

ACC Education Settings Anti-Bullying Policy

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1 Why does the Council need this Policy?

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to outline the Council's commitment to prevent, manage and respond effectively to bullying behaviour and to provide a clear and consistent approach to managing and reporting incidents of bullying across Aberdeen City schools and early learning centres. The Council is committed to providing environments which promote dignity and respect for every learner and a culture which is safe, healthy, fair, and aligned with the Council's Guiding Principles and each school's Positive Behaviour Policy.
- 1.2 The Council recognises the impact that bullying behaviour has on the wellbeing of children and young people, and how it can affect their participation, attainment and inclusion. Reputational risks will also be mitigated by the policy, since when the organisation is legally compliant, applying good equality, diversity, and inclusion practices in relation to staff, pupils, communities, and others, this will help avoid complaints and any negative publicity that could otherwise arise if this were not the case.
- 1.3 The policy will support any such incidents being addressed in a timely manner and implement robust recording and monitoring of bullying incidents which will additionally mitigate this risk.
- 1.4 This policy is in addition to ACC's corporate Dignity and Respect at Work policy which already covers bullying between employees. This policy covers bullying between pupils and it sets out the clear expectation of what behaviours are expected in accordance with the school's Positive Behaviour Policy - and how ACC will address and manage instances of non-compliance. A record will be kept in SEEMIS of any incident of bullying. If a learner wishes to raise an allegation against a staff member this would be dealt with under Handling Allegations Against School Staff. If a learner raises a complaint against a parent/guardian then this would be a Child Protection issue and should be dealt with via that policy.
- 1.5 The Council is committed to promoting an inclusive and supportive environment where all young people are treated with dignity and respect, free from any form of bullying behaviour (including Cyber-bullying), harassment, discrimination, or abuse. This policy provides a mechanism to report and record incidents of bullying behaviour. This policy also reflects the principles of 'Getting it Right for Every Child', where each child or young person should be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included.
- 1.6 The policy will support schools and early learning centres to improve arrangements for the recording and monitoring of bullying incidents so that they are robust and accurate. The analysis of the data will help the schools and authority to identify trends or themes in bullying and support planning to prevent incidents from occurring as well as identifying appropriate interventions.
- 1.7 The policy provides a framework and guidance that supports schools to work with learners, parents, and staff to agree a shared definition of bullying within their school community. It also gives advice on how to respond effectively to alleged bullying incidents so that we have a clear and consistent approach across our schools.
- 1.8 The policy will help ensure that the Council is legally compliant in relation to the Equality Act 2010, including the general and specific equality duties applying to listed public

authorities in Scotland. The Equality Act 2010 sets out rights which include legal protection from discrimination related to any of the protected characteristics. It will also help ensure that the organisation applies good practice in respect of equality, diversity, and inclusion for all young people irrespective of their unique differences.

- 1.9 The policy indicates the Council's approach to upholding the principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion and to promoting measures to address inequality. It also demonstrates a commitment to tackle any unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, or other prohibited conduct in accordance with its legislative duties.

2 Application and Scope Statement

- 2.1 This policy applies to all learners in Education settings who are enrolled in our schools and early learning centres. Staff have responsibilities for the application of the policy as detailed under section 3 below.
- 2.2 It is primarily concerned with the prevention of bullying incidents and the provision of equality and inclusion for all of our young people. The policy will help ensure that there is no unlawful discrimination, harassment, or victimisation in relation to the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 2.3 The Council does not tolerate generally unacceptable/inappropriate behaviour including bullying (including Cyber-bullying), harassment, victimization, or discrimination in any form. The primary aims of the policy are to address any unacceptable bullying behaviour. Incidents raised will be taken seriously, addressed, and recorded, monitored and managed promptly and confidentially in a supportive manner.
- 2.4 Other relevant legislation is the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended, which places specific duties on local authorities to ensure that children and young people with additional needs are given the support they require in order to reach their full potential. This broad term applies to children or young people who need extra support to help them make the most of their school education and to be fully included in their learning.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 The Council will adhere to all its statutory responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 including the public sector equality duties applying to listed public authorities in Scotland and will aim to apply good anti-bullying, equality, diversity, and inclusion practices in all circumstances. Senior leaders recognise that creating an inclusive ethos and culture is the most effective way of reducing and responding to incidents of bullying. The anti-bullying policy will be complemented by other important documents such as positive relationships and behaviour policies. This policy will support staff and learners to consider bullying as part of a continuum of unacceptable behaviours.
- 3.2 **The Chief Officer** is ultimately responsible for the application of the policy and associated guidance within their service delivery remit to help embed a culture where any form of bullying is not tolerated, involving:

- promoting best-practice and seeking improvement in anti-bullying approaches
- working with partner organisations, including those funded by the Council, to ensure that good equality, diversity, and inclusion practices are shared including 'Respectme' and GREC.

3.3 Application of this policy will be actively supported by the **Quality Improvement team**, who have responsibility to provide leadership in relation to promoting anti-bullying, equality, diversity, and inclusion and to oversee the operation of the policy. The Quality Improvement team will additionally monitor bullying data on a monthly basis which will inform identified trends and patterns which may indicate that an intervention is required.

3.4 **School leaders** have responsibility for:

- Ensuring that their staff are aware of and adhere to their responsibilities under the policy and inducting new staff in the Council's commitment to anti-bullying;
- Undertaking anti-bullying-related training and encouraging their staff to participate in such training and monitoring and managing their participation. This includes ensuring compliance with mandatory training requirements around equality, diversity and inclusion;
- Ensuring that any bullying instance raised is dealt with quickly and appropriately in a confidential, supportive manner in accordance with this policy
- Ensuring the recording of bullying incidents accurately and monitoring 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
- Ensuring that they seek advice from within the organisation where they are unsure about their responsibilities in relation to managing anti-bullying;
- Actively challenging any form of bullying behaviour;
- Creating and maintaining equality-friendly and inclusive environments where bullying is not tolerated.
- Ensuring that incidents are appropriately recorded using the Bullying and Equalities Module within Seemis.

3.5 **All education staff** have responsibility for:

- Challenging and reporting all bullying behaviour
 - Ensuring they fully understand and follow the procedures for reporting, recording and monitoring bullying behaviour
 - Familiarising themselves with the contents of this policy and co-operating with its requirements
 - Ensuring that all incidents of alleged bullying are taken seriously and reported appropriately
 - To ensure they have suitable arrangements in place to encourage children and young people to report, with confidence, all incidents of alleged bullying
 - Undertaking anti-bullying-related training as required by the organisation;
 - Always taking reported incidents seriously and never ignoring any accusation of bullying behaviour.
 - Demonstrating behaviours conducive to a culture which promotes equality, diversity and inclusion and committing to creating a safe and secure environment where bullying is openly acknowledged, discussed and challenged as unacceptable behaviour.
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- Ensuring that the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion are upheld, and no unfair or unlawful discriminatory practices are applied when acting on behalf of the Council in relation to working with pupils, staff members, or any others;
 - Treating all young people, fellow staff members and others with dignity and respect treating any disclosure as confidential to those who 'need to know'.

- 3.6 **Learners** have a Responsibility to:
- Abide by their schools Positive Behaviour Policy and treat everyone respectfully at all times
 - To report any incidents of unacceptable/inappropriate behaviour, bullying (including Cyber-bullying), harassment, discrimination, victimisation or abuse by fellow pupils to a member of school staff.
 - Try to keep calm and not retaliate.
 - Not to respond to abusive texts or messages; block messages from people who abuse you.
 - Fully participate in restorative conversations with all parties
 - Understand the impact of your actions on others
- 3.7 **Parents/Guardians** have a Responsibility to
- Report it. Contact the school as soon as possible should any incidents arise and ask to speak to your child's Guidance teacher/member of Senior Leadership team
 - Expect to be informed that the matter has been addressed, but note you will not be advised of the outcomes of the investigation (although not of specific disciplinary action involving other young people).
 - Work in partnership with the PTPS to support your child.
 - Support your child in learning about bullying behaviour.
 - Monitor your child's online activity and refer to useful sources of information regarding internet safety
- 3.8 A breach or misuse of this policy may result in the potential use of a corporate procedure e.g. disciplinary procedure.
- 3.9 Non-compliance with this policy should be reported to the staff member's line manager or a more senior manager if appropriate.
- 3.10 Any feedback on the policy or suggestions for improvement can be communicated to the policy author or owner in the first instance.
- 3.11 Enquiries in relation to the application of the policy can be directed to the Quality Improvement team.

4 Supporting Procedures & Documentation

- 4.1 'Respect for All' (2017) supplementary guidance on recording and monitoring of Bullying incidents in schools is available to support adherence to this policy. The process for raising and addressing complaints under this policy is detailed in the accompanying procedure and guidance, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying-scotlands-children-young-people/>

- 4.2 The anti-bullying policy is complemented by other important documents such as the school's positive relationships and behaviour policies.
- 4.3 Existing PSE (Personal Social Education) programmes will be adapted to reflect relevant adherence to the policy.
- 4.4 Regular opportunities are provided through whole school assemblies to ensure that pupils are aware of what constitutes bullying behaviour and feel confident in how to report it.
- 4.5 The policy links to the following, which are on the Council's Intranet:
- Employee Code of Conduct
 - Managing Discipline policy and accompanying procedure and guidance
 - Managing Grievances policy and accompanying procedure and guidance
 - Dignity and Respect at Work policy and accompanying procedure and guidance
 - Investigations Procedure
 - Diversity and Equality Policy
 - Social Media Guidance
 - The Council's Guiding Principles
 - ICT Acceptable Use Policy
 - Handling Allegations Against School Staff
 - Whistleblowing policy and procedure
 - Minimising exclusion policy
 - Gender based violence policy and accompanying procedure and guidance
- 4.6 Guidance in place to support adherence to this policy includes
- 'Respect for All': The National Approach to Anti-bullying for Scotland Children and Young People (2015)
 - Education Scotland National Thematic Review (February 2023) Approaches to Recording and Monitoring incidents of bullying in Schools;
 - Guidance for Children's and young people's services on the inclusion of transgender including non-binary young people- May 2023.

5 About this Policy

- 5.1 Every child and young person deserves and has the right to feel safe from all forms of bullying and our vision is that all children and young people in Aberdeen feel included, respected, equal and empowered, to achieve their full potential no matter what their unique difference is. Bullying behaviour is never acceptable and Aberdeen City Council is committed to providing a safe, supportive environment for all children and young people in its educational establishments.
- 5.2 Senior leaders recognise that creating an inclusive ethos and culture is the most effective way of reducing and responding to incidents of bullying. A school's anti-bullying policy should reflect an ambition to ensure a strong ethos of fairness, equality, respect and inclusion. Senior leaders in schools should work in partnership with parents, learners and staff to agree a shared definition of bullying within their school community.
- 5.3 Schools that have systematic approaches in place to monitor bullying will have a reduction in bullying incidents. There is now a need to improve arrangements for the recording and monitoring of bullying and ensure robust and consistent analysis of bullying incidents across our schools and early learning centres. Schools must 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.

- 5.4 Not all learners feel confident about reporting incidents of alleged bullying. This policy will support Schools to ensure that they have suitable arrangements in place to encourage children and young people to report, with confidence, all incidents of alleged bullying.
- 5.5 The protected characteristics (defined under the Equality Act 2010) are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Further descriptions and examples of the above definitions are included in the accompanying procedure and guidance.
- 5.6 In Education, equality, and diversity monitoring in relation to bullying will be undertaken to identify areas of increased bullying incident rates of protected characteristic groups, or other concerns, with action taken to address issues as appropriate.
- 5.7 Awareness and understanding of anti-bullying will be communicated and promoted through training, guidance and targeted campaigns

6 Risk

- 6.1 The following identified risks will be mitigated through having this policy in place.
- The policy will help ensure that the Council meets legislative requirements in relation to equality, diversity and inclusion, including its responsibilities in respect of the public sector equality duties under the Equality Act (2010). This will reduce the risk of any statutory non-compliance. This policy will provide pupils, staff and parents with clarity on the Council's expectations about what constitutes bullying behaviour and how to respond, report and monitor incidents.
 - Operational risks will be reduced, as if the Council is legally compliant and applies good practice in relation to anti-bullying approaches there should be less chance of incidents arising which could affect the efficient running of the Service. Promoting equality, diversity and inclusion should result in reduction in parental complaints and hence help meet service and customer requirements.
 - Financial risks should be mitigated by the policy, as it will help ensure that any potential claims against the Council of unlawful discrimination, bullying, harassment or victimisation by staff, parents, or others, do not occur, saving on potential costs of that type.
 - Reputational risks should also be mitigated by the policy, as if the organisation is legally compliant, applying good equality, diversity, and inclusion practices in relation to staff, pupils, communities, and others, this will help avoid complaints and any negative publicity that could otherwise arise if this were not the case.
- 6.2 There have been no unintended effects, consequences and risks identified resulting from the introduction of the policy.
- 6.3 The risks identified will be managed and mitigated through application of the policy across the Council and through appropriate training. This will be undertaken by ensuring the policy is readily available to staff, elected members and all others within scope and that support is provided from the Quality Improvement team where required. Learning resources on anti-bullying will be made available for all staff.

- 6.4 Monitoring will be undertaken of any feedback from stakeholders or others in relation to the identified risks and appropriate action taken if any concerns arise.

7 Environmental Implications

- 7.1 There are no environmental implications arising from this policy.

8 Policy Performance

- 8.1 Measures to determine the effectiveness of the policy will include compliance with the public sector general and specific equality duties and the progress made towards the Council's equality outcomes. The main factors determining the effectiveness of the policy and whether it adds the value intended is the usage of the policy by those in scope, the consistency in its application by managers and the satisfactory resolution for all parties involved.
- 8.2 The effectiveness of the policy will be measured through gathering data and through collecting feedback from users of the policy. A variety of school bullying related equality data is gathered as part of the specific equality duties on a monthly basis. This includes information on the number of bullying incidents, their perceived nature, type of bullying and with respect to the relevant protected characteristics of the bullying incidents. This data is used to plan for improvements in both preventions and interventions. In addition, feedback from and ongoing listening to staff, pupils and parents, trade unions and other stakeholders will provide an indication of whether the organisation is meeting its anti-bullying and inclusion objectives. Any complaints received in relation to bullying will also be monitored.
- 8.3 The Chief Education Officer will decide where and when data is reported on the effectiveness of the policy, ensuring that confidentiality is maintained. Performance information will be included in the Council's statutory Equality Outcomes Mainstreaming Progress Report produced every two years as part of its public sector equality duties, which is also submitted to Committee.

9 Design and Delivery

- 9.1 The policy links to the 'Workforce' design principle in the Target Operating Model (TOM) in that it is concerned with organisational culture and the promotion of equality, diversity, and inclusion. It also links to the 'Partnerships and Alliances' design principle, being concerned with how the organisation collaborates with external organisations to achieve successful outcomes, which encompasses some of the Council's equality outcomes.
- 9.2 The policy links to the 'Prosperous People' theme in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), which mentions people being entitled to live in a way they feel safe, supported, and

fully included in life in the City, having an equal right to enjoy these aspirations. It indicates that all people in the city are entitled to live in a manner in which they feel safe and protected from harm and supported where necessary. In addition, it indicates an ambition to support every child irrespective of circumstances to grow, develop and reach their full potential, where there is equality of opportunity for all. The policy also links to the 'Prosperous Place' theme in the LOIP, where all can prosper, reflecting the organisation's desire to help people, families, and communities to do well, succeed and flourish in every aspect, regardless of their background or circumstances.

- 9.3 The policy directly supports delivery of the Council's statutory obligations in relation to equality and diversity as referenced under 1.2, 1.5 and 2.4 above.
- 9.4 This policy supports the Community Planning Partnerships approach to the delivery of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

10 Housekeeping and Maintenance

- 10.1 The policy replaces the existing Anti-Bullying policy and will be reviewed annually with any necessary updates made to it.

11 Communication and Distribution

- 11.1 The policy will be shared directly with the all school communities to enable communication and distribution in accordance with responsibilities set out in section 3.
- 11.2 The policy will also be communicated through the Council's intranet and will be placed on the relevant page(s) of the Education Sharepoint site for all employees to view.
- 11.3 It will also be available to third parties including parents and guardians via the Council's website.
- 11.4 A communication plan is being developed to assist with embedding the policy into the organisation, which includes training for all teaching staff.

12 Information Management

- 12.1.1 Information generated by the application of this policy will be managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy and Supporting Procedures.

13 Definitions and Understanding this Policy

- 13.1 **Equality** – refers to providing equal opportunities to everyone and protecting people from being discriminated against. It is essentially about fairness and ensuring that everyone has the best possible chance to succeed in life, whatever their background or identity.

- 13.2 **Bullying** - is the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person or group by another person or group, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. It can happen face to face or online.' (Anti-bullying Alliance) '. Bullying takes place in the context of relationships. It is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out and it can happen face to face and online'. (respectme 2015). A child who is bullied will not feel safe, included or respected and this can therefore constitute a well-being concern (respectme).
- 13.3 **Diversity** - refers to recognising and respecting and valuing differences in people. It is acknowledging the benefit of having a range of perspectives and representations in decision-making.
- 13.4 **Inclusion** - refers to an individual's experience within society and the workplace, and the extent to which they feel valued and included. Inclusion is where people's differences are acknowledged and used to enable everyone to thrive. An inclusive environment is one in which everyone feels that they belong without having to conform, that their contribution matters, and they can reach their full potential, no matter their background, identity, or circumstances.
- 13.5 **The Equality Act** provides a modern, single legal framework to tackle disadvantage and discrimination. Under the Act it is unlawful to discriminate, harass or victimize someone because they have or are perceived to have a protected characteristic or are associated with someone who has a protected characteristic. The nine protected characteristics covered by the Act are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.
- 13.6 **Harassment** is unwanted conduct related to one of the protected characteristics which has the purpose or effect of violating the victim's dignity or of creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment for the victim.
- 13.7 **Victimisation** is where a person is treated badly or subject to disadvantage because they have complained about discrimination, or they have helped someone who has been the victim of discrimination.
- 13.8 The **General Equality Duty** under the Equality Act 2010 - requires listed Scottish public authorities to have due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other prohibited conduct; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; when carrying out their activities.
- 13.9 The **Specific Equality Duties** - require listed Scottish public authorities to publish relevant information, showing compliance with the General Equality Duty, to help them in their performance of that duty. Each authority is required to report on mainstreaming the equality duty, publish equality outcomes and report on progress, assess and review policies and practices, gather and use employee information, publish gender pay gap information and statements on equal pay.
- 13.10 **Equality Outcomes** – are the results a public authority aims to achieve to further one or more of the needs in the General Equality Duty. They are intended to achieve specific and identifiable improvements and are the changes that result for individuals and communities because of the action an authority has taken. There is a duty to publish equality outcomes and report on progress, publishing a fresh set every four years, with involvement of relevant parties in their compilation.

