

RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

To: Lifelong Learning and Work Policy Board

On: Thursday 21 December 2006

Report by

Director of Education and Leisure Services

**TACKLING BULLYING IN RENFREWSHIRE SCHOOLS:
PROGRESS REPORT 2005-06**

1. Summary

- 1.1 This is the fourth annual report on tackling bullying in Renfrewshire. It contains background information on bullying, progress achieved in school session 2005-06, current and historical data on incidents of bullying and results of the annual survey of schools.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the lifelong learning and work policy board are requested to:
- i) acknowledge the good work being carried out to deal with bullying; and
 - ii) note the data that has been collected using standardised monitoring forms and its relationship to the data previously reported.

3. Background

- 3.1 Bullying is an unacceptable form of behaviour through which an individual or groups of individuals feel threatened, abused or undermined by another individual or group of individuals. Bullying is behaviour which can be defined as a repeated attack of a physical, psychological, social or verbal nature by those who are able to exert influence over others.
- 3.2 At national level, there has been considerable and increased concern in recent years about the subject of bullying. Since this is an issue which can affect people at varying stages of their lives, all organisations are expected to have an anti-bullying policy which is known to all. Within schools this includes staff, parents and pupils and recognises the threat which bullying represents to the education and well-being of many pupils. There is clear evidence that bullying continues to be prevalent and a major cause of distress for young people.

- 3.3 Throughout the session, our work was supported by the Anti-bullying Network set up by the Scottish Executive in 1999. The focus of the network has been widened recently to tackle bullying in the community, not just in schools.
- 3.4 Childline, the national charity for children in need, reported in March 2006 that once again 25% of its calls were from children suffering from bullying, the largest percentage attributed to any one cause.
- 3.5 Within schools, the development of anti-bullying strategies is the responsibility of the whole school community, including staff, pupils and parents under the co-ordination of the head teacher.
- 3.6 In addition to ensuring that the curriculum addresses issues of discrimination and equality, it is also important to ensure that the ethos of the school gives positive messages to staff, pupils, parents and the local community. Schools strive to ensure that all people are welcome, are treated with respect, and that they feel safe in all parts of the building.
- 3.7 Improvement in behaviour cannot be achieved by simply drawing up a policy since the groundwork for such improvements lies in:
- developing a shared understanding of the value system within which the school operates;
 - the quality of learning and teaching which takes place; and
 - effective school management, recognising the necessity for the development of good relationships.
- 3.8 It is also important that bullying is seen not as a separate issue but as one aspect of unacceptable behaviour which impinges directly on the educational wellbeing of both victim and bully. Any appropriate strategies for addressing it should be seen within an overall approach to supporting all children and young people.
- 3.9 Anti-bullying strategies form part of a school's overall policy on discipline. The main purpose behind any policy on managing pupil behaviour is to create an ethos in which effective teaching and learning takes place in a safe, supportive environment in a climate of mutual trust and respect.
- 3.10 The policy statement Tackling Bullying in Renfrewshire provides guidance to schools. The procedures to be followed are based on existing good practice and draw on current educational research and established staff development materials.
- 3.11 Tackling bullying in Renfrewshire was launched to pupils and schools in September 2003. A series of awareness seminars for parents based on clusters of schools was started in 2005 and continued in session 2005-06. A third survey on implementation of the policy was carried out with schools in September 2006. The results are summarised in section 5 of this report.

4. Progress on Tackling Bullying in Renfrewshire

4.1 Implementation of the policy continues with the following tasks achieved in 2005/06:

- Our series of parent launch events continued with events for the St Andrews, Park Mains and Castlehead clusters which were very well received;
- Continued publicity in the local newspapers and in the council tax wall planner helped maintain the profile of the Renfrewshire policy; and
- The third set of annual monitoring data gathered from the revised monitoring form has been received from schools.

4.2 Incidents of bullying have been recorded between August 2002 and June 2003; between August 2003 and June 2004; between August 2004 and June 2005; and between August 2005 and June 2006.

Table I

Sector	Roll school 2005/06 Census data	Incidents				Number of incidents per 1000 pupils			
		2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06	2002/03	2003/04	2004/05	2005/06
Primary	13,608	158	138	68	71	11	9.65	4.88	5.22
Secondary	11,507	273	566	114	64	23.1	47.98	9.78	5.56
Special	299	0	0	1	4	0	0	3.29	13.38

4.2.1 The information for 2002/03 was collected in retrospect as part of a baseline exercise. The information for 2003/04, 2004/05 and 2005/06 was collected by schools throughout the session and reported on the standard monitoring form which was distributed to all schools as part of the policy Tackling Bullying in Renfrewshire.

4.2.2 There has been a small statistically insignificant increase in incidents in primary schools following the previous trend of reducing incidents. In secondary schools, the significant reduction in incidents has been sustained.

4.2.3 The increase in incidents in special schools is noted. However the numbers involved are small and relate to an even smaller number of pupils. These pupils were new to the school and experiencing difficulty in settling in. This was highlighted by the school's rigorous systems for tackling bullying. The school has excellent procedures routinely raising the issue of bullying with pupils and dealing with any incidents reported. This more systematic approach has led to better outcomes for the pupils as well as an increase in the number of recorded incidents.

- 4.3 As well as recording the number of incidents, schools were asked to record the number of incidents for which the target of completing the investigation within 3 days was met. The data for 2005/06 in each sector is shown below in table II. The comparable figures for 2003/04 and 2004/05 are given in brackets.

Table II

Sector	Incidents investigated within 3 days 2005/6 (2003/04, 2004/05)	
	Number	Percentage
Primary	71 (130,56)	100 (94.2, 82.35)
Secondary	59 (562, 114)	92.18 (99.29, 100)
Special	4 (0, 1)	(100) (N/A, 100)

It should be noted that the length of time taken to investigate an incident is dependent on its complexity and the availability of witnesses.

5. Survey on Tackling Bullying in Renfrewshire

- 5.1 56 schools responded to the questionnaire. All of these have a policy on promoting positive behaviour or anti-bullying which takes account of the council policy on tackling bullying in Renfrewshire. They have all implemented the monitoring and recording system outlined in the policy. 91.1% of the schools analysed trends in incidents of bullying to improve their practice in tackling bullying.
- 5.2 All schools which responded to the questionnaire have raised awareness of the council's policy with staff. 96.4% have also raised awareness of the policy with pupils and with parents. 74.1% of schools responding had involved the school board in the implementation of the school's policy, while 81.5% had involved parents in general. Pupils have been involved in establishing school policy in 86.5% of the schools responding. 62.7% of the schools actively involve pupils in monitoring incidents and implementing policy.
- 5.3 The policy is routinely promoted to parents, pupils and staff with 92.6% of schools providing posters or leaflets for parents, 85.5% using this method of communication with pupils and 92.5% using this method for staff. Some schools also issue an anti-bullying information pack to parents at the start of the session. 39.6% of schools use homework diaries to include information on tackling bullying and more than half of the schools use other methods of communication including fab cards, letters home, poster competitions, posters on pupil information wall, assemblies, school handbook, leaflets at primary 1, information book at primary 4, website, newsletters and anti-bullying days.
- 5.4 90.2% of the schools responding rated the policy to be very or extremely useful.

- 5.5 Schools were asked which aspects of the policy were most useful in helping in dealing with incidents of bullying. The guidance, definitions, standard letters, checklists and recording sheets were the most appreciated aspects. The policy was seen as a useful framework in supporting standardisation and consistency and a good basis for a school's own policy. Reporting of incidents to the authority is seen to give weight to the school's actions. Guidance especially in supporting the victim and the bully were most commonly mentioned with recording, standard letters, checklists and types of bullying also mentioned. Showing pupils logs and reports outside the school reinforces the seriousness which schools attach to the issue.
- 5.6 Schools were asked which aspect of policy was least useful. Most common responses were that the whole policy was helpful. However, some schools found the paperwork onerous. Some schools have devised their own. One school commented that the policy does not highlight that allegations are not always founded on fact.
- 5.7 Schools were given the opportunity to identify areas of the policy which they felt required further expansion or development. Suggestions included:
- effective communication with parents, including challenging the perception that nothing is done;
 - use of face-to-face meetings, letters and websites;
 - support to challenge the perception of parents and pupils that anti-social or aggressive conduct is bullying;
 - working with parents whose view of an incident differs from that of the school;
 - further support for staff development;
 - addressing bullying which is initiated through chat rooms and the use of mobile phones;
 - minor changes to the documentation for recording incidents; and
 - involving parents proactively rather than reactively.
- 5.8 To facilitate sharing good practice, establishments were asked to indicate any practices which they had found particularly useful in tackling bullying. Respondents listed a wide range of practices relating to the ethos of the school, supporting perpetrators and victims, provision of information to pupils and parents, promotion of positive behaviour, highlighting bullying as an issue and effective communication. The information contained in the responses has been collated and shared with schools.
- 5.9 Respondents were asked to rate a number of techniques and supports in terms of usefulness. The results are shown in table III. Previous figures are given for comparison. Respondents added a number of other useful techniques and supports. This information has also been shared with schools.

Table III

	Used by respondents			Rated as very useful where used		
	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04	2005/06	2004/05	2003/04
Circle Time	87.5	(81)	(84.4%)	65.3	(90.4)	(81.7%)
Bully Box	59.6	(54)	(68.3%)	25.8	(55.2)	(44%)
Written School Code	80	(90.5)	(87.9%)	42.5	(77.2)	(77.4%)
Buddy Schemes	85.2	(83.1)	(89.2%)	67.4	(81.9)	(79.4%)
Let's Stop Bullying CD ROM	41.5	(29.7)	(50%)	13.6	(47.3)	(25.7%)
Anti-bullying network website and publications	55.6	(56.2)	(59%)	6.7	(40)	(37.7%)
Home Link Service	90.7	(88.9)	(76.9%)	61.2	(84.9)	(78.2%)
Customer Support Manager	20.8	(31)	(40%)	50	(87.5)	(45%)

5.10 Respondents were asked to indicate any seminars or conferences on tackling bullying which they had found to be useful. The information provided has been collated and shared with schools.

5.11 Respondents were given the opportunity to indicate any aspects of tackling bullying on which further information or staff development would be useful. Suggestions included:

- advice on developing a school policy;
- courses to refresh staff awareness;
- quality resources such as DVDs etc;
- opportunities to view good practice in another school that is very effective;
- issues arising from use of modern technology, for example, cyber bullying or texting;
- link to anti-racist education;
- PSD/Citizenship co-ordinators would benefit from networking perhaps to discuss how they might work proactively to support this issue;
- how to tackle situations which stem from incidents in the local community;
- any other courses available to allow new members of staff to attend; and
- supporting (altering the behaviour of) the bully.

5.12 Since some respondents indicated that it was difficult to find appropriate resources, a list of resources which schools found helpful has been collated and circulated to schools.

- 5.13 Establishments were asked to detail any work carried out with parents on tackling bullying. Some establishments had been involved in one-to-one work while others had worked with groups of parents and some schools have yet to carry out any work with parents. Three further cluster events for parents took place in 2005/2006. They were very well received especially the video made by pupils.
- 5.14 Establishments were asked to provide examples of information which they had shared with pupils or parents. This material has been collated and circulated to share good practice across establishments.
- 5.15 Tackling bullying in Renfrewshire stresses the importance of talking about bullying. Schools were asked to indicate who most frequently reports incidents of bullying. Table IV shows the percentage of schools indicating victims, parents, peers and staff as most frequent reporters, 2004/05 figures are shown in brackets. Staff have overtaken peers as the third most likely person to report an incident. This may be the result of greater awareness and vigilance. The fact that pupils themselves most frequently report incidents shows they have confidence in schools that they will be taken seriously.

Table IV

Who most commonly reports incidents of bullying? 2005/06	
Victims	34.5 (43.94%)
Parents	30.9 (27.27%)
Peers	9.1 (16.67%)
Staff	25.5 (12.12%)

- 5.16 The results of the questionnaire were very positive in providing examples of good practice and also highlighting areas where further work is required. This will be taken forward in the current session.

IMPLICATIONS OF THIS REPORT

1. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS - None

2. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS - None

3. COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Social inclusion - Tackling bullying incidents in schools is important in creating an atmosphere in which all pupils can thrive and take the most benefit from the learning opportunities available to them.

Modernising government - Working in partnership with the whole school community, pupils, staff, parents is an important element of tackling bullying in Renfrewshire.

Sustainable development - Tackling bullying in schools leads to improved relationships between individuals and groups contributing to sustainable communities.

4. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS - None

5. PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS - None

6. INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS - None

7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

Racism is a particular form of bullying. Tackling racist incidents in schools will contribute to making our schools and the services they provide, equally accessible to all of our pupils.

*Education and Leisure Services
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29 November 2006*

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