Bullying in UK Schools

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Summary

This briefing paper discusses the prevalence of bullying amongst pupils in schools across the UK, and policies to prevent and tackle bullying in English, Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish schools.

There is no legal definition of bullying, but the Department for Education (DfE) defines bullying as behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that is intended to hurt or harm another individual or group, either physically or emotionally. Bullying is often aimed at certain groups, for example because of their race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. The rapid proliferation of new technologies has provided a new medium for bullying, in the form of cyberbulling through social media, gaming, and text messages.

In terms of prevalence of bullying in English secondary schools, the OECD/TALIS Teachers and School Leaders 2018 survey of 250,000 teachers in 48 industrialised countries found that in 2018:

- 29.0% of English secondary school heads received reports of physical and non-physical bullying amongst students (OECD average 14.0%)

- 13.9% reported that a student or parent/guardian had reported hurtful postings on the internet about students (OECD average 2.5%)

- 27.1% reported that a student or parent/guardian had reported unwanted electronic contact amongst students (OECD average 3.4%)

(Source: TALIS 2018 Tables, Chapter 3, Tables 42 and 45).

Policy in England

All schools are required to have a behaviour policy with measures to prevent all forms of bullying. The DfE has issued guidance to schools, parents and school staff on how to tackle bullying and the legal powers and obligations of schools.

The *Education Act 2011* amended the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* to provide that an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, can be seized by a staff member to investigate whether an act of bullying has taken place. The guidance states that parental consent is not required to search through a young person's mobile phone.

Since 2016, the UK Government has funded four charities to combat and prevent different forms of bullying, including cyber-bullying (Source: HC Deb, Anti-bullying week, 15 November 2018, c 190WH). The Government Equalities Office has also run programmes to prevent and tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying (Source: Government Equalities Office, 'Help us continue to tackle LGBT bullying in schools').

Online Safety

The Conservative Party in its 2019 Manifesto committed to "help teachers tackle bullying, including homophobic bullying" and to "legislate to make the UK the safest place in the world to be online-protecting children from online abuse and harms" (Conservative Party Manifesto 2019, pp13, 20). The December 2019 Queen's Speech committed to legislate on the April 2019 Online Harms White Paper, including bringing in a new duty of care on internet companies towards their users (Gov.uk, The Queen's Speech 2019, p58).

Policy in Scotland

The Scottish Government published Respect for all: national approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people in 2017, emphasising that the focus in schools should be on prevention and addressing the root causes of prejudice. All individual schools and local authorities are expected by the Scottish Government to develop policies to reflect the guidance. Respectme, Scotland's anti-bullying service, funded by the Scottish Government since its launch in March 2007, provides a guide to drafting a school's anti-bullying policy.

Policy in Wales

Rights, Respect, Equality was published as statutory anti-bullying guidance by the Welsh Government in November 2019. The statutory guidance expects a school's anti-bullying policy to clearly set out how it will address bullying, and for these measures to be communicated to all learners, school staff and parents/carers. The *Education and Inspections Act 2006* gives headteachers powers to determine measures that regulate the conduct of learners outside school, including when using transport and communicating on mobile phones. The *Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008* provides for the Travel Behaviour Code to be enforced.

Policy in Northern Ireland

The *Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998*, as amended, requires grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland to publish policies designed to promote good behaviour and to prevent all forms of bullying. School policy should take account of any guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Department for Education and, in the case of Catholic maintained schools, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS). The *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016* expanded the responsibilities of schools to include an obligation to prevent bulling amongst pupils when travelling to and from school, and to take measures to prevent bullying involving a registered pupil at the school which involves the use of electronic communications. In January 2020, the Northern Ireland Executive announced the implementation of the Act was to be temporarily paused (AQW 437/17-22, 22 January 2020)

1. What is bullying and how prevalent is it?

1.1 What bullying is

There is no legal or standard definition of bullying, though some forms of bullying behaviours may constitute a crime (for example, assault).

The Department for Education (DfE) has published non-statutory advice for schools on Preventing and tacking bullying. The advice sets out the following definition of bullying and priorities governing a school's response:

> Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally. Bullying can take many forms (for instance, cyber-bullying via text messages, social media or gaming, which can include the use of images and video) and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, special educational needs or disabilities, or because a child is adopted, in care or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived differences.
>
> Stopping violence and ensuring immediate physical safety is obviously a school's first priority but emotional bullying can be more damaging than physical; teachers and schools have to make their own judgements about each specific case.[1]

Bullying at school can be therefore perpetrated by those who not only seek to use physical strength to dominate others but apply social skills to either directly or indirectly dominate others through non-physical means.[2]

Cyberbullying

The DfE has also produced separate non-statutory advice for headteachers and school staff, and for parents and carers, about cyberbullying. Cyberbullying, as the advice to parents and carers notes, may take place through "social media sites, through a mobile phone, or gaming sites." The advice further states that:

> Parents and carers need to be aware that most children have been involved in cyberbullying in some way, either as a victim, perpetrator, or bystander. By its very nature, cyberbullying tends to involve a number of online bystanders and can quickly spiral out of control.[3]

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[1]   DfE, Preventing and tackling bullying, July 2017, p8
[2]   J. Sutton, P.K. Smith and J. Swettenham, 'Social cognition and bullying: social inadequacy or skilled manipulation?', British Journal of Developmental Psychology, 17, 1999, pp435-450, at pp435-438
[3]   DfE, Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying, November 2014, p1

1.2 Statistics on the prevalence of bullying

There are a wide range of available statistics on bullying in schools across the UK – mostly arising from surveys. However, reaching conclusions on trends in bullying prevalence across time, and prevalence rates in different countries, is challenging because different surveys have targeted different child and youth populations, and don't always ask comparable questions.

International comparisons

The OECD TALIS survey of school principals asked in 2018 whether physical and non-physical forms of bullying (excluding cyberbullying) had occurred at least weekly in their school. Of the 17 EU-member states surveyed under TALIS and with sufficient data, England saw the second highest proportion of school principals reporting such activity, behind only Finland. The overall OECD average was 14%, compared to England's 29.0%.

The survey also found that 13.9% of school principals in England said either a student or parent/guardian had informed them of postings of hurtful information on the internet about students, the highest of all surveyed nations and regions (the EU average being 2.9%).[4]

Percentage of principals reporting that physical and non-physical forms of bullying among students occurred at least weekly in their school Surveyed EU nations only, TALIS 2018	
Finland	29.4%
England	29.0%
Sweden	27.9%
France	27.2%
Bulgaria	25.6%
Cyprus	17.2%
Netherlands	14.7%
Romania	13.8%
Estonia	13.1%
Latvia	9.4%
Slovak Republic	9.0%
Portugal	7.3%
Spain	5.7%
Denmark	4.6%
Croatia	4.3%
Italy	3.6%
Czech Republic	3.1%

Source: OECD, TALIS 2018 Database.

England

Data from the annual crime survey

The Office for National Statistics carries out an annual crime survey in England and Wales. Since 2009, this has included an additional survey on the experiences of young people aged 10 to 15. In 2014, the ONS added new questions on young people's experience of bullying. The DfE used the survey data to analyse trends over the period April 2013 to March 2018. Their report estimated that, for England:

> **England:** 22% of 10-year olds reported being bullied in 2017-18, and 8% of 15-year olds.

- Around **17%** of young people had been bullied during 2017-18.

- Some groups were more likely to report being bullied, including:

  — Young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), or a long-term illness;

  — Those living in the most deprived areas, living outside of London, or in one-parent households;

  — Those who had truanted within the last 12 months.

- The proportion of young people reporting being bullied was higher in the younger age groups: 22% of 10-year-olds surveyed reported bullying in 2017-18, whilst only 8% of 15-year-olds reported similar.

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4   OECD, TALIS 2018 results: teachers and school leaders as lifelong learners: volume 1, 2019, pp102-103; TALIS 2018 Tables, Chapter 3, Tables 42 and 45.

Around 15-17% of children aged 10-15 were bullied in the previous 12 months in each survey, in a way that made them frightened or upset
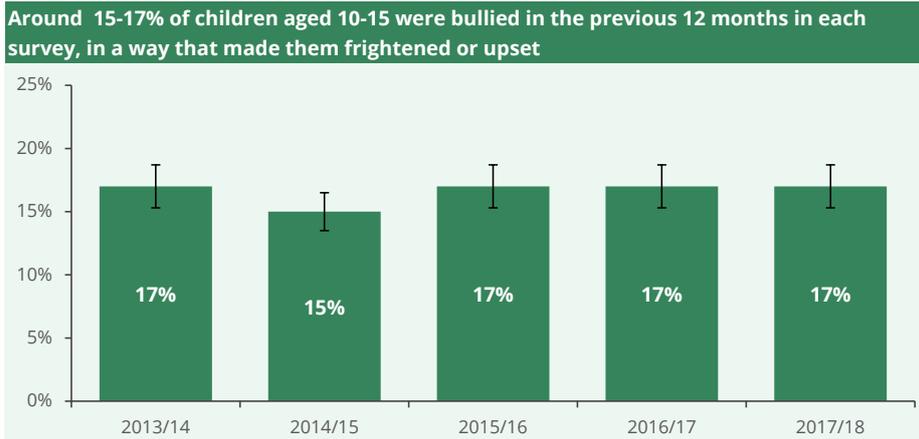
Note: Percentages show the number of children who answered 'yes', and exclude those answering 'don't know'/'don't want to answer'. Figures presented with a 95% confidence interval

Source: DfE, Bullying in England, April 2013 to March 2018 (November 2018)

In terms of attitudes to how bullying was dealt with, **72%** of the young people surveyed in 2017-18 judged their school dealt with bullying either well or very well. However, this figure was lower than in 2013-14, when **78%** of respondents had confidence in their school's approach.[5]

DfE analysis of longitudinal data

In June 2018, the DfE published analysis of data from the second Longitudinal Study of Young People in England. The underlying research took place in 2015, and with similar cohorts in earlier years, allowing for some comparisons to be made in terms of trends across time.

Key findings from the 2015 cohort data included:

- A smaller proportion of pupils (**30%**) reported having been bullied during year 11, compared to those same pupils during year 10 (**37%**).

- The reported bullying rate for the 2015 cohort of year 11 pupils was slightly lower (**28.6%**) than for the 2006 cohort (**29.1%**). Cyberbullying was excluded from this analysis.

- There was a correlation between lower GCSE results and reported experience of bullying, with bullied young people on average achieving two grades less in one GCSE qualification than their non-bullied peers.

- There was a significant gender disparity, with **35%** of female students reporting being bullied, whereas the figure for males was lower, at **26%**. This finding has been extensively mirrored in other studies.

- A higher proportion (**36%**) of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) reported being bullied. The rate was **29%** among their peers.

England: In 2015, 35% of female pupils reported being bullied, compared to 26% of males

Bullying and school exclusion

In 2017-18, bullying was recorded as the grounds for only **0.4%** of permanent exclusions in England. These figures include state-funded

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5   DfE, Bullying in England, April 2013 to March 2018, November 2018.

primary, secondary and special schools. However, **13.1%** of all permanent exclusions were for physical assault against another pupil, and a further **10.7%** were for verbal abuse or threatening behaviour toward another pupil.
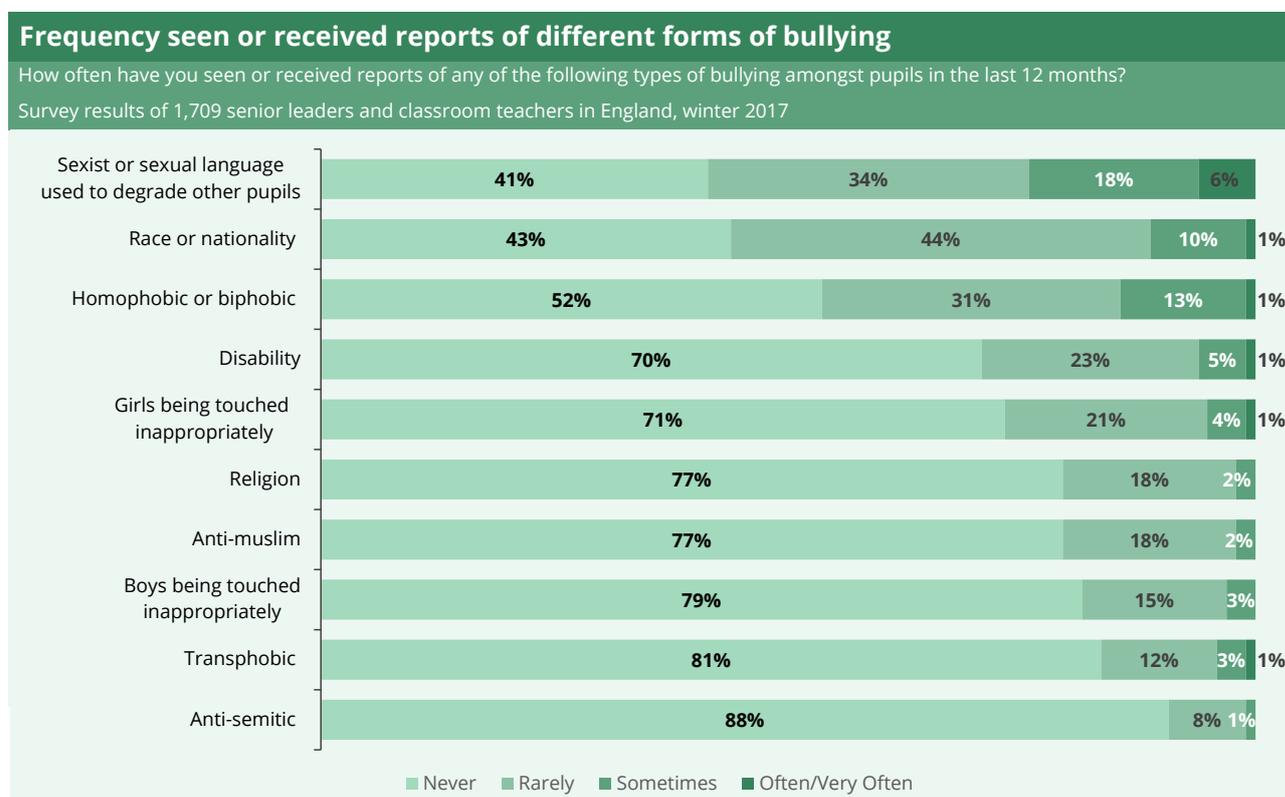
0.9% of fixed-period exclusions were attributed to bullying behaviour, whilst **16.4%** were for physical assault against another pupil, and **3.8%** were for verbal abuse or threatening behaviour toward another pupil.[6]

Types of bullying: School snapshot survey winter 2017

Government Social Research and IF Research interviewed 800 senior leaders and 909 classroom teachers in England on the behalf of the DfE for its School snapshot survey: winter 2017

The survey included asking respondents how often they had seen or received reports of bullying amongst pupils in the last 12 months.

The results are shown in the chart below.

Frequency seen or received reports of different forms of bullying

How often have you seen or received reports of any of the following types of bullying amongst pupils in the last 12 months?

Survey results of 1,709 senior leaders and classroom teachers in England, winter 2017

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often/Very Often
Sexist or sexual language used to degrade other pupils	41%	34%	18%	6%
Race or nationality	43%	44%	10%	1%
Homophobic or biphobic	52%	31%	13%	1%
Disability	70%	23%	5%	1%
Girls being touched inappropriately	71%	21%	4%	1%
Religion	77%	18%	2%	
Anti-muslim	77%	18%	2%	
Boys being touched inappropriately	79%	15%	3%	
Transphobic	81%	12%	3%	1%
Anti-semitic	88%	8%	1%	

Note: Figures exclude respondents answering "don't know" or "not applicable". The results have a significance level of 95%.

Source: DfE, School Snapshot Survey, Winter 2017 (2018), Tables 150-159.

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[6]   Department for Education, Permanent and fixed period exclusions in England 2017 to 2018, Table 4, updated 29 August 2019.

Wales

The School Health Research Network undertook a national survey on student health and wellbeing in Wales, in September-December 2017.[7] This collected data from children and young people of secondary school age. On experiences of being bullied, this found:

- **36%** of respondents reported having been bullied at school in the past couple of months. Mostly, the bullying had only occurred once or twice, but **10%** of respondents said they'd been bullied once a week, or more.

- Adolescents from the least affluent families were more likely to report having been bullied (**42%**) than those from the most affluent families (**33%**).

- The reported incidence of being bullied peaked in school year 9 (**39%** of respondents in this year group saying they'd experienced it), and fell to its lowest level in year 11 (**32%**).

- On cyberbullying, **19%** of respondents reported having experienced this in the last couple of months, but the figure differed for girls (**23%**) and boys (**15%**).[8]

On perpetrating bullying, the research found:

- Overall, **17%** of respondents reported they had engaged in bullying in the past couple of months, but there were gender differences. **20%** of boys reported having done so, whilst the figure for girls was **13%**.[9]

Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Young Life and Times Survey is an annual survey of 16-year-olds that collects evidence on a wide range of social, educational and community issues.

On bullying, the 2017 survey found:

- **42%** of respondents said they had been bullied in school at some point in the past. **For females, the figure was 45%** and for **males, 37%.**

- **35%** and **30%** of respondents, respectively, 'strongly agreed' or 'agreed' that they had confidence in their school or college's ability to tackle any bullying. However, **10%** disagreed, and **5%** strongly disagreed with this.

- Only **5%** of respondents said they had bullied anyone in the previous 3 months.[10]

7   Hewitt G., *et. al.*, Student Health and Wellbeing In Wales: Report of the 2017/18 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey and School Health Research Network Student Health and Wellbeing Survey, May 2019.

8   As above., pps 93-96; 102

9   Hewitt G., *et. al.*, Student Health and Wellbeing In Wales: Report of the 2017/18 Health Behaviour in School-aged Children Survey and School Health Research Network Student Health and Wellbeing Survey, May 2019, pp93-4.

10 ARK. Young Life and Times Survey, 2017. May 2018, Module: education.

Scotland

In 2014, Scotland's Government-funded anti-bullying service, Respectme, carried out a country-wide survey of children aged between 8 and 19. Key findings included:

- **30%** of respondents said they'd experienced bullying in the school year 2013-14.

- Only **10%** of young people who reported being bullied said they were only bullied online. The rest were either bullied in person, or both in person and online.

- Overall, **92%** of children who had been bullied knew their bullies; **91%** of those bullied online also knew their bullies, which the authors suggest could indicate that anonymity was not necessarily fuelling cyberbullying.

- Just under half of bullied respondents (**48%**) told their parents about the bullying.[11]

Scotland: 30% of children and young people reported experiencing some form of bullying in the school year 2013-14

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[11]   Respectme, Bullying in Scotland 2014 (2014), p3.

2. School duties and powers in England

By law,[12] all stated-funded schools in England must have a behaviour policy in place that includes measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils. This policy is decided by the school. All teachers, pupils and parents must be told what it is.[13]

The DfE advice for schools on Preventing and tacking bullying provides an overview of the requirements on schools.

As the advice notes, "there is no single solution to bullying which will suit all schools."[14] However, schools' approaches are expected to have several common elements.

2.1 An overview of schools' duties

An overview of some of the key expectations set out in the advice is provided below.

Prevention

- Schools should not begin to combat bullying when an incident has taken place, but rather create an ethos of good behaviour, where pupils treat each other and staff with respect;

- Schools should be aware of potential conflict between pupils, and develop strategies to prevent bullying before it occurs;

- Parents should be made aware of procedures if their child is being bullied and be confident the school will deal with the matter appropriately;

- Pupils should be aware of the school's approach to bullying and the role they can play in prevention, and how they can report bullying safely;

- Disciplinary sanctions should be implemented so that the consequences of bullying reflect the seriousness of the incident, and it is made clear that bullying is unacceptable.[15]

Intervention and discipline

Where bullying has occurred, schools have a responsibility to support children who are bullied and make appropriate provision for a child's needs. The nature and level of support will depend on the individual circumstances and the degree of need.

Schools should apply disciplinary measures to pupils who bully in order to show clearly that their behaviour is wrong. The advice notes:

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12   Section 89 *Education and Inspections Act 2006*; s10 *Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2014*
13   DfE, Bullying at school [accessed 16 January 2020]
14   DfE, Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, p10
15   Ibid, p10

> Disciplinary measures must be applied fairly, consistently, and reasonably taking account of any special educational needs or disabilities that the pupils may have and taking into account the needs of vulnerable pupils. It is also important to consider the motivations behind bullying behaviour and whether it reveals any concerns for the safety of the perpetrator. Where this is the case the child engaging in bullying may need support themselves.[16]

Wider advice on Behaviour and discipline in schools has been published by the DfE.

Bullying away from school premises

Section 90 of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* states that pupils may be disciplined for poor conduct outside of school premises, or when not under the supervision of school staff, "but only to the extent that it is reasonable for the school imposing the penalty to regulate the pupil's conduct at such a time."[17]

As the Departmental advice notes, this may include bullying incidents "occurring anywhere off the school premises, such as on school or public transport, outside the local shops, or in a town or village centre."[18]

The disciplinary sanction can only be implemented on school premises or when the pupil is under the lawful control of school staff, for instance on a school trip.[19]

Cyberbullying

Each school should have clear and understood policies that include setting out the acceptable use of technologies, that address the issue of cyberbullying. Pupils should feel that they can report bullying that may have occurred outside of school.[20]

If online material is upsetting and inappropriate, either the offending individual may take down the material voluntarily, or the social networking site may be contacted directly to request that the content be take down, if it is breach of their terms and conditions and can therefore be removed. In the case material posted is suspected to be constitute an offence, the police should be contacted directly, and a record made.[21]

The *Education Act 2011* amended the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* to provide that when an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, has been seized by a staff member who has been formally authorised to do so by the headteacher, that staff member can examine data or files on the device, and delete these, if there is good reason to. DfE guidance states that parental consent is not required to search through a young person's mobile phone. Material that a member of

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[16] Ibid, p13
[17] S90 *Education and Inspections Act 2006*
[18] DfE, Home to school travel and transport guidance, July 2014, para 47
[19] DfE, Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, p6
[20] DfE, Cyberbullying: advice for headteachers and school staff, 2014, p3
[21] DfE, Advice for parents and carers on cyberbullying, 2014, p4

staff has reasonable grounds to suspect provides evidence that an individual has committed an offence should be retained and passed to the police.[22]

The Online Harms White Paper (April 2019) set out the UK Government's ambitions for online safety, including a new regulatory framework. The December 2019 Queen's Speech committed to legislate on the White Paper, including bringing in a new duty of care on internet companies towards their users.[23] Alongside the White Paper, the Department for Culture, Media and Sport published a Code of practice for providers of social media platforms. This took the form of voluntary guidance that recommends appropriate actions that providers should take to prevent bullying and other intimidatory behaviours on their sites.

The UK Government has also asked the Law Commission to undertake further work on reforms to law governing harassment, self-harm and violence online. The Commission intends to publish a consultation paper during 2020.

The Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology has published a note on Online safety education, PN0608.

Equality duties

Maintained schools and academies are required to comply with the Public sector equality duty (PSED) provided for in the *Equality Act 2010*. The duty covers age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

The PSED requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act;

- advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it;

- foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.

The *Children and Families Act 2014* provides duties on schools to ensure that pupils with special educational needs fully engage in the activities of the school, alongside children who do not have special educational needs.[24]

The House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, The public sector equality duty and equality impact assessments, SN06591, provides further information on the duty.

Safeguarding duties

The DfE advice notes that when there is "reasonable cause to suspect that a child is suffering, or is likely to suffer, significant harm" a bullying

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[22]   Department for Education, Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, p8; S2 *Education Act 2011*
[23]   Gov.uk, The Queen's Speech 2019, p58
[24]   Part 3, *Children and Families Act 2014;* DfE, Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, p5

incident should be addressed as a child protection concern under the *Children Act 1989*:

> Where this is the case, the school staff should discuss with the school's designated safeguarding lead and report their concerns to their local authority children's social care and work with them to take appropriate action.[25]

The statutory guidance Keeping children safe in education provides wider information on schools' safeguarding duties.

The House of Commons Library Briefing Paper, Safeguarding in English schools, CDB8023, provides further detail.

Sexual harassment

The then Schools Minister, Edward Timpson, set out an overview of the measures in place to safeguard children from sexual harassment in response to a Parliamentary Question on pupil-on-pupil sexual assault in February 2017 (link added):

> Keeping Children Safe in Education is the statutory guidance to which all schools and colleges in England must regard when carrying out their duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of children. The guidance places a responsibility on all staff to provide a safe environment, in which children can learn and to consider at all times what is in the best interests of the child.
>
> The guidance requires schools and colleges to have an effective child protection policy, which includes procedures to minimise the risk of peer on peer abuse and sets out how allegations of peer on peer abuse will be investigated. The policy should reflect the different forms that peer on peer abuse may take and make clear that abuse should never be tolerated or passed off as banter or part of growing up. The policy should also be clear as to how victims of peer on peer abuse will be supported. The guidance is clear that children's social care and the Police should be involved as appropriate.[26]

Advice for schools on Sexual violence and sexual harassment between children in schools and colleges, published by the DfE in May 2018, sets out further information for schools and colleges on how to deal with incidents and allegations.

The advice provides definitions of sexual violence and sexual harassment, and also of harmful sexual behaviours. It sets out schools' and colleges' relevant duties, and how schools should approach prevention: for instance, in the curriculum or safeguarding training for teachers.

The advice also provides information on how schools should respond to accusations of sexual violence or harassment, and subsequent steps that should be taken, including how to safeguard the victim and the alleged perpetrator, including whether they should be placed in classes together.

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[25]   DfE, Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, p6
[26]   PQ 64615 [Sexual offences: pupils], 28 February 2017

The House of Commons Library Briefing, Sexual harassment in education, CBP8117, provides more information on this subject.

Supporting bullied children

Schools should support all bullied pupils and be aware that bullying can have a severe effect on children. They should be aware that some children, such as those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), children in care, or those with medical needs, may be particularly vulnerable to bullying.[27]

In some instances, bullying may lead to a child or young person experiencing pronounced social, emotional or mental health difficulties. Schools should ensure they support children in the short term and over a longer period should that be required.

Referrals to Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) may be appropriate in some instances.

Support for children and young people's mental health

The Library briefing Children and young people's mental health – policy, CAMHS services, funding and education, CBP 7196, provides wider information on support for young people's mental health, including on the 2017 Green Paper that aimed to improve mental health support, in particular through schools and colleges.

Reporting issues to the police

The gov.uk website sets out bullying incidents that should, where discovered, be reported to the police:

> Some forms of bullying are illegal and should be reported to the police. These include:

> - violence or assault

> - theft

> - repeated harassment or intimidation, e.g. name calling, threats and abusive phone calls, emails or text messages

> - hate crimes

2.2 Accountability: bullying in Ofsted inspections

Ofsted's School inspection handbook sets out information on the way Ofsted carry out their inspections of maintained schools and academies.

The Handbook sets out that when schools are inspected, they must provide by 8am on the day of inspection:

> records and analysis of bullying, discriminatory and prejudiced behaviour, either directly or indirectly, including racist, sexist, disability and homophobic/biphobic/transphobic bullying, use of derogatory language and racist incidents.[28]

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[27]   DfE, Preventing and tackling bullying: Advice for headteachers, staff and governing bodies, July 2017, p12

[28]   Ofsted, School inspection handbook, November 2019, p16

Ofsted's judgement on "behaviour and attitudes" at a school is based on a school's creation of:

> an environment in which pupils feel safe, and in which bullying, discrimination and peer-on-peer abuse – online or offline– are not accepted and are dealt with quickly, consistently and effectively whenever they occur.[29]

If bullying is common, and/or pupils have little faith it will be dealt with, a school will be graded "inadequate" in its behaviour and attitudes area. If a school is graded as inadequate overall, then it may be subject to intervention.

Potential interventions after Ofsted inspections

Section 7 of the *Education and Adoption Act 2016* places a duty on the Secretary of State for Education to make an academy order if a maintained school is judged inadequate by Ofsted. This enables the school to become an academy and receive additional support from a sponsor.[30]

Local authorities have no general power to intervene in academy or free schools deemed inadequate. However, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA), the Regional Schools Commissioner (RSC) or the Secretary of State for Education may intervene in these schools. Interventions could include 're-brokering' the school so that it is managed by another academy trust.[31]

More information on Ofsted inspections is available in the Library briefing School inspections in England: Ofsted, CBP 7091.

2.3 Curriculum: health education

Health education is being introduced as a statutory requirement in schools through *The Relationships Education, Relationships and Sex Education and Health Education (England) Regulations 2019*, from September 2020.

Schools were encouraged to adopt the new curriculum early, from September 2019.[32] Around 1,600 did so.[33]

Guidance on the health education curriculum, which covers physical health and mental wellbeing, is included as part of the statutory guidance for Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education.

At both primary and secondary levels, the guidance sets out that children should learn about:

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[29]   Ibid, p53
[30]   DfE, Schools causing concern, September 2019, p19
[31]   Ibid, p10
[32]   DfE, Statutory guidance: relationships education, relationships and sex education and health education, June 2019
[33]   PQ, Sex and relationship education, 3204, 22 January 2020

different types of bullying (including cyberbullying), the impact of bullying, responsibilities of bystanders (primarily reporting bullying to an adult) and how to get help.[34]

The Library briefing on Personal, social, health and economic education in schools (England), CBP 7303, provides further information.

2.4 UK Government funding of anti-bullying organisations

Between September 2016 to March 2020, the DfE provided £2.8 million of funding to four anti-bullying organisations to work with schools to combat and prevent different forms of bullying.[35]

In reply to a Westminster Hall debate on anti-bullying week in November 2018, the Minister Nick Gibb set out further details on the aims and objectives of each project in the remaining 18 months of Government funding to March 2020:

- The **Anti-Bullying Alliance**, in order to extend its "All Together" programme, which focuses on reducing bullying of SEND pupils. This will support a further 300 schools to gain "All Together" status and provide certified online training for 10,000 professionals by March 2020.

- The **Anne Frank Trust** will further develop its "Free to Be" programme, which encourages young people to think about the importance of tackling prejudice, discrimination and bullying. It intends to reach an additional 825 ambassadors and more than 8,000 workshop participants by March 2020.

- The **Diana Award** will extend its peer-to-peer anti-bullying ambassadors programme, training an additional 2,750 young people from a further 270 schools in England to March 2020.

- The **Internet Matters** project will run its "Make a Noise" programme until January 2019. That project supports the reporting of bullying to schools via the tootoot app.[36] When announced in 2016, the programme was to be initially rolled out to 120,000 students across 300 schools.[37]

In answers to a 2019 PQ, the Government set out an additional means it has pursued to combat bullying on grounds of ethnicity, race and religion:

> As part of our commitments in the government's Integrated Communities Action Plan, the department has funded an expanded national school linking programme. This seeks to encourage meaningful social mixing between different types of schools and foster understanding of those with different backgrounds, faiths and beliefs. Last

[34]   DfE, Relationships education, relationships and sex education (RSE) and health education, June 2019, pp22, 28

[35]   PQ, Sex and relationship education, 265597, 20 June 2019

[36]   HC Deb, Anti-bullying week, 15 November 2018, c 190WH

[37]   DfE, 'Thousands more children to benefit from anti-bullying app', 8 September 2016

year, the Linking Network worked with over 400 schools leading to 17,635 pupils taking part in activities supporting integration.[38]

The Government Equalities Office has also funded programmes to prevent and tackle bullying on homophobic, biphobic and transphobic grounds:

> Between 2016-2019 the Government Equalities Office provided £3 million of funding to prevent and tackle homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying in schools. In the LGBT Action Plan published last year, it committed £1million to continue the programme until 2020.[39]

The funding commitment from the Government Equalities Office followed a pilot scheme in 2015.[40] The evaluation of the pilot projects found that "one of the areas in which most change appeared to have resulted….was in improving school and teaching staff awareness of [Homophobic, biphobic and transphobic] bullying as an issue, as well as their capacity, competence and confidence to tackle and prevent it".[41]

38   PQ, Schools: Racial discrimination, 228161, 12 March 2019.
39   PQ, Sex and relationship education, 265597, 20 June 2019
40   PQ, LGBT people, 198218, 3 December 2018.
41   Government Equalities Office, Evaluation of an anti-homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HB&T) bullying programme, 11 July 2016, p131

3. Bullying: schools in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland

Schools policy is devolved, with different school systems in place in each of the four countries of the UK. This section provides an overview of the responsibilities of schools in UK school systems shaped outside Westminster.

3.1 Shared features

Equality Duties

The *Equality Act 2010* is in force in Wales and Scotland, in addition to England, though the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly can pass additional measures under certain sections of the Act. Equal opportunities and discrimination are transferred matters under the Northern Ireland Act 1998. With a few exceptions, the 2010 Act does not apply to Northern Ireland, being governed by separate legislation.[42]

Similarly, the Public sector equality duty, introduced under the 2010 Act, is in force in England, Wales and Scotland.

The responsibilities of schools under the 2010 Act are set out in section 2.1, above.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Both the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly have adopted the UNCRC into law. The UNCRC says that states should:

> take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical and mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment, or exploitation, including sexual abuse.[43]

The *Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014* placed all Scottish Ministers under a duty to keep under consideration "whether there are any steps which they could take that would or might secure better or further effect in Scotland of the UNCRC requirements", and to take the identified steps. This has put a requirement on Scottish ministers to monitor and progress children's rights in devolved areas, such as education, health and discrimination.

In 2004, the Welsh Assembly Government adopted the UNCRC as the basis for policy making relating to children and young people in Wales,[44] and the *Rights of Children and Young Persons (Wales) Measure 2011* placed a duty on Welsh ministers to have regard to the requirements of the UNCRC when exercising any of their functions.

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[42] Equality Act 2010: Explanatory notes, paragraphs 16-20; Equality Northern Ireland, Legislation
[43] UNCRC, Article 19, sect 1.
[44] Gov.Wales, Children's rights in Wales, 27 November 2019.

3.2 Scotland

Overview of anti-bullying strategy

The Scottish Government published [Respect for all: National approach to anti-bullying for Scotland's children and young people](#) in 2017, emphasising that the focus of schools should be on prevention and addressing the root causes of prejudice. All individual schools and local authorities are expected by the Scottish Government to develop policies to reflect the guidance. The guidance provides a complete list of what a school's policy should include:

- A definition of bullying, in line with the "Respect for all" guidelines;

- An explicit commitment to challenge all types of prejudice-based bullying and language, including that based on the protected characteristics in the Equality Act 2010;

- A range of strategies to prevent and respond to bullying, in ways that take account of the impact of the incident and any underlying prejudice or other negative attitudes;

- Recording and monitoring strategies, in line with data protection rules;

- The inclusion of parents/carers and pupils in the making and enforcement of the policy;

- Addressing additional support needs and taking account of the principles of inclusion when providing support to children with additional support needs.[45]

Scottish local authorities are also expected to develop and implement anti-bullying strategies in line with the guidelines, and to publicise to parents and carers how to raise a bullying issue. [Respectme](#), Scotland's anti-bullying service, funded by the Scottish Government since its launch in March 2007, provides a [guide](#) to drafting a school's anti-bullying policy.[46]

Independent schools in Scotland are responsible to their own governing boards but are subject to the *[Equality Act 2010](#)*. The [Scottish Council of Independent Schools](#) support the advice within [Respect for all](#), and recommend that individual schools develop and record systems for recording bullying.[47]

Cyber Bullying

Internet safety is largely a reserved matter, but Scottish ministers can develop and implement policy as a result of their devolved responsibilities for education, policing and child protection.

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[45]   Scottish Learning Directorate, [Respect for all: National approach to anti-bullying](#), 15 November 2017, Section 2
[46]   Respectme, ['About'](#)
[47]   Scottish Learning Directorate, [Recording and monitoring of bullying incidents in schools: supplementary guidance](#) May 2018, para 14

The Scottish Government published [guidance](#) on using mobile technologies in schools in 2013. The guidance sets out how mobile phone use can be regulated in schools:

- Policies should make clear that there are consequences for misuse of mobile technologies, including referral to the Police in cases where an offence may have been committed;

- The individual may be asked to remove images from social networks as part of the normal behaviour policy of the school, or the social network provider may be contacted directly.[48]

2014 Statutory guidance on [Relationships, sexual health and parenthood](#) education in Scottish local authority maintained schools states that such education must "take account of development in online communications, and recognise that relationships for children and young people can begin, and take place online", and ensure that "children are informed of the law in Scotland, and communications involving sexual content".[49]

Health and Wellbeing Education & Relationships, Sexual Health and Parenthood education

Health and wellbeing education in Scottish schools is expected to teach students to develop their "respect for others", "understand that adults in my school community have a responsibility to look after me", and "acknowledge diversity and understand that it is everyone's responsibility to challenge discrimination".[50]

Current statutory guidance on [Relationships, sexual health and parenthood education](#) (RHSP) in local authority schools expects that learners will "have the skills and resilience to prevent or respond in an appropriate manner to bullying" and RSHP teaching should address diversity, including issues relating lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex. Teaching should also "challenge some of the negative gender norms that exist in society" and be mindful of pupils with a disability.[51]

A report by the Scottish Parliament Education and Skills Committee, [Let's talk about personal and social education](#) (May 2017), called for the Scottish Government to initiate a review into Personal and social education (PSE) in Scotland, and to additionally account for health and wellbeing, equality, and LGBT inclusiveness in the formation of any new framework.[52] The Equalities and Human Rights Committee Report [It is not cool to be cruel](#) (July 2017), also called upon the Scottish Government to reform PSE to deliver the national anti-bullying

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48   Scottish Learning Directorate, [Safe and responsible use of mobile technology in schools: guidance](#), November 2013, paras 20, 21 & 23

49   Scottish Learning Directorate, [Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools](#), December 2014, para 37

50   Scottish Government, [Curriculum for excellence: health and wellbeing](#), p1

51   Learning Directorate, [Conduct of relationships, sexual health and parenthood education in schools](#), December 2014, paras 32, 36, 45, 53.

52   Education and Skills Committee, [Let's talk about personal and social education](#), May 2017, pp5-7.

approach, promote commonality and empathy, educate children about consent, and challenge stereotypes.[53]

In November 2018, the LGBTI inclusive education working group: report to Scottish ministers, recommended that the Scottish Government develop national guidance to clearly state expectations regarding LGBTI inclusive education in Scottish Schools. The Scottish Government announced that schools will teach LGBTI equality and inclusion through themes such as:

> LGBTI terminology and identities; tackling homophobia, biphobia and transphobia; prejudice in relation to the LGBTI community; and promoting awareness of the history of LGBTI equalities and movements.[54]

The Scottish Government states the recommendations will be implemented before the end of the current Scottish parliament term in March 2021.[55]

Recording bullying incidents

Scottish Government 2018 Guidance recording and monitoring of bullying incidents recommends that once a bullying incident has been raised, it should be logged on the SEEMiS database, and should be updated when the incident has been investigated and resolved. Data to be recorded includes where the incident took place, the form of bullying, any underlying prejudice and protected characteristics implicated, the impact of the bullying, the students and staff involved, and actions taken to resolve the incident.[56]

These cases should be monitored by the senior leadership of each school more than once a term, whilst local authorities should monitor incidents at the end of each school term.[57]

The guidance states that in any recording of information, the pupil's right to privacy must be respected, and that they should be informed if there is any intention to share information.[58]

Following a 2018 pilot, the new system is intended to be in place by August 2019.[59] The scheme followed a report by the Scottish Parliament Equality and Human Rights Committee on Bullying and harassment of children and young people in schools (2017) that found many schools or local authorities were not recording bullying consistently or effectively.[60]

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[53] Equalities and Human Rights Committee Report, It is not cool to be cruel, July 2017, pp5-6.
[54] Scottish Government, 'LGBTI education', 8 November 2018.
[55] Learning Directorate, LGBT inclusive education: guidance to education authorities, May 2019
[56] Recording land monitoring of bullying incidents in schools: supplementary guidance May 2018, paras 32, 36-37.
[57] Ibid, paras 56-57
[58] Ibid, paras 43-44.
[59] Bullying in schools (monitoring), Q10, 3 October 2018
[60] Scottish Parliament Equality and Human Rights Committee report on Bullying and harassment of children and young people in schools, 2017, p43

Equality Duty

In addition to being subject to the *Equality Act 2010* and the related Public sector equality duty, Scottish schools are included under the *Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012*. This requires organisations to publish equality outcomes and ensure that bullying that is related to a protected characteristic is treated as seriously as others form of bullying.

Accountability

Education Scotland, which provides the school inspection service, provides support and resources around anti-bullying strategies to schools.[61] Secondary school leaders are required to complete a self-evaluation report demonstrating how the school ensures wellbeing, equality and improvement and provide inspectors with records relating to bullying incidents. School inspectors can review and report on a school's performance in the context of the national framework and can commit to further inspection or propose changes to improve school performance.[62]

3.3 Wales

School Obligations

Rights, respect, equality was published as statutory anti-bullying guidance by the Welsh Government in November 2019, under the powers introduced by the UK *Education Act 2002* and UK *Education and Inspections Act 2006*.[63] The draft guidance had originally intended for the guidance to be non-statutory.[64]

Guidance has also been published for parents and carers, young people, and children.

The Welsh Government expects a school's anti-bullying policy to set out clearly how it will address bullying and strategies for challenging bullying behaviour, and for these measures to be communicated to all learners, school staff and parents/carers.[65]

The statutory guidance for schools states that a policy must include:

- the vision and values of their school
- their definition of what is meant by bullying
- why it is important to prevent and challenge bullying
- how awareness of bullying will be raised

[61] Scottish Parliament Equality and Human Rights Committee report on Bullying and harassment of children and young people in schools, 2017, p25
[62] Education Scotland, Briefing note for headteacher of secondary schools being inspected, pp9, 13, 19
[63] s175 of the *Education Act 2002* and s88 of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*
[64] Welsh Assembly Children, Young People and Education Committee, 6 November 2019, para 240.
[65] Welsh Government, Challenging bullying: Rights, respect, equality, para 5.14

- how anti-bullying work will be embedded in the curriculum rather than an isolated annual event (such as during anti-bullying week)

- involvement of staff, learners, parents/carers and school governors in development and implementation of the policy

- signs a child or young person might be experiencing bullying

- how bullying will be prevented, including on journeys to and from school

- when the school will take action in relation to bullying outside the school

- how the school will respond to incidents

- how to report bullying

- what learners and parents/carers can expect

- how incidents will be recorded and monitored

- how learners and/or parents/carers can appropriately escalate the matter if they do not feel that their concerns are being taken seriously

- how the school will evaluate and review their policy and strategy.[66]

The Welsh Government also expects learners with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities, who are LGBT or questioning, from an ethnic minority, religious background, new to the English or Welsh Education system, or have emotional health and well-being issues, to be carefully considered in the school's prevention strategy.[67]

Cyberbullying and Mobile Phones

Under Section 89(5A) of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006*, Welsh headteachers have the power to discipline learners for incidents taking place off the premises and to search or confiscate mobile phones as a disciplinary penalty if learners have contravened the school behavioural policy and/or anti-bullying policy.

School staff may request a learner to reveal a message or show them content on their phone for the purposes of establishing if bullying has occurred. It is recommended that the designated safeguarding lead or ICT manager is present if a phone is searched, and for a written note of the time, date and purpose of the search and evidence for its necessity to be made. Schools should have a clear policy on the ability of staff to confiscate and access phones.[68]

Off-site Bullying

Section 89(5A) of the *Education and Inspections Act 2006* gives headteachers powers to determine measures that regulate the conduct

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66   Ibid, para 7.2
67   Ibid, para 3.6
68   Ibid, para 5.16

of learners when they are off-site or not under the control or charge of a member of staff.[69]

The Welsh Government expects that school policies clearly set out expectations for positive behaviour of learners when off the school site, and states that schools should act reasonably when governing behaviour outside of school.[70]

The *Learner Travel (Wales) Measure 2008* sets out that learners aged 5 to 19 travelling to and from "relevant places" (such as school) by bus, train, foot, taxi, scooter, motorbike, cycle and car must adhere to the Travel Behaviour Code. The code states that travelling learners must "never bully other learners".[71]

The code sets out a sanction's framework, including the removal of free or subsided transport. This code is expected to form part of a school's behaviour and anti-bullying policies, and should be publicised to students and parents/carers.[72]

Personal and Social (PSE) Framework

The current Personal and social (PSE) framework is a requirement under the basic curriculum in Welsh primary and secondary schools. The framework outlines that learners should understand "situations which produce conflict and the nature of bullying" and "develop strategies to resolve conflict and deal with bullying".[73] Sex and relationship education states that schools should "address bullying and harassment in all its forms, including any related to sexual orientation".[74]

A new curriculum for Wales was published in January 2020. From 2022, it is intended that health and wellbeing will cover the physical, psychological, emotional and social aspects of life. The new 'designing your curriculum' guide sets out that topics should include online bullying, and one of its purposes as being to "develop the characteristics to understand and respect diversity."[75] The new Digital competence framework also includes statutory responsibilities on integrating cyber-bullying into the curriculum.

From 2022, all children aged 5 to 16 will be taught Sex and relationship education (RSE).[76] The new curriculum guidance states that learners should be 'recognising the diversity of gender and sexual identity, expression, behaviour and representation', gain an 'understanding of the 'social, emotional, physical and legal nature and impact of gender-

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[69] Ibid, para 5.15

[70] Welsh Government, Challenging bullying: rights, respect, equality, para 6.28

[71] Welsh Government, *Learner Travel (Wales) Measure* 2008: All-Wales travel behaviour code statutory guidance, 2017, p21

[72] Welsh Government, Challenging bullying: rights, respect, equality, paras 5.17-5.21

[73] Welsh Department for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Personal and Social Framework for 7 to 19-year olds in Wales, 2008, pp18, 19b

[74] Welsh Assembly Government Circular No 019/2010, Sex and relationships education in schools, 2010, para 2.20.

[75] Welsh Government, Health and wellbeing: Designing your curriculum

[76] Welsh Government, 'Focus on healthy relationships in major reforms', 22 May 2018

based and sexual violence including online', and the 'confidence to seek support and advice'.[77]

Evaluation and Accountability

Welsh schools are expected to have in place mechanisms for reporting and recording bullying that are communicated to the whole school community. Records should comply with data protection laws, and detail the specific types of bullying, including any protected characteristics involved. This data is expected by the Welsh Government to inform the development of anti-bullying policies.[78]

The Welsh School Inspection Service, Estyn, considers a school's provision for child protection. This will include how effective its arrangements are for preventing and addressing bullying, harassment, and discrimination, and whether it fosters an anti-bullying culture.[79] Inspectors will also assess whether pupils who require extra support, such as those with SEN, are free from bullying and that schools have effective anti-bullying strategies in relation to pupils at greater risk of bullying.[80]

Any parent/guardian who has concerns about how a provider has dealt with bullying issues raised about their child can inform a school inspector, who cannot intervene but may consider whether these concerns form part of a general pattern found by the inspection team more generally.[81]

In 2014, Estyn published a report on the effectiveness of school strategies in combating bullying against pupils with protected characteristics defined under the *Equality Act 2010*. Its research found that many schools paid insufficient attention to the Act when developing anti-bullying strategies.[82]

Children's Commissioner for Wales

The Children's Commissioner for Wales is an office responsible for highlighting and protecting children's rights, as set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which were adopted into Welsh law in 2011.

In 2016, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sally Holland, published a strategic plan for children, A plan for all children and young people, 2016-19. The plan recommended that by 2019, the Welsh Government makes significant progress on ensuring that:

- Children and young people have access to the mental health services they need in a timely manner;

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[77]   Welsh Government, Curriculum for Wales guidance, January 2020, pp39, 40.
[78]   Welsh Government, Challenging bullying: rights, respect, equality, paras 11.1, 11.3, 11.7, 11.8
[79]   Estyn, Guidance handbook for the inspection of secondary schools, from September 2019, 2019, p25
[80]   Estyn, Supplementary guidance: pupils who provide extra support, including those with SEN, Autumn 2019, 2019, p9
[81]   Estyn, 'FAQs: Child is being bullied'
[82]   Estyn, Action on bullying, June 2014, p6

- Children's contemporary experiences of bullying are better understood and schools prevent and tackle bullying more effectively.

The Children's Commissioner for Wales published Sam's story (2017), which reflected on children and young people's experiences of bullying in Wales. It recommended that Welsh schools should be under a statutory duty to record all types and incidences of bullying, that human rights education should be made a compulsory aspect of the curriculum, and that schools should adopt the "child rights" based approach to education, recommended in Estyn's report Action on bullying (2014).[83]

3.4 Northern Ireland

School Responsibility & cyberbullying

The *Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998*, as amended, requires grant-aided schools in Northern Ireland to publish policies designed to promote good behaviour and to prevent all forms of bullying, with their policy taking account of any guidance issued by the Northern Ireland Department for Education and, in the case of Catholic maintained schools, the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS).[84] To date, the CCMS has only issued additional guidance in relation to bullying of staff members.[85] Any school policy should be created after consultation with parents, and include preventative measures updated at intervals of no more than 4 years.

In addition, under the *2010 Education (School Development Plans Regulations)*, schools must have a publicised development plan, which includes how the school plans to promote "the good behaviour and discipline of pupils". This must be reviewed no later than every three years, or no later than 5 months following a school inspection.[86]

The *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016* expanded the responsibilities of schools to include an obligation to prevent bulling amongst pupils when travelling to and from school, and to take measures with a view to prevent bullying involving a registered pupil at the school which involves the use of electronic communications.[87] Schools were initially expected to comply with the Act by September 2019.[88]

However, in January 2020 the Minister for Education stated that following concerns raised by teaching unions, a temporary pause in the

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[83] Children's Commissioner for Wales, Sam's story (2017), p27
[84] S3, *Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998*; art 19 *The Education and Libraries (Northern Ireland) Order 2003*.
[85] CCMS, 2011/14 Policy Statement on tackling violence and abusive behaviour against teachers; 2009/11 Policy and procedures to combat bullying and harassment of teachers, principals and vice principals, 2009/30 Policy and procedure to combat bullying and harassment
[86] S4, Schedule, & S7 *The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010*
[87] S2 *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016*
[88] Education Northern Ireland, Addressing Bullying in Schools Act 2016

Act's implementation was ordered. The Minister said that the department remained committed to bringing the Act into operation.[89]

Statutory guidance produced for staff and governors of all grant-maintained schools sets out what a school policy must include:

- A legal definition of bullying

- The criteria by which an alleged act of bullying would be judged

- The motivations behind bullying

- Preventative measures

- Measures to combat bullying on the way to and from school

- Policies on acceptable internet use, mobile phone policy

- How reports of bullying should be raised and resolved

- How reports of bullying should be recorded

- A statement setting out responsibility for enforcing and reviewing the policy.[90]

The Department of Education's publication Pastoral care in schools: Promoting positive behaviour offers detailed guidance, practical initiatives and case studies to support schools to tackle bullying in Northern Ireland.

The Northern Ireland Department of Education funds the Northern Ireland anti-bullying forum (NIABF) which identifies and champions anti-bullying priorities.[91] The Department of Education's website provides further information published by NIABF on dealing with bullying, including a guide to cyberbullying for parents and carers, how to report bullying concerns to a school, and an explanation of bullying related to race, faith and culture. NI Direct have also published pages on cyberbullying and bullying.

Equality legislation

The *Equality Act 2010* is not in force in Northern Ireland. The collection of laws governing discrimination by age, disability, gender, race, religion, politics, sexual orientation has been published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.

Bullying in the Curriculum

All grant-aided schools develop their own policy on how they address Department of Education guidance on Relationships and sexuality education (RSE), which should be "focusing on the need to make pupils feel safe and confident that they should not be bullied, for example, due to their sexual orientation".[92]

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[89] AQW 437/17-22, 22 January 2020
[90] Northern Ireland Education Authority, 'Addressing bullying: easy guide'
[91] Northern Ireland Department of Education, Dealing with bullying: AQW 7250/16-21, 16 November 2016
[92] Department of Education, Relationship and sexuality (RSE) guidance, 2015/22, 26 August 2015, Para 5.

Since September 2007, "Personal development and mutual understanding" for primary students and "Learning for life and work for post-primary pupils"—where RSE and the need to understand bullying and how to combat it are components of both—have been a statutory requirement in Northern Ireland schools.[93]

Recording and Accountability

The *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016* requires grant-aided Northern Ireland schools to centrally record incidents of alleged bullying involving a pupil registered at the school. Such a record must include the motivation of the incident, the methods of bullying, how the bullying was addressed, and note if the bullying related to issues of religion, politics, race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, pregnancy, or a person with dependents.[94] These records should be used for schools to monitor the extent and motivations of bullying, and inform any anti-bullying strategy.[95] Implementation of the Act was paused in January 2020.[96]

If a parent/guardian is not happy with the way that a child's teachers and school have dealt with a bullying complaint, and have exhausted the school's complaints process, they can refer the case to the Public Service Ombudsman for further investigation.[97]

The Education and training inspectorate (ETI) monitors the treatment of bullying incidents by schools as part of their inspection process.[98] This was planned to include an adherence to the 2016 Act from the school year 2019/20, in addition to ensuring a school demonstrates its monitoring and reviewing of policies to promote the "good behaviour and discipline of pupils".[99] Post-inspection reports may include requests for improvement and a timetable for action, including amending any school development plan.[100]

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93   *The Education (Curriculum Minimum Content) Order (Northern Ireland) 2007;* Northern Ireland Curriculum, Personal development and mutual understanding for key stages 1 & 2, p22; Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessments, Statutory requirements for Learning for life and work: personal development, p2
94   S3 The *Addressing Bullying in Schools Act (Northern Ireland) 2016*
95   AQW 4860/16-21, 7 October 2016
96   AQW 437/17-22, 22 January 2020
97   NI Direct, Dealing with bullying and getting support
98   AQW 285/16-21, 31 May 2016
99   Education and Training Inspectorate, Safeguarding proforma (Nursery, primary, post-primary, special educational schools and EOTAs centres), 16 September 2019, p1
100   Education and Training Inspectorate, What happens after an inspection, January 2019, p3; S7 *The Education (School Development Plans) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2010*

4. Evaluations of anti-bullying strategies

This section summarises recent research on what strategies have worked within schools to combat bullying amongst pupils. It should be noted that it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about which programmes or components are the most effective for the UK, as much research is based on international surveys and studies. It is also possible that what works in one school or country will not work as effectively in another.

KiVa school-based antibullying programme (2019-22)

The KiVa programme, developed in Finland, was introduced to Welsh and English schools through a pilot from March 2013 to July 2015, with further funding for an additional pilot running from July 2019 to April 2022.[101]

The KiVa programme compromises a whole school curriculum and targeted intervention, with differentiating features being concrete materials for pupils, teachers and parents, a virtual learning environment to reinforce learning, and exercises to enhance empathy and support for victimised peers.[102] The scheme also seeks to reduce the motivation from the social awards that a bully obtains from the passive behaviour of bystanders, with programme intervention seeking to change bystander behaviour by promoting their empathy with the victim and sense of self-efficacy.[103] When trialled in Finland, reductions occurred in all nine forms of bullying measures, and KiVa is now is delivered in 90% of Finish comprehensive schools.[104]

The English and Welsh pilot trial in 17 schools found that whilst the pre-pilot rate of self-reported victimisation was 16% and bullying 6%, this decreased post-pilot to 9% and 2%, respectively.[105] Further research between 2019 and 2022 will test whether KiVa reduces the number of both bullies and bullied children, improves mental health, school attendance, and increases teacher skills. It will also examine whether KiVa works well in disadvantaged schools, something not tested in Finish studies.[106]

Behind the numbers: ending school violence (2019)

The UN's Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) published a comparative report Ending school violence and bullying

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[101] National Institute for Health Research, Research Award UK KiVa Trial, 17/92/11
[102] S. Clarkson, J.M. Charles, C.W.N. Saville, 'Introducing KiVa school-based antibullying programme to the UK: a preliminary examination of effectiveness and programme cost', School Psychology International, 2019, pp6-7
[103] Elisa Cantone et al, 'Interventions on bullying and cyberbullying in schools; a systematic review', Clinical Practice and Epidemiology in Mental Health, 2015, Supplement 1, pp58-76, at p72
[104] S. Clarkson, J.M. Charles, C.W.N. Saville, 'Introducing KiVa school-based antibullying programme to the UK: a preliminary examination of effectiveness and programme cost', School Psychology International, 2019, pp6-7
[105] Judy Hutchings and Suzy Clarkson, 'KiVa anti-bullying programme', 2017, p6
[106] Bangor University, The KiVa anti-bullying programme in Wales

(2019). In order to highlight common features of successful anti-bullying programmes, the report analysed 8 case study countries. It found that common features of successful programmes included:

- A robust legal and policy framework

- Collaboration between the education sector and a wide range of partners

- Implementing school-based programmes and interventions that are based on evidence of effectiveness

- Availability of data on school violence and bullying and systematic monitoring of responses

- Training for teachers on school violence and bullying and positive classroom management

- Focus on a safe and positive school and classroom environment

- Commitment to child rights and empowerment, and student participation

- Systematic approaches to involving all stakeholders in the school community

- Support and referral for students affected by school violence and bullying.[107]

The report highlighted the experiences of Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands, all of whom had seen a recorded fall in school bullying between 2002 and 2014 according to international survey data. The report emphasised the practice of evaluating anti-bullying strategies in each country, and the clear legal prohibitions and definitions that enabled meaningful data on bullying to be collected in order to inform strategies and strengthen accountability.[108]

The effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies (2019)

An academic review of school-based bullying strategies in 12 countries found that in general, anti-bullying strategies are effective in reducing school-based bullying and victimisation. The literature review found that bullying perpetration was reduced by around a fifth when strategies were in place, with approaches in Greece (seeing a fall of 40% in school bullying), Norway, Italy, the USA and Finland (seeing falls of between 21% and 25%) being the most effective.[109] The academic authors argued that the most effective anti-bullying strategies were ones that had:

- A "whole school approach", where the whole school community, including support staff, governors and parents in addition to teachers and pupils, are involved in confronting bullying (p25);

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[107] UNESCO, Behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying, 2019, pp48-52
[108] Ibid, p47
[109] Hannah Gaffney, David Farrington, Maria Ttofi, 'Examining the effectiveness of school-bulling programs globally: a meta-analysis', *International Journal of Bullying Prevention,* 2019, pp14-31, at p20

- A practice of "working with peers", where bystanders were encouraged to prevent, or respond accordingly to, bullying situations in their daily lives (p26);

- An ability to report privately and in non-classroom settings, because many victims felt uncomfortable about publicly disclosing their experiences, and much bullying has moved online (p26); and

- "Hot spot supervision", where school leaders had identified locations where bullying occurs frequently, and increased teacher presence in these areas (p26).

Addressing school violence and bullying (2019)

NHS Scotland was asked by the Scottish Government's Learning Directorate Health and Wellbeing unit to review what practices worked best to prevent school violence and bullying. Its report Addressing school violence and bullying concluded that "whole school strategies that implement a range of complementary approaches to prevent as well as respond to bullying", tailored to the school, were more likely to effective than isolated approaches. It also emphasised the importance of having a consistent approach throughout the school.[110]

The report examined 28 publications that conducted systematic reviews on school-based interventions to prevent or reduce bullying. It concluded that:

- It could not discern any substantial differences between anti-bullying programmes themselves on the rates of bullying, with most leading to falls (pp14-15);

- There were "consistent benefits" for LGBT+ pupils in schools that did have a comprehensive policy, and one that took account of the most at-risk groups of bullying (p15);

- The behaviour of bystanders and peers was important in tacking bullying, but the evidence was mixed on the effectiveness of programmes to encourage such interventions (p16); and

- It was not possible for the review to come to any firm conclusions on cyberbullying programmes, anti-aggression measures, or school environment modifications, due to the lack of published evidence (pp17-19).

The report also considered UK-specific programmes, but concluded that the majority of evidence to date was insufficient to come to firm decisions on their effectiveness.[111]

Improving behaviour in school (2019)

The Education Endowment Foundation's report Improving behaviour in schools argued that bullying is best reduced through staff knowing pupils, understanding the specific context of behaviour, applying cross-curricula anti-bullying strategies, and effective classroom management that promote engagement and respect. The report stressed that consistency and coherence at a whole school level are "paramount"

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[110]   NHS Scotland, Addressing school violence and bullying, 2019, p3
[111]   Ibid, pp19-27

and behaviour programmes were more likely to have an impact if implemented on a whole-school level.[112]

The report stated that there was a lack of evidence on the impact of zero tolerance policies towards bullying on pupil outcomes in English schools.[113]

Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying (2018)

Cooper Gibson Research was requested by the Government Social Research Body to publish research on Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying (2018). It conducted interviews in 15 schools and colleges in England. The common strategies to tackle and prevent bullying were:

- **Whole school approach, involving teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils, parents and carers and governors:**

    A highly visible school ethos or values embedded throughout the school and underpinning everything the school does.

    Clear behaviour and anti-bullying policies with a clear definition of what bullying is [...] and a system of sanctions

    Behaviour and anti-bullying policies and practices that are reviewed and updated regularly

    Training and supporting all staff, from non-teaching support staff to senior leadership teams

- **Focus on preventative practice:**

    Reduce the number of bullying incidents that occur by tackling prejudice and increasing empathy and understanding

    Teach pupils to self-regulate their behaviour and to develop an understanding that they should not engage in bullying behaviour because it is not the right thing to do

    Rewards and recognition systems for behaviour

- **Creating an inclusive ethos/environment:**

    Inclusive and proactive approach to diversity, where pupils are encouraged to celebrate people's differences.

    Promoted careful use of language, challenging 'banter' and racist language

- **Keeping anti-bullying high profile**

- **Empowering pupils**

    Pupils were also commonly encouraged to generate ideas and take ownership of antibullying activities and even

- **A rapid response to bullying incidents**

    Providing a variety of ways for pupils to report incidents or concerns was an important part of this rapid response

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[112] Education Endowment Foundation, Improving behaviour in schools (2019), p6
[113] Education Endowment Foundation, Improving behaviour in schools (2019), p33

approach, and takes into account that some pupils might find it difficult to talk to staff.

The document provided case studies of school strategies to tackle different forms of bullying, through whole-school approaches, maintaining the profile of anti-bullying policies, preventing bullying in multicultural schools, challenging stereotypes and promoting diversity, combatting cyberbullying, and reducing bullying against SEND and LGBT+ pupils.[114]

Below the Radar (2014)

Ofsted in 2014 examined schools practices in England to deal with low-level disruptive behaviour (such as talking to gain attention, forming distractions, name-calling of others) in the report Below the Radar. It argued that the best schools had a consistent policy, that was applied immediately, uniformly and with rigour by staff:

> high expectations of behaviour have been spelt out by senior staff and are applied consistently, with similarly consistent responses to any pupils who engage in minor or other disruptive behaviour. Staff, pupils and parents know what is expected of them and any transgressions by pupils are met with a robust response.[115]

Action on bullying (2014)

The Welsh education inspectorate, Estyn, report Action on bullying (2014) shared best practices to deal with bullying, based on visits to 21 Welsh schools and an additional 7 schools providing strategy documents. The report highlighted the importance of having a nationally-agreed definition of bullying, the lack of which made staff unsure on when and how to report an incident (including on protected characteristics). Schools that used the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to discuss children's rights and establish a school ethos promoting equality and diversity generally reported lower instances of bullying.[116]

Estyn published an accompanying checklist of best practice.[117]

No place for bullying (2012)

Ofsted's report No place for bullying (2012) surveyed anti-bullying strategies in English schools. Its recommendations were based on surveys of 37 primary schools and 19 secondary schools visited by Ofsted between September and December 2011. Their survey found that primary school children were frequently more able to describe the school's values compared to those at secondary level, the report finding that secondary school headteachers placed more emphasis on rules than values.[118] The report characterised the best anti-bullying curricula as one that:

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[114] Government Social Research/Cooper Gibson Research, Approaches to preventing and tackling bullying (2018), pp19-43

[115] Ofsted, Below the radar (2014), pp24-25

[116] Estyn, Action on bullying (2014), p4

[117] Ibid, pp33-34

[118] Ofsted, No place for bullying (2012), pp6,7

- Placed a strong emphasis on helping pupils to develop positive values, to understand difference and diversity, to understand the effects that bullying has on people, and to protect themselves from bullying.
[…]
- Clearly identified the links between personal, social and health education, citizenship, religious education and other curriculum areas, and there was a strong emphasis on ensuring that pupils were able to extend and apply their learning in other subjects.
[…]
- Thought the most carefully about preventing bullying and helping pupils to interact positively had recognised the importance of the physical organisation of the school and the organisation of breaktimes and lunchtimes, and had taken action to improve these aspects.[119]

Further case studies of strategies to tackle prejudice-based bullying, best practice for recording and reporting bullying, and promoting moral, social and cultural issues, were also explored by Ofsted.[120]

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[119] Ofsted, No place for bullying (2012), p7
[120] Ibid, pp31, 40-41, 44-65.

5.   Impacts and legacies of bullying

This section summarises recent research on bullying's impact on both the victim and preparator whilst they are in education and over their lifetime.

There has been comparatively less research on the impact of bullying on bullies themselves, though there is sometimes overlap between bullies and the bullied. It is generally held that bullying can also have both short- and long-term consequences for both victims and perpetrators, they being more likely to have worse attendance records and academic performance compared to those who are not either victims of bullying or do not perpetrate it.[121]

It is important to note that in most studies bullying is self-reported, making this research open to measurement error and false-recollection. As there is no single or legal definition of bullying, varying definitions have been employed by researchers and those surveyed, making comparisons between studies problematic. Definitions of bullying applied by each study are cited where applicable.

5.1 Impact of bullying whilst in education

On attendance & decision to home educate

The National Centre for Social Research report on Estimating the prevalence of young people absent from school due to bullying (2011), estimated that of children aged 11-15 absent from English state schools, between 13,300- 19,600 had bullying as the main reason for absence, and between 71,400 and 84,500 would cite bullying as one factor for their absence in 2010-11.[122] The statistics were compiled by requesting parents whose children were home-educated or persistently absent from school to complete a questionnaire, and relied upon a self-definition of bullying.[123]

A DfE-commissioned 2012 academic review of the impact of wellbeing on education found that "children who are bullied at age 7 are less likely to be engaged in school three years later", though no relationship was found between being bullied at age 10 and school engagement at age 13.[124]

> In 2011, between 71,400 and 84,500 school children aged 11-15 in England cited bullying as one reason for their absence from school

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[121] Education Policy Institute, 'Bullying: a review of the evidence', 12 November 2018
[122] National Centre for Social Research, Estimating the prevalence of young people absent from school due to bullying (2011), p4
[123] Ibid, pp5-6
[124] DfE, Leslie Morrison Gutman & John Vorhaus, The impact of pupil behaviour and wellbeing on educational outcomes (2012), p33

A [poll](#) carried out for the charity [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) found that in 2019 11% of surveyed children said they missed school due to bullying, and 19% had avoided friends or online media because of bullying.[125]

The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2015 scores found that on average across the OECD, 9.2% of those frequently bullied had skipped at least 3-4 days in the previous two weeks, compared to 4.1% amongst those who had not been bullied.[126]

The same PISA scores also showed that across the OECD, on average 44.5% of those reporting that they were frequently bullied expected to leave education at the end of secondary level, compared to 34.8% of those not bullied frequently.[127]

On teaching time

Ofsted's [Below the radar](#) (2014) raised concerns about the frequent loss of time through low-level but persistent disruptive behaviour. Drawing on evidence from 3,000 maintained schools and academies in England in 2014 and two surveys conducted by YouGov for Ofsted, the report stated an equivalent of 38 days of teaching were lost per year due to low-level disruption.[128] Inconsistency in behaviour management was identified in a third of the 95 schools studied by Ofsted, "with long term detrimental consequences of the culture of the schools".[129]

> In 2014, Ofsted estimated that English schools lost an hour of teaching each day due to low-level disruption

Of the teachers surveyed for Ofsted in 2014, 72% of secondary school teachers stated that the disruption had a medium or high impact on children's ability to learn, and 19% said between 5 and 10 minutes was lost from classroom time each time an incident occurred.[130]

"Low level disruption" was defined in the report as including unnecessary talking, disturbing others, fidgeting, making noise to gain attention, answering back, using mobile phones, not having the correct equipment and swinging on chairs.[131]

Educational Performance

The DfE commissioned- academic study, [Impact of pupil behaviour and wellbeing on educational outcomes](#) (2012), found that bullying had a negative impact in the teenage years on GCSE performance:

> pupils who were bullied at age 14 had significantly lower GCSE scores at age 16. Pupils who experienced bullying at age 14 were also much more likely to experience bullying at age 16.[132]

These conclusions have been confirmed in other studies and surveys. A [2010 report](#), commissioned by the Labour Government, also found lower attainment amongst bullied pupils at key stage 4, achieving on

[125] Anti-Bullying Alliance, ['Children call for change as poll reveals they avoid school, social media and social life to escape bullying'](#), 6 November 2019
[126] UNESCO, [Behind the numbers: ending school violence and bullying](#), 2019, p32
[127] [Ibid](#), p32
[128] Ofsted, [Below the radar](#) (2014), pp4-5
[129] [Ibid](#), pp21, 22.
[130] [Ibid](#), pp11, 12
[131] [Ibid](#), p8
[132] DfE, Leslie Morrison Gutman & John Vorhaus, [The impact of pupil behaviour and wellbeing on educational outcomes](#) (2012), p15

average grades 2 levels lower than those who had not been bullied. This relationship was particularly strong when money or possessions had been taken as part of the bullying. Children bullied at secondary school at any time from years 9 to 11 were also significantly less likely to be in full time school in year 12 than those who had not been bullied.[133]

Using data on 7,000 school pupils participating in the Longitudinal Study of Young People in England, aged between 13 and 16 years,[134] a 2019 Lancaster University Study found that if a child has experienced bulling, it reduced the probability of success in age 16 high stakes exam by about 10% and the probability of staying in education past 16 by 10%.[135]

The anti-bullying charity Ditch the Label found a correlation between self-reported grades and bullying in its 2014 survey of children and young people, respondents reporting that the greater their experience of bullying, the lower the average grade in maths, English and science.[136]

Mental Health

The international Health Behaviour in School-aged Children study, using data collected between 2001 and 2014, showed that bullying victims were less likely to perceive their classmates to be kind and helpful compared to non-bullied students (59.8% versus 75.1%). Bullied students were also more likely to report that classmates did not accept them as they are (58.4% compared to 83.0%). As a result, bullied children are three times more likely to report feeling like an outsider at school (42.0% versus 15.0%).[137]

International data collected between 2001 and 2014 showed that 42% of bullied children felt like an outsider at school, compared to 15% of other children

An academic review of 165 articles also concluded there was evidence for an:

> Association between bullying victimisation and mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, poor general health, and suicidal ideation and behaviours. Probable causal associations existed between bullying victimisation and tobacco and illicit drug use…However, the association between bullying victimisation and anxiety was not significant in children under 13 years old.[138]

On girls and young women

In the Girl Guides Girls' attitude survey 2019 of 2,118 girls and young women aged 7 to 21, 79% of respondents had experienced a form of bullying. Of those who had experienced bullying, 66% said it made

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[133] DfE, Characteristics of bullying victims in schools (2010), pp76-77, 79.
[134] Bullying was defined as: name calling, social exclusion, theft of money/possessions, threats and experience of physical violence.
[135] Emma Gorman et al, 'The Casual effects of adolescent school bullying victimisation on later life outcomes', Life Course Centre Working Paper, 2019, p28
[136] Ditch the Label, Annual bulling survey 2014, p19
[137] UNESCO, Behind the numbers: ending school violence, 2019, pp29, 31
[138] Sophie Moore et al, 'Consequences of bullying victimisation in childhood and adolescence: a systematic review and meta-analysis', World Journal of Psychiatry, 7, 2017, pp60-76

them feel less confident, 41% lonely, 38% a desire to avoid school/college, and 20% a loss of desire to go out alone.[139]

The House of Common's Women and Equalities Committee in 2016 heard evidence on the impact of sexual harassment in schools and colleges from several sources in their 2016 investigation. The report stated that experiences of bulling and sexual harassment "normalised" sexual harassment and abuse and "makes it less likely that victims will identify behaviour as abusive and are therefore unlikely to report it".[140]

The committee summarised the evidence presented to it on the impact of sexual harassment and bullying on girls and young women (links added to the original):

> 32.Girlguiding UK's 2015 survey found that three quarters of girls aged between 11 and 21 say anxiety about experiencing sexual harassment negatively affects their lives in some way—from what they wear and where they go to how they feel about their bodies.
>
> 33.It can also have an impact on girls' participation in class, as noted by UK Feminista, who point out that 25% of 11 to 16 year old girls say that concerns over potential sexual harassment make them consider whether or not to speak out in class.
>
> 34.Members of the ATL teaching union reported some of the consequences of sexual harassment that they had observed. These included:
>
>> girls being "even more unwilling to take risks even in academic areas"
>>
>> girls being less likely to participate in activities and "do anything that will make them stand out and attract attention"
>>
>> girls being more self-conscious about appearance "and not appearing too geeky"
>>
>> sexual harassment "taking up a lot of teacher time."
>
> 35.In their research with over 1,000 young people across the UK, arts organisation Tender found sexual harassment and violence had an impact on both genders:
>
>> The impact of sexual violence on victims was described as reducing levels of self-esteem, confidence and ability to concentrate in class; with reference to perpetrators, reduced levels of empathy was observed, and in both boys and girls an increase in the normalising and acceptance of a range of violent behaviours.
>
> 36.Other impacts of sexual harassment at school have been identified as: post-traumatic stress disorder; self-harm; isolation and withdrawal; substance use; sexually transmitted diseases; depression and anxiety; and lack of attendance at school.[141]

The House of Common's Women and Equalities Committee in 2016 said the extent of school bullying and sexual harassment "makes it less likely that victims will identify behaviour as abusive and are therefore unlikely to report it".

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[139] Girl Guides, Girls' attitudes survey 2019, p22
[140] Women and Equalities Committee, Sexual harassment and sexual violence in schools, HC 91, 2016, pp10-11
[141] Ibid, pp12-13

Cyberbullying impacts

An academic review of literature on self-harm, suicidal behaviours and cyberbullying involving children and young people resolved that 28 of the 33 reviewed studies identified some form of negative association between cybervictimisation and suicidal behaviour. To a lesser extent, preparators of cyberbullying were also at risk of suicidal behaviours and thought compared to non-preparators and victims.[142] The review's findings were that cyberbullying victims were 2.35 more likely to self-harm compared to the rest of the population, 2.57 times more likely to attempt suicide, and 2.15 times more likely to have suicidal thoughts.[143]

5.2 Life-time impacts of bullying

In addition to impacting on school life and academic performance, school bullying may also create an impact into adulthood. It is open to dispute how far these impacts are the case for all victims and preparators of bullying, given the complexity of factors impacting on life-outcomes (such as academic performance, parental background, socio-economic status, access to employment), the different forms and intensity of bullying, and that most research on bullying has focused on its immediate effects and how to prevent it.[144]

It should also be noted that in many studies published on the longer-term impacts of bullying, bullying is self-reported, meaning that longer-term studies may be open to miss reporting of victimisation or participation in bullying, in addition to selection bias.[145]

A 2019 study commissioned for NHS Scotland describes the range of impacts being both a victim and perpetrator of bullying can potentially have on later life:

> The effects of bullying can extend into later adolescence and adulthood. Adults who have been bullied in childhood have been consistently found to be at increased risk of anxiety and depression, as well as have lower educational attainment. Children and young people who display bullying behaviours can also be affected. They are at increased risk of depression and suicidal thoughts and behaviour, as well as becoming involved in offending behaviour and dropping out of school. Young people who are both bullied and bully others are at the greatest risk of experiencing negative outcomes in later life. Exposure to violence in childhood has been linked with an increased risk of health-damaging lifestyle behaviours such as smoking and alcohol misuse later on.
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> […]

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142 Ann John et al, 'Self-harm, suicidal behaviours, and cyberbullying in children and young people: systematic review', Journal of Medical Internet Research, 20, 2019, pp1-15
143 Ibid,p9
144 NHS England, 'Childhood bullying "casts shadow" over adult life', 20 August 2013
145 NHS England, 'Bullying may have worse long-term effects than child abuse', 29 April 2015

Experiences of adolescent relationship violence can have negative consequences for mental health and wellbeing and educational attainment, as well as increase the risk of unintended pregnancy.[146]

Public Health England's Framework for young's people health and wellbeing (2015) cites research carried out at the University of Warwick, which argued that childhood bullying can "cast a shadow over the whole life course- leading to serious illness, poor social relationships and problems holding down a regular job" and "highly increases the risk of developing psychiatric problems including depression, anxiety and psychotic experiences in early adulthood."[147]

In its summary conclusions, the Warwick University research project, 'Precursors and consequences of bullying', concluded that

- Being bullied at school increased the risk of self-harming behaviour in early adolescence. We also found that being bullied increased the risk of self-harm indirectly via depression.[148]

- Being bullied is related to psychotic experiences at 12 years of age...we were able to show that both victims and bullies were at increased risk of suffering from psychotic experiences by the age of 18. Even when external factors such as family relationships, pre-existing behaviour problems, children who were involved in bullying behaviour (as victims and/or bullies) were up to four and a half times more likely to have suffered from psychotic experiences by the age of 18.[149]

- Victims of childhood bullying, including those that bullied others (bully-victims), were at increased risk of poor health, wealth, and social-relationship outcomes in adulthood even after controlling for family hardship and childhood psychiatric disorders. On the other hand, pure bullies were not at increased risk of poor outcomes in adulthood once other family and childhood risk factors were taken into account. This study highlights the long-lasting and significant damage that bullying may cause.[150]

The Scottish Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice,[151] Report Bullying behaviours (2019) quoted academic research on the long-term effects on bullying on the perpetrator, which showed:

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[146] Jane White, Addressing school violence and bullying: evidence review for NHS Scotland (2019), pp4-5
[147] Dieter Wolke, 'The long term costs of bullying', April 2014
[148] Summarised in Warwick University, 'Childhood bullying increases the propensity to self-harm during adolescence', April 2013
[149] Summarised in Warwick University, 'Childhood bullying shown to increase likelihood of psychotic experiences in later life', December 2013
[150] Summarised in 'Childhood bullying "damages adult life"', BBC News, 19 August 2013
[151] The Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice is primary funded by the Scottish Government and hosted by the University of Strathclyde.

- Children who were perpetrators of bullying between the ages of 7 and 12 were significantly more likely to have been arrested by the age of 30.[152]

- The odds of frequent bullies having committed more than 5 crimes by the age of 26 [are] almost 7 times that of those not involved in bullying.[153]

- The odds of people who perpetrated bullying going on to offend at a later state was 2.5 times the odds of those people not involved in bullying.[154]

[152] S. J. Gibb, L.J. Horwood, D. M. Ferguson, 'Bullying victimization/perpetration in childhood and later adjustment: findings from a 30 year longitudinal study', Journal of aggression, conflict and peace research, 2011

[153] A. Sourander, D Gyllenberg, A. B. Klomek, 'Association of bullying behaviour at 8 years of age and use of specialised services for psychiatric disorder by 29 years of age', JAMA Psychiatry, 2016, pp159-65

[154] M.M. Ttofi, D.P. Farrington, F Lösel, R. Loeber, 'The predictive efficiency of school bullying versus later offending: a systematic/meta-analytic review of longitudinal studies', Criminal Behaviour Mental Health, 2011, pp80-89

6. Sources of advice & information

Government guidance across the UK recommends that victims of bullying and their parents/guardians should first contact the school at which the child is registered to report instances of bullying, and the police in cases where they believe an offense may have been committed. Guidance also recommends that evidence of bullying is retained and recorded where possible.

UK-wide

- Anti-Bullying Alliance: run programmes to combat specific aspects of bullying behaviour. It is unable to offer individual help and advice, but maintains webpages on anti-bullying tools and research.

- Childline provides general advice on bullying, and under-19s can contact the charity about any topic, on 0800 1111, or log in to send confidential emails or participate in online chat. Childline can also be contacted in Welsh.

- InternetMatters provides advice for parents and teachers on bullying that occurs online through gaming, social media, and instant messaging, with age-specific guides.

- Kidscape provide a parent advice line for parents, carers and family members who are concerned about their child being bulled. They provide an email service and can be contacted on 020 7823 530 (9.30am-2.30pm, Mon-Wed)

- National Bullying Hotline can be contacted via a helpline on 0845 22 55 787 (9am-9pm Mon-Sat) and at admin@nationalbullyinghelpine.co.uk.

- The UK Safer Internet Centre provides information and advice for pupils, teachers, carers and parents on internet safety. Harmful online content can be reported to the centre.

- The UK Council for Internet Safety has published a guide on child safety online

England & Wales

- Family Lives [formerly Parentline] provides general advice and also provides a confidential and free helpline for families in England and Wales on 0808 800 2222, 9am-9pm (Mon-Fri) and 10am-3pm (Sat-Sun), or email support via askus@familylives.org.uk

Wales

- Children's Commissioner for Wales can provide advice to a child or young person, up to the age of 18, or 21 if they have been in care or up to 25 if they have been in care and are in education, and are living in Wales or have been placed in England by a Welsh authority. This can be used to complain or make a representation about a service provider on 01792 765600 or 0808 801 1000 (freephone) and at advice@childcomwales.org.uk.

Scotland

- Respectme is Scotland's anti-bullying service, providing training and guides for both young people and parents/guardians of bullying.

- Children1st provide a parentline service for parents/guardians to ask for support on 08000 28 22 33

- Children and Young People's Commissioner Scotland: can provide advice, information or to raise an issue to a child or young person on 0800 019 1179 (freephone), 0770 233 5720 (text) or inbox@cypcs.org.uk. Adults may use the same services, but a call-back system is used, with the Commission taking brief details in the first instance.

Northern Ireland

- Parentline NI provide advice to parents and carers, and can be contacted on 0808 8020 400 (9am-9pm, Mon-Thu, 9am-5pm, Fri, 9am-1pm, Sat) and parentline@ci-ni.org.uk

- Commissioner for Children and Young People: deals with complaints from children and young people and their parents/carers about the services they receive or the way they are treated. Enquiries can be made via 028 9031 1616, info@niccy.org and the online enquiry form.