

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday 11 June 2015

Report by Director of Education

REPORT ON THE IMPACT OF THE ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to inform elected members of the plan to revise the current Standard Circular 8(a) Bullying and Anti-bullying and to ensure that the awareness and understanding of anti-bullying approaches remain high among schools staff, parents and pupils following the work previously undertaken on anti-bullying.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Elected members are asked to:
- a) note the contents of the report on the impact of the current anti-bullying policy; and
  - b) note the intention to revise the policy in light of the expected new guidance from the Scottish Government and to bring such back to the Education Committee for approval.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Elected members will recall approving the anti-bullying policy in November 2011. This approval followed the publication by the Scottish Government in November 2010 of 'A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People'. The authority policy also reflected other legislation and guidance around support for pupils.

4. Elected members will be aware of previous data shared through mid-year reporting and through Standards and Quality reports.

**REPORT**

5. We are conscious that a strong approach to anti-bullying needs to be at the forefront of practice in all establishments. To reduce unacceptable bullying behaviours, we must encourage children and young people to challenge and to report them and we must grow staff confidence to respond effectively when dealing with reports of bullying behaviour. Furthermore, what constitutes bullying behaviour needs to be understood by children, young people and their parents so that the term is not used inaccurately.

6. The revised policy took full account of the national guidance. The policy and the content of training for staff were informed by the working group's consultation with pupils, parents and staff. The Programme Manager from *respectme*, Scotland's national anti-bullying organisation, attended the first meeting of the working group and supported a Quality Improvement Officer throughout the process of revision as a 'critical friend'.

7. The authority took the decision at this time to ask schools to record and report on instances of bullying behaviour which, after investigation, were found to be unconfirmed as well as those confirmed instances.

8. The revised policy was launched on the 22 November 2011 during National Anti-bullying Week at an event held in Williamwood High School. The event was attended by pupils and staff representing all primary and secondary schools in the authority and Isobel Mair School.

9. Members of the working group and campus police officers were trained over two days by trainers from *respectme*. This extended group in different pairings then trained representatives from every establishment in cluster groups. A total of 65 staff were trained to support their own clusters – 4 pre five specific staff, 46 primary and 15 secondary. The cohort included head teachers, other promoted and unpromoted staff, child development officers and pupil support assistants. An online group for all those who had attended the training was set up, hosting training materials including a powerpoint presentation, the authority policy, the national guidelines, research and other documentation of interest.

10. The expectation following training was that all establishments held their own training sessions which, in best practice, involved all staff and partners. Establishments were to revise their own policies and involve pupils and parents in the process.

11. A showcase event was held in November 2012 during Anti-bullying Week in Eastwood Theatre. Clusters displayed work they had done on anti-bullying since the launch of the revised policy and children and young people from a number of schools gave presentations and performances.

12. The revised policy is cited as an example of good practice for other local authorities on *respectme*'s website. In research findings on 'Prejudice Based Bullying in Scottish Schools, commissioned by the Equality and Human Rights Commission from *respectme* and LGBTYouth Scotland and published in March 2015, the authority's policy is described as "a clear example of good practice as it included suggested strategies for dealing with each form of prejudice to which it referred."

13. The number of reported incidences of bullying behaviour in educational establishments has remained low since this information was collected centrally. The table below illustrates the number of incidences of bullying behaviour per one thousand pupils in primary and secondary schools over the last five school sessions.

	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14
Primary	2.5	3.1	8.7	11.5	3
Secondary	2.8	3.5	5.5	4.1	7

14. The authority regularly surveys the pupil population on a cumulative rolling programme. The following table shows the percentages of pupils answering "agree" and "strongly agree" to these questions over the last three school sessions.

	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
I feel safe and cared for in school.	92%	87%	94%
I have adults in school I can speak to if I am upset or worried about something.	92%	90%	94%
Staff are good at dealing with bullying behaviour.	78%	74%	85%

15. All establishments are advised to conduct annual anti-bullying surveys to explore the attitudes and experiences of children and young people. Some schools have reported that focus groups have given a less positive picture of the anti-bullying ethos in their establishment. However, in focus groups and in questionnaires for Support and Protection Reviews, pupils are very positive about feeling safe and supported. They tell us they know what to do if they witness or experience bullying behaviour and also that staff interventions are effective.

## NEXT STEPS

16. Further guidance from the Scottish Government is anticipated in October of this year and this is expected to provide points for consideration in the refresh of the policy.

17. In anticipation of the new advice from the Scottish Government, the working group has been reconvened with some new representation to replace original members who have moved on. The group maintains representation from all sectors – pre five, primary, secondary and special - and Psychological Services. A representative from *respectme* has met with the new group and shared learning gained from the organisation's own survey and other recent research.

18. Before the launch of the revised policy, a training programme has been planned. All staff who were previously trained will be offered a half day refresher training. Campus police officers will also access this training as appropriate. Cluster chairs have been invited to nominate new staff to be trained and they will have a full day's training. The training, which will take place in September 2015, will be delivered by trainers from *respectme* and by members of the working group.

19. Our expectation is that those who have been trained will be 'anti-bullying champions' in their own establishments and clusters and they will deliver training to their staff. The authority will commit to offering centralised training annually along with support for in house training.

20. The working group will continue to develop the existing policy with the intention to share this with establishments in November 2015, if the Scottish Government guidance has been published on schedule.

21. From August 2015 the authority's management and information system will include additional fields which will make it possible to monitor and report on the perceived causes of bullying behaviour, as well as the nature of the behaviour. Sections on resources, websites and online bullying will be checked and refreshed. There will be additional emphasis on the duties as the Equalities Act 2010, with particular reference to LGBTQ.

22. All establishments will be expected to revise their own policies within six months of the publication of the authority's revised guidance and submit a copy to be held centrally by the Quality Improvement Officer with responsibility for Health and Wellbeing. Policies should be reviewed with the involvement of pupils, parents and partners.

23. There will be a continued expectation on all establishments to regularly seek the views of children and young people, through questionnaires and focus groups, with regard to the incidence of bullying behaviour and how it is dealt with.

24. The working group intends to hold another showcase event where good practice in policy and approach will be presented. As before, the emphasis will be on children and young people presenting to their peers.

## **CONCLUSION**

25. The existing policy sets out a strong approach to the prevention of bullying behaviour and clear guidance on responding to, resolving and recording reports of bullying behaviour. Despite continued low incidence of reported behaviours, the department is not complacent. All reports of bullying behaviour continue to be taken very seriously. Where a complaint about bullying behaviour is received centrally, a robust and thorough investigation is carried out with clear recommendations given to establishments, as appropriate. The revised policy will strengthen existing guidance and be supported by up to date training.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

26. Elected members are asked to:

- a) note the contents of the report on the impact of the current anti-bullying policy; and
- b) note the intention to revise the policy in light of the expected new guidance from the Scottish Government and to bring such back to the Education Committee for approval.

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Local Government Access to Information Act 1985

### Background Papers

1. A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People, Scottish Government 2010
2. Respectme [http://www.respectme.org.uk/good\\_practice.html](http://www.respectme.org.uk/good_practice.html)
3. 'Prejudice –based Bullying in Scottish Schools: A research report', Brandi Lee Lough Dennell and Caitlin Logan, LGBTYouth/respectme/ Equality and Human Rights Commission <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/publication/prejudice-based-bullying-scottish-schools-research-report>