

SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL'S



# SBC:**INCLUDES** RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS AND ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Summary Document

Ensuring safe, respectful and nurturing environments for children  
and young people in Scottish Borders



## INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Borders Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy is one of a suite of policy and guidance documents in the Inclusion Framework, within the context of our overarching policy on Inclusion and our Nurturing Approaches Guidelines.

The policy applies to all incidents of bullying behaviour within a learning establishment between children and young people.

Based on [Respect for All](#) \*: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, the policy provides a coherent and consistent approach for staff, parents/carers, and children and young people on the prevention, early intervention and management of bullying behaviour.

In order to outline the procedures and actions which learning establishments will undertake to embed this policy, each establishment should complete a **Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Establishment Statement** (See Appendix 1 of the main policy document).

## RESPECTFUL RELATIONSHIPS

In Scottish Borders learning establishments, adults should work together with children and young people to create an environment that encourages respect, celebrates difference and promotes positive relationships and behaviour.

The starting point for promoting respectful relationships and behaviour is the provision of a:

- coherent and inclusive curriculum
- effective and engaging learning and teaching
- whole school nurturing ethos based on positive relationships
- whole school commitment to inclusion

SBC Includes: [Inclusion Policy](#) Jan 2020

## ETHOS AND CULTURE

All learning establishments should work to create a positive ethos and culture of respect and trust based upon shared values. An inclusive culture and ethos will minimise incidences of bullying however, any bullying behaviour is unacceptable and should be dealt with in line with the Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy procedures and guidelines.

## WHAT DO WE MEAN BY BULLYING?

*"Bullying is face-to-face and/or online behaviour which impacts on a person's sense of physical and emotional safety, their capacity to feel in control of their life and their ability to respond effectively to the situation they are in."*

*"The behaviour does not need to be repeated, or intended to cause harm, for it to have an impact. Bullying behaviour can be physical, emotional or verbal and can cause people to feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out." (respectme,2024)*

This behaviour can harm people mentally, emotionally, socially, and physically. The actual behaviour, such as actions, looks, messages, confrontations, or physical interventions, does not always need to be repeated for it to have a lasting impact; the fear of the behaviour reoccurring can have a lasting effect. Bullying is more likely to occur in the context of an existing imbalanced relationship but may also happen where no previous or current relationship exists. It can be carried out by an individual or sometimes involve a group of people.

## Online Bullying

In today's digital age online bullying, or cyberbullying, is a major issue impacting children and young people. This type of bullying utilizes digital tools like social media, messaging apps, gaming forums, and mobile devices to intimidate, isolate, or humiliate individuals. The impact of this can be as hurtful and damaging as other forms of bullying behaviour and should be taken as seriously as offline bullying.

Whilst advances in technology, including social media, provide many possibilities to enhance learning and teaching, staff in learning establishments should be alert to its possible misuse. Some online behaviour is illegal. Children and young people need to be made aware of the far-reaching consequences of posting inappropriate or harmful content on forums, websites, social networking platforms, etc.

## Bullying, Mental Health and Trauma

Bullying can lead to serious mental health issues like anxiety, depression, and self-harm, which may persist into adulthood. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) such as neglect or abuse increase the risk of bullying behaviour and its effects. Addressing trauma is essential in anti-bullying efforts.

## Language and Use of “Labels”

When talking about bullying, it is important not to label children and young people as ‘bullies’, ‘victims’ or ‘perpetrators’. Reference should be made instead to “those experiencing bullying behaviour” and “those displaying bullying behaviour”. All children and young people need help to understand why bullying behaviour is wrong in order that they can change it.

## Bullying or Criminal Behaviour?

Bullying isn't legally defined in Scotland and isn't a crime by itself, but some bullying behaviours can be criminal. It's important to distinguish between bullying and criminal actions based on context.

## Examples of criminal offenses:

- **Physical behaviour:** Violence, verbal abuse, and aggression can impact health and may be considered assault.
- **Sexual behaviour:** Coercion or inappropriate touching is sexual assault or abuse, a form of gender-based violence (GBV). More information about GBV, is available within the [Scottish Government's framework on preventing and responding to gender-based violence in schools](#).
- **Online behaviour:** Harassment and abuse can be illegal.
- **Hate crime:** Bullying motivated by prejudice can resemble hate crime, involving malice towards a group based on characteristics, addressed by The [Hate Crime and Public Order \(Scotland\) Act 2021](#).

# STOP BULLYING



## PREJUDICE-BASED BULLYING

Bullying behaviour can often be rooted in prejudice due to difference or perceived difference. This can lead to prejudice and discriminatory language or behaviour.

Respect for All states: "Prejudice based bullying is when bullying behaviour is motivated by prejudice, based on dislike of an individual's actual or perceived identity and reflects wider societal trends of inequality and power. Prejudice comes in a variety of distinct forms and prejudice-based bullying can have wide-ranging impacts on children and young people's health and wellbeing."

Learning establishments are expected to challenge inequality and promote inclusive and nurturing environments where bullying based on or motivated by these is never acceptable.

**Intersectionality:** People's identities are complex and can be influenced by multiple factors simultaneously. Children facing multiple inequalities may experience bullying from various prejudices. It's important for staff, parents, and others to consider these overlapping inequalities when addressing bullying.

**Structural inequalities:** These are unfair distributions of privilege, resources, safety, and power that favour certain groups, leading to bullying based on protected characteristics.

**Internalised prejudice:** When children believe stereotypes and discriminatory views, it harms their self-esteem and confidence. They might not recognize prejudice-based bullying, so staff need to address these prejudices even if the child doesn't mention them.

**Intergroup prejudice:** Bullying within minority groups, such as racism among different ethnic backgrounds or misogyny among girls, requires creating a space where children feel confident to discuss various types of prejudice.

## WHAT TO DO IF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IS EXPERIENCED

1. How the member of staff reacts is crucial, a child's experience may be directly affected by the response they get from the adult.
2. The staff member should reassure the child/young person that they have done the right thing by reporting the bullying and should arrange a suitable time speak to them about it further.
3. Staff should gently encourage the child/young person to talk and find out as much information as possible.

respectme recommend that the most effective way for staff to structure their response to bullying is to ask themselves these questions:

- What was the behaviour?
- What impact did it have?
- What does the child or young person want to happen?
- What do I need to do about it?
- Is there evidence of any prejudice-based attitude or behaviour?



### **\*Remember Consent, Confidentiality and Child Protection\***

4. Staff need to be very clear with the child or young person about what happens next. Those experiencing bullying behaviour need to retain some feeling of control over the situation. It is vital that they are involved in deciding and **agree to the next steps**.

“There isn't any single approach when responding to bullying, and what works for one child or situation, may not work for another. Children and young people value choices.” [respectme - Responding to bullying](#)

### **\*\*Steps 1 – 4 should be completed within 5 school/working days\*\***

5. **Monitoring** meetings should be scheduled with the children/young people involved at increasing intervals of time as appropriate to the circumstances. All parties involved should mutually agree a date for the monitoring to stop. If the agreed course of action is not effective, then step 4 should be revisited and a new agreement made.

6. Following the agreed date for monitoring to stop, there should be a date set for **review** to ensure that the bullying behaviour has not started again. Regular check-ins with all parties involved would also be beneficial between the end of monitoring and the review date.

### **\*\* Step 4, 5 and 6 should be seen as ongoing until the situation is resolved\*\***

7. When all parties agree that the bullying behaviour incident has been resolved satisfactorily, then the incident can be 'signed-off' in SEEMIS.

There should be **regular communication** with all parties involved throughout the process and a record of all communication should be kept.

**Care and support** needs to continue throughout the process for all people involved. Ongoing monitoring and support may be required to aid recovery.

Any individual has the right to express their dissatisfaction and complain if they feel that the learning establishment has not fulfilled the expectations of this policy or any agreed management plans.

[Scottish Borders Council Complaints Handling Procedure](#)

**\*\*Further guidance on the steps outlined in this flow chart can be found in the Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Policy section 5\*\***

## WHAT ABOUT THE CHILD WHO IS DISPLAYING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR?

There are many reasons why children and young people may get involved in bullying behaviour, it may well be that the behaviour stems from an unmet need, in this case staff should:

- Deal with the behaviour in the same way as they would deal with any type of distressed behaviour
- Avoid labelling
- Listen and support to identify thoughts/feelings behind the behaviour
- Support children and young people to find other ways to manage difficult feelings
- Have conversations with parents
- Be prepared for a strong reaction from all involved
- Be prepared to address prejudicial attitudes
- Support repair of relationships, where possible
- Address what is happening behind the behaviour
- Behave in a restorative way, demonstrating restorative values and using restorative thinking and language

There will be a wide range of actions or consequences that a learning setting can take in response to bullying incidents. These actions should be proportionate and appropriate to the age and stage of the child and to the incident.

### Restorative Approaches

A restorative approach recognises that people are the experts of their own solutions and if implemented effectively will promote accountability and maximise personal responsibility. A restorative approach provides a framework of values, thinking and language that is helpful when 'something' needs to be restored.

Being restorative can be proactive (relationship building) or responsive (relationship repairing) and can be used at every level from everyday informal interactions to more formal restorative meetings. All practitioners can behave in a restorative way by demonstrating restorative values and using restorative thinking and language.

### Exclusion

Exclusion from school should only be used as a last resort. It should be a proportionate response where there is no alternative. It is the responsibility of all Scottish Borders Council's schools and learning establishments to keep all children and young people fully included, engaged and involved in their education and to improve outcomes for all, with a particular focus on those who might be at risk from exclusion.

Scottish Borders Council have produced guidelines on how to Manage School Exclusions, these can be found in [Policy Guidance on Managing School Exclusions](#).

Other learning establishments should consult their own policies and procedures for excluding children and young people.



## PARENTS/CARERS AS PARTNERS

Parents and carers have a key role to play in supporting their children when they experience or display bullying behaviour. It is important that staff listen to, and respond to, the concerns of parents/carers and ensure that there is clear communication between them when dealing with bullying incidents relating to their children.

When writing their Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Statement, learning establishments should consult with parents/carers to draw on the wealth of knowledge that they have.

### Parent/Carer involvement can take the form of:

- Parent Councils as partners with the learning establishment
- Involvement with development of the 'Respectful Relationships and Anti-Bullying Statement' for the learning establishment
- Parent education events around bullying
- Attendance at learning establishment open sessions where respectful relationships are modelled
- Involvement of parents in national Anti-Bullying week activities
- Involvement of parents in school assemblies dealing with current issues in bullying and its prevention
- Home-School Partnerships

## STAFF WORKING IN SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL LEARNING ESTABLISHMENTS

Scottish Borders Council promotes a 'Zero Tolerance' approach to threats and violent and abusive behaviour towards staff.

If unacceptable behaviour is experienced, your Line Manager should be made aware in order to provide appropriate support.

The following policies have been developed to ensure Scottish Borders Council staff are supported:

[Dignity and Respect in the Workplace | Scottish Borders Council \(scotborders.gov.uk\)](#)

[Managing Customer Engagement Policy | Scottish Borders Council](#)

## STAFF WELFARE

Staff Wellbeing Handbook:

The [Staff Wellbeing Handbook](#) is available online as a supportive tool. The purpose of this directory is to provide staff with a list of useful organisations and resources in relation to wellbeing topics.



## STAFF WORKING IN OTHER LEARNING ESTABLISHMENTS

Other learning establishments will have their own policies, procedures and support, which would be available if required.

## SEEMIS: RECORDING, REPORTING AND MONITORING OF BULLYING AND DISCRIMINATORY INCIDENTS/ALLEGED INCIDENTS IN SCHOOLS

Schools are required to record all incidents of bullying behaviour on the SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities Module. To support a consistent approach to the use of SEEMIS to enter and maintain details of any alleged incident of bullying or discrimination reported, schools should follow the procedures outlined in [SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities Protocol for SBC Schools Nov 24](#).

Each school should have a clear set of procedures for reporting and investigating reports of bullying behaviour. In all cases, it is crucial that the child or young person is listened to and supported.

It should be clear how the case will be investigated, monitored and reviewed. A member of Senior Leadership Team in each learning setting should have responsibility for ensuring that procedures relating to reports of bullying are implemented and that the whole school reports available on SEEMIS are regularly monitored.

Within SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities Module, information is recorded about both the person experiencing the behaviour and the person displaying the behaviour. All sections in the bullying and equalities module must be completed and when the incident is fully investigated, and a conclusion reached, it must be signed-off.



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