



Rationale

As set out in the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - UNICEF UK](#) children and young people have an entitlement to learn in an environment in which they feel valued, respected, safe and free from all forms of abuse, bullying or discrimination.

This policy sets out Mearns Academy's anti-bullying policy within the context of: 'Respect for All: The National Approach to Anti-Bullying for Scotland's Children and Young People'

[Respect for All: national approach to anti-bullying - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

This policy also reflects the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child [Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#), where health and wellbeing is a central aspect of the curriculum and is the responsibility of all staff.

An anti-bullying policy must address both prevention and response.

In this there will be a role for:

- Teaching Staff
- Support Staff
- Pupil Support Workers
- Guidance Team
- Senior Leadership Team
- Pupils
- Parents/Carers

It will involve:

- The ethos of the school
- The curriculum
- Extra-curricular and enrichment activities
- School code of conduct
- Communication with parents/carers etc.
- Restorative approaches

At Mearns we aim to ensure that:

- There is a development in school of a positive and caring ethos in which all members of the school community are valued and supported as individuals
- Opportunities are created for parents/carers and others in the wider community to be involved in the life of the school and the programme for improvement
- Thorough and ongoing evaluation leads to improvements in the quality of service we provide
- All members of the school community are encouraged to achieve all they can and that such achievements are recognised and valued

Our values are reinforced in a number of ways, including:

- Involvement of Pupil Council in updating our values and sharing concerns
- Prefect system
- Restorative approaches and solution-focused approaches
- Our code of conduct "Be Considerate, Be Responsible & Be Safe"
- Visual reminders such as posters or school screen displays
- Discussion as part of Personal and Social Education (PSE)
- Featuring anti-bullying at school assemblies

The school has a responsibility to:

- Ensure that pupils and parents/carers are aware of the policy.
- Ensure that they know what to do if the problem arises.
- Ensure that they know what steps the school takes to prevent bullying behaviour.
- Help tackle the problem by letting pupils and parents/carers know how they can contribute.

This policy has been written in consultation with staff, students, parents and carers.

Definition of Bullying Behaviour

There is no legal definition of bullying behaviour. Bullying type behaviour in schools is often behaviour which emerges from complex social dynamics as opposed to being a characteristic of a particular individual. It is not helpful to label students as 'bullies' or 'victims'.

Bullying type behaviours may include the following:

- Physical assault – hitting, tripping, pushing, kicking...
- Making threats, intimidation
- Name calling, teasing
- Ignoring, excluding, spreading rumours
- Sending abusive messages, pictures or images on social media or by phone
- Taking or damaging someone's belongings
- Targeting someone because of who they are or what they believe in

This is not an exhaustive list and other behaviours may constitute bullying. It is important to acknowledge, however, that not all unpleasant behaviour constitutes bullying. As children grow and develop as individuals their relationships with peers will inevitably change. Children will have disagreements; they will fall in and out with each other, will argue and have different opinions as they make and build relationships. This is a normal part of growing up and of life. Sometimes children may need support to resolve these issues. Restorative approaches used in school can allow them to overcome these challenges and improve their emotional intelligence and resilience.

Mearns Academy staff are professional, open-minded and careful to establish the facts before making any judgements as to whether bullying has taken place or whether it is a matter of conflict between individuals. Staff have undertaken a variety of training programmes including Restorative Practices, See Me See Change and Respect Me, to support them when dealing with issues around bullying type behaviours.

Conflict	Bullying Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disagreement or argument in which both sides express their views• Equal power between those involved• End or change in behaviour when they realise it is hurting someone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Goal is to hurt, harm or humiliate• Imbalance of power in the relationship• Continuation of the behaviour even when they realise it is hurting someone

Why do those displaying Bullying Behaviour do what they do?

The real motivation is likely to be the wish to gain power or respect or take out one's frustrations on others. The need to do this through inappropriate behaviour may arise from a number of factors. They may be someone who:

- Feels inadequate in some way
- Is unpopular or insecure (but some may be quite secure)
- Is underachieving academically (but some may be quite able)
- Is himself/herself the victim of bullying behaviour

- Has Additional Support Needs and may struggle with their understanding of social norms and what is appropriate behaviour

Children who are displaying bullying type behaviours will need help and support to help identify the feelings that cause them to act this way and develop strategies to cope with these feelings differently. In some cases, children or young people may not be aware that they are displaying bullying type behaviour. They perhaps model the behaviour of adults or other children and young people. They may not understand that it is wrong because they have never been taught otherwise. It should be remembered that it can be the case that one child says something unpleasant to another, but this is not always a case of bullying behaviour.

All behaviour is communication. It may well be that the bullying behaviour of the child may stem from an unmet need it may well be that a Multi-Agency Child's Plan would be appropriate. At Mearns Academy we aim to be proactive in preventing bullying behaviours, minimising the impact of bullying behaviours on young people and in promoting positive mental health and wellbeing for all:

- We liaise with Primary schools prior to S1 transition
- All pupils regularly complete wellbeing questionnaires based around the GIRFEC Wellbeing Indicators – Safe Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included [Wellbeing indicators - Getting it right for every child \(GIRFEC\) - Statutory Guidance - Assessment of Wellbeing 2022 – Part 18 \(section 96\) of the Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014 - Easy Read - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)
- The PSE curriculum covers topics including friendships, positive relationships and internet safety
- Our Pupil Support Workers (PSW) and Pupil Wellbeing Worker (PWW) work with individual pupils and with small groups
- We liaise with our Community Learning team who offer small group support
- We have senior pupils who undergo training and volunteer as Peer Mentors and as Mental Health Ambassadors
- We invite relevant charities/organisations to work with pupils individually, in classes or in assemblies
- Staff engage regularly in appropriate training

Online Bullying Behaviour

The internet, like any social setting, has the potential to become a place where bullying behaviour can take place. Schools and parents/carers have a role in supporting children to navigate social media safely and responsibly. To support our young people, internet safety and digital literacy form part of our PSE and Information Technology curriculums. Parents/carers can take the following steps to support young people at home:

- Speak to your young people about the risks
- Monitor your child's online activity – know who they are talking to
- Listen to their concerns
- Set clear boundaries
- Check the age rating of games/social media apps etc. that they use
- Set up parental controls
- Look out for any unusual behaviours
- Be a positive role model
- Know how to report a concern [CEOP Safety Centre](#)

Bullying or Criminal Behaviour?

Bullying behaviour in itself is not a crime in Scotland, but some types of harassment or threatening behaviour including some online behaviours could be a criminal offence, for example the Malicious Communications Act 1988, the Communications Act 2003, and the Hate Crime & Public Order Act (Scotland) 2023. An example of this may be where someone sends an electronic message which is indecent, grossly offensive or threatening. They are guilty of an offence if their purpose was to cause distress or anxiety.

Where bullying behaviour is identified as criminal in nature, the school will work in partnership with Police Scotland.

Hate Crimes/Protected Characteristics

The Equality Act (2010) [Equality Act \(2010\) | Resources | National Improvement Hub \(education.gov.scot\)](#), prohibits discrimination (whether direct or indirect), harassment and victimisation against people who possess one of the protected characteristics, listed below.

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

If this is happening to your child, you should report it to the school as soon as possible. You can also report this online or by contacting Police Scotland. Again, school will work closely with Police.

Impact of Bullying Behaviour

The impact of bullying behaviours may lead to the following behaviours in young people:

- Changes to behaviour and or physical appearance
- Withdrawal from activities/hobbies
- Refusal to attend school
- Tearfulness
- Anxiety
- Self-harm
- Social isolation
- Aggression
- Being secretive – hiding their phone or other devices

Staff, parents and carers should be aware of any changes in the behaviour of young people and respond appropriately.

Reporting Unacceptable and/or Bullying Type Behaviour - Expectations & Responsibilities

We all have a role to play in preventing, challenging and reporting bullying type behaviours.

Pupils:

- Speak to a trusted adult about your concerns. Alternatively, you can report any concerns to your Guidance Teacher using the QR code in school which links to a Microsoft Form
- Where safe and appropriate, challenge bullying behaviour – this is covered in our “See Me, See Change” sessions and in PSE lessons
- Keep calm
- Do not retaliate
- Do not respond to any abusive messages or texts
- Block messages
- Work with staff, parents/carers and other agencies to resolve any issues

Parents/Carers:

- Be aware of any changes in behaviour
- Listen to your child. Try to keep an open mind - you may not be in possession of all the facts
- Discuss how they feel and help them to develop resilience and strategies to manage relationships
- Report it - Contact your child’s Guidance Teacher as soon as a bullying concern is raised by your young person
- Work with the school and other agencies to support your child and allow time for an investigation to take place
- Monitor your child’s online activity
- Work with school and be a role model giving a consistent message promoting positive relationships

Staff:

- Challenge and report bullying behaviour to the relevant Guidance Teacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team
- Always take bullying behaviour seriously – never ignore an accusation of bullying behaviour
- Listen to and support young people who have experienced or have demonstrated bullying behaviour
- Uphold and promote the school’s Vision, Mission & Values

Investigating Allegations of Bullying Behaviour



Strategies that will be Used to Prevent and Respond to Bullying Behaviours

At the point of initial conflict, the following supports and interventions may be implemented as appropriate. If the conflict continues, it may be considered bullying behaviour and further sanctions can be employed.

Supports/Interventions	Sanctions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Restorative Conversations• Follow up work with PTG/Year Head• Moving of seats• Monitoring cards• Change of class composition• Use of 'safe space'• Parental meeting• Peer support• 1:1 Support (PSW/PWW)• Small Group Work• School Counsellor• Referral to partner agencies• Work with school Police	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Short term loss of privileges (break and/or lunch times)• Letter home setting out consequences for future unacceptable behaviour• Short term removal from social areas• Short term removal from class• Removal from school trips/activities• Short term exclusion from school*

*Exclusions from school can only be carried out when an incident meets the legislative criteria: [Included, engaged and involved part 2: preventing and managing school exclusions - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/included-engaged-and-involved-part-2-preventing-and-managing-school-exclusions-2022/pages/1-3.aspx)

Restorative Approaches in Mearns Academy

A restorative approach allows both parties involved to have the opportunity to be listened to, to explain what has happened from their perspective and to describe the impact of the bullying behaviour. It also offers an opportunity to challenge prejudice and offer an opportunity to learn and change behaviour.

More information around restorative approaches in schools can be found here:

[Restorative approaches](#) | [Social and emotional factors](#) | [Specific support needs](#) | [Additional support](#) | [Parentzone Scotland](#) | [Parentzone Scotland \(education.gov.scot\)](#)

Incident Recording Procedures for Principal Teachers of Guidance

All reported bullying incidents should be logged in The Bullying and Equalities Module within SEEMiS. PTGs have been provided with detailed instructions on how to log incidents accurately.

Useful Links/Supports

Anti-Bullying Alliance - [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#)

Childline - www.childline.org.uk

Children 1st - [Scotland's National Children's Charity | Children 1st](#)

Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland - www.cypcs.org.uk

Respectme - www.respectme.org.uk/

See Me - <https://www.seemescotland.org/>

Stonewall – www.stonewall.org.uk

Unicef Rights Respecting Schools - www.unicef.org.uk/rights-respecting-schools/