KIDSCAPE

A Kidscape guide to

Updating your school's anti-bullying policy

KIDSCAPE

Your 12-step guide.

This guide has been developed to support school bullying prevention leads with developing or updating an anti-bullying policy. The best schools are those that work with all members of the community to create an ethos of kindness and respect, where bullying behaviour is understood and everyone feels empowered to stop it.

We welcome your thoughts and comments on this guide. Please do get in touch and share with us ways it has helped, or anything else we should include in the guide. Email info@kidscape.org.uk.

Step One: Listen

The first step is to understand the lived experience of the people in your school community. Consult with children, staff, parents, and carers to ascertain their experiences of bullying and how safe they feel:

| in school | on the way to school | in the local community | online |

There are then many things you can do:

- Share your ethos and values and discuss whether you are living up to these
- Ask them what more you can do as a school community to help stop bullying
- Hold focus groups to ensure you draw out the experiences of those who may be particularly at risk (e.g., disabled people and those with additional needs, younger pupils, LGBT+ young people and staff, young carers, children in care, people from a minority ethnic and/or faith group)
- Map out the school and surrounding area and encourage pupils to share the locations and times they feel least safe and what practical steps would make them feel safer.

Step Two: Get Together

Form a bullying prevention working group. If you want the policy to be taken seriously, it is helpful to involve a wider pool of participants in forming/reviewing the policy and leading on your bullying prevention work going forward.

Include a broad range of pupils, a lead governor or board member, representatives from across the staff team and parents and carers. Make sure disabled people and those with additional needs are included in the working group as they are the most likely to be impacted by bullying. Prioritise bullying awareness training for members of this group so they can lead the work with the right knowledge and understanding (see Further Support at the end of this guide).

Step Three: Agree Your Definition of Bullying

Work together to agree a definition of bullying that all members of the community can understand. You may want to run classroom activities with smaller groups to discuss what we mean by bullying and what should be included in the school definition. Consider how to share this definition in ways that can be understood by all children regardless of age or developmental stage.

Quick tip: there is no legal definition of bullying. Kidscape describe bullying as any behaviour that is intended to hurt, is repeated and where there is an imbalance of power (or it is hard for the person on the receiving end to defend themselves).

Step Four: Be Explicit About the Behaviour the Policy Covers

Work together as a school community to explore all the various ways that people can bully one another (e.g., physical, emotional, verbal, online) and how bullying often targets those who are seen as different (see Step Six). Explain what the difference is between teasing, conflict, and friendship fallouts and when they may become bullying behaviour. This should be explained within your school policy, but the real work takes place in class or tutor time as you explore these topics with children.

Step Five: Link to Safeguarding

Make sure you reference the relationship between bullying and the safeguarding of children and young people. Be clear that you take bullying extremely seriously, and that you understand that bullying is a form of child-on-child abuse. Share examples of the occasions when you would follow your safeguarding policy (e.g. if a child is refusing to attend school; if a child has been physically or sexually assaulted or has assaulted another child; if a child has been subject to threats of harm; if a child's mental or physical health has been impacted). Reference other relevant policies such as your ICT/acceptable user policy.

When there is 'reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm' a bullying incident should be addressed as a child protection concern under the Children Act 1989 (Department for Education, England).

Step Six: Eliminate Discrimination

Make sure you reference the Equality Act 2010 and show how you will eliminate any discrimination or harassment on grounds of disability, race, religious belief, gender, pregnancy, or sexuality. Give examples of what you mean by behaviour that is disablist, racist, faith targeted, homophobic, transphobic, and racist. Take time to explain this type of behaviour to children and young people through class and tutor time. Explain the actions you take to promote inclusion and diversity in your community.

Step Seven: Places and Spaces

Make sure that the policy covers all the places and spaces where bullying can happen. This should include:

- The journey to and from school

- The local community

- In school

- Online, both during and outside of the school day

- In extracurricular activities linked to the school such as breakfast and after school clubs, sports, and school trips

Step Eight: Prevention

Share the steps you take as a school community to prevent bullying. This list is not exhaustive, but this could include:

- The ethos of your school as a kind, caring and respectful community
- A shared understanding of the signs and symptoms that indicate someone may be experiencing bullying
- Consistent challenging of offensive language or comments
- Clear guidance for staff and pupils on appropriate physical boundaries, and education for all ages on consensual touch
- The creation of safe spaces at break and lunch times for children who may feel lonely or isolated
- Steps you take to educate staff, children, parents, and staff about bullying issues and the action they can take to stop bullying (e.g. curriculum content, parent and carer events, staff training, participation in Friendship Friday (Kidscape), Anti-Bullying Week (Anti-Bullying Alliance) and Safer Internet Day (UK Safer Internet Centre))
- Exploration of positive relationships and bullying as part of your relationships education for children in all key stages
- The use of external support where needed (e.g. Kidscape ZAP assertiveness workshops and peer mentoring training for pupils)
- Actions you take as a school to celebrate difference, create safe spaces and promote inclusion

Step Nine: Reporting Bullying

Explain how all members of the community can report bullying:

- Create a clear reporting structure (e.g. tutor/Head of Year/Headteacher/Board)

- Write a transparent complaints procedure and link to the school complaints policy

- Display photos and names of staff who can help

- Encourage and support pupils to be alert to bullying behaviour and be there to help other pupils (consider Kidscape Peer Mentoring training)

- Consider alternative reporting routes such as worry boxes in classrooms and online systems (e.g. Tootoot, StudentVoice)

- Include how to report bullying in extracurricular activities (e.g. breakfast and after school clubs), the journey to and from school and bullying online. Where necessary, work with external agencies to coordinate your approach (e.g. providers of extracurricular activities, transport providers).

- A clear system for recording bullying incidents and the action you have taken to resolve the situation. This will help you spot any trends in behaviour and provides evidence that you take bullying seriously

Step Ten: Responding To Bullying

Be clear that we all have a role to play in responding to a bullying situation. This includes:

- Explaining the role of the bystander and the ways we can take positive action if we witness or hear of a bullying situation (e.g. lead the person experiencing the bullying to a safe place, show we are not in support of the bullying behaviour)
- Creating safe, confidential spaces for pupils and parents and carers to share their experiences and concerns with a focus on the impact the behaviour is having and the help they need from you to make the bullying stop
- Explaining when and how you will share concerns with parents and carers
- Training staff in the use of restorative approaches and other interventions to support both children who experience bullying, and those who display bullying behaviour
- Referencing the types of disciplinary action you might take and the situations where you may need to seek police/ children's services involvement (e.g. when a child is harmed, when there are threats of harm, when illegal content has been shared online)
- Bullying rarely takes place in isolation, so consider the involvement of the wider peer group and additional work you may need to do to reinforce your position on bullying or to explore different aspects of bullying with the peer group (e.g. if there has been an incident of homophobic bullying, is this indicative of a wider culture of homophobic abuse that needs to be addressed?)
- Additional support for the children involved (e.g. Kidscape ZAP assertiveness workshops, counselling, behaviour management support, referral to CAMHs)

Step Eleven: Measuring Safety and Wellbeing of Pupils

Explain how you will make sure this policy is effective. This could include regular meetings of the bullying prevention group; scheduling time each year to listen to the experiences of everyone in your school community (e.g. through surveys and focus groups); including bullying as a standing item at governor/board meetings; and monitoring levels of incidents and the effectiveness of your response.

Step Twelve: Communicate

Use every opportunity to share and reinforce your anti-bullying policy (e.g. pupil and staff induction, beginning of each new term, website, social networks). Be clear that you take bullying seriously and that as a school community you work together to stop bullying. Celebrate the progress you have made.

Anti-Bullying Policy Template

Here are headers you may want to use in your anti-bullying policy.

1. Together we will stop bullying (our school commitment)

2. Ethos and values of our school community

3. Our definition of bullying

4. Understanding bullying behaviour

5. Bullying and keeping children safe (including how the anti-bullying policy relates to your safeguarding policy and any other related documents)

6. Bullying and discrimination

7. Stopping bullying wherever it takes place

8. Preventing bullying (e.g. spotting the signs and symptoms of bullying; guidance on physical contact and consensual touch; zero tolerance for abusive or offensive language; curriculum content, staff training; pupil and parent workshops; participation in Anti-Bullying Week and Friendship Friday)

9. Reporting bullying

10. Responding to bullying

11. Measuring safety and wellbeing of pupils

12. Communicating the policy

Further support

For help and advice, visit www.kidscape.org.uk. It is vital that all staff and pupils are confident to prevent and respond to bullying.

 Kidscape offers a CPD-accredited training programme that includes bullying awareness training, peer mentoring, safeguarding and digital safety. Find out more.