



SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REPORT

Date Written	12 th January 2021
Report Author	Sarah Bowen
Service Area	Learning
Committee Date	8 th February 2021

To: Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen

Wellbeing: Anti-Bullying

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides Scrutiny members with an update on the work being done to tackle issues around bullying across the County Borough.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The contents of this report are discussed and noted.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Members will be aware that a guidance document for how schools promote Anti-bullying has been in existence in Merthyr Tydfil since 2009. Following advice from Welsh Government this guidance was updated in August 2020, presented to Council on 9th September 2020 and uploaded to the Council website as directed by Welsh Government. The guidance document emphasises the importance, and benefits, of having high standards of anti-bullying practice and ethos, that are clearly understood by all.
- 3.2 Challenging any form of bullying across Merthyr Tydfil is a key priority for us. Schools are uniquely placed to enable our learners to develop as ethical, healthy, confident and ambitious well skilled individuals, which is at the heart of the new curriculum. Schools will continue to challenge bullying holistically, by addressing the root causes of unacceptable behaviour and by creating an inclusive environment of mutual respect. The New Curriculum for Wales, due to be implemented from September 2022, has wellbeing at its heart, to enable learners to feel safe and ready to learn.

- 3.3 Children and young people need to be taught both at home and at school about having respectful relationships. The statutory guidance has been produced to provide advice to enable the values of respect, tolerance and kindness to be embedded in our schools and across the wider community.

4.0 WHERE WE WERE

- 4.1 The data shows that bullying incidents across our schools peaked in 2017/18, but since then has decreased. Physical and verbal continue to be the most used types of bullying, while those for cyberbullying have decreased significantly since 2017/18. Racial incidents have fluctuated since 2017/18, having increased in 2019/20. This could be a reflection on events that have taken place across the world over the last few years. Incidents around gender have also become more prevalent – see Appendix 1.
- 4.2 Many schools engaged with the Rights Respecting Schools Agenda with St Mary's RC Primary schools being the first school to achieve the Gold Award in 2018.
- 4.3 The LA promote activities during National Anti-Bullying week each year. This week usually coincides with the regions safeguarding week and the annual student conference will always have some activity linked to anti-bullying. Elected members have also participated in promoting the key messages around anti-bullying.

5.0 WHERE WE ARE NOW

- 5.1 Summary of key messages as reported to the local authority in 2019/20 – Appendix 1.
- There has been an increase in the number of reported incidents since 2011/12.
 - The number of racial incidents remains low and has reduced since 2011/12.
 - There was a spike in incidents, including those of a racial nature in 2017/18, but since then these have decreased.
 - There has been an increase in the number of incidents reported for physical, gender and cyber-bullying.
- 5.2 Summary of key messages as reported by secondary pupils in three out of four mainstream schools in the School Health Research Network 2019/20.
- 12% of students have taken part in bullying another student(s) at school in the past couple of months; below the National Average which was 15% and a reduction on last local authority report (2017/18) 14%.
 - 31% of students have been bullied at school in the past couple of months: below the National Average which was 33% and a reduction on last local authority report (2017/18) 35%.
- 5.3 Local authority officers work closely with schools to ensure that timely and relevant information is shared to enable improved resilience and tolerance, and ultimately to reduce the number of bullying incidents. This includes information on training opportunities and pupil workshops (e.g., on Transgender, Social Emotional Aspects of Learning, online safety).

- 5.4 Caedraw, Cyfarthfa Park, Heolgerrig, Twynirodyn and Coed Y Dderwen Primary Schools, the PRU and Bishop Hedley High School are part of the WLGA Hate Crime in Schools Project. The project is funded through the Welsh Government European Transition Fund and is part of a suite of additional support being provided over the coming months to help to prevent incidences and mitigate the effects of hate crime in Wales. This project will provide workshops for pupils delivered by Show Racism the Red Card and training for staff by Sapere. The delivery date has had to be postponed due to COVID 19, but the funding remains in place for this project and will be delivered this calendar year.
- 5.5 During Anti-bullying week in 2020 the annual Student Conference was held with a variety of workshops being delivered online. 96 pupils from nine primary schools and Greenfield Special School attended ten workshops over the week. Topics covered resilience, staying physically and mentally well, hate crime and bullying. The company 'Bullies Out' delivered a workshop called "The Jar of Kindness" and the Healthy Schools Partnership worked with pupils to update the local authority child-friendly anti-policies and learn how anti-bullying messages are linked to children's rights.
- 5.6 A Wellbeing curriculum was produced ready for September 2020 for schools with colleagues from Central South Consortium (CSC) and the local authority, as well as some primary Headteachers. The focus of this is on reconnection, recovery and resilience in light of the current pandemic and has been used across our primary schools. The secondary schools have also had a focus on reconnection, recovery and resilience since September with schools utilising more curriculum time to focus on wellbeing activities.
- 5.7 An online Wellbeing Toolkit has been completed and published on the Headteacher's Hwb platform so that there is access to an extensive range of information on supporting Wellbeing – curriculum, pupil and staff. This includes a training programme for schools to support this agenda.
- 5.8 A task and finish group comprising of local authority staff and Headteachers has been established to update the Wellbeing Handbook. The purpose of this handbook is to provide guidance on how schools can make a difference in supporting the wellbeing of its pupils and staff.
- 5.9 In November 2020 Council approved the Raising Standards Raising Aspirations (RARS) Strategy where strong links between raising standards and wellbeing resonate throughout the document. Commitments focus on emotional, mental and physical wellbeing of both pupils and staff as a pre-requisite to improved outcomes.
- 5.10 Wellcomm has been rolled out across our primary schools and follows on from the successful use of this within Early Years settings. Wellcomm is a tool that can be used to inform planning as part of a whole class differentiated approach to improve speech and language and ultimately literacy. Poor literacy can often result in frustration and poor behaviour, so by addressing levels of literacy it is hoped that this will have a positive effect on behaviour also.

- 5.11 IRIS Connect professional learning programme has been purchased for secondary schools and our Learning Resource Base classes (LRBs). The programme is intended to support the professional learning of all staff within our secondary schools LRBs and specialist provisions.
- 5.12 A project for pupils living in the Aberfan area was set up in December 2020 in partnership with the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Health Board Research Innovation and Improvement Hub. This project aims to help capture the imagination of children using enterprise technology, whilst allowing them to play and create ideas providing new learning opportunities. The focus of the workshops will be for the children and young people to see how they can influence their future and how engaging with these projects supports their own wellbeing.
- 5.13 The support given to schools on safeguarding has always referred back to the Welsh Government guidance document on Blended Learning that was issued in the first lockdown and has been recently updated. [Live-streaming and video-conferencing: safeguarding principles and practice](#). Originally issued in May 2020, the updated guidance reflects a change to enable **decision-making at a school or setting level** to determine the most appropriate approach to live-streaming or video-conferencing for their setting. All normal standards of behaviour apply in the online classroom and as such behaviour incidents will be dealt with in the usual way. This includes any incidents of bullying. All pupils and staff have been asked to sign Acceptable User Policies (AUP) in order to be part of the online learning.
- 5.14 Good staff wellbeing is essential for cultivating a mentally healthy school, for retaining and motivating staff and for promoting pupil well-being and attainment. In September 2019, the local authority published a Wellbeing Charter for school staff; this charter was produced with Headteachers and the charity Education Support.
- 5.15 The local authority has commissioned InspireU to work with the schools in the Pen Y Dre cluster to further support wellbeing. This work focuses on the rights of the child as set out in the United Nation Convention but is firmly rooted in the expectation that all children should achieve the very best they can.
- 5.16 A multi-dimensional framework for understanding and promoting wellbeing called PERMA(Positive Emotions, Engagement, Relationships, Meaning and Achievement/Accomplishment) has been rolled out across our schools.
- 5.17 In developing an approach to improving wellbeing and outcomes the local authority, in partnership the Nurture Network UK, has initiated a programme of skills development with Ty Dysgu, Ysgol y Graig, Ysgol Coed y Dderwen and Goetre, which will lead to them achieving the Nurture UK Quality Mark. This seeks to influence the culture of schools and how behaviours are viewed and addressed, creating long term benefits. This has also included ensuring local authority staff are trained in the approach to provide ongoing support to schools. Funding permitting, the aim is to roll this opportunity out to more schools in the next academic year.

- 5.18 This approach is working in tandem with the support that has been commissioned through the whole school approach grant. Upskilling teachers and partners to provide bespoke programmes to children and young people facing challenges on the following: family breakdown, transition, self-harm, loss or bereavement. In addition, identified staff have undertaken an emotional coaching training programme to support their work with parents.
- 5.19 The authority has reaffirmed its commitment to developing the Positive Behaviour Support programme through the outreach approach with Greenfield School. All schools now have staff trained in PBS and annual refresher systems in place. Discussions have also been held as to the local authority becoming licenced through this system to improve long term sustainability of the approach.

6.0 WHERE WE WANT TO BE

- Our aim is to support schools to develop a school environment where children feel happy and safe; diversity is respected, and healthy debate is encouraged. This will ensure that pupils are more ready to learn.
- All schools to be utilising PERMA as their tool for supporting wellbeing.
- All schools to have the appropriate number of Emotional Literacy Support Assistants (ELSA) employed to support young people.
- Increasing numbers of schools trained in nurture principles.
- The local authority to become an accredited facilitator of PBS (Positive Behaviour Strategies).

7.0 WHAT WE NEED TO DO NEXT

- Produce a pupil-friendly report on the Student Conference.
- Update the online Wellbeing Toolkit.
- Finalise the Wellbeing Handbook.
- Evaluate the Aberfan Project.
- Continue to ensure that staff have access to support their wellbeing.

8.0 CONTRIBUTION TO RAISING ASPIRATIONS RAISING STANDARDS STRATEGY

- 8.1 The contents of this report relate to the following RARS Themes and Goals.

Themes

- Partnership and Collaboration; and
- Pandemic Recovery

Goals

- Developing the Education Workforce
- Supporting Learners' Health and Wellbeing;
- Improving Achievement and Progression; and
- Developing the Environment for Learning.

9.0 CONTRIBUTION TO WELLBEING OBJECTIVES

9.1 The contents of this report relate to the following Wellbeing Objectives:

- Best Start to Life and Living well

SUE WALKER
CHIEF OFFICER, LEARNING

COUNCILLOR LISA MYTTON
PORTFOLIO LEAD

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Anti-bullying Statutory Guidance 2020	August 2020	Learning Department
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

BULLYING INCIDENTS

		Type			Motivation					
		Verbal	Cyber	Physical	Racial	Sexuality	Disability	Gender	Religion	Not known
Period Sept-July	Total number of incidents									
2011/12	54	22	5	8	15	2	0	2	0	0
2012/13	75	34	11	15	9	5	1	0	0	0
2013/14	88	27	12	39	8	0	0	2	0	0
2014/15	142	52	7	16	10	2	0	0	0	0
2015/16	106	35	11	36	7	2	1	9	0	5
2016/17	152	76	13	41	7	11	0	0	1	3
2017/18	260	65	24	81	16	5	1	27	0	41
2018/19	148	36	3	48	7	5	7	17	0	33
Sept- Mar 2019/20	84	20	4	22	12	5	4	10	0	7

The above figures relate to the total number of incidents by category, but in some instances reflect the same incident.