



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH  
The Moray House School  
of Education

**INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL BULLYING**

WRITTEN SUBMISSION  
for

**The Equalities and Human Rights Committee**  
**Scoping session on bullying and harassment of children and young people in schools**

from  
Moray House School of Education  
University of Edinburgh  
Dr Rowena Arshad, OBE (Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland), Dr Jane Brown,  
Maureen Finn (STEP), Dr Geetha Marcus and Dr Gillean McCluskey

Our responses to the questions below are based primarily on research but also draw on our recent professional development seminars with teachers and school leaders and participation in the Independent Advisory Group on Hate Crime, Prejudice and Community Cohesion.

**1. What is the nature and extent of prejudice and bullying in schools?**

Our findings indicate that current statistics on reporting and recording of bullying do not match the everyday experiences of pupils.

Our recent discussions with teaching staff point to a growing mood among pupils and also within some parent groupings about a new acceptability of discriminatory language and views related to colour, ethnicity, nationality, ethnic origins and religion. While there has not been a spike in recorded Hate Crime in Scotland post-Brexit, those school leaders who are aware of racial equality issues have expressed concern that parents of pupils caught for racial bullying are now very likely to say, for example, '*...it is unfortunate she was caught.. but it happens all the time.. just unfortunate my daughter was caught saying this...*' In the views of these school leaders, such a response would not have been forthcoming in previous years. 'Race' needs to be explicitly back on the agenda.

The latest research by Centre for Education for Racial Equality in Scotland (CERES), in collaboration with the University of Newcastle and the University of St Andrews, interviewed 382 young people and found that young people are acutely aware of everyday racism (invalidations) on the basis of accent, skin colour, faith, dress, nationality and ethnicity. Young people (majority and minority) wanted more opportunities to discuss the topic of racism as well as new expressions of

racism based on Islamophobia, anti-immigration attitudes and religious intolerance. Our research shows that teachers are reluctant and anxious about discussing these issues.

LGBT Youth Scotland (2012) has highlighted the severity of the issues of bullying and harassment in relation to issues of gender and sexuality and found a similar issue with teachers' levels of confidence and ability to be pro-active. We also note with concern the findings from recent research by EHRC (2015) which revealed a lack of consistency in schools' recording of prejudice-based bullying, an issue that has long affected children from Gypsy/Traveller families in particular. More broadly, recent research led by Dr Jane Brown on student participation highlights the need to learn from other research domains in order to move the bullying agenda forward.

## **2. How do schools respond to bullying and how are they supported in that role?**

Our research shows that teachers are still reluctant and anxious about discussing bullying, particularly when associated with racism, sexuality and gender.

This poses serious issues given the highly decentralised model of Curriculum for Excellence. This leaves the recognition and tackling of bullying and harassment alongside the teaching of issues of prejudice and hate crime at an *ad hoc* level, with resulting inconsistencies of practice.

We are largely confident that school staff will recognise, for example, overt forms of racial or gender-based bullying and harassment. However, the majority would not articulate this to be 'hate crime' when some of those incidents should be categorised accordingly. The issue of 'misrecognition' and that of 'micro-invalidations' should also be recognised as part of the bullying and harassment repertoire. Micro-forms of daily invalidation because of someone's sexuality, skin colour, nationality, faith, dress or accent can be as corrosive as the overt name-calling. However, our research found that these micro-instances are often felt by the people on the receiving end but not even noticed by those perpetrating those invalidations or aggressions.

## **3. What needs to change to ensure schools can deal with cases of bullying and promote inclusivity in schools?**

- Advice from Education Scotland to schools should be updated to reflect and integrate recent findings on, for example, experiences of LGBTQ young people and new expressions of racism.
- Bullying should be recognised as a major contributing factor in underachievement.
- Schools should be supported to use proven strategies, such as restorative approaches, in working with those who have bullied, those who experience bullying and bystanders.
- Verbal and physical abuse should be recognised as potentially both cause and effect of bullying and harassment.
- All staff should be trained to recognise their statutory duties under the Equality Act (2010), and to identify and respond to bullying and harassment in schools.
- All schools should systematically record all incidents of bullying and harassment and their responses to these incidents. Clear systems for recording incidents should be shared.
- School staff, including senior management, should receive advanced training and support to enable them to 'consciously disrupt' acts and systems that encourage bullying and harassment.

- Staff and pupils should be taught to understand the deleterious and long lasting effects of bullying and harassment not only on those directly and immediately affected, but on society as a whole.
- The issues of bullying and harassment should be highlighted through positive educational campaigns so that schools become safe spaces for learning for all.
- Schools should be encouraged to work more closely with parents, the third sector and Community Learning and Development (CLD) partners to build a community and societal response to bullying and harassment.

## References

Arshad, R. (2004) Minority ethnic pupils' experiences of school in Scotland.

<http://www.gov.scot/resource/doc/920/0033758.pdf>

Arshad, R. (2016) Everyday geopolitics of minority ethnic young people in Scotland (2013-2016)

<http://www.ed.ac.uk/education/election-briefings/experiences-of-minority-ethnic>

Brown, J., Winterton, M. and Northern, S. (Eds.) (2010) Violence in Schools; what is really happening? British Educational Research Association. <https://www.bera.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Insight1-web.pdf>

Finn, M. (2016) A video made by Lee and Chloe about bullying

<http://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/project/video-made-lee-chloe-bullying/>

<http://www.step.education.ed.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Bullying-resource-2BW.pdf>

LGBT Youth Scotland (2012) Life in Scotland for LGBT Young People: Education report.

[https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/files/documents/Life\\_in\\_Scotland\\_for\\_LGBT\\_Young\\_People\\_-\\_Education\\_Report\\_NEW.pdf](https://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk/files/documents/Life_in_Scotland_for_LGBT_Young_People_-_Education_Report_NEW.pdf)

Lough Dennell, B. L. and Logan, C. (2015) Prejudice-based bullying in Scottish schools: A research report. Equality and Human Rights Commission

[https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/prejudice-based\\_bullying\\_in\\_scottish\\_schools\\_research\\_report\\_0.pdf](https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/prejudice-based_bullying_in_scottish_schools_research_report_0.pdf)

Marcus, G. (2016) Breaking the silence: the invisible, intersecting experiences of Gypsy/Traveller girls in Scotland (PhD thesis) <https://caysnetwork.wordpress.com/2016/02/05/theintersecting-invisible-experiences-of-gypsytraveller-girls-in-scotland/>

McCluskey, G. (2016) Restorative Approaches in Education <http://www.ed.ac.uk/education/election-briefings/restorative-approaches>

Scottish Government (2016) Report of the Independent Advisory Group on hate crime, prejudice and community cohesion <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0050/00506074.pdf>