



Merton Anti Bullying Strategy 2014 – 2016

In Merton, children and young people have

- A right to be treated with dignity and respect
- A right to live in an atmosphere free from victimisation, discrimination, harassment and any other form of bullying behaviours
- A responsibility to promote care, respect and co-operation in their relationships

Working together, Merton Children School's and Families' Division and partner agencies have developed this strategy which sets out our shared commitment and action to address bullying. It also identifies that there are a number of groups that are more likely to be bullied related to: gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and looked after children. This strategy includes actions to address this.

Definition of bullying

- **Bullying behaviour** is usually **repeated over time**, and physically or emotionally hurts another individual or group.
- **Bullying** is behaviour that is **intentional** and **usually repeated over time** that physically or emotionally hurts another individual or group. One person or a group can bully others.

Aim of the strategy

The aim of The Antibullying Strategy is to continue to build on good practice locally and nationally. The strategy will ensure that there is data on bullying, improve policy and practice in preventing bullying and dealing with incidents and encourage children and young people to get along together. Children and Young People are at the heart of these initiatives.

Why do we need to address bullying?

We need to address Bullying because our Young People tell us it's a concern for them. Historically the Merton Young Residents Survey has reported higher than the London Average with the satisfaction of Merton young people around bullying. In 2012 bullying was a source of concern for young people, seeing an increase in the level of concern since 2011. As a result, in autumn 2012 the Antibullying and E-

safety Operational Group was set up to review and implement the Antibullying action plan. This was in response to the concerns raised in the Young Residents Survey and the restructure of services and changes to funding both of which had significant impact on the delivery of the action plan.

Bullying is more often linked to issues related to gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and looked after children. Research shows that these groups are more likely to be bullied. This is unacceptable.

What harm does bullying do?

A child or young person who is being bullied may come to believe they deserve it. They can feel isolated, anxious and angry. Bullying can lead to depression, self-injury and eating problems. If the bullying is happening at school they may make excuses so they don't have to go to school, or get so anxious they cannot go in. This can affect their school work, friendships, and even their future prospects.

Being bullied regularly can be associated with problems later on in life as well. Some adults who were bullied when they were young can suffer from depression, anger problems and low self-esteem. [Young Minds 2014](#)

What do we know about bullying?

National Data

- 38% of young people have been affected by cyber-bullying.
- 31,599 children called ChildLine in 2011/12 about bullying

[NSPCC collated statistics on bullying March 2013](#)

- Almost half (46%) of children and young people say they have been bullied at school at some point in their lives.
- 38% of disabled children worried about being bullied.
- 18% of children and young people who worried about bullying said they would not talk to their parents about it.

From: [Chamberlain, Tamsin, George, Nalia, Golden, Sarah, Walker, Fiona and Benton, Tom \(2010\)](#)

- Over half (55%) of lesbian, gay and bisexual young people have experienced homophobic bullying at school.

From: [Guasp, April \(2012\) The school report: the experiences of young gay people in Britain's schools \(PDF\). London: Stonewall.](#)

- Between 8% and 34% of children and young people in the UK have been cyberbullied, and girls are twice as likely to experience persistent cyberbullying than boys.

From: Department for Education (2011) [The protection of children online: a brief scoping review to identify vulnerable groups \(PDF\)](#). London: Department for Education.

- A survey of pupils in England estimates that 16,493 young people aged 11-15 (4.4%) are frequently absent from state school or home educated because of bullying.

From: Red Balloon (2011) [Estimating the prevalence of young people absent from school due to bullying \(PDF\)](#). London: Red Balloon.

Local Data

While data from young people in Merton does not reflect the high percentages in national data we recognise that national issues are reflected in the local picture.

The Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children in January 2012 rated work around Antbullying as 'good' and commented...

'The prevention of bullying in schools and other settings for learning and leisure is high profile and shows considerable success. The comprehensive anti-bullying strategy focuses strongly on prevention. Excellent data and rapid sharing of information between services and partners identify groups and individuals vulnerable to bullying. Good initiatives in the community include strong partnerships with the Police in the prevention of bullying on public transport when travelling to and from school.'

Merton Young Residents reported that, although bullying remains a key concern for them the levels of concern fell in 2013.

In summer 2013, ten focus groups of Merton children and young people were asked a range of questions about bullying. These included young people from primary, secondary and special schools, young carers and those who were Looked After.

What did young people tell us?

- that the overwhelming majority of young people felt safe, particularly in school
- that sometimes bullying did happen but most often it was dealt with well.
- Online bullying can be an issue for secondary school students. It mostly happens outside school but it impacts on relationships in school.

They also said that things could be done to ensure things were even better and this included...

- Worry boxes in all schools
- Peer mentors in every school

- Interactive activities to help everyone understand how to address bullying, including role play/ /drama /assertiveness training
- More adults to talk to
- Training for adults in dealing with issues at lunchtime
- Support and clear consequences for those who bully
- Work in lessons on how to get on with others

These and other issues are addressed in the current Antibullying action plan

The Virtual School consultation questionnaire with Looked After Children in summer 2013 found that children and young people overall felt safe at home and school.

Ofsted judge schools provision for and response to bullying through the Behaviour and Safety Judgement .Currently,

- 96% Merton primary schools are rated good or better for Behaviour and Safety. 3% above the national average
- 86% of Merton secondary schools are rated good or better for Behaviour and Safety, a 15 % improvement. 1% above the national average

In the Stonewall Equality Index 2013, Merton's work to challenge homophobia in schools showed a 14% improvement and Merton was one of the most improved LA's

Strategic Priorities

This strategy will work to four priorities and consider the particular needs of those groups who are more likely to be bullied. (Gender, disability, race, religion, sexual orientation and Looked After Children)

These priorities are;

- Information gathering and the use of data
- Embedding good practice in the schools, and the community
- Involving Children and Young People
- Reinforcing and Maintaining Partnerships (including parents)

Information gathering and the use of data

What's working well?

There is good custom and practice around information sharing between schools, and partner agencies to ensure Children and Young People stay safe.

The Merton Young Residents Survey runs annually and provides evidence around bullying measured London wide. The Antibullying and e-safety Operational Group has agreed to run the Antibullying focus group exercise annually as long as resources allow. This provides evidence at a school level and from identified vulnerable groups. The Virtual School consultation questionnaire with Looked After Children will continue to be run annually.

The Staff at the adventure playground based at The Intergenerational Centre have a daily debrief where issues of bullying can be highlighted and addressed. This practice is mirrored at Merton Youth Clubs

Embedding good practice in the schools, and the community

What's working well?

S.E.A.L. (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) continues to be used in Merton Schools. Schools use the materials in a range of ways often linking with their PSHE or Citizenship curriculum. Key aspects of the programme focus on getting along. There are discrete units on Antbullying, often used to support work during Antbullying Week, a national event, every year in November. The SEAL, Emotional Health and Wellbeing Network will continue to be funded by the VBS and led by schools.

One strategy that young people report works is peer mentoring. In 2013 'Youth That Care' students at Ricards Lodge secondary school secured funding from the Merton Youth Council to set up a training programme for primary school students in peer mentoring. Currently three schools who have taken up the offer.

Schools purchase support from a variety of teams and agencies that are able to offer additional support to children who find relationships difficult.

In 2012 – 2013

- The overwhelming majority of Merton schools purchase a service from the Language Behaviour and Learning Team
- 42% of mainstream schools fund Nurture provision
- 48% of primary schools and 25% of secondary schools buy into the Merton TAMHS Service
- 41% of all schools have an Emotional Literacy Support Assistant (E.L.S.A.) This is an initiative is supported by Merton Educational Psychology Service
- 37% of primary schools purchase a Home School Link Service from JIGSAW4U

The local authority has funded drama groups to address issues around safe relationships for young people in secondary schools and youth settings. Secondary schools have a PSHE module on healthy relationships, written by teachers from Merton schools. This module looks at appropriate touching and sexting.

Curriculum delivery in schools looks at difference. Schools have been offered central and bespoke training around responding to racist and homophobic language.

Addressing children's concerns about being bullied as they move to secondary school is a key feature of transition work. Secondary schools work closely with their feeder primary schools to allay fears. Some primary schools will spot purchase project work for their more vulnerable children in Yr 6 from the Language Behaviour and Learning Team. The Choices Advisor based in Education Welfare, supports and

advises parents as their children move from primary to secondary school. Many parents are concerned about bullying at this time. The advisor aims to allay their fears, talking broadly about the practice of schools around bullying. They mention the buddy or peer mentoring systems many school have in place to support Yr 7 students and highlight the fact that all school should have an antibullying policy

Cyberbullying is a concern for parents, schools and some young people. The LA has promoted the SMART CREW website for primary school pupils. This programme helps primary pupils to 'Stay Safe in Cyberspace'. The e-safety strategy has been reviewed and launched. Youth Workers and Newly Qualified Teachers and Designated Teachers for Child Protection have been offered on line, e-safety training.

There is annual training for school governors on Antibullying. This includes suggestions for questions to ask if you're to get the current picture of bullying in school, particularly in relation to cyber bullying and homophobic bullying. Alongside this is advice around proactive and preventative strategies and what to do if a child reports a bullying incident.

The overwhelming majority of Merton secondary schools belong to the Merton Safer Schools Partnerships. Safer Schools police officers are able to offer schools an early response to incidents and at the same time offering a level of safety and security. There are a range of LA funded and commissioned services that provide a range of opportunities for children and young people to get along outside school. All services are encouraged to complete the London Ambition Quality Kite Mark which covers a range of policies and procedures required including safeguarding. There are expectations that youngsters work within clear boundaries of behaviour and that prejudiced behaviour is challenged.

Outside school, the Junior Neighbourhood Warden Watch is run by Neighbourhood Watch and Merton Priory Homes wardens

Involving Children and Young People

What's working well?

The participation of children and young people in the design and delivery of children's services is a high priority.

Through a number of children and young people's groups a 'Participation Promise' has been developed. The key elements of the promise are to enable children and young people to:

- be listened to
- take responsibility
- be involved in making choices and decisions
- be involved in how we spend money for children's services

Most schools use a range of surveys that allow young peoples and parent's voices to be heard around antibullying.

Merton Primary Schools Council has been re-established, funded by the VBS and is being led by a senior leader in school.

Officers working on the e-safety strategy have met with The Merton Primary Schools Council to hear their views.

Young Advisors are members of the Antibullying and E-safety Operational Group.

Merton Youth Service has a daily debrief in all their settings. In addition, anti-bullying projects, awareness raising and debates take place in youth projects through the year.

Reinforcing and Maintaining Partnerships (including parents)

What's working well?

The Merton Antibullying and E-safety Operational Group represents a wide range of agencies including

- Merton School Improvement Team Equalities Advisor
- Schools
- Virtual Behaviour Service
- SSMIST
- Merton Safeguarding Children Team
- Police
- Safer Transport Team
- Young Carers
- Education Welfare
- Young Advisors

Multiagency Targeted Youth Support Panels in Secondary Schools focus on the most vulnerable children in schools. If bullying is identified as an issue, strategies will be put in place to address these whether they are in or out of school or both. The Virtual Behaviour Service addresses issues around Antbullying at a strategic level via training and consultation and at a casework level through the YIP panel and referrals to the casework manager. The YIP casework panel picks up bullying related issues around a referred individual and can offer advice to schools.

The VBS offer training for foster carers around bullying

There is a standing agenda item on Healthy Relationships at the quarterly Promote and Protecting Young People – Strategic Group.

Identifying and monitoring targets.

There are no national targets around bullying.

Merton targets

- Young Residents Survey shows a fall in young people's concern around bullying
- An increase in the % of schools who have 'good' OFSTED grades for 'Behaviour and Safety'

This groups reports annually to The Merton Safeguarding Children's Board.

The strategy action plan is monitored termly by the Behaviour, Attendance and Safety Group

Related documents

- Antibullying Action Plan 2014 - 2016
- Template for Antibullying policies for schools and other settings
- Sources of advice and support