in terms of the processes used to address bullying, the impact of bullying, or how senior leaders intend to

monitor and review bullying incidents. It would also benefit from a greater focus on 'Respect for All', GIRFEC principles, and children's rights.

The school do not use the SEEMiS Bullying and Equalities module (BEM) to record incidents of bullying. The headteacher explained that she is uncomfortable to formally record bullying as parents would not support relationship issues being defined in this way. The headteacher has a paper-based system for recording behaviour and relationship issues. The headteacher does not routinely use SEEMiS pastoral notes to record issues. Instead, the headteacher uses an activity time passport to log children's positive achievements and behaviour and relationship issues. This document is shared with children and parents at the end of the school year to demonstrate the child's learning and development.

The headteacher and staff recognise the need to involve children and parents in reaching an agreed definition of bullying behaviours and an approach to managing these issues as an important next step. Children and parents do not have a strong awareness of the existing policy and the processes which are followed to address issues. The revised policy would benefit from becoming widely available to all stakeholders.

In the pre-questionnaires, almost all children indicated that bullying is not accepted in their school and almost all knew who to speak to if they, or someone they know, is being bullied. Children believe the headteacher and staff are responsive in dealing with relationship issues. Most children feel safe in the school.

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

Staff use the school's code of conduct to identify children who are not meeting expectations. Staff have refocused their behaviour management system to place an emphasis on children earning activity time at the end of the week rather than losing time. Children who do not meet expectations spend part or all of their activity time with the headteacher where they review their conduct and have a restorative conversation. Children feel this conversation supports them to review and consider their actions and what they would do differently in the future. The headteacher records these conversations on the children's activity time passport. These records indicate situations where children have demonstrated bullying behaviours, such as verbal abuse or hitting another child. These have not been recorded on BEM. The headteacher's system allows the school to monitor well cases of bullying and their frequency. The system does not allow staff to identify trends and patterns across the school. Staff were unable to discuss specific bullying trends, other than recognising football as being a trigger for relationships issues between children. This message was reinforced by children and the headteacher.

Staff are responsive to relationship issues which arise in class. They frequently arrange restorative meetings between children and support children to discuss what has happened and how to move forward positively. Staff appropriately avoid using labels, such as victim and bully, but recognise that there is a need for greater consistency in staff's process of assessing and defining bullying behaviours. A few children have experienced bullying stated that they do not always feel listened to when they are talking about the impact of bullying on them.

Staff reported a reduction in the allocation of pupil support assistants (PSA) to the school. This is limiting the number of adults available to monitor children in the playground during breaks. Staff recognise social time, such as intervals and lunchtimes, are often when relationship issues occur.

The headteacher and staff ensure the school has an inclusive culture where diversity is celebrated. The school community has been enhanced by 13 children from the Ukraine. Children talk about the positive impact of assemblies focusing on different cultures but also on informal events, such as classmates sharing their experience of cultural holidays, on the respectful ethos of the school. Staff ensure resources are translated into a range of languages to support the needs of children with EAL and their families, including into Polish, Ukrainian and Russian. This is supporting the development of positive relationships across the school community.

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 with children regularly to consider their wellbeing needs. The school could target the use of the wellbeing indicators better to support children who experience bullying to reflect on its impact using a shared vocabulary of wellbeing across the school.

Staff are positive about the support they receive from the headteacher to access relevant and helpful professional learning. Staff have recently benefitted from learning focusing on de-escalation techniques and managing challenging conversations. Staff would benefit from further professional learning focusing on bullying, such as the resources available on the 'Respectme' website. This learning could be enhanced by an additional focus on whole school nurturing principles, adverse childhood experiences, and trauma-responsive practice. 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 to promote good order in the school.

Children learn about bullying during assemblies and health and wellbeing (HWB) lessons. Most children talk confidently about their responsibility to be a good citizen and report bullying that they witness. Staff offered a few examples of partnership working to support bullying issues, such as an input from Community Police in relation to cyber-bullying. Children in P7 act as a buddy for children in P1 and P2. These buddies encourage positive play and interactions between their younger peers during social time. Children in P7 talk about how this experience is helping them to show care and compassion for their peers.

Staff talked about an increase in relationship issues between children since periods of lockdown. Staff talked about children losing their temper with others quicker, lacking resilience when there is conflict with others, and struggling with free-flowing play opportunities. Staff are also concerned about the impact of the cost of living crisis on families. They believe it has the potential to limit some children's access to clubs and social activities outwith school, due to the additional costs. Staff would like to see more engagement from partner agencies and community groups to support children to develop their relationship and interpersonal skills.

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]