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Children in Wales
Plant yng Nghymru



Cymru Ifanc
Young Wales

25th September 2019

Dear Janet

re: Petition P-05-862 Tackling School Bullying

Thank you for writing to me regarding the petition above. Bullying is a very important matter, which sadly continues in many schools up until the present day despite it having been known about for many many years and numerous attempts made to reduce the number of incidents in schools. Cyber bullying has increased the problem considerably as has the issue of children from other countries being targeted more in the past couple of years. All bullying adversely affects the emotional and sometimes physical well-being of children.

However across Wales there is a variety of practice in schools ranging from excellent to very poor – as reported by children and young people themselves. Reasons for this vary. However in schools where the culture of the whole school is one of mutual respect, openness and transparency between staff, children and parents, prevention of bullying behaviours is more likely.

Recognising the importance of this issue to children and young people, in 2017 we undertook work both directly with children and young people through our 'Young Wales' programme as well as practitioners and created a Young Wales Anti bullying Network, organised events, surveys and campaigns such as :

#Bullying-MaketheChange;

We are young people of the Young Wales Anti Bullying Network -We say #sayno #bullyingmustgo

In 2018 we published a Report entitled Anti Bullying and School Attendance based on this work (report attached). Below are the key recommendations made by the children and young people which they hoped would be included in the revised guidance. A Welsh Government official attended these events and the recommendations from all of the work were forwarded to Welsh Government.

The recommendations from the children and young people for Welsh Government's re developed **Respecting Others – Anti Bullying Guidance** included:

1. Schools should have a safe room for pupils to use following an incident of bullying, as a space to calm down and gather their composure. The safe room could also be used as a space to discuss issues with a teacher.

2. There should be independent adults who are able to look at reports of bullying, speak to young people and make recommendations for action.
3. Schools should be able to provide a listening service for pupils to access confidentially.
4. Policies must have minimum standards to be able to monitor delivery. Young people report that there is significant variations in how schools respond to and address incidents of bullying. From young people's perspective some schools do address bullying incidents well, while others do not. Standards would support a more consistent response for young people.
5. Teachers and other adults in the school need to be held accountable. There should be a process for teachers and support staff to follow, if bullying is reported, so that the victim is aware of the process to be followed and feedback to the victim is compulsory.
6. Young people reporting bullying should be given a named person as their link and a date by which they will receive some feedback. This should apply whether the school or an independent person is investigating the complaint.
7. Pupils need to be told about and have access to their schools anti-bullying policy. Many young people do not know they have the right to see the school's anti-bullying procedures. Pupils should be included in revising and updating policies.
8. Young people, who are asked to write down the details of the incident, want to know what will happen to their information, who will see it and where will it be held. Where bullying incidents are written up, these should be viewed and given the status of a victim statement or impact statement. In discussion with young people an example was shared, where a pupil reported an incident to a teacher, who made a note of the pupil's concern, but at the end of the interview the information was thrown in the waste paper bin.
9. Teachers should have training on how to manage incidents of bullying, in line with the schools' policy, to ensure effective implantation. Updated training should be offered on a regular basis and when policies are revised.
10. Young people want bullying to be seen as a safeguarding issue, and included in the school's safeguarding policies.
11. Young People remain very concerned that bullying is not seen as a hate crime.
12. Schools and local communities should agree how to manage incidents that happen outside the school grounds. Young people shared examples of where an incident less than ten yards from the school gate is seen as a community incident, while other schools will work with local community services to jointly address the issue.

Recording

Children in Wales believes that the Welsh Government should place a statutory duty on schools to record all incidences and types of reported bullying. Children and young people should inform what is felt by them to be bullying. They should also be the main evaluators of successful anti bullying policies and there should be the option of anonymity as there are many instances where children prefer not to be identified.

As recording incidents is optional for schools, a stronger approach must be taken so children are better protected. However attention should also be paid to exactly how recording systems are implemented. We know of instances where a child reports bullying, the school records the incident/incidences, but then there is a gap of several months before the same child is bullied again by the same individual and the recording system regards it as a first incident. This has resulted in children no longer reporting incidences.

Whole School Approach to children's emotional well-being

Children need to feel that they are believed and that teachers will act to protect them. The more open the culture of the school regarding valuing the views of children and young people, the more likely children are to feel able to tell teachers what is actually happening to them in the knowledge that something will be done to sort it out. An effective use of recording means that better preventative work can be done in the school as a whole because bullying behaviour may also indicate an underlying problem for the child who bullies such as family problems as well. The response to reports of bullying would therefore be more effectively dealt with in this context. Schools which have developed a strong ethos of children's rights within their staff, children and parents are well placed to succeed in combatting bullying. The well-being stream in the new Curriculum should be used as an opportunity to promote this whole school approach.

Conclusion

A statutory requirement for recording of incidences of bullying, combined with leadership from Welsh Government to promote the ethos of children's rights in schools and the delivery of a whole school approach to emotional well-being would go far to reduce bullying behaviour.

Yours sincerely



Catriona Williams OBE
Chief Executive

