Anti-Bullying Alliance: Agreed Policy Recommendations

Last reviewed – October 2023

Introduction

There has been little policy activity on bullying since 2010/11 however the government has invested in a series of grant programmes including a series of anti-bullying grants which currently come to an end by March 2024.

The following policy recommendations have been developed by the Anti-Bullying Alliance through our Advisory Group, which consists of NSPCC, Ditch the Label, NASUWT Teacher's Union, Red Balloon, the National Children's Bureau, BulliesOut, Stranmillis University, Professor Lucy Betts, Childnet, Kidscape, Mencap and Wandsworth Borough Council. They have also been agreed upon among our core members.

These recommendations applying primarily to legislation in England. Recommendations for governments in Northern Ireland and Wales are in development.

If you would like to discuss anything in this document, please contact aba@ncb.org.uk.

	POLICY RECOMMENDATION	WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?
	ANTI-BULLYING TRAINING	
1.	**Initial Teacher Training should include how to prevent and respond to bullying as a core element.**	Currently there are no requirements for trainee teachers to undertake any anti-bullying training at all. Many become teachers without even a basic

		understanding of the definition of bullying let alone the skills to prevent and respond to it.
		Research shows that many teachers do not feel equipped to tackle bullying. 42% of teachers interviewed in one study reported not feeling equipped[1]. In our own research, 40% of bullied young people surveyed said access to a supportive teacher trained in dealing with bullying would have made a difference. Yet, 70% of the 170 teachers surveyed said there was inadequate support for schools working with children with mental health issues and over half would value better training.[2]
2.	**Anti-bullying CPD should be available for all school staff on induction into school and refreshers as needed.**	Research shows that providing training to all school staff including teachers, home to school transport staff, lunchtime supervisors can help to reduce bullying[3].
3.	**Ofsted inspectors should receive anti-bullying training.**	Ofsted inspectors are required to assess how effective a school's anti-bullying measures are, however, they are not provided anti-bullying training to do so.
4.	**Professionals from services that regularly encounter children who may disclose bullying must have anti-bullying information and training available to them including GPs, youth services, CAMHS, social care services, foster carers, care home staff etc.**	Services such as GPs, social workers, Accident and Emergency Departments are often the first professionals to hear from children about bullying and they need to be able to provide good quality information and advice about it.
	ACCOUNTABILITY	
5.	**There should be a senior member of school staff (could be provided through the designated mental health in schools leads) responsible for a whole-school approach to promoting preventing and responding to bullying, in a similar manner to a SENCo, as well as an appointed school**	There is evidence that a 'whole school approach'[4] where the whole school community, including the pupils, teachers, support staff; parents and board of governors, are involved in confronting the issue of bullying is the most effective approach to tackling bullying in school. This needs a coordinated approach by a senior designated member of staff.

[1] Spencer, K. (2014) 'Teachers Need More Anti-Bullying Training', *Sky News*, 14 November
[2] Anti-Bullying Alliance (2015) 'Serious mental health consequences for children and young adults as a result of bullying in schools – children, teachers and GPs call for more support', 15 November
[3] https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/attachments/Literature_Review%203_0_0.pdf
[4] Cambridge Education, 2005

	governor who is responsible for a whole-school approach to bullying.	
6.	**The Government should consider a duty on all schools and academies to record, monitor and review all bullying issues including assessing the impact of the effectiveness of responses.**	No school can have an effective anti-bullying approach without recording levels of bullying and using that data to influence it. A duty to record bullying was recently brought into law in Northern Ireland. This data should be used to understand levels of bullying in schools in England.
7.	**School absence records should record bullying as a reason for children being absent from school. Ofsted inspections should be triggered when these absences are high.**	We know that bullying is a common reason for pupil absence. Absence data collected termly by the Department for Education contains a significant number of 'other unauthorised absence'. ABA believes much of this absence may be due to bullying however we don't have the data[5].
	RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE	
8.	**The government should undertake a national anti-bullying survey, conducted annually, to understand levels of bullying in England. This survey should capture data about:** • **Groups more at risk of experiencing bullying including children with SEND, children in receipt of Free School Meals, those with a visible difference, young carers, care experienced young people and other pupil characteristics** • **Type of bullying (including sexual and sexist and online bullying)** • **Where bullying is taking place (e.g. online, in school and home to school transport)**	The government has not regularly collected data relating to levels of bullying for several years. We urgently need this data to understand bullying levels in England.
9.	**The government should undertake research into what interventions work to reduce bullying and improve how schools respond to bullying both face to face and online.**	We currently do not have a good understanding of what works to tackle bullying in schools in England.

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[5] 16,000 pupils aged 11-15 absent from school each day where the primary reason for them missing school is bullying – NATCEN 2011 http://www.natcen.ac.uk/media/22457/estimating-prevalence-young-people.pdf