

A Parent's Guide to Reporting Faith-Based Bullying in Scottish Schools

Practical steps to protect your child's right to hold their faith
without fear of bullying or exclusion

Produced by the Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group (AEMWG)

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Your Child's Rights

Every child in Scotland has the right to hold and express their religious beliefs without being bullied, shamed, or excluded. This is protected by law.

Key Legal Protections:

- **Equality Act 2010** — Religion or belief is a protected characteristic. Schools have a legal duty to prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation based on faith.
- **Education (Scotland) Act 1980** — Parents have the right to have their children educated in accordance with their wishes, including respect for religious convictions.
- **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)** — Incorporated into Scots law in 2024. Article 14 protects freedom of thought, conscience, and religion. Article 30 protects the right of minority children to enjoy their own culture and practise their own religion.
- **Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC)** — Scotland's national framework requires that every child is safe, respected, and included.

What Counts as Faith-Based Bullying?

Faith-based bullying includes any behaviour that targets a child because of their religious beliefs, cultural practices, or the values they hold. It can be direct or subtle.

- Being called a 'bigot' or 'hateful' for expressing a sincerely held religious belief
- Being excluded from friendship groups for not participating in campaigns or rallies that conflict with their faith
- Being mocked for wearing religious clothing (hijab, cross, kippah, turban)
- Being told their religion is 'wrong', 'backward', or 'intolerant'
- Teachers or staff making dismissive comments about a child's faith
- Peer pressure to publicly endorse views that contradict their family's beliefs
- Social media targeting or group exclusion based on religious identity

Step-by-Step: How to Report

Step 1: Document Everything

- Write down exactly what happened — dates, times, locations, who was involved
- Save screenshots of any online bullying (social media, group chats)
- Note any witnesses (other children, staff who were present)
- Keep copies of any school communications about the incidents
- Record how your child felt and any impact on their wellbeing or attendance

Step 2: Speak to the Class Teacher

- Request a meeting (in writing — email is best so you have a record)
- Calmly describe what happened, using your written notes
- Explain that this is faith-based bullying and reference the Equality Act 2010
- Ask what action the school will take and request a written response
- Set a clear timeline — ask to hear back within 5 school days

Step 3: Escalate to the Head Teacher

- If the class teacher's response is insufficient, write to the Head Teacher
- Reference the school's anti-bullying policy (every school must have one)
- State that your child's religion is a protected characteristic
- Request a formal meeting and ask for the school's complaints procedure
- Bring a supportive friend or advocate to the meeting if you wish

Step 4: Contact the Local Authority

- If the school does not resolve it, contact Aberdeen City Council's Education team
- Email: education@aberdeencity.gov.uk
- You can also contact the council's Equality & Diversity team
- Request that they investigate under their equality duties

Step 5: Make a Formal Complaint

- Every council has a formal complaints procedure — ask for it in writing
- Stage 1: Frontline resolution (5 working days)
- Stage 2: Investigation (20 working days)
- If still unresolved, escalate to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

Template Letter to the School

You can adapt this letter and send it by email or post:

Dear [Head Teacher's Name],

I am writing to formally report that my child, [Child's Name], in [Class/Year], has been experiencing bullying related to their religious beliefs.

On [date(s)], the following incidents occurred: [describe what happened].

As you will be aware, religion or belief is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. The school has a duty to prevent discrimination, harassment, and victimisation on the grounds of religion. I also note that the UNCRC, now incorporated into Scots law, protects my child's right to freedom of religion (Article 14) and cultural identity (Article 30).

I would like to request a meeting to discuss what steps the school will take to address this and to ensure my child feels safe and included. I would appreciate a written response within 5 school days.

Yours sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Date]

Key Contacts & Resources

Organisation	Contact
AEMWG (Aberdeen Ethnic Minority Women's Group)	WhatsApp: 07440 685720 www.aemwg.org workshops@aemwg.org info@abdn-emwomen.org.uk
Aberdeen City Council Education	education@aberdeencity.gov.uk 03000 200 292
Respectme (Scotland's Anti-Bullying Service)	www.respectme.org.uk 0344 800 8600
Enquire (Additional Support for Learning)	www.enquire.org.uk 0345 123 2303
Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)	www.spsso.org.uk 0800 377 7330
Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)	www.equalityadvisoryservice.com 0808 800 0082
CRER (Coalition for Racial Equality & Rights)	www.crer.org.uk

Remember: Your child has every right to hold their faith proudly. You are not alone — we are here to help.

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