

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	Whalsay School	
Date/time of visit	7 September 2022	All day
HMI	[Redacted]	
Date ROV submitted		

Key contextual information (200 words)

School roll	170
Composition	Whalsay School is an all-through school situated on a small island off the coast of the mainland of Shetland. The nursery, primary and secondary stages are located in different buildings, which are close to each other. There is also a leisure centre on the campus that the school makes good use of. 50 learners in secondary (S1-4) 95 learners in primary (4 classes) 25 learners in nursery (age 3 upwards)
Demographics (SIMD, ethnicity, ASN)	Almost all children live in deciles 6 and 7. 30 children across the school are identified as ASN. [Redacted]
Leadership structure	Headteacher leads the school. Two deputy headteachers (who job share in primary) PT Pupil Support

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

All schools in Shetland follow the local authority's anti-bullying policy and procedures that were introduced in 2018. The local authority developed the policy in consultation with stakeholders. The policy is comprehensive and is linked clearly to national guidance and legislation, including children's rights and Getting it Right for Every Child. It aims to provide clarity, consistency and coherence in approaches towards recognising, responding to, recording and preventing bullying. The local authority planned to review the policy, procedures and guidance by the end of last session. It is unclear if this has taken place.

A working group of staff at Whalsay School developed its own policy on positive relationships and behaviour at the beginning of the 2019-20 session. The policy centres on three rules to keep learners safe and valued: be safe, be respectful and be your best. All staff are positive about this work and of their approaches to prevent bullying. Senior leaders could strengthen this policy by including reference to national guidance and legislation.

Almost all children and young people understand what bullying is and recognise that it is not acceptable at their school. A majority of parents are aware of the school's approaches and feel confident about reporting bullying. Most parents are unaware of being involved in the development of the school's policy.

The local authority policy provides a helpful flowchart for staff to deal with bullying. The first step of this is to consider the impact of the behaviour before deciding to record an incident as bullying. Senior leaders are able to evidence the recording of incidents over time, including more recently on SEEMiS and in line with national guidance. They need to make all stakeholders, especially parents, more aware of how they record and deal with bullying at the school.

The headteacher recognises the strengths of recording incidents using SEEMiS. It supports identification of patterns and trends over time, such as types of bullying, and where it takes place. However, senior leaders feel that there is a tension between recording bullying and supporting learners to resolve conflict in a restorative way. They have challenges also with the thresholds of bullying and what they should actually record. They feel that by labelling bullying behaviour the situation can become more emotive. They feel this obstructs the process of restorative conversations and resolving difficulties.

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

Children and young people at the school enjoy strong, trusting relationships with staff. They learn about bullying through the health and wellbeing curriculum. Most children and young people have someone in school they can talk to about any concerns about bullying. As a result, all staff feel confident that they will identify bullying when it happens and pass concerns on. All staff are very sensitive of the need to protect dignity and ensure privacy for children and young people when responding to bullying.

Senior leaders are very visible around the school during classes and social times. They and the staff know the children and young people very well indeed. Senior leaders learn about bullying incidents in a range of ways. Given the school roll, stakeholders tend to pass on concerns verbally. This can also happen by concerned parties writing it down on documents or in an email. Senior leaders will respond immediately and provide support to potential victims. They will conduct and conclude an investigation within three days. In a small community, it can sometimes be a challenge to maintain anonymity, but all staff strive to preserve privacy.

The headteacher chairs fortnightly support for learning meetings to monitor the progress and wellbeing of all learners. This includes being alert to any potential bullying situations, as well as monitoring incidents that have taken place. This can result in changes to the personal and social education curriculum, for example. In addition, senior leaders monitor wellbeing formally twice a year and use this data to notice any trends or concerns for individuals or groups.

The local authority monitors bullying data annually. The school's quality improvement officer visits once a term and will discuss bullying with senior leaders.

Senior leaders need to do more to raise awareness of children and young people and their parents about how bullying is reported and recorded at the school. They should also ensure all stakeholders are involved fully in reviewing the school's approaches. A few parents raised concerns about the school's approaches and senior leaders should address these.

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

The local authority policy stresses the need for a whole-school approach that places the values of respect and inclusion at the heart of an establishment's ethos. It states that creating an environment that fosters positive relationships, better behaviour and high expectations will help to prevent bullying. In the policy, it recognises that bullying behaviour can affect children's and young people's wellbeing negatively. All staff are clear that bullying has no place at the school.

All staff and learners are familiar with the school's own promoting positive relationships and behaviour policy. To support the roll out of this policy, the working group facilitated professional learning for all staff to ensure consistent approaches. This included input based on Paul Dix's work 'when the adults change' as well as developing restorative practices across the school. All learners are familiar with and understand the approach to 'be safe, be respectful, and be your best'. Staff refer to and reinforce these rules on an ongoing basis. They encourage children and young people to take responsibility for their behaviour and their actions. Playground buddies support their peers during social times away from the classroom. Staff use the Circle of Friends approach to support children and young people who appear to be left out by their peers.

Most learners feel safe in school and have someone to speak to if they or someone else is being bullied. A majority feel that staff deal effectively with bullying at the school. A minority of parents do not feel however that the school deals well with bullying. Senior leaders need to revisit the anti-bullying policy with parents and ensure all are aware of the procedures at the school.

Teachers talk to children and young people about the wellbeing indicators in a range of ways across the nursery and school. They track learners' wellbeing formally twice a year using a wellbeing wheel. Staff could embed the use of the wellbeing indicators more in their day-to-day work with children and young people, including how they respond to bullying.

All staff are very conscious of the potential impact of labelling children and young people in the close-knit island community. Staff in the nursery, in particular, described challenges in labelling negative behaviour as bullying.

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]

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