

Anti-bullying Policy**Report by Carolyn Robertson, Quality Improvement Manager ASN****Report for Decision****1 Recommendations**

The report recommends the adoption of the Anti-Bullying Policy, and the proposal to continue with consultation activity around the policy and development of guidance materials as schools embed practice within their settings.

2 Purpose of Report/Executive Summary

The review of the Midlothian Anti-Bullying Policy comes ten years after the adoption of the current policy and reflects changing guidance from the Scottish Government, and recent research into the reasons for bullying and ongoing impact. It has been created by a working party made up of representatives from schools, and officers responsible for Children's Rights, ASN, Care Experienced Young People, and parent and pupil voice. It is designed as a model policy for schools to adopt, with aspects which can be adapted according to individual school contexts. The policy includes clear definitions and roles and responsibilities in an attempt to clarify best practice when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour. A suite of support and guidance materials, aligned to a professional learning programme will support the implementation of the policy over the coming year, based on information from schools as they review their existing practice and procedures. The policy sits within the Relational Approaches Framework which has been introduced to schools, and will, in further iterations, reflect key messages from the Inclusion Framework which is under development.

26 September 2024**Report Contact:**

Ani Lawrence

anita.lawrence@midlothian.gov.uk

3 Background/Main Body of Report

- 3.1** Midlothian has an Anti-Bullying policy for schools which dates from 2014. A review of this policy was undertaken in 2019, where it was updated in line with national recommendations. However, this version was not approved, and schools continue to use the 2014 policy as a basis for their approach to bullying. In the absence of updated policy and guidance specific to Midlothian, a number of schools have created their own policies which reflect up to date thinking and national guidance.
- 3.2** According to *Respect for All* (2017), “an anti-bullying policy is a clear commitment to develop a respectful, equitable and inclusive culture and ethos within an organisation or establishment.” In line with the vision to make Midlothian a “great, green place to grow”, it was decided that a refreshed approach to anti-bullying policy and practice be undertaken, based on existing good practice and national legislation and guidance.
- 3.3** The review of the existing policy and creation of a new Midlothian Policy for Anti-Bullying was informed by a range of publications. The Education Scotland *Respect for All* document, published in 2017, provides the legislative and policy framework under which anti-bullying practice and policy sits. A 2024 update of Education Scotland guidance on bullying provides information on prevention of, response to, and recording of incidents of bullying and these have closely informed the policy and practice outlined within the Midlothian Anti-Bullying Policy.
- 3.4** The Midlothian Anti-Bullying Policy is positioned within the national policy and legal framework laid out in *Respect for All*. It is informed by the Equality Act, 2010, and the UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024, the premise of which runs throughout the policy document. Other policy and legislative frameworks which have helped to inform the policy include the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004, GIRFEC, the National Improvement Framework and the Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy.
- 3.5** The Midlothian Anti-Bullying Policy is situated within the Midlothian Framework for Relational Approaches, which informs a suite of policy documents, including attendance and exclusions policies.
- 3.6** A working party consisting of representatives from schools, educational psychology, UNCRC, ASN, care-experienced practice, and parent and pupil support was convened to review the existing policy and devise a new approach in line with the latest updates and research on anti-bullying policy and practice.
- 3.7** A desktop review of a number of schools’ own anti-bullying policies was undertaken to identify common themes and approaches. A number of school leaders provided insights and experiences to help inform the creation of the policy. Headteachers were kept informed of the process through EEG and Headteacher meetings.
- 3.8** Pupil and parent consultation is ongoing due to limited availability towards the summer of consultation groups. Pupil voice has been gathered from Learner Conferences held in August and September 2024 as part of the consultation process.
- 3.9** The policy is written in four parts, with indications for schools and settings as to where they should amend or supplement the content. It is designed to act as a model template for schools, into which they can add their own context, values and vision statements.

- 3.10** Part One outlines the legislative framework and expectations on schools to promote an anti-bullying culture and ethos within their settings. It provides clear information for schools about definitions of bullying - what bullying is, and isn't, and the ways in which bullying behaviours can be exhibited. It provides information about protected characteristics and outlines the key responsibilities of all stakeholders (the Local Authority, schools, parents and learners).
- 3.11** In Part Two, a range of strategies to prevent bullying from occurring are provided, and schools and settings are encouraged to incorporate their own anti-bullying strategies, in consultation with the learning community.
- 3.12** Supporting re-engagement with the policy, when an incident of bullying occurs, is explored in Part Three, with expectations on the reporting, recording and monitoring of incidents. Schools and settings are encouraged to include the voice of key stakeholders to ensure that there is a common understanding and ownership of the processes which schools will apply in the event of an incident of bullying behaviour.
- 3.13** Part Four provides information on quality assurance and updates.
- 3.14** It is proposed that this policy is rolled out as a draft policy, over the school session 2024/25, to allow schools time to explore their approaches, to incorporate learner and parent voice into approaches taken, and to transition between existing anti-bullying policies and the model policy proposed. School staff consultation will take place over the session to inform any changes which may be required in order to ensure that this policy remains relevant, manageable and effective, with an initial review date of August 2025.
- 3.15** To support the introduction and implementation of the policy, a suite of guidance materials is under development which will provide a range of information including recording incidents in SEEMiS, developing anti-bullying practice, digital and online bullying, and supporting children and young people who may have experienced incidents of bullying.
- 3.16** Alongside the development of materials to support implementation, a professional learning offer is under development to support staff dealing with bullying within schools and settings. The impact of this training will contribute to the review of the draft policy in August 2025.

4 Report Implications (Resource, Digital and Risk)

4.1 Resource

There are no resource implications from this report

4.2 Digital

There are no digital implications in this report. Guidance regarding online bullying and mobile phone issues will be created as part of the policy rollout.

4.3 Risk

No risk factors have been identified.

4.4 Ensuring Equalities (if required a separate IIA must be completed)

An IIA will be completed once training has been sourced for completion.

4.5 Additional Report Implications (See Appendix A)

See Appendix A

Appendices

Appendix A – Additional Report Implications

Appendix B – Background information/Links: Anti Bullying Policy.

APPENDIX A – Report Implications

A.1 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

Insert text here

A.2 Key Drivers for Change

Key drivers addressed in this report:

- Holistic Working
- Hub and Spoke
- Modern
- Sustainable
- Transformational
- Preventative
- Asset-based
- Continuous Improvement
- One size fits one
- None of the above

A.3 Key Delivery Streams

Key delivery streams addressed in this report:

- One Council Working with you, for you
- Preventative and Sustainable
- Efficient and Modern
- Innovative and Ambitious
- None of the above

A.4 Delivering Best Value

Insert text here

A.5 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Insert text here

A.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Insert text here

A.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

Insert text here

A.8 Supporting Sustainable Development

Insert text here

APPENDIX B

Background Papers/Resource Links (insert applicable papers/links)