

Respect for All Review
Recording and Monitoring Incidents in Schools
5 March, 15:00-16:30

[Click here to join the meeting](#)

Chair's brief

Helpful links:

- [Respect for All](#)
- [supplementary guidance on recording and monitoring](#)
- [Thematic Inspection](#)
- [Relationships and Behaviour Summit: Recording and monitoring](#)

1. Welcome and introductions

Thank you all for attending today [expecting 11 people].

Apologies from:

- [redacted], respectme
- [redacted], SLS
- [redacted], NSPCC
- [redacted], SYP

I know most of you know each other from the main Respect for All working group, however we also have [redacted] and [redacted] from SEEMiS here today so it would be helpful if we could do a quick round of introductions for this first meeting.

2. Background and key themes

As you all know, we're updating our national anti-bullying guidance Respect for All. We are aiming to have the updated guidance published in November this year so it was agreed that certain aspects of the guidance will require more in depth consideration and updates, including recording and monitoring incidents in schools. The national approach to recording and monitoring bullying incidents in schools was implemented in 2019 and is supported by supplementary guidance which was shared with the papers.

The purpose of this subgroup is to identify and consider any changes required to the supplementary guidance on recording and monitoring.

The work of this group will be informed by two pieces of work undertaken last year, links to both were shared with the papers. The Scottish Government commissioned HMle to carry out a thematic inspection on how successfully the new approach had been implemented, which was published on 23 February 2023.

Key findings of the thematic inspection:

National approach to recording and monitoring incidents

- Most senior leaders report the national approach to recording bullying through the Bullying and Equalities module (BEM) in SEEMiS is not the most effective recording system for recording incidents.
- Challenges include difficulties in navigating the system, the length of time required to complete the recording and updating of incidents, the potential for duplication, a lack of flexibility to detail incidents and actions taken to support those involved, and the ability to monitor specific issues, trends and other patterns, restricting proactive responses.
- Nearly half of schools have created their own parallel system to record bullying incidents. Almost all of those not using BEM are using their own preferred system.
- Schools have a difficulty in agreeing a shared definition of bullying with their stakeholders and report the current national definition is open to interpretation and does not support them to identify which behaviours are bullying. There is therefore a risk of underreporting.
- Senior leaders are concerned about the potential negative impact of individual CYP having bullying on their record (as either a 'bully' or a 'victim'.)
- In almost all schools, staff provide appropriate support to children and young people who both display and experience bullying behaviours.
- Examples of improved policy and practice as a result of effective data analysis include adaptations to the school environment, amendments to the health and wellbeing curriculum, targeted support for individuals and professional learning for staff. There is significant scope for schools to strengthen their arrangements for using data to identify patterns and trends of incidents of bullying to help guide improvements in practice.
- Senior leaders recognise that creating an inclusive ethos and culture is the most effective way of reducing and responding to incidents of bullying. In most schools, the anti-bullying policy and day-to-day practice reflect an ambition to ensure a strong ethos of fairness, equality and respect. Complemented with positive relationships and behaviour policies.

Learner and Parent views

- 40% of children and young people have experienced bullying (8233 respondents to survey.)
- A fifth of learners do not feel confident reporting an incident of bullying.
- 43% of CYP and 30% of parents and carers (1633 respondents) are aware of how incidents are recorded
- 56% of pupils and 46% of parents think their school deals well with bullying.

Recommendations

- SG should work with partners to review the functionality of BEM to make it more practical for schools to record and monitor incidents of bullying.
- Schools should work in partnership with parents, learners and staff to agree a shared definition of bullying within their school community.
- Schools should ensure they have suitable arrangements in place to encourage children and young people to report, with confidence, all incidents of alleged bullying.
- Schools must regularly record bullying incidents accurately and monitor this information systematically. This will allow them to identify more readily the scope and scale of bullying incidents and make improvements in policy and practice to support learners wellbeing.

We met with SEEMiS following the publication of the report to discuss the points around functionality of the system which was really helpful. We think there's a piece of work that could help around training/awareness of what the system and reports can do which we can pick up as part of this group.

Education Scotland have undertaken a second phase of the inspection looking at good practice in responding to bullying which they expect to publish this month.

The second piece of evidence that will inform this work is part of wider work the Cabinet Secretary has been undertaking in response to concerns about relationships and behaviour in schools where a series of summits were held last year. The first summit discussed recording and monitoring incidents in schools.

The primary aim of this summit was two-fold: to identify issues relevant to recording and monitoring incidents in schools; and to identify practical solutions necessary to tackle these together, at a school level, local level and national level.

The key themes coming out of the summit were:

- cultural/ Definition and understanding
- a shared understanding of what a recordable incident (and what bullying means) is necessary across all levels to enable appropriate, consistent recording
- Important to understand the context; response will be guided by the type of incident and support necessary
- the importance of engaging with parents and the ethos that comes before recording was noted
- the importance of creating a culture where people feel comfortable (and able) to report was noted

Thoughts from [redacted]

Reporting pathways - these are the pre-cursor to recording and monitoring. Unless there are clear and trusted ways for CYP to report bullying safely, recording and monitoring will remain variable. An ask of our Youth Action Group in our Listen Up! campaign made this plea of adults to '[Create simple, safe pathways for reporting bullying that protect children's rights.](#)' We have good practice examples of how this can be done using anonymous post-boxes in schools, secure email addresses, QR codes linked to pastoral staff, etc. You should also be aware that the Keep Safe Kids App [Keep Safe Kids App \(iammesotland.co.uk\)](#) has been piloted by Renfrewshire Council and the model, which not only allows CYP to report bullying directly to their school via the App, but also provides links to support for specific themes, eg LGBT/mental health, etc., could readily be expanded for use across all LAs.

Definition - this continues to cause practitioners confusion, as set out in the thematic review and the summit in relation what constitutes a recordable incident. The driver for this should always be the **impact** on the CYP of the behaviour they are experiencing. This is articulated in significant detail in paragraphs 32-42 of the Supplementary Guidance. Specific guidance on 'out of school' incidents are noted at para 40 - the language of 'Schools **may**...' was designed to allow for selectivity with

particular regard to online bullying, recognising limited capacity for investigation of all incidents. Nonetheless, if bullying outside of school is impacting CYP wellbeing and learning, schools retain their scope to investigate if they feel it is necessary.

Managing Incidents - summit feedback speaks to the need for a consistent protocol for this. SEEMIS, used properly, can provide this through the Bullying & Equalities module as it's designed around a case management, end-to-end approach. HMiE noted that some schools use pastoral notes as an alternative way of recording. This was explored in the RAMBIS work of 2017, and agreed that this was an unhelpful method as it doesn't create a record in SEEMIS and data cannot be extrapolated without going back through individual records. The process, however, works better in reverse, as creation of a SEEMIS record automatically generates a pastoral note where more detail can be held. [redacted] should be able to speak to the **Glasgow City Council** mandate to senior staff in 2021/22, which respectme heavily supported, which focussed on recording & monitoring and should be showing results/trends/improvements by now.

Children's Rights & Recording - given the enactment of the UNCRC in July, duty bearers are required to consider this, and all aspects of RfA, through the lens of Children's Rights. I noticed two issues in the reports/feedback which merit attention. Firstly, there was mention of stigmatisation and labelling of CYP; it should be noted that on SEEMIS there is no labelling of CYP as 'bullies' or 'victims', and indeed every LA policy also reflects this stance. Secondly, there was concern around whether CYP consent was required in order to record an incident. I would suggest that even although not all bullying would be regarded as a child protection concern, it is always harmful behaviour and in the best interests of the CYP and school safeguarding team that there is a record noted, for which no consent would be required.

We are aware of parental concerns that a formal record of 'bullying' will follow their child throughout their school life, prompting a negative bias, especially at transition (although there is no evidence, other than anecdotal, to support this). Teachers are also often uneasy about their personal liability when recording incidents where there is a prejudiced or discriminatory element. I suspect this topic could be a thorny issue which may require legal overview.

3. Respect for All: Recording and monitoring

Welcome thoughts from members on the areas in the supplementary guidance that will require to be strengthened or updated.

Short term / long term.

4. AOB

Invite AOB from members.

We will bring these changes back to another subgroup meeting before taking to the main Respect for All working group.