



CONNECT'S ANTI-BULLYING GUIDE FOR PARENTS AND PARENT COUNCILS

This guide is based on *Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People*. You can read this here

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying/>

This guide is designed to help Parent Councils, parents and carers and school communities work together to develop anti-bullying strategies and approaches in their own school communities so they are clear about:

- What bullying behaviour is
- What can be done to prevent bullying behaviour
- How we can respond to bullying behaviour when it happens
- What help is available.

Everyone in the school community has an important role to play in addressing bullying behaviour and in creating a kind, inclusive community which is based on positive and respectful relationships.

Parent Councils can act as the catalyst for whole-community discussions about bullying behaviour and strategies to challenge this behaviour, which can then be included in an Anti-Bullying Policy. This whole-community approach is essential. By working together, Parent Councils can help shape a respectful, safe and inclusive school community that benefits all children, young people, parents, carers and staff.

Scotland has a distinctive approach, called *Respect for All*, which is based on the values of fairness, respect, equality and inclusion. Clear and strong anti-bullying policies and messages should help children and young people and those in the wider school community feel safe, included and respected. School staff, parents, children and young people are encouraged to recognise and value difference, and to have respectful relationships with others. Adults model behaviour for children and young people – how we behave towards other adults and children is very important. The *Respect for All* approach centres on schools, educators and professionals taking responsibility for organisational policies and procedures to prevent, challenge, handle, report and record incidents of bullying behaviour. However, Parent Councils and parents and carers, as well as children and young people, are of course key to supporting these and to building safe, caring and inclusive school communities. *Respectme* has a dedicated guide for parents and carers

here <https://www.respectme.org.uk/file-download/284/bullying-a-guide-for-parents-and-carers-2025.pdf>

Children (and their families) have rights under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, incorporated into Scots law. The national wellbeing approach, *Getting it Right for Every Child*, also requires schools to ensure children and young people are supported and can thrive. The Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act and the Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act are also important in recognising and challenging bullying behaviour and the rights of children and parents. Read more in Connect's summary of policy and legislation, [Laws and Policy for Families and Schools](#).

What is bullying behaviour?

Respect for All describes bullying behaviour as:

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.'

Bullying behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally. It may only take place once, but the threat of it happening again can continue. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed quickly. Sadly, bullying happens in schools, work, in social groups, in our homes and online.

Read more about what bullying behaviour can look like in *Respect for All* here.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying/pages/3/> In this same section, the *Respect for All* cites the protected characteristics from the Equality Act 2010 and sets out guidance to schools and local authorities about how prejudice-based bullying should be handled. There is also information about 'intersectionality', which '*recognises that people's identities are multifaceted and therefore their experiences of inequality and discrimination can be shaped by several factors at once*'.

Bullying behaviour can include:

- being called names, being teased or threatened

- unwanted physical contact such as hair-pulling, being tripped or pushed etc
- having belongings taken or damaged
- being ignored or left out, or having rumours spread about you
- being sent abusive messages, pictures or images online or via social media
- behaviour which makes people feel they are not in control of their lives
- being targeted because of who you are or who you are perceived to be.

Respect for All includes a section on what is NOT bullying too:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying/pages/4/> It states: *'It may be possible to differentiate conflict from bullying by having regard to the relationships and dynamics involved. Conflict is normal and can happen in healthy, happy, equal relationships.'* This section also differentiates bullying from criminal behaviour.

What can we do to prevent bullying?

Respect for All advises schools to take the following approach:

'Early intervention and prevention are therefore essential for addressing these behaviours by disrupting the cycle, promoting understanding and empathy, and fostering a culture and ethos that values respect and inclusion. This proactive approach reduces the likelihood of behaviours escalating to more intense levels.' However, everyone has a role to play in preventing bullying even if schools and local authorities are charged with the responsibility for preventing, challenging, addressing, recording, reporting bullying behaviour. The best way to address bullying in schools is to

- create an ethos of positive relationships and respectful schools where bullying is not accepted and is challenged
- work together as a school community (parents, children, school staff) to build mutual respect, an inclusive and tolerant environment that celebrates diversity as this is both the right thing to do and helps to prevent bullying behaviour and prejudice. There are examples of school anti-bullying curricula here <https://education.gov.scot/resources/bullying/responding-to-bullying/anti-bullying-curriculum/anti-bullying-curriculum-at-aberdeen-grammar-school/>
- make sure everyone in the school community understands, recognises and challenges all forms of prejudice
- involve everyone in developing a whole-school Anti-Bullying Policy which is put into practice, reviewed and monitored so that everyone learns about bullying and how to address it
(read more here <https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying/pages/5/>)
- make sure that children and parents know what steps to take and who to speak to if a child is experiencing bullying behaviour or if a child is demonstrating bullying behaviour

- help children understand the importance of treating others with kindness and respect. Encourage them to think about how their actions affect others, and reinforce empathy by discussing feelings and thoughts more often
- encourage whole school activities, events that promote kindness, inclusion and respect. Parent Councils can help organise events like anti-bullying weeks, workshops or assemblies focused on empathy and positive relationships
- understand that bullying (including online bullying) usually takes place in the context of relationships and we need to support young people to build their relationship skills so that they can better navigate difficult situations
- encourage adults and children to help others understand about positive relationships and behaviour by showing how it's done!
- recognise the difference between bullying and illegal behaviour (such as harassment; hate crime; sexual abuse; assault; graffiti)
- involve the whole school community in initiatives such as Rights Respecting Schools
- consider the role of Parent Councils in promoting online safety education for parents and children. Sessions could be held on responsible digital behaviour and on how to report incidents, as well as privacy and handling cyberbullying.

How do we deal with bullying behaviour when it does happen?

Research shows that bullying is less likely to take place where there are respectful relationships and mutual respect. When everyone understands what bullying is, how it makes someone else feel and how to challenge it, bullying behaviour can be addressed.

Research by *respectme*, Scotland's anti-bullying service, found that, where there is bullying, children and young people ask that

- they are listened to carefully
- their feelings are respected
- they are asked (and listened to) about what they would like to happen next

They are supported by the adults around them to understand and make choices or decisions about how to deal with bullying behaviour, so they regain a sense of control or 'agency' over their lives. This means that school staff, parents and children/young people need to work together.

What help is available?

- If you are concerned that your child is being bullied or is bullying others, remember that listening to them and really understanding what has been happening is an

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important first step in responding. Ask your child about what has happened, about how they feel and then discuss with them what they would like to see happen. See the *respectme* web page here <https://www.respectme.org.uk/information-parents/> for more advice and information.

- There is never one single answer when it comes to bullying but exploring options and helping young people make choices can be helpful. For example, would they be comfortable speaking to someone at school? This might be the class teacher, a guidance teacher, a learning support teacher or the headteacher.
- Or would they prefer to ask for advice and ideas outside the school? This might be Childline on 0800 1111 or a website such as <https://respectme.org.uk/>
- Bullying is very upsetting for the child or young person who is being bullied; it is also really upsetting for parents. Do you need advice and support? Children First's Support Line on 08000 28 22 33 can help. Websites with advice on bullying include Scotland's national advice service for anti-bullying, *respectme* <https://www.respectme.org.uk/> and <https://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/>
- Help with online bullying can be found at <https://saferinternet.org.uk/> as well as at <https://respectme.org.uk/adults/online-safety-for-parents-and-carers/>

Useful Contacts

- [respectme](https://www.respectme.org.uk/)
- Childline 0800 1111
- Children First's Support Line for parents 08000 28 22 33
- Enquire <https://enquire.org.uk/> (for help with bullying relating to children with additional support for learning needs) 0345 123 2303
- [Samaritans](https://www.samaritans.org/) 116 123
- [Parenting Across Scotland](https://www.parentingacrossscotland.org/)
- [Breathing Space](https://www.breathingspace.org.uk/) 0800 83 85 87
- [NSPCC](https://www.nspcc.org.uk/)
- [Young Scot](https://www.youngscot.org.uk/) (Cyberbullying)
- [CEOP](https://www.ceop.gov.uk/) (online abuse)

INCLUSION HEALTH CHECK: ANTI-BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

There is a downloadable Word version of this Health Check. This exercise will help you identify how effectively your school community challenges bullying behaviour, including prejudice-based bullying, and will help you identify areas for improvements. We recommend the whole school community works together on this to create an inclusive culture in which bullying cannot thrive. Adults have a crucial part to play in being role models for children and young people.

Using the tick boxes, mark each one with the following colours:

GREEN: Very well implemented

ORANGE: Good start

RED: Needs improvement

INCLUSION: Anti-Bullying Behaviour	Very well implemented	Good Start	Needs improvement
Our school community recognises that we all need to work together to challenge bullying behaviour as it is a shared endeavour	☐	☐	☐
Our school community values and respects everyone and is inclusive and welcoming. This is made clear in all our vision/values statements, policymaking and practices. We are committed to equality and diversity and recognise that bullying behaviour can be part of prejudice and intolerance, relating to the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 too	☐	☐	☐
The school and Parent Council recognise that bullying behaviour can happen in school, in the workplace, in the home, in the community and online	☐	☐	☐
Our school community has clear and visible statements that bullying behaviour is not acceptable and that respectful	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Anti-Bullying Behaviour	Very well implemented	Good Start	Needs improvement
relationships with others are crucial for ensuring that bullying cannot thrive			
Everyone understands what is meant by bullying behaviour (see Connect's <i>Anti-Bullying Guide</i>) and that bullying is both behaviour and its impact on others	☐	☐	☐
The adults in our school community (parents, staff etc) understand the importance of their own behaviour because we are role models for children; bullying behaviour by adults towards children and other adults is not acceptable	☐	☐	☐
Our Parent Council uses Connect's <i>Code of Conduct</i> to emphasise the need for respectful and acceptable behaviour by the Parent Council	☐	☐	☐
Our school community uses respectme's guidance and the Scottish Government's <i>Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People</i> which is available here https://www.gov.scot/publications/respect-national-approach-anti-bullying/ when considering all aspects of challenging and preventing bullying behaviour	☐	☐	☐
Our approach to dealing with bullying incidents centres on listening to children and young people and asking them what they would like to see happen	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Anti-Bullying Behaviour	Very well implemented	Good Start	Needs improvement
Our school community challenges prejudice and we work together to create policies and vision/value statements which support this	☐	☐	☐
Everyone knows what steps to take when bullying has taken place; this is made clear to all repeatedly in different ways all through the year	☐	☐	☐
The school keeps a record of bullying incidents with the steps taken and outcomes. This record is reported as required by local authorities and the Scottish Government and is shared annually to the Parent Council, as long as there is no identifying information. This spirit of openness and focus on improvement enables everyone to play their part in making progress towards an inclusive community	☐	☐	☐
Families, school staff, children and young people are given training and information about keeping safe online and about appropriate online behaviour	☐	☐	☐
Our school community understands and enacts the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child which are incorporated in Scottish legislation; we understand the protected characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 and we are aware of intersectionality	☐	☐	☐

INCLUSION: Anti-Bullying Behaviour	Very well implemented	Good Start	Needs improvement
Our school anti-bullying behaviour/positive behaviour policies and practices are shared regularly and widely and are displayed in the school, on the school website and in new parents' information packs	☐	☐	☒
The anti-bullying policy and practices are reviewed or revised at least every three years and parents, staff and pupils are involved	☐	☐	☐
Everyone knows where they can go for further help and advice – see Connect's Anti-Bullying Guide – and what to do if they feel bullying incidents need further intervention, external to the school	☐	☐	☐
We maintain the high profile of our anti-bullying work and we model positive relationships	☐	☐	☐

You are welcome to use information from this resource. However, if you do, please acknowledge Connect. We welcome your comments and feedback.

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