

# Anti-Bullying Policy

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## Foreword

This Anti-Bullying Policy provides three parts, to support schools to embed a policy which is underpinned with legislation, is high-quality, recommended practice, and which provides a steer as to how to adapt elements to include the voice of learners, parents and staff within your own school community.

Each part includes a box which provides advice around whether to adapt parts, utilise parts verbatim for your own school policy, or areas that could be taken to learners, parents and staff to gain their thoughts and opinions.

## Part One: Rationale, Legislative Context & Expectations

For Part One, it is recommended that all schools utilise all paragraphs verbatim within their school anti-bullying policy, unless denoted by **red text**, or '(insert)' recommendations. This will provide a consistency around supporting each school to lay out the rationale, legislative context and expectations around anti-bullying across the local authority

Bullying is never acceptable, in any form. The impact of bullying can be significant and can resonate for many years after the event.

The Scottish Government vision for children and young people states that:

- Every child and young person in Scotland will grow up free from bullying and will develop respectful, responsible and confident relationships with other children, young people and adults;
- Children and young people and their parent(s), will have the skills and resilience to prevent and/or respond to bullying appropriately;
- Every child and young person who requires help will know who can help them and what support is available; and
- Adults working with children and young people will follow a consistent and coherent approach in dealing with and preventing bullying from Early Learning and Childcare onwards. <sup>1</sup>

### 1. Vision and Ethos in Midlothian

Midlothian Council is committed to creating an environment where everyone is safe and supported to thrive and grow. There is no place for bullying behaviour within any Midlothian establishment, and this policy document and associated guidance materials include a range of strategies aimed at both prevention and intervention within the rights-respecting culture we aspire to in all Midlothian education settings.

### 2. (Name) School Vision and Ethos

At (name) School, we promote our school values of (insert here) in all that we do. We recognise that bullying is never acceptable, and we understand that all children and young people in our school have the right to learn in a safe and secure learning environment which enables them to thrive and to flourish.

### 3. Context and Legislation

This anti-bullying policy sits within a broad legislative framework which includes the following pieces of legislation:

- UNCRC (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024<sup>2</sup>
- Additional Support for Learning Act 2004<sup>3</sup>
- Equality Act 2010<sup>4</sup>

Other key national guidance which underpins this policy can be found in Appendix A.

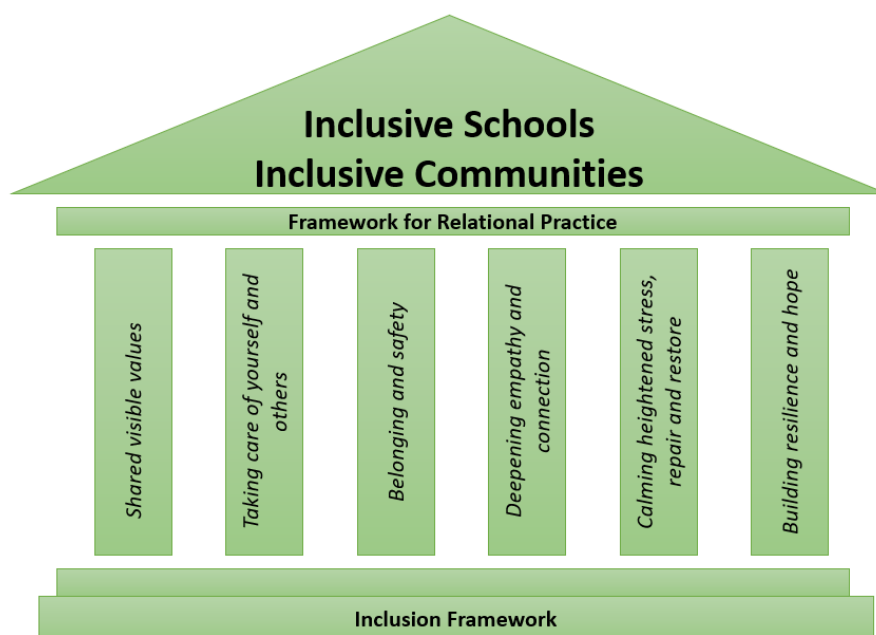
<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2014) Respect for all: The national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people.

<sup>2</sup> [Background and introduction to the UNCRC Act - UNCRC \(Incorporation\) \(Scotland\) Act 2024 - part 2: statutory guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\) \(Draft guidance\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) \(Scotland\) Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

This policy is located within the Midlothian Relational Practice Framework, (Appendix B) and reflects the six pillars of relational practice which are underpinned by the Inclusion Framework (Appendix C).



## 4. Terminology and Labelling

It can be unhelpful to use labels to define people by their behaviour. At *Name of School*, we use the term *bullying behaviour* rather than describing someone as a bully, which suggests that behaviour is fixed and cannot be changed. We avoid use of the word *victim* because this risks defining a child or young person by the mistreatment they have experienced. According to the NSPCC, the word “victim” is associated with “weakness, vulnerability and powerlessness”.<sup>5</sup> Instead, we use terms such as *the person being bullied*, or *the person on the receiving end of bullying behaviour*.

## 5. What is bullying?

The Scottish Government guidance “Respect for All”, quotes the *respectme* definition of bullying as:

both behaviour and impact; what someone does and the impact it has on the other person’s capacity to feel in control of themselves. We call this their sense of ‘agency’. 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.<sup>6</sup>

This definition locates bullying behaviours within a relationship framework and context and focuses upon the *impact* of behaviour and not just the behaviour itself.

Every child has the right not to be bullied<sup>7</sup>. We are committed to challenging all types of bullying behaviour, including prejudice-based bullying.

<sup>5</sup> [Why language matters: why to avoid the term ‘victim’ to refer to children who have experienced abuse | NSPCC Learning](#)

<sup>6</sup> [What is bullying? - respectme](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Children’s Rights - respectme](#)

Bullying behaviour includes:

- Name-calling, teasing, threatening, or putting someone down, either in person or online;
- Physical bullying such as hitting, pushing, kicking and tripping;
- Taking someone else's belongings or damaging them;
- Spreading rumours about someone, purposefully ignoring them or deliberately leaving them out (face-to-face and/or online);
- Sending abusive messages, pictures or images via social media, phone or gaming platforms;
- Behaving in ways which make people feel like they are not in control of themselves or their lives (face-to-face and/or online);
- Targeting someone because of who they are or who they are perceived to be<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> [What is bullying? - respectme](#)

Bullying behaviours can take place face to face and online. The focus is on *what* is happening, not *where* it happens.

## 6. When it isn't bullying.

We recognise that children and young people sometimes fall out as a natural part of growing up, and learning to get along with each other. Sometimes learners behave towards each other in ways which can be hurtful or unkind. RespectMe states that:

“We should always remember that children will tease each other, fall in and out with each other, have arguments, stop talking to each other and disagree about what they like and don't like. This is a normal part of growing up and should be distinguished from bullying. However, in an environment where this behaviour is left unchecked, it can lead to bullying, making those being bullied feel afraid, uncomfortable and unsafe in their environment.” (RespectMe, 2018).<sup>9</sup>

When considering whether behaviour can be described as bullying, we use RespectMe's guidance:

“Bullying can affect people in different ways, and this should be taken into consideration. If you are unsure if behaviour is bullying, look at the effect it is having on the child or young person. If they are unable to respond effectively and regain their sense of self and control in the situation, adults need to intervene to help restore it. Keeping the focus on impact reduces the emphasis on issues of persistence and intent. What you do about bullying is more important than how you define it.” (2018) <sup>10</sup>

At (*name*) School, we have high expectations of each other when it comes to respectful and positive relationships. We support each other to develop these relationships through good role modelling, and a focus on kindness and respect throughout our school. The strategies we use to promote respectful, positive relationships can be found in our Relationships policy (*insert link here*).

## 7. Protected characteristics and Prejudice-based bullying

Bullying behaviour that is directed at someone because of a perceived or actual difference is known as prejudice-based bullying. This behaviour can include racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia or prejudice and discrimination towards disability and faith<sup>11</sup>.

The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful to discriminate against anyone with a 'protected characteristic'. These are:

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<sup>9</sup> [What is bullying? - respectme](#)

<sup>10</sup> [What is bullying? - respectme](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Supporting documents - Respect for All: national approach to anti-bullying - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#) p10

- Age
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation
- Sex
- Disability
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity

These protected characteristics can be the target of prejudice-based bullying behaviour. However, prejudice-based bullying can include a wider range of prejudices, including, but not limited to:

- Additional Support Needs
- Asylum seeker or refugee status
- Care experienced children and young people
- Intersectionality
- Sectarianism
- Body image and physical appearance
- Gypsy/Travellers
- Young carers
- Socio-economic differences<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>12</sup> [Supporting documents - Respect for All: national approach to anti-bullying - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot) p39

## 8. Positive Expectations

Tackling bullying behaviour begins with creating a whole-school ethos with positive relationships at the centre, where bullying is not tolerated, and where all bullying behaviours are challenged. At *(name)* school, we have high expectations of conduct from all members of our school community in line with our vision and ethos, and we promote a culture of support and trust between all members of our school community. We believe all children and young people have the right to be treated with dignity, and we expect every member of our school community to treat one another with respect, fairness, and kindness.

We promote a whole school anti-bullying ethos by:

- Developing and embedding a supportive and open culture where all members of the school community feel safe to express their concerns and their views without fear of reprisal;
- Ensuring that all members of our school community know what to do if they are concerned about an incident of bullying;
- Providing curricular input about managing conflict and developing resilience;
- Working collegiately with all members of the school community to embed a zero-tolerance approach to incidents of bullying;
- Creating safe spaces, and easily accessed procedures which prevent bullying from happening.

## 9. Roles and Responsibilities

We all have responsibilities to ensure that all members of our school community are safe and can learn in a safe and supportive environment. We support each other to address bullying behaviours and to develop and maintain our anti-bullying ethos. Bullying affects individuals, groups, environments, learning and health and wellbeing. Because of this, it is important that we are all clear about the individual and collective responsibilities which keep us all safe.

### The Local Authority is responsible for:

- Supporting schools to implement the council schools anti-bullying policy;
- Providing training and support to address all forms of bullying behaviour.
- Gathering and monitoring incidents of bullying and reporting on trends, patterns and key insights from data analysis.
- Keeping abreast of advances in technology to provide advice on online bullying.
- Providing support and guidance to school staff.
- Working with partner agencies to support the prevention and reduction of bullying incidents.
- Consulting and engaging with children and young people, parents and carers, and members of staff, about the effectiveness and further development of the policy.
- Reporting to the Council.

### Schools and Settings are responsible for:

- Developing and regularly reviewing the implementation of their school's anti-bullying policy and practice.
- Developing practices that promote fairness, inclusion and respect and challenge prejudice-based bullying.
- Being pro-active and treating all allegations seriously using a respectful and proportionate approach to address concerns.
- Ensuring appropriate procedures are in place to address, record, review and monitor all forms of bullying behaviours quickly.
- Developing a positive ethos and culture within the school community.
- Developing digital citizenship as an integral part of Relationships policies.
- Providing effective communication to ensure that parents and the wider community know what to do if a bullying incident occurs.
- Ensuring opportunities exist to promote children's rights, equality and diversity.
- Referring incidents through Child Protection procedures or to the Police if appropriate.
- Providing appropriate support to all those involved in bullying incidents and treating everyone with respect at all times.
- Ensuring parents/carers and learners are updated on the policy and what it means in practice at key review times and when any changes are made.
- Ensuring that the Anti-bullying policy is made available on the school website and in hard copy on request.



### Children and Young People are responsible for:

- Telling a trusted person if they have any worries about bullying.
- Treating everyone with respect and not engaging in bullying behaviour.
- Reporting incidents of bullying behaviours.
- Supporting each other and seeking help to ensure that everyone feels safe, and nobody feels excluded or afraid in school.
- Engaging in safe, responsible use of mobile technology.

### Parents are responsible for:

- Supporting and encouraging positive relationships amongst all members of the school community.
- Sharing concerns as quickly as possible.
- Working in partnership with the school and local authority.
- Communicating concerns to a relevant member of school staff in the first instance and working in partnership with them to resolve these concerns.

## Part Two: How are teachers, pupils and families supported to fulfil the expectations stated in Part One?

For Part Two, it is recommended that all schools consider the recommended strategies detailed but utilise them as a starting point for discussion with learners, parents and staff. The strategies you detail in your school's Anti-Bullying Policy should be specific to your school's context and actioned following the launch of the policy, therefore it's important that learners, parents and staff have their voices heard, considered and, where appropriate, included within Part Two.

### 10. Preventing Bullying Behaviours

The best way to tackle bullying in school is to develop preventative measures as part of the school's ethos and approach to wellbeing. We use a range of strategies to help prevent bullying, which include:

- Ensuring responses to distressed or inappropriate behaviour are predictable and consistent;
- Establishing restorative practices across our school;
- Implementing advice from *RespectMe* and *Included, Engaged and Involved* to inform practice;
- Developing school approaches which promote meaningful inclusion, diversity and equality;
- Ensuring that nurture principles underpin approaches to decision making and interactions with, and between, all members of the school community;
- Building resilience and empathy through the implementation of the Framework for Relational Approaches (Appendix B), and through our curriculum offer;

- Timely, age-appropriate curriculum approaches which reflect the Curriculum for Excellence *Learning for Health and Wellbeing*<sup>13</sup> expectations;
- Promotion of safe environments for open dialogue;
- Provision of information for learners, families and carers, and staff on our approaches to bullying;
- Professional Learning opportunities for staff members;
- Promotion and signposting of learning opportunities for parents, carers and families;
- Clear processes for reporting incidents of bullying behaviour which are shared with all stakeholders.

## Part Three: What are the steps taken to support re-engagement in adhering to the policy & reporting?

For Part Three, it is recommended that all schools utilise all paragraphs verbatim within their school anti-bullying policy- around reporting and monitoring, unless denoted by **red text**, or '(insert)' recommendations. This will provide a consistency around reporting and monitoring of bullying across the local authority.

Aspects in this section which can be discussed with learners, parents and staff, to seek their thoughts and opinions on are:

- What actions might be taken with the person experiencing bullying
- Approaches to restorative conversations
- Appropriate escalation strategies
- Approaches to pastoral support to those feeling distressed
- Suggested strategies for improving resilience, understanding and managing challenge
- Curriculum approaches to managing conflict

### 11. Reporting and Investigating Incidents of Bullying Behaviour

At (*name*) school, we promote an ethos of safety and care, where learners are free to discuss concerns in a supportive and non-judgemental environment.

Anyone can raise a concern about, or report an incident of, bullying behaviour, and the procedure for reporting is shared with children and young people, staff, parents and carers.

At (*name*) school, we take all reports of bullying behaviour seriously. We ensure that we investigate all reports thoroughly and record them both on our internal incident log and on SEEMiS. We share data about bullying incidents with the Council at agreed times in the schoolyear. All allegations of bullying behaviour are recorded on SEEMiS, even if subsequent investigation determines an incident not to constitute bullying. Incidents of bullying behaviour, or perceived bullying behaviour are followed up to ensure that all parties have reached resolution. We refer to our Relationships Policy when assessing the actions to be taken when an incident of bullying has occurred, applying the escalation process as needed.

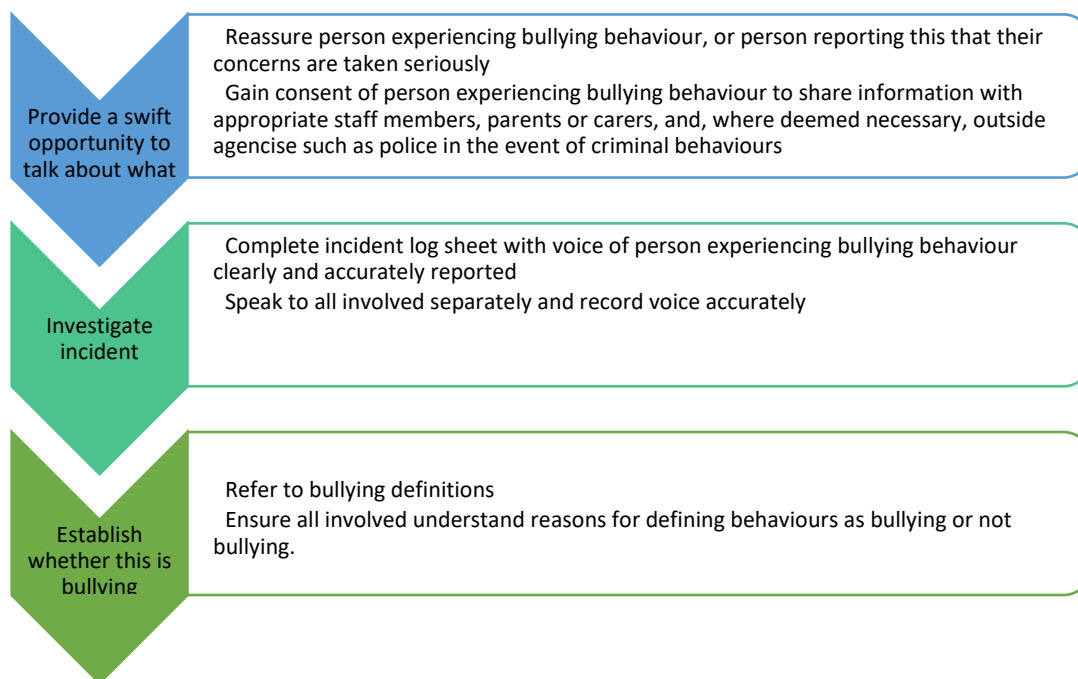
When an incident of bullying behaviour is reported which may involve child protection concerns or allegations of criminal behaviour such as hate crime, we follow Midlothian child protection procedures

<sup>13</sup> [Health and wellbeing | Curriculum areas | Curriculum for Excellence | Education Scotland](#)

and involve third parties such as the police where there is a concern that a crime may have been committed.

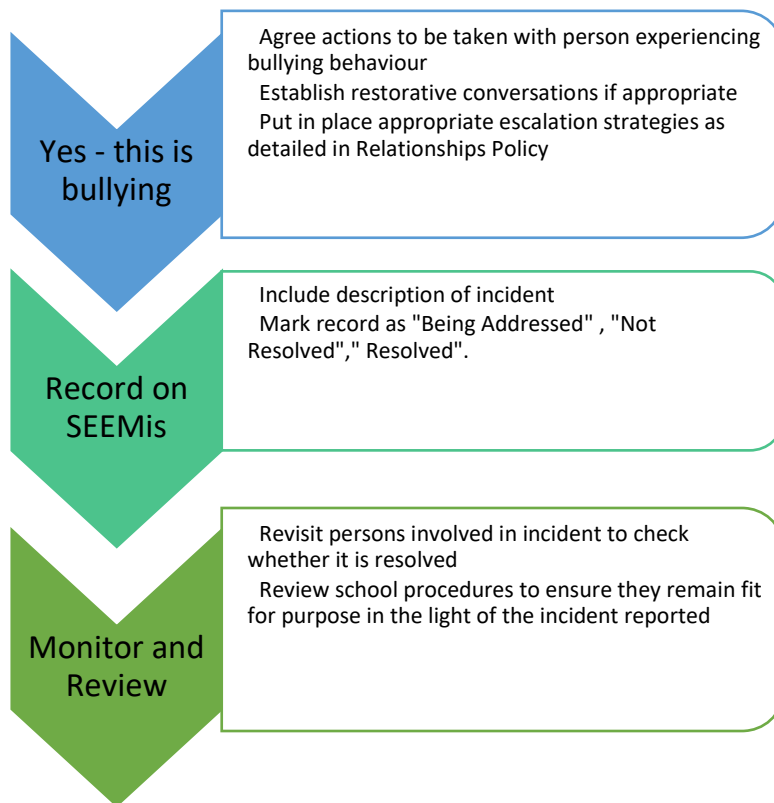
We seek consent from those who have experienced a bullying incident to share the information they provide to us with relevant staff members, family members or carers, and if necessary, external services. However, we recognise the rights of the child as outlined in the GIRFEC guidance<sup>14</sup> and we are committed to ensuring transparency about the need for sharing of information, and the rights of the child to express a view on whether they wish information to be shared or not.

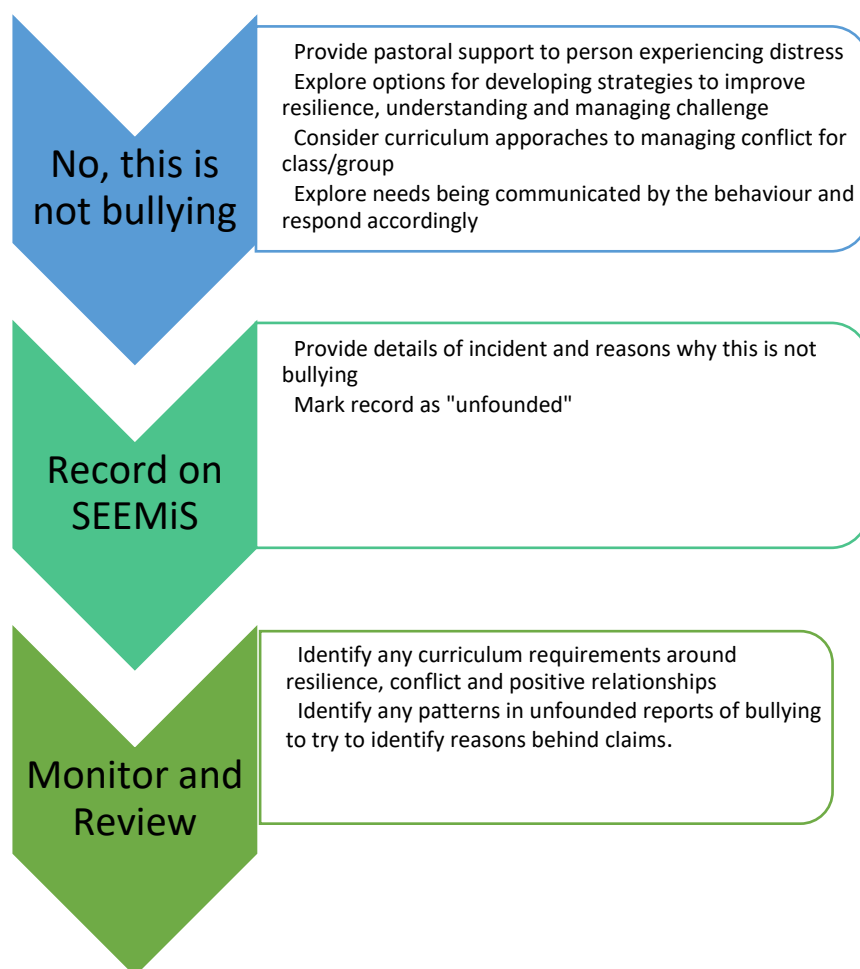
## 12. When an incident of bullying behaviour is reported:



<sup>14</sup> [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) Practice Guidance 4 - Information sharing - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/Getting-it-right-for-every-child-(GIRFEC)-Practice-Guidance-4-Information-sharing)

## Is this bullying?





### 13. Recording incidents of bullying behaviour

All reports of bullying behaviour will be carefully investigated and logged. An incident report will include:

- The children or young people involved and any adults or staff members;
- Where and when the incident of bullying behaviour took place;
- What type of bullying behaviour was experienced;
- Any underlying prejudice or details of any protected characteristics;
- The impact of the bullying incident, using SHANARRI as a framework (see appendix D) and the principles of GIRFEC to establish level and type of impact on all involved, the school environment, learning, health and/or wellbeing;
- What the child or young person(s) experiencing bullying behaviour want to happen;
- What actions have been taken, including restorative practice, resolution and/or individual or organisational changes to be made.

Following a report of bullying, the incident will be recorded on the SEEMiS Bullying and Equalities module (appendix E). This must happen for all reports of bullying regardless of the outcome of investigations, including where the behaviour reported is found not to constitute bullying. By recording all reports of bullying behaviour, we can identify patterns of behaviour and provide support and intervention which may include input on recognising when behaviour constitutes bullying and when it is part of a normal approach to disagreement. Accurate recording helps us to identify appropriate strategies to help learners deal with challenging situations, supporting the development of resilience,

and providing opportunities for all children and young people to discuss their concerns and worries in a safe, supportive environment<sup>15</sup>.

SEEMiS records will be collected and analysed by the local authority on a termly basis.

## 14. Monitoring incidents of bullying behaviour

Respect for All states that:

“The most successful anti-bullying interventions are embedded within a positive ethos and culture and do not focus on individual incidents.”<sup>16</sup>

In order, then, to provide a meaningful, preventative and ethos-driven approach to anti-bullying at *(name)* school, we undertake regular monitoring alongside the local authority of incidents of bullying in our school.

Monitoring enables us to:

- Gather information on the scope and scale of bullying in our school;
- Make judgements about improvements to our approach;
- Provide interventions which are informed by analysis of data;
- Evaluate the impact of anti-bullying measures on our self-improvement;
- Identify trends, patterns, and issues related to equality and diversity.

Monitoring of incidents, including recording of follow up activities, are carried out on a termly basis by the Anti Bullying Co-Ordinator *(name)*. Monitoring information will include:

- Number of incidents recorded;
- Type of incidents recorded;
- Location of incidents;
- Year groups involved;
- Timing of incidents;
- Changes over time;
- Number and type of prejudice-based incidents and changes over time;
- Effectiveness of interventions and follow-up.

The local authority will monitor incidents of bullying on a termly basis, analysing the data collected to identify trends and signpost to support and guidance related to emerging patterns.

*Where a learner or parent/carer is dissatisfied with the response to an allegation of bullying, they should, in the first instance, contact *(name)* in order to try to resolve the issue. If this is not satisfactory, the council's Complaints Procedure should be followed (Appendix F)*

## Part Four: Quality Assurance and Policy Updates

Part Four is to ensure clarity around who developed the different parts within the policy, as well as a statement of intent around how and when the policy will be reviewed.

<sup>15</sup> [Supporting documents - Recording and monitoring of bullying incidents in schools: supplementary guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

<sup>16</sup> [Supporting documents - Recording and monitoring of bullying incidents in schools: supplementary guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Part One of this policy was developed by the local authority and will be refreshed and updated in line with national updates on a rolling basis.

Part Two of this policy was developed by (insert staff titles and the breadth of stakeholders involved, e.g. learners from P7, parent council). This will be reviewed every year by senior leaders, with a wider consultation with learners, parents and staff taking place every (insert timeframe).

Part Three of this policy was developed by the local authority and will be refreshed and updated inline with updates to monitoring and reporting processes at a local authority level. Aspects in this section which will be reviewed every year by senior leaders, with a wider consultation with learners, parents and staff taking place every (insert timeframe) are: (use as appropriate):

- What actions might be taken with the person experiencing bullying
- Approaches to restorative conversations
- Appropriate escalation strategies
- Approaches to pastoral support to those feeling distressed
- Suggested strategies for improving resilience, understanding and managing challenge
- Curriculum approaches to managing conflict

**This policy was last updated:** (insert date school launched policy on school website) **and is due to be refreshed on:** (insert deadline for annually launching policy on school website)