Tackling poverty related BULLYING:

Mini guide for schools

Addressing poverty related bullying in schools to reduce its occurrence and impact on the wellbeing and attainment of children and young people

Tackling the Impact of Poverty on Education

Ariennir gan
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Tackling Poverty Related Bullying

About this mini guide

This guide specifically looks at **bullying in the context of poverty and low income**, rather than bullying as a whole. Whilst many of the principles, considerations and practice recommendations are transferable in addressing other bullying issues, the focus here is the prevention of poverty related bullying within the school setting.

This guide supports the **5 Key Areas of the [Price of Pupil Poverty Guides](#)**, which identify practical steps your school can take to tackle the impact of poverty and improve outcomes for your learners:

(1) Understanding poverty; (2) School uniform and Clothing: (3) Food and Hunger; (4) Participation in the Life of the School; (5) Home-School relationship

What is bullying?

Welsh Government's *Challenge Bullying: Rights, respect and equality$_2$* statutory guidance, defines bullying as:

> *Behaviour by an individual or group, usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts others either physically or emotionally.*

The Challenge

Poverty affects 28% of children and young people in Wales$_1$. On average that's more than a quarter of all children in Wales and 7 learners in a class of 25.

Studies show that between a quarter and a third of children experience poverty related bullying. Whilst not all children who live in poverty are bullied, findings from the Children in Wales Annual Child and Family Poverty surveys$_3$ echo these findings. In the Children in Wales surveys, children and young people in Wales were asked about school and specifically what affects children who live in poverty the most in school. In the 2021, 2022 and 2023 survey findings, **bullying was given as the top issue**.

Children said that they were most frequently bullied about:

- **Lack of the correct school uniform**
- **Poor appearance of the school uniform**
- **Lack of, or appearance of shoes and PE kits**
- **Clothing worn on non-school uniform day**
- **Inability to afford to socialise with friends**
- **Being in receipt of free school meals**

Many children and young people living in poverty face barriers and challenges on a daily basis. They are more likely to be hungry and tired, anxious about their families' financial and living circumstances and often feel isolated as they are far less likely to afford extra curricular activities or the cost of socialising with their friends.

Tackling poverty related bullying in your school setting can help to remove one barrier to learning. This will enable a positive school experience and can improve the attendance, engagement and emotional wellbeing of your learners.

Tackling Poverty Related Bullying

The Impact

Research shows that children who are bullied are more likely to be lonely, avoid school and experience **depression, anxiety and low self-esteem.** The same research identifies that bullying also has an impact on those who witness it, leading to increased fear, anxiety and depression.

These findings are echoed in the Children in Wales reports, 2021; 2022; [2023](#)[3] in which children and young people align poverty related bullying with **poor school experiences** and low engagement; **poor mental health**; feelings of isolation, sadness, stress, shame and embarrassment and inequity.

> *"We should all be treated the same"*
> **Children in Wales survey report 2022**

Your Impact

In schools, what we do matters. Your actions, practice and approach to poverty and the impact this has on your learners is important to their outcomes. **Your school can successfully tackle poverty related bullying** or, inadvertently, support and increase it. For example, highlighting or sanctioning pupils for dishevelled or improper uniform in front of other learners can often lead to increased or new instances of bullying.

Schools who are successfully tackling poverty related bullying are taking a **whole-school approach** to poverty. This includes raising awareness, both with learners and staff, ensuring that all actions are carried out in a sensitive, non-stigmatising way.

Poverty related bullying — Lower attainment, Depression, Lower engagement, Inequity, Isolation, Increased absence, Stress & Anxiety

> *"My worst experiences were teachers forcing me to explain to them, in front of my classes, why I couldn't afford proper uniform"*
>
> [Children in Wales survey report 2022](#)

Tackling Poverty Related Bullying

Recommendations from Children and Young People

In the 2022 and 2023 poverty surveys, Children in Welsh schools were asked what should be done to stop poverty related bullying.

"Maybe we could all learn about poverty and the effects of it"

Tackling bullying supports your curriculum design and the four purposes, specifically in its aim to support learners to become:

"No more non-uniform days, they just show everyone that we can't afford designer brands"

"Need a mindset change"

"Lessons on budgeting and how difficult it is to spread the money"

"Raise awareness of what it's like living in poverty"

"Free school meals and snacks for everyone"

"All children should wear the same 'cheap, supermarket' school uniform'"

"Don't point out individuals"

"Free school uniforms and shoe tokens for everyone"

"Pupils and teachers both need to know so that they are more understanding and compassionate"

"Not just a poster or video, but fully absorbed"

"We should teach young people about the realities of poverty. The younger they are when they learn about poverty and bullying, the more likely they are to be accepting"

- **Ethical, informed citizens of Wales and the world**
- **Healthy, confident individuals, ready to lead fulfilling lives as valued members of society**

Positive Actions Your School Can Take

Follow Statutory Guidance on School Uniforms

Ensure your school has regard to the affordability, accessibility and availability of uniforms. Consider if school branded clothing is an essential item. Uniforms are an ongoing, expensive outlay and on average, around one third of your learners are likely to live in poverty. Schools uniforms were cited by children as the biggest issue in terms of poverty related bullying. For guidance see School uniform and appearance: policy guidance for governing bodies (WG23-17) [HTML] | GOV.WALES

School uniform and appearance policy

For non-compliance, firstly check everything is okay. Using discretion and understanding, ask why uniform is not as required. Have a discreet stock of clean spare uniform that can be distributed sensitively to pupils. Sending children home to change or giving detention may lead to further bullying instances. Speak with your Equity Champion as they could advise on available support.

School support points

Normalising the use of school uniform recycling and exchange schemes will help to remove any shame and stigma around second hand uniform. For guidance see School uniform exchange and recycling schemes | GOV.WALES. Set up uniform 'recycling' areas and involve pupils and parents from the very beginning. Ask them what they need, where it should be located and how to access it. This crucial engagement will avoid implementing processes that may stigmatise or further spotlight children and young people from lower income families and will help to reduce bullying.

Non-uniform days

Children living in poverty find these days particularly stressful, fearing judgement and bullying. Many are likely to be absent on these days or 'forget' and attend in uniform. Consider why you hold these days and if they are really necessary.

Positive Actions Your School Can Take

Taking a whole school approach to poverty involves everyone, from staff and learners to governors, parents and the wider community. For guidance on how governors can take on wider diversity and champion roles see school-governing-body-equality-and-diversity-champion-model-role-description.pdf. Implementing poverty proofing programmes, such as Tackling the Impact of Poverty on Education using the Price of Pupil Poverty Guides will reduce poverty related bullying and have a positive impact on all children and young people. Find the main guides here and guides specifically for governors here.
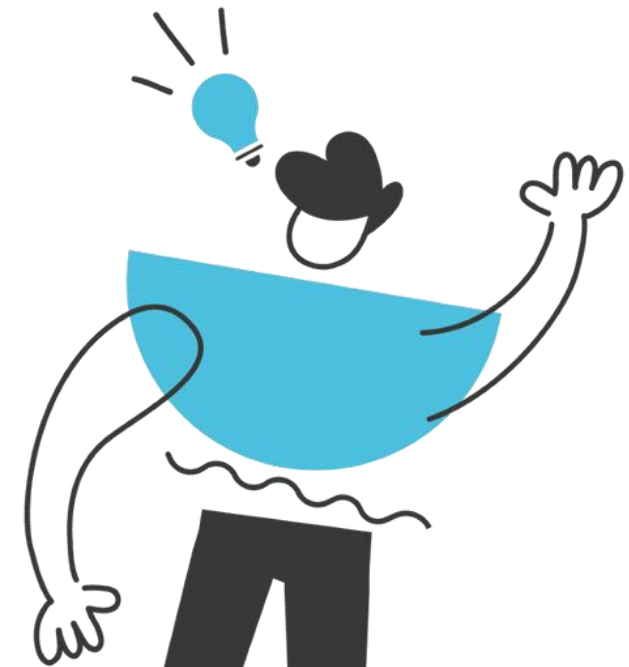
Raise awareness of the impact of poverty

This could include activities and lessons on the cost of living; managing a budget; emotional impact; and the causes of poverty. These activities should be engaging and work better as a series, not just a 'one-off' lesson. Whilst posters can provide support for these activities, they will have little impact when used alone. Raise awareness and understanding with staff too.

Recruit an 'Equity Champion' from existing school staff whose role is to engage
with, identify, monitor and support learners from low income or disadvantaged families.
This trusted person should also be aware of and share information on grants and support
available to help families.

Consider your fund raising activities
Do they exclude disadvantaged children by asking for donations, financial, food or otherwise?
Avoid asking learners to bring their donated items to the front of the class. This can cause stress
and bullying for those not able to donate. Choose cost free fund raising activities and take account
of any transport costs or equipment that may be needed (e.g. PE kit) for the activity. Always
consider if there is a cost to being included and taking part.

Positive Actions Your School Can Take

Your anti-bullying policy

This should address all bullying, including poverty related bullying. Involve everyone in the development, updates and implementation of this policy, including learners themselves. Create a child friendly version of your policy too.

Find examples of how schools successfully address bullying here and here.

Welsh Government has produced statutory guidance for the development and implementation of anti bullying policies: Rights, Respect, Equality which also includes advice for how to prevent and respond to prejudice related bullying.

For the full suite of resources to help tackle school bullying see School bullying | Sub-topic | GOV.WALES

Tackling Poverty Related Bullying

Children living in poverty face many daily challenges; don't let poverty related bullying in your school be one of them

The main Price of Pupil Poverty guide raises awareness of pupil poverty and the impact this has on children within the school setting and provides tangible, cost effective solutions that schools can take to improve the school experience, learning and wellbeing of pupils from lower income families. To view the main guide and resources, visit: **Hwb** or **Children in Wales**

Useful Links

Tackling the Impact of Poverty on Education – Children in Wales

Hwb: The Price of Pupil Poverty Guides

CiW_Child__Family_Poverty_Report_2023_English.pdf (childreninwales.org.uk)

Free School Meals

School Essentials Grant

Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)

Meic

Childline

Kidscape

Bullies Out

References

1.) Local indicators of child poverty after housing costs, 2021/22

2.) Rights, Respect, Equality: Statutory Guidance for Schools

3.) CiW_Child__Family_Poverty_Report_2023_English.pdf (childreninwales.org.uk)