ANTI-BULLYING POLICY: BULLYING PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT FOR EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS

Policy Summary

This policy ensures all children and young people in Aberdeenshire learn in environments free from bullying. It sets out a clear stance that bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed promptly. The policy aims to:

- Prevent bullying through education and awareness.
- Provide consistent guidance for staff to respond effectively.
- Promote equality and inclusion by tackling all forms of bullying, including prejudice-based behaviour.

Its overall intent is to safeguard wellbeing and uphold children's rights, ensuring every learner feels safe, respected, and supported.

Policy Status	Approved and finalised by the committee on 29/01/2026
Responsible Officer	Fiona Murray, Education Support Officer, Inclusion Equity and Wellbeing
Policy Sponsor	Carron Chapman, Principal Educational Psychologist/Service Manager Inclusion Equity and Wellbeing
Authorised By	Education & Children Services Committee
Policy Review Date	29/01/2029

1. Policy Statement

This policy reflects Aberdeenshire Council's commitment to inclusion, equity, and wellbeing, supporting strategic priorities under Education and Children's Services. It aligns with national and statutory requirements, including:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009
- Equality Act 2010
- Respect for All: A National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People (2024 Update)
- Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)

In accordance with Scotland's National Anti-Bullying Service; 'Respectme (Update 2024)', Aberdeenshire Council Education and Children's Services define bullying as the following:

'*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.*'

A further exemplification of bullying from the same document states that
'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 is considered to be a breach of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Aberdeenshire Council shares the view that:
'Bullying of any kind is unacceptable and must be addressed promptly and effectively. Bullying should never be seen as an inevitable part of growing up. Children and young people living in Scotland should have equal opportunities to succeed; bullying compromises this ambition.'
Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People Update 2024

By embedding these principles, the policy reflects legal and ethical obligations to protect children and young people from harm, promote positive relationships and guides staff to uphold these responsibilities.

This policy was developed in response to updated national guidance (*Respect for All 2024*) and local consultation to ensure consistency across Aberdeenshire educational establishments. It supports Aberdeenshire Council's strategic priorities by creating safe, respectful learning environments that promote wellbeing and inclusion (Living well locally), encouraging positive relationships and community cohesion (Connected communities), and preparing confident, skilled learners for future employment (A sustainable economy). During development, the Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty were actively considered to embed equality and fairness throughout the policy.

2. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all educational establishments and practitioners within Aberdeenshire Council. It covers all instances of bullying behaviour between learners, including face-to-face and online interactions, and any behaviour impacting attendance or engagement in learning. It includes bullying and harassment on grounds such as age, disability, race, sexual orientation, sex, gender reassignment, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. Prejudice-based bullying is also included.

3. Policy Principles & Equalities

This policy provides clear guidance for education staff, partners, and stakeholders to prevent and respond effectively to bullying. It is underpinned by the belief that all children and young people have the right to learn in an environment free from bullying, enabling them to develop the skills and confidence needed for life, learning, and work.
To achieve this, the policy sets out six strategic principles:

1. **Stance** – Bullying in any form is unacceptable and will be addressed promptly and effectively.
2. **Definition** – Bullying behaviour does not need to be repeated or intended to cause harm to have an impact. It can be physical, emotional, or verbal and may cause individuals to feel hurt, threatened, frightened, or excluded.
3. **Prevention** – Promote education and awareness to reduce bullying and foster positive relationships.

4. **Communication** – Ensure clear communication of anti-bullying measures and responsibilities across all stakeholders.
5. **Response** – Adopt a structured, consistent approach to managing incidents, such as the '6-step approach'.
6. **Reporting, Recording, and Monitoring** – Use robust systems (e.g. RAMBIS) to record and monitor incidents, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement.

Intended Outcomes:

- Create safe, inclusive learning environments where bullying is not tolerated.
- Support equality and uphold children's rights in line with statutory duties.
- Enable schools to implement consistent, data driven practices for prevention and intervention.
- Ensure transparency and accountability through effective monitoring and reporting.

In developing and reviewing this policy, Aberdeenshire Council has actively considered and embedded the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty and the Fairer Scotland Duty. This has been achieved by:

- Conducting an Integrated Impact Assessment to identify potential impacts on protected characteristics and socio-economic disadvantage.
- Engaging with stakeholders, including children and young people, to ensure diverse perspectives informed the policy.
- Reviewing national guidance and best practice to ensure the policy promotes equality of opportunity and fosters good relations.
- Embedding equality considerations throughout the policy's principles, ensuring that responses to bullying address prejudice-based behaviours and support inclusion for all learners.

4. Supporting Policies and Documents

- Anti- Bullying Guidance: Bullying Prevention and Management for Educational Establishments (Aberdeenshire Guidance updated to align with this policy)
- Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People
- Included, engaged and involved part 2: preventing and managing school exclusions - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
- Supporting Transgender Pupils In Schools: Guidance for Scottish Schools
- Further Anti-Bullying information and training can be found at Professionals | respectme
- Addressing racism and racist incidents in schools
- Education Scotland - Hate Crime and prejudice-based behaviours
- Scottish Government guidance on mobile phones in schools.

5. Council Strategic Priorities

Pillar	Priority	How does the policy reflect the Council's strategic Priorities?
A sustainable economy	We will support a strong and diverse economy by attracting people of working age to our region, complementing our highly skilled local workforce.	Creates safe, respectful learning environments that promote wellbeing and inclusion
Connected communities	We will work with communities and partners to enhance the sense of connection among our places. This includes supporting communities to come up with innovative solutions to ensure our places are resilient and vibrant.	Encourages positive relationships and community cohesion through anti-bullying measures
Living well locally	We will encourage and support our residents to lead healthy and active lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. We will make proactive choices that will allow us to cater to the needs of our increasingly ageing population.	Builds inclusive schools that prepare confident, skilled learners for future employment

6. Policy Revision

Version Number	Revision Date	Committee Approval Date	Summary of Changes
V2	Feb 2022	March 2022	Definition of Bullying has been amended in line with National guidance. Reporting and Monitoring procedure for Aberdeenshire has been added. Reference to Transgender related bullying; in accordance with National Guidance on Supporting Transgender Young People in Scottish schools 2021 was also added.
V3	Nov 2025	29th January 2026	Amended Definition and Stance in line with updated National Guidance. Links updated in line with current guidance.

7. Policy Distribution

Name	Designation	Organisation
Laurence Findlay	Director of Education & Children's Services	Aberdeenshire Council
Susan Smith	Head of Education	Aberdeenshire Council
Carron Chapman	Principal Educational Psychologist/Service Manager (IEW)	Aberdeenshire Council
Head Teachers	All Educational establishments	Aberdeenshire Council (The final Policy will be shared with all educational establishments)

[ENDS]