



## BULLYING

### >> AWARENESS RAISING STRATEGIES



The first issue schools must address when drawing up an anti-bullying policy is **what do pupils understand** by the term “bullying” and **what types of strategies** do pupils think should be put in place to address this issue in their school. The Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) website [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk) has produced 50 excellent ideas on how to give pupils more say in how their school should deal with bullying issues. Some of these include:

#### **Mapping Out ‘WHERE’ Bullying Occurs**

Research shows that bullying often occurs in the playground (Whitney and Smith 1993, Davey et al 2004, Schubotz and Sinclair 2006), on transport to and from school (Hine et al 2006), in toilets and school canteens (Sampson 2002) and in school cloakrooms (Save the Children 2002). Each school must identify where bullying is likely to occur on their particular premises. Schools might therefore consider giving out maps of the school grounds and asking pupils to place red dots in those areas where they feel unsafe and green dots in areas where they feel safe.

#### **Assemblies**

Schools could hold a competition for the class with best anti-bullying assembly idea and the winning entry could present their assembly idea to the school. Alternatively, pupils could be encouraged to use one of the six assemblies on the ABA website [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org) which include scripts and suggestions for props and music to raise awareness of bullying issues and the strategies their school has, or will put in place to deal with this issue.

#### **English Classes**

Excerpts from story books (such as Harry Potter novels) or from films (such as Billy Elliott) could be used to discuss bullying and pupils could select books and DVD’s dealing with this topic to make an anti-bullying display in their school library. Pupils could also be encouraged to write their own poems or short stories on the theme of bullying and a local dignitary could judge the winning entry. The winning poems from the DfES 2004 Anti-bullying Competition (available on the website [www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk](http://www.publications.teachernet.gov.uk) could be used as a stimulus for this event.

#### **Drama Classes**

Pupils could be encouraged to create role plays on the consequences of bullying and how this can negatively affect friends and family members. Different storylines could be presented to pupils where the victim is of a different age, religion, ethnic background, nationality or sexual orientation to encourage pupils to explore issues of diversity in their thinking. As a stimulus, pupils could use information from magazines or media stories from [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk)

#### **Media Studies Classes**

Class or school debates could be organised around the issue of whether bullying in the form of violence shown in film, television and video games should be banned. Digital cameras could also be used to



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create storyboards about bullying. Pictures could be supplemented with speech bubbles and captions as a means of encouraging pupils to think of different situations in which bullying might occur and possible strategies to resolve these confrontations.

#### Art Classes

Pupils could design a paper maché tree and they could write suggestions on ways to prevent bullying onto different coloured paper leaves which could be pinned to the tree or they could display their ideas on a graffiti wall or on a life-sized jigsaw. The physical stature of trees, walls and jigsaws send out the very powerful message that together, pupils can stop bullying. Pupils could also decorate fabric squares with anti-bullying messages using fabric paint, collage or stitching. These could be pieced together to make a friendship quilt to be displayed in a prominent place in the school.

#### Discussing the role of Onlookers

**YOU'RE IN A CORRIDOR WHEN YOU SEE AN OLDER CHILD THREATENING A MUCH SMALLER CHILD. YOU KNOW THIS OLDER PUPIL HAS A REPUTATION FOR BULLYING**

Pupils could write or draw what they would do in this situation and give reasons for their response. These could then be collated and the findings discussed in a subsequent lesson.

It is important that pupils know that it is their duty to report anyone they see engaging in bullying tactics and that they will be commended for taking this action and will not be accused of telling tales. This technique makes the bully aware that other children will report unacceptable behaviours.

Alternatively, schools could run a series of workshops exploring pupils' definitions of bullying by asking question such as:

#### >>IT IS BULLYING IF:

**AMANDA SAYS TO CLAIRE "YOU'D BETTER GIVE ME THAT £2 OR ELSE?"**

**ENRICO IS ON THE GROUND AND MARK IS BASHING HIM?**

**SAM IS POURING KATIE'S COKE ON THE GRASS?**

**A GROUP PELTS JOSH WITH SNOWBALLS WHILE HE RUNS AWAY LAUGHING?**

**SOME BOYS FOLLOW PAUL AND LAUGH AT HIM ON HIS WAY HOME FROM SCHOOL?**

Other suggestions for raising pupils' awareness of bullying issues include:

#### Positive Behaviour Promises

At the start of the school year, discussion on bullying behaviours could be used to draw up class rules, positive behaviour promises and anti-bullying pledges. These could be written into homework diaries and work planners and signed by pupils and parents.

#### Traffic Lights

Research suggests that children who have a large group of friends are less likely to fall prey to bullies because friends can act as a powerful buffer in protecting vulnerable children (Save the Children 2002). In light of this, a number of strategies have been proposed to increase pupils' social network of friends. For example, some primary schools have placed a "FRIENDSHIP" stop sign in the school playground where children can stand if they are feeling sad or lonely and other children are encouraged to include this child in their play.

### **Circle Time**

Circle time can be used to discuss issues such as bullying because it is based on the idea that the issues discussed will not go outside the circle. In some schools, only the person who is holding a mascot or toy is allowed to speak whilst other pupils listen to what they have to say to ensure everyone in the class has an opportunity to contribute to the discussion. Circle time could be used to discuss different types of bullying. These include actions which are physically aggressive and intentionally cause hurt or harm; words which deliberately, but indirectly seek to alienate particular individuals through rumor spreading, teasing, name calling, isolation and exclusion; tormenting, ridiculing or humiliating another person by stealing or hiding their possessions; and/or subjecting another individual to threatening gestures and taunts via text messaging, msn, chat rooms or through e-mail (for more information on cyber bullying visit [www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying))

### **Suggestion Boxes**

Suggestion boxes allow pupils to anonymously alert teachers to bullying behaviours. Pupils could be encouraged to post questions into this box on issues such as what to do if they suspect or witness another child getting bullied.

It is very important that a notice board is posted close to this box to provide feedback and advice on the issues posted in the box to illustrate that the school listens to pupils suggestions and where appropriate, will act on these. 'Sorry' boxes could also be set up so that a pupil who has engaged in bullying behaviours has the opportunity of posting a sorry note apologising for their behaviour and notes from this box could be added to a wall/tree/jigsaw display on bullying with the significance of these notes being followed up during lessons on reconciliation or friendship building discussed during RE classes.



### **Homophobic, racist and other forms of discriminatory bullying**

Research shows that gay, lesbian and bisexual pupils, travellers, ethnic minorities (Kilkelly et al 2004), pupils with special educational needs (Davey et al 2004), those who have few friends (Smith et al 2004, Schubotz and Sinclair 2006) and pupils who care for a sick/disabled adult, are particularly vulnerable to being bullied. Therefore what motivates an individual to bully others and what constitutes racist, sectarian and homophobic bullying needs to be discussed in a classroom setting especially given that many of these incidents are motivated by a fear of difference. It is also possible that pupils will not know what is meant by terms such as 'poof', 'fag', 'sissy', 'lizzie', 'paki', 'chinkers', 'taig', 'fenian' and may simply use these words because they want to be seen to be part of the group or because they regard using these terms as a means of gaining power over someone else. To unpack the meanings of these terms, pupils could be encouraged to research newspaper stories, magazines, film or television which looks at violence motivated by



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homophobia, sectarianism, racism and/or xenophobia. These stories could be used to form a wall display on why some people choose to bully others and the reasons why this is wrong. For example, to deal with homophobic bullying, the anti-bullying network recommends that:

- Pupils are made aware that everyone has a right to express their sexuality in any way which is within the law.
- Pupils are informed that different societies have different attitudes towards homosexuality - it is accepted and tolerated in some, and outlawed in others.
- Pupils are provided with accurate information about the law on homosexuality in their country.
- Pupils acknowledge the risks associated with some sexual practices without reinforcing stereotypical assumptions around heterosexual and homosexual behaviour.
- Teachers challenge any homophobic remarks which are made during any class discussion.

Helpline leaflets and posters advertising support groups set up to deal with specific incidents of racial, sectarian or homophobic bullying should also be placed around the school and on the school website as a visible demonstration that bullying (whatever form it takes), will not be tolerated.

#### Further Information

- >> An excellent resource detailing 50 fun ways to encourage pupils to think about bullying can be downloaded from [www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk](http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk)
- >> For more information on how to address homophobia visit [www.lgbtyouth.org.uk](http://www.lgbtyouth.org.uk); [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk); [www.antibullying.net](http://www.antibullying.net); [www.teachersunion.org.uk](http://www.teachersunion.org.uk) or [www.lgbthistory.org.uk](http://www.lgbthistory.org.uk). Alternatively you can contact the Rainbow Project on 028 9031 9030 or 028 7128 3030.
- >> For information on how to address sectarianism visit [www.mifc-pii.org](http://www.mifc-pii.org) or contact the Community relations Council on 028 9027 7500.
- >> Leaflets on racially motivated bullying can be downloaded from the website [www.utu.edu](http://www.utu.edu) or further advice can be obtained from the Northern Ireland Council for Ethnic Minorities on 028 9023 8645. The Primary National Strategy offers materials under the Excellence and Enjoyment (more materials under social and emotional aspects of learning - SEAL) which include classroom activities for one week on 'Say no to Bullying' available at [www.bandapilot.org.uk](http://www.bandapilot.org.uk)
- >> An anti-bullying toolkit containing questionnaires, staff training and lesson plans are also downloadable from [www.standards.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk)
- >> Another resource which provides pupils with fictional situations and asks them to choose their preferred method for resolving the particular bullying situation from a number of options can be downloaded from [www.kidscape.org.uk](http://www.kidscape.org.uk)
- >> For younger children, NICCY has sponsored NIPPA the early years organization, to develop a curriculum and cartoon to help tackle bullying in the early years.