

Item No. 10.	Classification: Open	Date: 18 March 2014	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-committee's Review of Bullying	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Dora Dixon Fyle, Children's Services	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR DORA DIXON-FYLE, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

The service seeks and welcomes feedback which enables it to improve the education and well-being of the children and young people of Southwark, and we continue to identify areas for improvement. The education and children's services scrutiny sub-committee's report and recommendations are received in this context.

The recommendations will support the service and ensure that children and young people in Southwark receive the support and information they may need to feel safe from bullying or bullying related situations that affect their safety and well being.

Of the 16 recommendations of the sub-committee we are already performing 12 as part of our commitment to reducing incidences of bullying behaviour and promoting the well being of children and young people so that they can learn in safe environments. Of the 4 remaining the response to the recommendations in the main report detail how these will be progressed.

Children's Services recognise the paramount importance of the safety and well being of children and young people and will continue to ensure that our key partners continue to promote strategies that combat bullying behaviours.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Cabinet agree the proposed responses to the recommendations of the Education and Children's Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee's into the Review of Bullying.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Education and Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee

2. In December 2013, the Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub Committee provided its report on the issue of bullying in schools and made a series of recommendations for moving forward. Proposed responses to these recommendations are set out below.
3. Supporting vulnerable children is a key priority of the Council as set out in the Children and Young Peoples Plan. This and other 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 should be addressed as a child protection issue under Children Act 1989 statutory duties.
5. The guidance describes bullying as “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 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 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 judgments about each specific case.”
6. The guidance makes special reference to the use 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.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Recommendations from the Education and Children’s Services Scrutiny Sub-Committee and proposed cabinet response

Recommendation 1

7. That Cabinet considers nominating the cabinet member for children and young people to take overall responsibility for implementing the council’s work to address bullying.

Response

8. The portfolio for the cabinet member for children and young people includes the responsibility for safeguarding and welfare, an aspect of which is to support schools to implement anti bullying strategies and ethos. Each school’s Behaviour Policy addresses all aspects of bullying; Ofsted makes judgments about the impact of the school’s policy and procedures. The Local Authority’s School Improvement Team support and challenge (when necessary) the school’s procedure and regular safeguarding checks and reviews are a feature of the LA’s monitoring of schools.

Recommendation 2

9. That cabinet considers nominating a senior officer to lead on delivery of this work.

Response

10. The responsibility for securing a safe and supportive learning environment rests with schools. The safety and well being of children and young people is a day to day responsibility of every school, judged through Ofsted inspections and monitored through the Standards and School Improvement Team. Safeguarding audits and Ofsted inspections ensure that policy and procedure is having an impact. Officers within the School Improvement Team and Early help (comprising social and mental health workers) have the monitoring and quality assurance responsibility.

Recommendation 3

11. That information be cascaded to schools on the work of Kidscape and the Cybersmile Foundation on tackling bullying and cyber bullying.

Response

12. This will be done through the usual communication channel by the Director of Education to schools. A recent Professional Development and Training programme for schools delivered by the School Improvement Team, conducted specific sessions on Kidscape and Cyber bullying. Officers work with the Southwark mediation service to develop resources for schools.

Recommendation 4

13. That training be promoted that brings together teachers, young people and their families to enhance communication and knowledge in relation to online and media and cyber bullying.

Response

14. Training programmes are in place to enhance best practice strategies to reduce instances of bullying. Recently schools attended an Anti Bullying Conference, covering such topics as cyber-bullying, developing anti bullying alliances, anti homophobic bullying, and expectation of Ofsted (and the Local Authority) in the context of pupil welfare. Information about resources to tackle bullying are cascaded to schools and shared between them where good practice is recognised. An anti-bullying tool kit produced by the Local Authority is a valued resource in schools. Schools are supported to take part in national anti bullying week each November.

Recommendation 5

15. That initiatives such as Kindness Weeks and cyber bullying awareness days be encouraged, which promotes the values of care and kindness. Initiatives such as these can also help develop emotional intelligence and an awareness of what constitutes acceptable behaviour online.

Response

16. This initiative is the responsibility of schools however the council will encourage schools, through Head Teacher meetings and other avenues, to include this alongside other activities which schools currently implement.

Recommendation 6

17. That the use of role play in schools be encouraged in order to develop emotional literacy

Response

18. This activity is already a key strategy for schools.

Recommendation 7

19. That schemes be promoted that support bullied children to build self esteem and develop assertiveness skills

Response

20. Schools have in place a range of strategies to support children and young people who may be the victim of bullying. At the heart of a school's Behaviour Policy is the development of self esteem, confidence and well being in pupils. School Councils regularly review the impact of behaviour Policies and the reduction of bullying is a key aspect of their agenda. Many schools engage the resources and expertise of agencies such as Place to B. The Early Help Team with its Education Welfare Officers and Family Liaison Officers support pupils and families where incidents of bullying have occurred.

Recommendation 8

21. That counselling services such as Place2Be be supported

Response

22. Place2Be currently operates in many Southwark schools. Council will promote this, and other similar organisations to schools.

Recommendation 9

23. That school children be empowered to raise issues and the box scheme and other schemes be extended so that children, young people and the public can raise concerns easily, particularly around school bus routes.

Response

24. Officers will discuss with schools the importance of pupils raising issues and having a voice. All schools have a school council comprising pupils. This avenue is one which pupils use frequently to raise issues of concern or suggestions for improvements. Many schools use the box system. During inspections Ofsted look for evidence of pupil voice and strategies in schools for pupils to feel comfortable in raising issues. To date, no school has been found to be inadequate in this area and of the 55 schools inspected under the new framework of September 2012, 52 were judged good or outstanding.

Recommendation 10

25. That placing wardens and transport police on problematic bus routes such as the 381 be considered.

Response

26. The Council, MPS Southwark and Transport Police undertake regular reviews of intelligence in relation to bus routes and bus stops where there are emerging issues of crime and anti social behaviour. The approach is to maximize the resources that are available, providing a wardens and local policing teams presence in the vicinity of schools and local bus stops at the end of each day and using Transport police and revenues officers on the bus routes. This approach helps to maximize the coverage and key routes and locations can be reviewed through our regular partnership tasking meetings which take place every fortnight.

Recommendation 11

27. That training to teachers be promoted on bullying and involvement with gangs/serious offending so that they are more able to work effectively with young people at risk. That it can be ensured that training is done by people who are credible and knowledgeable.

Response

28. The Council, through its Youth Offending Service (YOS) and community safety specialist gangs team are a resource which the schools may draw upon for training and support. These involve a range of voluntary and community organizations which specialise in the area.
29. Home office research into educational programmes to address gangs and gang violence highlighted that there is limited evidence that programmes in schools are effective. The report highlights that "Mentoring, anti-bullying programmes, improving social skills, involving parents and cognitive behavioural therapy all have good evidence of success when applied appropriately". Testimonies by ex gang members, for example, have less evidence of success and can, in some circumstances have a negative outcome. (Addressing youth violence and gangs – Practical advice for schools and colleges; Home Office 2013)

Recommendation 12

30. That a forum be provided for teachers to share concerns and information on young people involved, or at risk of involvement with gangs/serious offending

Response

31. YOS provides information, advice and support to teaching staff and others through its monthly Gangs Forum.
32. This forum may be used by teachers and others to discuss how we can work collaboratively to improve the sharing of information and deliver interventions, whilst recognizing that gangs violence and influences has positively decreased over the last two years.

Recommendation 13

33. That encouragement and support be provided for schools to develop Gang Prevention Strategies.

Response

34. It is important to note that the profile of gangs and gang affiliation has significantly changed in Southwark over the past two years. The council through the specialist services in community safety, youth offending team and youth service will continue to provide support for schools with a focus on developing approaches that enable schools to access those specialist services and established multi agency responses. There is evidence that where this approach has taken place before, it has proven to be successful and draws on the skills of the school, council and voluntary organisations who can work collaboratively and targeted towards those most affected by the influences of gang violence.

Recommendation 14

35. That groups such as Safe N Sound, Empowering People for Excellence and CitySafe be invited to join the Safer Schools Steering group.

Response

36. The Safer schools Steering group has been established to review issues in and around the school environment. It includes discussions of specific concerns or emerging issues which are confidential in their nature. As such it would not be appropriate to involve external organisations at this time.

Recommendation 15

37. That more accessible information be provided on local LGBT networks for young people and consideration be given to developing a network for Southwark young people, possibly with the support of Southwark's LGBT forum.

Response

38. Council provides space and other opportunity for Southwark's LGBT forum, which is attended by young people. The forum meets regularly and is the vehicle through which suggestions and recommendations are made. This recommendation will be put to the forum by the adult by the Cabinet Member at one of their regular meetings.

Recommendation 16

39. That Speaker Box, the Looked After Children Panel, the Safeguarding Children Board and the Corporate Parenting Committee be consulted on anti bullying work with children receiving care.

Response

40. The groups above already consider matters in relation to bullying at regular intervals. Coincidentally the Speaker Box Children in Care Council, plan to feature an article about bullying in their Speaker Box Magazine, spring edition.

Policy implications

41. There are no policy implications.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Bullying - School and Council Policy to Support Vulnerable Children and to Reduce Poor and Abusive Peer Relations (Education, Children's Services and Leisure Scrutiny Sub-Committee) – Report to Cabinet 10 December 2013 (Item 8)	Council Offices 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Everton Roberts 020 7525 7221
Link http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=4553&Ver=4		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

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