

Introduction



Many children and young people in Northern Ireland are worried about being bullied at school. Those who are bullied may get hurt, feel unhappy or get bad results in school. The Children's Commissioner (NICCY) wanted to know if children and young people were involved in drawing up rules on bullying in school.

Researchers from the National Children's Bureau (NCB) visited 14 very different schools (5 primary, 5 special and 4 post-primary schools) across Northern Ireland to find out about bullying in schools. Ten young people, who were still at school themselves, were trained to help with the research.

How did we do the research?



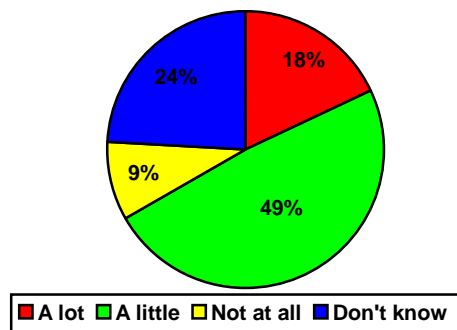
- ✓ We looked at rules that schools had on bullying;
- ✓ We interviewed teachers and principals;
- ✓ We talked to groups of pupils in schools;
- ✓ We talked to some pupils on their own;
- ✓ 687 pupils filled in questionnaires;
- ✓ We also compared our findings with what others found out about bullying before us.

School Rules (Policies) on bullying

- ✓ All schools had a set of rules on bullying. This is called an 'anti-bullying policy'. Sometimes these rules were part of a set of more general school rules.
- ✓ School staff and parents were asked their opinions on anti-bullying rules, but pupils were rarely asked their views about this issue.
- ✓ Most pupils said that they had talked about their anti-bullying policy, but they had not helped to draw up these rules.
- ✓ If pupils reported bullying to a member of school staff, the school kept this on record.

The pie chart below shows that 67% of pupils (just over two out of three children and young people) were aware of bullying in their school.

Do you think pupils in your school get bullied 'a lot', 'a little' or 'not at all'?



Girls in primary schools and boys in post-primary schools were more likely to think that pupils got bullied 'a lot' in their schools.

Pupils were mainly bullied because they were perceived to be different in some way.

Learning about bullying in schools



Schools used poster competitions, assemblies, circle time or PSHE to talk about bullying. Some schools also invited experts from outside school to help in their anti-bullying work.

Pupils understood how serious bullying can be. They knew how to report it and what might happen afterwards, but some were not sure what the difference was between having a bit of fun and bullying.

Anti-bullying Practices



- ✓ Bullying was not tolerated in any school.
- ✓ Most pupils knew who in their school was meant to deal with bullying.
- ✓ Pupils were most likely to tell their parents about bullying first. Very few pupils in post-primary schools said they would talk to the member of staff who dealt with bullying.
- ✓ Teachers who encouraged pupils to get involved in how their school was run said this had improved the atmosphere in the school.

What Next?

Schools could do a number of things to raise awareness of bullying.



1. Schools need to think of more creative ways to engage pupils in the drawing up of rules on bullying. This could involve setting up suggestion boxes, discussion and debate during circle time or citizenship education classes and agreeing at a school council meeting what pupils think needs to be done in their school to reduce bullying incidents.
2. Pupils need to be kept aware of the various ways they can report bullying incidents and the issue of school bullying needs to be openly discussed and revisited on a regular basis.
3. Schools need different ways to monitor bullying. As well as having a log book or record cards to record bullying incidents, schools could think about having playground friends or buddy schemes or anti-bullying squads to support children and help them tackle bullying in school.



NICCY's three main tasks are:

- to ensure children and young people know about the rights they have;
- to take action when children's rights are being ignored;
- to undertake research relevant to children and young people and the services available for them.

You can get in touch with NICCY:

By phone: 028 9031 1616

By e-mail: info@niccy.org

Or by writing to:

NICCY, Millennium House,
17-25 Great Victoria Street, Belfast BT2 7BN

Website: www.niccy.org



NCB is an umbrella body for organisations working with children and young people in England and Northern Ireland.

If you want to speak out on anything you think is important to children and young people you can join Young NCB.

You can get in touch with NCB:

By phone: 020 7843 6000

Or by writing to:

NCB, 8 Wakley Street, London, EC1V 7QE

Website: www.ncb.org.uk

Being Part and Parcel of the School

The views and experiences of children and young people about bullying policies in schools.

A Summary for Young People in Post - Primary Schools



'Bullying'



Bitterness, hatred and contempt
Needing a shoulder to cry on
Someone to listen to your problems
Complications, a mistake, a nuisance.
Kaleidoscope of confusion,
Repressed anger and hurt,
Displaced anger and hurt,
Paranoia personified.
Dignity eroded,
Innocence murdered,
Birth, growth, bullying, death
Does it have to be this way?

Poem by Anna Lafferty
Aged 15

