



Anti-Bullying Alliance: Agreed policy recommendations

Last reviewed - April 2021



NATIONAL
CHILDREN'S
BUREAU
Part of the family

Introduction

The following policy recommendations have been developed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance through our Advisory Group, which consists of NSPCC, the Diana Award, NASUWT Teacher's Union, the National Children's Bureau, Stonewall, Childnet, Kidscape, Mencap and Wandsworth Borough Council.

This document related to policy in England.

COVID and bullying

- It is a sad state of affairs that many children were happier not going to school due to not experiencing face to face bullying. We have an opportunity to build back schools that are set up to prevent bullying.
- Return to school and catch up should not simply focus on academic achievement and behaviour but rebuilding friendships and wellbeing.
- We're seeing evidence of an increase in online bullying that has taken place over the pandemic. Children are reporting seeing more hate speech online.
- Recommendation 1:** We should be monitoring levels of wellbeing and bullying as 'normal' school life resumes
- Recommendation 2:** Schools need guidance about how to maintain friendships during online lessons whilst also preventing bullying.

Children who are especially at risk of bullying

- There are groups that are significantly more likely to experience bullying in their childhoods than other young people.
- Recommendation 3:** We would like to see the government funding anti-bullying activity and focusing on those most at risk including those with SEN/D, looked after children, young carers, those who are or are perceived to be LGBT those on Free School Meals (growing evidence base), sexist bullying, HBT bullying,
- There is growing evidence that children on free school meals are more likely to experience bullying but little is known about this issue [ABA, 2018 / 2021].
- Recommendation 4:** The government should conduct research in to levels of bullying of children in receipt of Free School Meals.
- Our literature review showed a real lack of recent research about racist and faith targeted bullying. It also showed that we acknowledge that what research there is shows significant variations in experience of different ethnicities and faiths.

- **Recommendation 5:** The government should commission research relating to bullying levels among BAME children and young people, particularly Gypsy, Roma and Traveller CYP, exploring bullying experiences of mixed race CYP, immigrant and refugee CYP and children who have English as an additional language – who the available research show may be particularly at risk.

Online bullying

- **Recommendations 6:** We urgently need introduction of duties for social media companies to safeguard children and young people from harmful content cyberbullying and better-quality reporting about their handling of reports of bullying and harmful content.
- **Recommendation 7:** Implementation of the new RSHE curriculum needs to ensure that teachers fully understand the online world that young people face today.

Mental health and wellbeing

- The government has expressed a desire to train Designated Mental Health Leads in every school in England by 2025.
- **Recommendation 8:** Designated leads for mental health in schools and mental health teams should have bullying sit under their remit and should receive anti-bullying training.
- GPs and Accident and Emergency Departments are often the first professionals to hear from children about bullying. GPs and Accident and Emergency Departments should have **a good understanding of bullying, their safeguarding duties and school's responsibilities** so they are better able to support victims of bullying.
- **Recommendation 9:** GPs and other health professionals should be provided with up to date and accurate information and training relating to how to deal with children and young people who disclose experiencing bullying to them.

Accountability

- **Recommendation 10:** Ensure that all parts of the school system (including independent schools, Academies and free schools) are bound by the same core legislative framework around bullying.
- Currently:
 - Maintained schools (S89 School and Inspections Act 2006) says schools
 - Must have measures to prevent all forms of bullying set out within their behaviour policy – some schools do this in a stand-alone anti-bullying policy
 - These measures must be communicated to pupils, staff and parents at least once a year

- Young people should be involved in writing this
 - Academies, free schools and independent schools (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2012) says proprietors are required to have an effective anti-bullying strategy drawn up and implemented.
- **Recommendation 11:** Ofsted inspectors should receive anti-bullying training and as a minimum understand what bullying is.
- It is estimated that 12,000 children are moved to different schools due to the bullying they experience¹. We estimate that 16,000 children are off school at any one time due to the bullying they experienced². Absence data collected termly by the Department for Education contains a large number of 'other unauthorised absence'. ABA believe that a number of these reasons may be for bullying³. There is very little accountability within school absence data reporting and when a child is removed from school role taking in to account how school has dealt with the bullying that has taken place.
- **Recommendation 12:** We believe that each time a child is removed from school role due to experiencing bullying, this should trigger an inspection or investigation into what has happened.
- **Recommendation 13:** School absence records should record bullying as a reason for children being absent from school. Ofsted inspections should be triggered when these absences are high.

Whole school approach

- Teachers are not currently required to undertake any anti-bullying training as part of their Initial Teacher Training.
- **Recommendation 14:** Initial Teacher Training should include how to prevent and respond to bullying as a core element.
- Schools are not required to have lead members of staff or governors responsible for their anti-bullying strategies.
- **Recommendation 15:** There should be a senior member of school staff (perhaps through the designated mental health in schools lead) who is responsible for a whole-school approach to promoting preventing and responding to bullying, in a similar manner to a SENCo.
- **Recommendation 16:** There should be an appointed school governor who is responsible for a whole-school approach to bullying.

¹ <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2485397/Bullies-force-12-000-pupils-year-to-new-schools.html>

² <https://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/22457/estimating-prevalence-young-people.pdf>

³ 16,000 pupils aged 11-15 absent from school each day where the primary reason for them missing school is bullying – NATCEN 2011
<http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/22457/estimating-prevalence-young-people.pdf>

Curriculum

- We welcome the new RSHE curriculum including elements of bullying, online bullying, e-safety, LGBT inclusion and support about relationships.
- **Recommendation 17:** We would like to see teachers and schools adequately supported to meet requirements of the new RSHE curriculum in a manner that is to a high standard and inclusive. Government should ensure implementation of RSHE remains high on their agenda.

Evidence and data

- There has not been a national data collection of levels of bullying in England in a number of years.
- **Recommendation 18:** The government should undertake a national anti-bullying survey, conducted annually, which would give an annual view of the wellbeing of pupils, including the prevalence of bullying in English schools. This national survey will give a view of bullying under the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and other characteristics about pupils such as free school meals, young carers and looked after children to give us a national picture of identity targeted bullying.
- Schools do not have a duty to record levels of bullying as there is currently being introduced within Northern Ireland.
- **Recommendation 19:** The government should consider a duty on all schools and Academies to record, monitor and review all bullying and harassment issues including assessing the impact of the effectiveness of responses. This should be reported on annually at least at school level to governors and Ofsted would review this data.
- There is a significant lack of research relating to the most effective strategies for preventing and responding to bullying in England.
- **Recommendation 20:** The government should conduct research into the most effective strategies for preventing and responding to bullying.

Martha Evans – Director, Anti-Bullying Alliance
mevans@ncb.org.uk
April 2021