Item No.	Classification Open	Date: 12 September 2012	Meeting Name: Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee
Report title:		Bullying - school and council policy in supporting vulnerable children and reducing abusive and poor peer relations	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
From:		Deputy Director of Children's Services - Education	

RECOMMENDATION

1.   To note the information in this report and appendix, which provide the information requested by the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2.   In March 2007, the then Children's Services and Education Scrutiny sub committee examined the issue of bullying in schools and made a series of recommendations for moving forward. At the time of this investigation, local authorities were working to the government's 'Safe to Learn Guidance'. This included information on how the local authority should support schools.

3.   More widely, supporting vulnerable children is a key priority of the council, as set out in the Children and Young People's Plan and Council Plan. These strategic frameworks commit the local authority and partners to keep children and young people safe, and provide opportunities to enable them to flourish and achieve their full potential.

4.   In March 2012, the Department for Education issued revised guidance for "Preventing and tackling bullying", which shifted responsibilities to schools. The guidance made only one reference to a local authority having a role – that when a bullying incident is so severe it is should be addressed as a child protection issue under Children Act 1989 statutory duties.

5.   The guidance describes bullying as:
     "Bullying is behavior 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 or the internet), and is often motivated by prejudice against particular groups, for example on grounds of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, or because a child is adopted or has caring responsibilities. It might be motivated by actual differences between children, or perceived

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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."

6. The guidance makes special reference to the rise of the concept of "cyber-bullying":

    "The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for 'virtual' bullying, which can occur in or outside school. Cyber-bullying is a different form of bullying and can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, and more accessories as people forward on content at a click."

7. The wider search powers included in the Education Act 2011 give teachers stronger powers to tackle cyber-bullying by providing a specific power to search for and, if necessary, delete inappropriate images (or files) on electronic devices, including mobile phones.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

8. The following table summaries the progress that has been made against the March 2007 recommendations:

Recommendation	Response
We recommend that a council officer be identified and tasked with the responsibility of coordinating termly meetings between police beat officers, safer neighbourhood teams, secondary schools and bus and train operators to share information and coordinate initiatives aimed at ensuring that the journey to and from school is safe.	The Safer Schools Steering Group which meets half-termly to discuss these issues. The nucleus group consists of the following roles: Partnership and Criminal Justice Police Superintendent Safer Neighbourhood Chief Inspector Southwark H/Ts Representative YOS Rep Southwark Community Safety Police Sergeant, Youth Engagement Team Southwark early Help Team
We recommend the council takes active steps to facilitate the sharing of information about bullying strategies amongst schools and other key agencies. This should include: • organising a two yearly bullying conference • collating school anti-bullying policies and circulating good practice examples to head teachers	An Anti-bullying toolkit was produced for schools and the youth services. Schools were supported to take part in national anti-bullying week each November Case studies on activities were shared with schools

and chairs of governors as an aid to other schools when reviewing their anti-bullying policies • becoming involved with the Anti-Bullying Alliance.	
We recommend the council coordinates a mediation service on a trial basis to resolve any disputes between parents and schools, including disputes that relate to incidents of bullying. We think that schools should pay for this service on a case-by-case basis, but the council should organise the provision.	Officers worked with the Southwark Mediation Service (SMS) to develop resources for schools. SMS have provided training for peer mentors in many of our schools.
We have also identified two specific areas we think officers need to research further and report back to executive on: We recommend officers look into whether schools want more training around bullying. If so, the LEA should support this either by actively promoting the council and Southwark-wide services available, or by directly organising training days.	The PSHE team arranged regular training events for all schools and bespoke training to individual schools - plus multi agency training for our partner organisations
We recommend that executive tasks an officer to look into what extent gambling is a problem amongst children and young people in Southwark.	Officers found no evidence that that gambling was a particular problem in Southwark schools. As a precautionary measure all secondary schools were provided with a nationally developed resource to help schools recognise and deal with any issues related to gambling.

9. Under legislation introduced by the current government many statutory duties have passed from the local authority to schools. . This coupled with budget cuts have reduced the level of universal support on offer to schools.

10. Evidence from Ofsted suggests that schools are however now well equipped to deal with these issues and have robust processes in place to protect young people.

11. In January 2012 the Ofsted framework for the inspection of schools changed to include a requirement to investigate bullying in schools.

12. Just under a third of Southwark schools have been reported on under the arrangements of the current Ofsted framework since January 2012. Inspectors judged that in those schools visited:

- Pupils/students' awareness of types of bullying, including cyber-bullying and racist and homophobic abuse, was well developed and that they knew how to keep themselves safe.
- In over 70% bullying is very rare and pupils/students and the wider school community have confidence that incidents are resolved effectively and quickly.
- In 29% pupils/students reported that they had not experienced bullying and that the community did not tolerate it any form

13. Until September 2011 the local authority eLearning team provided schools with support in developing on line safety policies and procedures. The London grid for Learning continues to provide support for all schools in tackling these issues. Many of our schools have developed effective eSafety policies. www.lgfl.net/esafety

14. The recent triennial inspection of safeguarding and looked after children services by Ofsted also praised the experience and expertise of schools and the local authority in supporting vulnerable children and young people. Inspectors highlighted work to counter cyber-bullying, as well as the work of the youth offending team around restorative justice.

15. Both the Connexions Team and the Early Help team work directly with young people in schools who are either disengaged from learning or have poor attendance. All professionals are trained to spot when this disengagement is the result of bullying and are experienced at working with the host institution to deal with the root causes.

16. The local safeguarding children board, alongside the children's trust, provides multi-agency leadership across safeguarding issues, including bullying. This includes, for example, child sexual exploitation, which the safeguarding board's practice, development and training sub-group is currently investigating. It is planned that this issue will be a focal point of the safeguarding board's annual conference in November.

APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Preventing and tackling bullying

AUDIT TRAIL

Lead Officer	Merril Haeusler, Deputy Director Children's Services
Report Author	Darren Coghlan, Head of Specialist Education Services
Version	Final

Dated	22 August 2012	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	**Comments Sought**	**Comments included**
Director of Legal Services	No	No
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	No	No
Cabinet Member	No	No
Date final report sent to Scrutiny Team		4 September 2012