



AGENDA ITEM 8

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD

8 MARCH 2011

ANTI-BULLYING WORK IN MIDDLESBROUGH SCHOOLS - SUMMARY OF THE CHILDREN & LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL'S FINAL REPORT

Why the Scrutiny Panel Examined This Subject:

1. In 2007 The Government made tackling bullying in schools a key priority with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) making it clear that no form of bullying should be tolerated. Bullying in our schools should be taken very seriously - it is not a normal part of growing up and can ruin lives.
2. It is generally recognised that bullying can only be addressed if it is acknowledged that it exists. The scrutiny panel was concerned to find out the position regarding the level of bullying in Middlesbrough, what support is available to victims of bullying, how schools deal with the subject, together with investigating the Council's involvement.

What the Scrutiny Panel Found:

3. The panel found that the Council has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children and young people in their area. Schools are required to have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and prevent all forms of bullying.
4. The scrutiny heard information on the different types of bullying, including the relatively recent development of 'cyberbullying,' and examined examples of anti-bullying policies, including details of how these have been developed. Middlesbrough Council's involvement with schools was also examined - such as through Children, Families and Learning's Behaviour and Attendance Group and through support provided by the Department's Anti-Bullying Consultant.
5. The panel also heard information on local levels of bullying, as reported by the last national TellUs Survey of school children, and action that the Council has taken in recent years to support schools and young people with regard to bullying. A wide range of support is available nationally for victims of bullying, with details being submitted to the panel. More locally, the scrutiny panel spoke to staff and pupils of a Middlesbrough Secondary School in respect of its Peer Mentor Scheme, which has been used to successfully support vulnerable pupils on issues including bullying.

Summary of the Scrutiny Panel's Conclusions:

6. The scrutiny panel's conclusions highlight its key findings. These are shown in full in the **attached final report** and highlight the following issues:
 1. The need to provide safe and happy places to learn and the negative impact that bullying can have on school improvement, attainment and attendance - as well as on pupil's lives.
 2. The need to acknowledge that bullying does occur before it can be addressed and that it is unlikely to be ever completely eradicated.
 3. The Council's and schools' legal duties in respect of bullying - including their roles in developing relevant strategies and providing support.
 4. Action that the local authority has taken, and progress that has been made in recent years, in this area of work.
 5. The implications of the abolition of the annual TellUs survey of pupils on the recording and assessing the level of bullying in Middlesbrough.
 6. The fact that local government spending cuts are likely to impact on the Council's involvement in anti-bullying work.

Summary of the Panel's Recommendations:

7. The panel's recommendations are based on the conclusions outlined above. These are shown in full in the **attached final report** and relate to:
 1. The Council, as far as is possible in the current difficult financial climate, continuing to support schools on anti-bullying work through the Behaviour and Support Group and Behaviour Support Team.
 2. Ensuring that victims of bullying are directed towards appropriate support, as well as publicising/promoting support that is available through Council departments/agencies.
 3. Engaging schools in recording all incidences of bullying, with statistics being collated by the Council.
 4. Submitting statistical updates to the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel via the Annual Standards Report reporting system.

Councillor Javed Ismail

Chair of Children & Learning Scrutiny Panel