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	Westhill Primary School	
Date/time of visit	10 October 2022	9:00 – 16:50
HMI	[Redacted]	
Date ROV submitted	[Redacted]	

Key contextual information (200 words)	
School roll	337 plus 70 in nursery
Composition	13 classes
Demographics (SIMD, ethnicity, ASN)	Almost all are in SIMD 8-10 Ethnically diverse school with 17 languages spoken and a range of religious backgrounds. Approximately one third of the roll is identified as having an additional support need.
Leadership structure	Headteacher has been in post for five years. She is supported by two substantive depute headteachers. A senior practitioner manages the nursery.

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

Senior leaders started working on the school's Promoting Positive Relationships Policy (including Anti-Bullying) in 2020. They consulted with staff and parents about the draft policy. The policy reflects national guidance, including Respect for All and Getting it Right for Every Child, and references children's rights appropriately. The approach is based on the school's shared values of kindness, respect, responsibility and togetherness, which children are familiar with. The policy focuses on approaches to create a positive ethos and peaceful learning environments. At the heart of these approaches is promoting positive relationships and behaviour. Given the diverse context of the school, the policy should reference protected characteristics more strongly.

Almost all children understand what bullying is and most say that bullying is not acceptable at their school. Most children know who to speak to if they or someone they know is being bullied. A majority of parents are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy however more than half do not feel they had a say in developing this. Evidence indicates that parents and children do not

all understand fully the approach staff are taking at the school. Senior leaders are aware of the need to involve children and parents more meaningfully in their planned review of the policy.

Approaches to recording incidences of bullying at the school need to improve. Depute headteachers make hand-written notes that they pass to the headteacher, who then records each incident in pastoral notes. The headteacher is mindful of the need to ensure that content is complaint with GDPR. Senior leaders record very few incidents on SEEMiS. Senior leaders take an approach based strongly on restorative approaches and work with children and parents to resolve difficulties. It is clear from the notes that many pupils and parents consider incidents to be bullying. However, none of these incidents appears as bullying in the school's records. Senior leaders believe that by recording them in SEEMiS, they would be labelling children as bullies or victims and are reluctant to do this. Senior leaders describe SEEMiS are cumbersome, clunky and time-consuming. They say there is insufficient space to record the details of the incident and it is difficult to extract data.

Just over half of children know what happens when they report an incident of bullying. A majority do not know how staff record bullying incidents at their school. Most parents do not know how staff record incidents of bullying.

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

Senior leaders know the children well and spend a lot of time investigating and talking to children, and following up with parents. They take care to ensure the privacy of children when investigating incidents, by not using the names of others. They are careful with the use of the word bullying as they feel it is an emotionally charged term. They are mindful that it can become a label for children who are struggling and who need support.

Senior leaders introduced a simple table this term to give them an overview of children who are having relationship difficulties. This records the name of the child and the date of any incidences. Children whose names appear more frequently receive additional, targeted support. Senior leaders discuss the needs of these children formally with teachers at tracking meetings three times a year.

Overall, approaches to recording and monitoring bullying incidents at the school needs to improve. At present, there is no useful overview of incidents. [Redacted]. Senior leaders have no overview of trends in the types of bullying or of those related to protected characteristics. The headteacher has had no discussions with the local authority about bullying at the school.

Senior leaders are aware that almost all incidents that they deal with take place in the playground. A few teachers are making effective use of emotional check ins and sharing circles after lunchtime. However, there is not a consistent approach to this across all stages of the school. Teachers are aware of the need to have a consistent, progressive approach to developing children's knowledge and skills through the curriculum. Approaches to resolving difficulties between children are very adult-led at present. Children need support to help develop the skills to resolve difficulties themselves, without resorting to self-defence.

It is not clear how senior leaders inform and include children and parents in the resolution of incidents of bullying. [Redacted]. Senior leaders are aware of the need to involve all stakeholders more meaningfully in reviewing incident of bullying.

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

All staff believe that behaviour is communication and respond by trying to support children with what they need and to develop their social skills. Senior leaders and staff feel a restorative approach is the most beneficial and appropriate way to support children. Recent feedback was positive about a helpful leaflet for parents to help them to understand restorative approaches. Senior leaders need to continue to ensure all stakeholders understand the approaches they are taking.

Professional learning in restorative approaches and helpful scripts for staff is leading to greater consistency. One of the depute headteachers is trained in nurturing approaches. She is aware of the need to ensure that universal nurturing approaches are consistent across all stages of the school. The school's educational psychologist delivered useful professional learning recently on zones of regulation. This is helping staff to support children to recognise and manage emotions better in class. Senior leaders should continue to develop this approach in a progressive and consistent way across the school and in the playground.

Senior leaders need to support teachers and support staff to embed the universal use of the wellbeing indicators. Children have little understand of them at present. Senior leaders use wellbeing webs to help them plan targeted support for children they are concerned about. There are a few good examples of eight week focused interventions have had a positive impact, with less fall outs with friends taking place for the children involved. Children in one class understand neurodiversity after a focused piece of learning to help them to understand their peers better. Depute headteachers make use of a 'cozy corner' in their office for children who need time out from their peers for a short time.

Children need to be more involved and have more awareness of how staff deal with bullying at the school. Almost all children feel that at present approaches are not fair and consistent. They feel that some children receive preferential treatment, which suggests lack of understanding of the approaches staff are using. A few parents do not understand the school's approaches well enough. Going forwards, senior leaders need to ensure that all stakeholders understand and have greater ownership of approaches to bullying.

It would be helpful for staff to develop buddying approaches at the school and to introduce more quiet spaces in the playground. Further work to make the values more explicit in relation to relationships and behaviour would also be helpful.

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]

[Redacted]