

Thomas Muir Primary School



Anti-Bullying Guidelines

November 2022

'Respect for All has a fundamental role to play in helping us realise our vision for all children and young people. It provides a holistic framework for all adults working with children and young people to address all aspects of bullying, including prejudice based bullying. Respect for All reflects Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and recognises that bullying impacts on wellbeing. In order to thrive and achieve their full potential, children and young people need learning environments which are safe, nurturing, respectful and free from fear, abuse and discrimination.'

Scottish Government (2017) – Respect for All: A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People.

Rationale

These Anti-Bullying Guidelines provide guidance to pupils, staff, parents and carers of Thomas Muir Primary on preventing, responding to and reducing bullying behaviour in line with East Dunbartonshire's Anti-Bullying Policy and Guidance for Education Establishments (2020).

Aims

The aims of the Thomas Muir Primary's Guidelines are to ensure:

- that all children and young people are provided with a safe, inclusive and supportive environment in which to learn;
- children and young people, parents and carers and staff have a robust understanding of what bullying behaviour is and the action which will be taken when it is witnessed or reported.
- a culture is promoted where bullying is recognised as being unacceptable;
- the prevention of bullying of children and young people through a range of approaches;
- effective support for children and young people and their parents and carers who are affected by bullying.

Definitions of Bullying

Bullying is a combination of behaviours and impacts that can affect someone's ability to feel in control of themselves; it is behaviour that can make people feel hurt, threatened, frightened and left out. This behaviour can harm people physically or emotionally and, although the behaviour may not be repeated, the threat may be kept up over time, by actions, looks, messages, confrontations, hitting or hurting or the fear of these.

Bullying also occurs in the virtual world which children and young people access through the Internet, via social networking (e.g. FaceBook, Twitter and Snapchat), computers and mobile phones. As communication can happen anywhere and at any time, often unsupervised, on-line bullying can be all-encompassing and difficult to handle. However, in essence, the behaviour is the same and requires similar prevention methods. *Bullying – A Guide for Parents and Carers*, which includes guidance on on-line bullying, is available from 'respectme' – Scotland's Anti-bullying Service on their website - **www.respectme.org.uk**.

Bullying behaviour may be related to prejudice-based attitudes and behaviours which may compound other differences or difficulties in a child or young person's life. These include:

- homophobic bullying
- racist bullying
- disablist bullying
- body image
- religion and belief
- sexism
- looked after children and young people
- young carers/care experienced
- socio-economic group
- gender based or trans identity

When talking about bullying, it is important not to label children and young people as 'bullies' or 'victims'. Labels can stick for life and can isolate a child, rather than helping them to recover or change their behaviour. All children and young people need help to understand why bullying behaviour is wrong in order that they can change it.

Thomas Muir Primary is committed to current definitions that take account of the context in which the event took place and the impact on the person who feels harm has been done to them. It is considered unhelpful to define bullying purely in terms of behaviours alone.

It is important to have clarity about these significant events and be able to recognise and acknowledge bullying behaviours when they happen.

Bullying behaviours can include:

- name calling, teasing, putting down or threatening and intimidating by making prejudiced-based remarks
- hitting, tripping, pushing, kicking
- stealing and damaging belongings
- ignoring, excluding, spreading rumours
- sending abusive messages electronically, e.g. via text, emails or social networking sites
- making people feel like they are being bullied or fearful of being bullied
- targeting someone because of who they are or who they are perceived to be

This list is not an exhaustive list; there may be other behaviours that could impact negatively on a child's wellbeing.

It is crucial to take into account the impact that bullying behaviour has on a child or young person. **The impact an incident has on a child or young person is more important than whether it is classified as bullying.** Actions can affect people in different ways and this should be taken into consideration. The person who has experienced harm may have experienced just one event. **The impact determines the definition of bullying.** One incident is sufficient to alert adults to take supportive action.

Prevention of Bullying

Thomas Muir Primary will work to create a positive and supportive ethos. A culture that encourages respect, values opinions, celebrates differences and promotes positive relationships will make it difficult for bullying behaviour to occur or be tolerated. This includes approaches such as:

- the promotion of our school charter to encourage respect and tolerance
- buddying or mentoring
- system which identifies vulnerable pupils and takes steps to remedy this
- creative and motivational ways to engage pupils and raise awareness of bullying with theatre groups, speakers, film footage and music
- involvement of the House Captains and other pupil groups
- anti-bullying campaigns, posters, assemblies
- encouraging pupils to report bullying incidents using 'worry' boxes
- areas of special focus e.g. prevention of name calling
- an understanding of the impact and legal consequences of on-line bullying, for the whole school community through the curriculum, assemblies and events for parents and carers.
- Working with partnership agencies to raise awareness amongst staff and pupils, eg community police, EDC Young carers, SAMH

Action

The member of staff to whom the incident is first reported, or who has witnessed the incident, should take the incident seriously. They must use their professional judgement in deciding upon appropriate action based on the impact of the bullying behaviour on the child or young person.

The child or young person who has experienced bullying behaviour will receive appropriate support and protection. This may be from a member of the Senior Leadership Team or another member of staff who will be released to have time to talk with them (eg class teacher, nurture teacher).

Examples of good practice include:

- the child or young person is taken to a comfortable place with no distractions
- the child or young person is listened to
- the member of staff should confirm that bullying is never acceptable; they deserve to feel safe
- they should be gently encouraged to talk, to find out what happened, who was involved, where and when – and notes taken
- they should be asked what they want to see happen next
- the child or young person should be kept up to date with progress
- details of the bullying behaviour and actions taken is recorded in the SEEMIS Bullying and Equalities Module
- the member of staff should inform parents/carers of the incident and action taken.

When a child or young person has displayed bullying behaviour, a member of the management team should, based on their professional judgement, endeavour to manage the resolution of the bullying incident within the school. Parents should be involved when their active support is needed to implement a resolution of the bullying incident.

Examples of good practice include:

- time should be taken to understand the reasons for the bullying behaviour
- the individual or group should not be labelled as 'bullies', name the behaviour
- staff should be prepared for a strong reaction from parents and carers, children and young people
- staff should be prepared to address prejudicial attitudes that may be behind the bullying behaviour
- addressing what is happening behind the behaviour, even when the bullying has stopped.

Consideration should be given to the sanctions and support given to the young person displaying bullying behaviour to ensure that interventions are intended to improve behaviour.

Such approaches might include:

- positive behaviour strategies with an appropriate member of staff
- restorative approaches
- solution orientated approaches
- involvement of educational psychologists and community police.

However, 'where it is considered that in all circumstances to allow the child or young person to continue attendance at school would be seriously detrimental to order and discipline or the educational wellbeing of the pupils there' (National Guidance for Schools and Local Authorities in Managing School Exclusions, 2011), senior managers have the power to exclude as a last resort.

Communicating Awareness

In order to tackle the issue of bullying it is essential that **everyone within the school community** is aware that **bullying is never acceptable** and what action should be taken if they are subject to, or witness, what might be a bullying incident.

At Thomas Muir we will:

- regularly discuss anti-bullying strategies through our health and wellbeing programme and whole school assemblies
- promote respect and tolerance through our whole school charter
- in consultation with pupils, parents and staff, regularly review, update and publish the school anti-bullying policy
- display relevant information on a dedicated notice board, in a prominent position, close to the main entrance to the school;
- regularly communicate with parents to keep them abreast of our work
- work with partner agencies to educate pupils on internet safety and safe approaches to online communication

It is essential that everyone takes responsibility in creating a safe and supportive environment within Thomas Muir Primary and we aim to achieve this by:

- supporting anti-bullying projects and nurturing a positive ethos of respect for all;
- promoting work on personal safety as part of the Health and Wellbeing curriculum;
- encouraging the development of environments in which children and young people can feel free of bullying and can thrive;
- providing support in individual circumstances.

Reporting Bullying Behaviour

If you are being bullied or witness someone else being bullied it is very important that you take action: ignoring it can often mean it will get worse.

Steps you can take include

- report it to a member of school staff (office, class teacher, senior leadership team).
- Speak to admin staff in the school office and make an appointment to speak to the Head Teacher or Depute Head Teacher, explaining you have a bullying concern.

What will we do when you tell us?

Bullying and harassment are wrong and we will always listen to any concerns or comments, but that doesn't mean the people who do it are 'bad' people. It doesn't excuse the bullying behaviour, but it does mean that it is possible to help them change the way they behave.

Steps we will take will include:

- discussing incidents with pupil(s) experiencing the bullying behaviour;
- discussing incidents with pupil(s) displaying bullying behaviour;
- taking appropriate action eg monitoring the situation over an agreed period of time and plan check ins to see how restorative measures have progressed
- record the incident on the Seemis system as outlined in the EDC Procedure Manual Anti Bullying policy.

We will encourage mediation which will involve:

- creating an ethos of respect, inclusion, accountability and taking responsibility;
- demonstrating impartiality and being non-judgemental;
- actively listening while encouraging collaboration and emotional self-expression
- facilitating dialogue and problem-solving;
- listening to and expressing emotion;
- empowering others to take ownership of problems.

Review of Guidelines - Anti-Bullying Guidelines to be reviewed during session 2024/25