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[Blog article](#) by Chris Jenkins, Senior Policy Officer, Equality Commission NI

Tackling prejudice-based bullying in education

[Anti-Bullying Week](#) raises awareness of bullying of young people. It's an ideal time for us to reiterate our commitment to ending bullying. The Equality Commission has longstanding [positions on tackling prejudice-based bullying](#). These include:

- challenging negative stereotypes
- encouraging inclusivity, and
- supporting leadership in schools.

Lack of data on bullying in NI Schools

One of the major challenges in this area is that we know very little about what bullying in our schools looks like. Very little data exists on who is affected by bullying, how many children are impacted by bullying, and what schools do in response to it. 2011 was the last time comprehensive research on bullying in NI schools was carried out. This is badly out-of-date.

We need the Department of Education to urgently conduct or commission updated and comprehensive research on what bullying looks like in our schools, and the forms it takes. This is essential in responding to bullying effectively.

Equality Commission research shows bullying remains a persistent problem

[Our own research highlighted](#) that prejudice-based bullying remains a persistent problem. It showed that young people

- with Special Educational Needs,
- with disabilities,
- from minority ethnic groups, and
- LGBT

all experience high and unacceptable levels of bullying.

Schools and Boards of Governors have a vital role in responding to bullying

The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act came into force in September 2021. It is a significant step towards addressing the longstanding challenges of bullying in

schools. It's important that schools and Boards of Governors are aware of and implement the Act.

The Act places a duty on Boards of Governors to:

- prepare an anti-bullying policy and make it freely available
- ensure that policies designed to prevent bullying are followed in school
- determine and review the measures needed to prevent bullying
- consult with the principal, pupils, and parents before drafting or reviewing measures
- record all instances of bullying, including the motivation for bullying behaviours.

Boards of Governors and school leaders play an essential role in ensuring schools are following these key actions and duties. They will be contributing to making our schools more inclusive for all children and students.

It is also vital that the Department of Education assess compliance with the Addressing Bullying in Schools Act and support Board of Governors and schools in its implementation.

Working together to stop bullying

Each of us, as a member of society, also has a duty to do all we can to bring an end to bullying. We must all work together to promote positive attitudes and good relations where our young people meet and interact.

We would welcome any steps you can take to help end bullying in Northern Ireland. One way you can do this is by engaging with decision-makers to raise [awareness of our positions and secure adoption of our recommendations](#).

Further information

Read more about [The Equality Commission's education priorities and recommendations](#)

Make a Noise about Bullying and [support Anti-Bullying Week](#)