



supporting partnerships in education

Spring 2018

Parents' Voice Survey: Anti-Bullying with respectme



Parents' Voice is Connect's online survey group. It comprises more than 800 parents, who receive occasional online surveys on topics relating to education and children's wellbeing.

Our Parents' Voice survey on bullying behaviour with respectme, Scotland's anti-bullying service, looked at parents' experience, knowledge and understanding of bullying. We wanted to find out where the gaps in parental confidence and knowledge are so that we can support parents and Parent Councils as they work with schools to prevent and respond to bullying behaviour.

What you told us

Your survey responses were a mix of positive experiences, where bullying behaviour had been effectively challenged, and really devastating experiences, where families felt helpless and unsupported. Some children were experiencing physical assault, not bullying. Many of you told us that there was a real shortage of support for the children, young people and their families who are on the receiving end of this behaviour. At Connect, we believe that a dedicated helpline in Scotland is essential for those families and children. Bullying behaviour unfortunately occurs in all walks of life but it is always unacceptable.

Survey Summary

- 540** took part in our survey
- 85%** said that they thought bullying goes on in their child's school
- 46%** had witnessed bullying in their child's school
- 88%** knew who to contact to discuss their concerns about bullying
- 69%** had **not** seen their child's school's anti-bullying policy

Thank you!

A massive thank you to all of our Parents' Voice participants! You give us the information we need to press for change and to suggest practical steps for Parent Councils and parent groups to take. Working with respectme, we are:

- compiling a new Guide to Challenging Bullying Behaviour
- running two pilot online workshops for Parent Councils and for parents to help address bullying behaviour. If helpful, we will repeat these.

Connect is campaigning for a new Scottish helpline to support those affected by bullying.

What Parents Said:

'I am glad to see that schools seem to be taking the issue seriously'

'My son got held down and a dirty orange stuffed in his mouth and they hit him with sticks. I only found out about the sticks when a mum messaged me to say. The school did tell the bullies off but it didn't really help. They said I could take it further but the parents of one wouldn't care anyway and the other parent thinks her son is an angel. They still go round bullying people now. I feel like I was hitting a brick wall and got myself depressed because I couldn't help him' <This is assault and is a police matter>

'I've just had to move my daughter to another school because she was being bullied. The school took a very soft approach to the bullying'

'I'm going through this, with the police involved as my son is being choked, slapped, kicked, told he is fat among other degrading names' <This is assault>

'I recently found that my child and a couple of other children were being nasty to another child. The teacher rightly got in touch with me and I was hopefully able to nip in the bud. A challenge was set for my child to be kind to others at school and when she came home, to write it in her kindness notepad'

'My daughter has had to deal with a form of bullying for four years. The school wasn't interested. Then they moved my daughter into a different class and what a difference. There are wee things that schools can do - keep an extra eye on the child who is being bullied; let the child go first to get out of school before the kids who bully'

'Children often don't want parents to intervene for fear of repercussions'

'My biggest concern is online bullying'

'The high school was very supportive of my son who was bullied last year and took charge of an emotional situation for us as a family. The respect they continue to show my son is very much appreciated'

'Although I believe I would know how to deal with my children if they were being bullied, I'm not sure how I would react if the situation actually arose'

'I think the school should keep parents informed of the action that is being, for example if they have spoken to the parents and what they have said and done to get across to the child that bullying is unacceptable'



www.respectme.org.uk

respectme says

Bullying of any kind is unacceptable. It can have a lasting effect on young people's lives. This is evident in some of this survey's concerning findings. There is still much to do to ensure that every young person across Scotland realises their right to live free from bullying and harassment.

It is important to distinguish that some behaviours can be perceived as, or assumed to be, bullying when they are more serious and, in fact, criminal in nature. If physical attacks and assault are witnessed, we need to be clear that it is not bullying and appropriate advice and guidance should be sought from agencies like Police Scotland.

It is positive to see from the survey that many parents know who to contact to discuss any bullying concerns. These concerns should be taken seriously. Everyone, including parents and carers, has an important role to play in preventing and responding to bullying.

www.respectme.org.uk

Your Ideas for Change:

'Bullying goes on everywhere. It's important to empower our children not to be victims; it's not the sole responsibility of schools. Parents should not expect the school to 'punish the bully'; guidance and support to change bullying behaviour should be given'

'It would be good to see more in the curriculum about challenging bullying'

'Dealing with bullying is as much about teaching children that it is not OK if bullying is happening to them and the importance of telling someone, as it is actually stopping the bullying'

'The class teacher seems to have dealt with bullying well by having friendship as a class subject for a number of months'

'More talks are required in schools about cyber bullying'

'Bullying outwith school by fellow pupils has to be addressed in school; it has a direct effect on life at school'

'I think training for teachers is needed on how to handle bullying and how to prevent it'

'Clear lessons on bullying from P1 and parental involvement in this'

'So much more needs to be done about bullying, both in and out of school. Parents need advice on how to prevent bullying and how to support their children before any problems arise'

'Breaking the silence is key as is listening to children'

'More awareness is needed and more support for all parties involved. Anti-bullying policies have to be implemented'

'Schools should have clear guidelines which are easy to read and parent-friendly'

'A person is bullied because there is something wrong in the person who is bullying's life and that is the message we have to get out there'

Where to go for Help and Advice

- respectme.org.uk
Scotland's anti-bullying service for advice and steps to take
- Parentline
08000 28 22 33
- Enquire
0345 123 2303
if it relates to additional support for learning needs
- Childline
childline.org.uk
0800 1111
for children and young people
- Samaritans
samaritans.org
116 123
- Parenting Across Scotland
parentingacrossscotland.org
- Breathing Space
breathingspace.scot
0800 83 85 87
to talk about your feelings
- NSPCC Net Aware
net-aware.org.uk



What would you do if your child was being bullied?

Parents could choose more than one answer

75% said they would go to the class teacher

81% said they would go to the head teacher

42% said they would talk to other parents at the school

19% said they would go to the local authority

71% said they would advise the child themselves

14% said they would do something else

Responding to Bullying

respectme is Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service. Here are **respectme**'s tips for helping children and young people.

Firstly, don't panic.

Remaining calm and listening without interrupting or judging is reassuring and shows you're taking your child seriously.

Involve your child in what happens next.

Exploring this together can make your child feel valued and will help you to understand what support they need. Ask them what they have already done, and what they want to happen next. Most children want bullying to stop with the minimum of fuss, and often they don't want you to do anything – it helps just to have told someone.

Support them to cope with how they're feeling.

Some children might be good at writing things down or recording their feelings in a blog, others might use sport, music or drama. What works for one person won't always work for another; what worked before might not work again. What will help your child cope, and what might make the behaviour stop? Stay alert to both.

Keep listening and talking.

If you're working with the school, keep your child informed about what's happening at all stages. Encourage them to talk – and be aware that the impact of bullying can be felt, even when the behaviour has stopped.

If your child is involved in bullying.

It's natural to be angry and upset, but it's important that you **remain calm**, take the time to discuss the issue and **listen to their explanation**. Try to **establish the reasons behind their behaviour**, explain why it's unacceptable and what is expected instead.

If appropriate, you might want to **alert the parents of the person involved** to ensure they get any support they might need. Support for **both families from a third party**, such as a teacher, might also be helpful.



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