



**ANTI-BULLYING
ALLIANCE**

Anti-Bullying Alliance: Agreed policy recommendations

Last reviewed - April 2021



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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 grants to address homophobic, biphobic and transphobic (HBT) bullying and a series of grants principally on single-theme or issue initiatives aimed at young people or teachers (e.g. Diana Award Ambassadors, All Together [SEN/disability] programme) which are valuable and welcome. All these grants have now come to an end and currently there are no plans to extend them or introduce new grants.

In 2021 we are of course undertaking policy activity within the context of the COVID-19 crisis which will impact some of the activity. We should also be aware that there will be a new Office of the Children's Commissioner in Dame Rachel de Souza.

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

Current Government activity relevant to bullying:

- [COVID](#) – return to school and recovery
- [Open consultation on government plans to reform the Mental Health Act](#)
- [Education Committee Inquiry into Home Education](#): NCB provided evidence which included mention of bullying. We are awaiting next steps.
- Implementation of statutory relationships, health and sex education: [read the ABA roundup of the elements pertinent to bullying here.](#)
- [Exclusions review](#) – this is currently paused.
- [Government response to the Online Harms White Paper Consultation](#)
- [Home to School Transport guidance consultation](#)
- [Behaviour Hubs](#) DfE Programme
- [Review of Children's Social Care](#)

COVID and bullying

- Return to school and catch up should not simply focus on academic achievement and behaviour but rebuilding friendships.



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

Children who are especially at risk of bullying

- There are groups that are significantly more likely to experience bullying in their childhoods than other young people. The government in recent years has focused its activity on HBT bullying which has now come to an end and needs to be urgently evaluated and reviewed. We would like to see the government funding anti-bullying activity and focusing on those most at risk including those with SEN/D, looked after children, young carers, those who are or are perceived to be LGBT those on Free School Meals (growing evidence base), sexist bullying, HBT bullying,
- There is growing evidence that children on free school meals are more likely to experience bullying [ABA, 2018]. Little is known in the UK about this issue and we would like to see research commissioned to address this.
- Our literature review showed a real lack of recent research about racist and faith targeted (R&FT) bullying. It also showed that we acknowledge that what research there is shows significant variations in experience of different ethnicities and faiths. Research is needed and especially exploring bullying experiences of mixed race CYP, immigrant and refugee CYP and children who have English as an additional language.

Online bullying

- Introduction of duties for social media companies to safeguard children and young people from harmful content cyberbullying and better-quality reporting.
- Implementation of the new RSHE curriculum needs to ensure that teachers fully understand the online world that young people face today.

Mental health and wellbeing

- Designated leads for mental health in schools and mental health teams should have bullying within their remit.
- GPs and Accident and Emergency Departments are often the first professionals to hear from children about bullying. GPs and Accident and Emergency Departments should have a good understanding of bullying, their safeguarding duties and **school's responsibilities** so they are better able to support victims of bullying. They should be urged to follow safeguarding procedures if a child presents with unexplained injuries caused in school as they would if it was home related.



Accountability

- Ensure that all parts of the school system (including independent schools, Academies and free schools) are bound by the same core legislative framework around bullying. Currently:
 - Maintained schools (S89 School and Inspections Act 2006) says schools
 - Must have measures to prevent all forms of bullying set out within their behaviour policy – some schools do this in a stand-alone anti-bullying policy
 - These measures must be communicated to pupils, staff and parents at least once a year
 - Young people should be involved in writing this
 - Academies, free schools and independent schools (Independent School Standards (England) Regulations 2012) says proprietors are required to have an effective anti-bullying strategy drawn up and implemented.
- Bullying should be publicised by Government as a significant barrier to learning and a potential children protection issue.
- Ofsted inspectors should receive anti-bullying training and as a minimum understand what bullying is.
- Each time a child is taken off school roll due to experiencing bullying (either to home educate or to move to another school) and when a pupil's mental health is so affected they are not able to attend school due to bullying they have experienced there should be greater accountability for the school **they are leaving to help improve that school's anti-bullying practice**. Currently, children are leaving school due to bullying and, often, nothing is done as a result.

Whole school approach

- Initial Teacher Training should include how to prevent and respond to bullying as a core element.
- There should be a senior member of school staff (perhaps through the designated mental health in schools lead) who is responsible for a whole-school approach to promoting preventing and responding to bullying, in a similar vein to a SENCo.
- There should be an appointed school governor who is responsible for a whole-school approach to bullying.

Curriculum

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

Evidence and data

- Introduce a national survey, undertaken annually, which would give an annual view of the wellbeing of pupils, including the prevalence of bullying in English schools. This national survey will give a view of bullying under the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and other characteristics about pupils such as free school meals, young carers and looked after children to give us a national picture of identity targeted bullying.
- Consider a duty on all schools and Academies to record, monitor and review all bullying and harassment issues including assessing the impact of the effectiveness of responses. This should be reported on annually at least at school level to governors and Ofsted would review this data.
- The government should conduct research into the most effective strategies for preventing and responding to bullying.
- Absence data collected termly by the Department for Education contains a large number of 'other unauthorised absence'. ABA believe that a number of these reasons may be for bullying¹. The government should include 'being bullied' as a category of unauthorised absence.

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¹ 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>

