

DEFINING BULLYING

There are many definitions of bullying but most consider bullying to be:

“Deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated over a period of time and in circumstances where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.”

This definition was recognised and accepted in case law (in Hansen v. Isle of White Council)

The Government defines bullying as:

“Behaviour by an individual or group usually repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group physically or emotionally”.

(DCSF 2007)

Bullying is, therefore:

- **Repetitive and persistent.** Bullying is usually experienced as part of a continuous pattern and it can be extremely threatening and intimidating even when very subtle. Nevertheless, sometimes a single incident can have precisely the same impact as persistent behaviour over time.
- **Intentionally harmful.** The act of bullying intends harm to another individual although occasionally the distress it causes is not consciously intended by all of those who are present.
- **Involves an imbalance of power.** Bullying leaves someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it. In some case an imbalance of power may mean that bullying crosses the threshold into abuse. This would require implementation of safeguarding procedures.

METHODS OF BULLYING

Good anti-bullying policies and training for all staff should detail the different forms of bullying that children and young people may experience, as understanding the nature of bullying is the starting point for effective detection and response.

Bullying can take various forms and includes the following types of behaviour:

- **Physical bullying:**
 - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching, spitting, hair pulling or any use of physical violence
 - sexual assault
 - making people do things they don't want to do
 - stopping people doing things they want to do
 - damaging someone's belongings
 - taking someone else's belongings e.g. mobile phones or money. The threat of violence very often accompanies thefts from persons and there can be clear instances of extortion focused on weaker pupils.

Bullying is not letting people play.
Year 4 Pupil

Bullying is when people are actually getting punched or smacked by someone who wants something like their money.
Year 6 Pupil

Bullying is where someone is bigger, older, tougher and picking on smaller people.
Year 10 Pupil

- **Verbal bullying:**

- name-calling, the range of possible name-calling and other unpleasant language is wide and usually focuses on someone's appearance, personal hygiene, family or ability
- sarcasm, teasing, mocking, "put-downs"
- spreading rumours
- saying or writing nasty things
- blackmail and threats
- making offensive remarks including comments about someone's gender, race, disability, religion or sexual orientation. This form of bullying is also discriminatory behaviour that may be unlawful.

Bullying is making someone feel unhappy with themselves
Year 11 Pupil

You could be bullied if you have ginger hair or wear glasses.
Year 5 Pupil

Bullying is repeatedly singling out a person
Year 8 Pupil

Bullying is when someone says something hurtful and the others copy.
Year 6 Pupil

- **Indirect bullying:**

- being unfriendly, not talking to someone
- excluding from social groups and activities,
- tormenting (e.g. hiding books), making someone feel uncomfortable or scared
- using threatening gestures, looks and signs/symbols.

Another type of bullying is when someone is spreading rumours about you that are not true and it is hurting you
Year 6 Pupil

Bullying is when somebody scares you and you don't want to come to school.
Year 5 Pupil

- **Cyber bullying**

- misuse of areas of the internet, such as email & internet chat room
- mobile phone threats by text messaging and calls
- misuse of technology, e.g. camera & video facilities used to record "happy slapping"
- Accessing E-mail/MSM addresses for individuals via Bluetooth and sending threats

Behaviour / Anti-bullying policies should make it clear that the use of intimidating or defamatory messages/images both inside **and outside** of the school will not be tolerated. It should be stated clearly that in order to combat cyber bullying, schools will work with both the police and mobile phone network/internet service providers.

It is important to bear in mind that some behaviours which are described as bullying may be defined in law as 'threatening behaviour', 'criminal damage', 'theft', 'robbery', 'assault', 'sexual harassment' or 'racial harassment' or 'malicious communication' **and therefore constitute offences**. It is the right of children and young people and parents / carers to report such incidents to the police.

Bullying can be viewed as a continuum of negative behaviour from teasing, put downs, and threats at the lower end, to anti-social behaviour and murder at the upper end. Bullying can result in the victim committing suicide. If bullying behaviours at the lower end of the continuum are left unchallenged, the behaviours can escalate to the point where external interventions become necessary from police, prison systems and health professionals.

The intention of all bullying is to demonstrate power and create fear. Physical bullying may be the easiest to detect because of its visibility. More difficult to define and detect are those forms of bullying that are intended to hurt by spreading rumours, making malicious accusations, manipulating social networks, and seeking to sideline or ostracise individuals.

A child or young person disclosing that they are distressed or afraid because of the behaviour of another person toward them must be taken seriously whatever the form of the behaviour and regardless of whether it is a single incident or part of a continuing pattern of behaviour.

THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING

The most common effects of bullying are:

- Anxiety and depression that can lead to intermittent and long-term absence from school, physical illness, psychosomatic complaints or even suicide.
- Poor self-esteem, which inhibits pupils from forming positive relationships, leads to feelings of worthlessness and betrayal, and causes some to lower their expectations, standards of work and therefore their academic attainments
- Withdrawal, which may lead to low participation in school and other activities.

Possible Indicators of bullying are:

- Changes in attitude
- Unexpected illness
- Damaged/missing clothes, belongings or money
- Unexplained scratches/bruising/cuts/bite marks
- Going to school or coming home a different way
- Poorer school performance
- Truancy
- Getting easily upset or emotional
- Wanting to be escorted to places
- Absconding
- Crying at night/nightmares
- Bullying other children
- Returning home hungry (lunch/snack money stolen)
- Asking for more money than usual or stealing money
- Stopping eating
- Self harm/attempted suicide

The effects of bullying can last well into adulthood as this example demonstrates:

'I don't know why I was bullied at school. Three boys just seemed to dislike me. They always made comments, made me look stupid in front of others. The others did not join in but they didn't stop it either. The worst lesson was games. By the time I was 13 I was always sick on games day. I was made to feel as if I was nothing, people ignored me, made snide remarks, just put me down. The worst part was when teachers joined in, knowing it would get a cheap laugh and make them feel part of the group. I hardly went to school after I was in Year 10. Eventually, I went to college in another town because I couldn't face meeting people from my old school at the local college. Eventually I got A levels and a reasonable job, but even today I feel nervous about new situations and hate having to ask questions in case someone says I'm stupid.'

STRATEGIES TO REDUCE BULLYING

The strategies that schools adopt to reduce bullying are many and varied. Overall, the strategies can be broadly defined in terms of:

Preventive strategies	Strategies that aim to <u>prevent and/or minimise</u> bullying within a school, setting or within the community
Intervention strategies	Strategies that aim to <u>minimise the effects</u> of bullying incidents, both for the victim and the bully
Reactive strategies	Strategies that are <u>in response to a disclosure</u> of bullying by a child or young person

In turn, preventive, intervention and reactive strategies can be seen at the level of the:

- Whole school
- Group
- Individual

The importance of a consistent whole school approach for minimising bullying behaviours cannot be emphasised too greatly. All adult members of a school should:

- recognise that bullying exists within their organisation
- accept responsibility for the reduction of bullying
- share a common language to describe bullying behaviours.

This acceptance of responsibility, in turn, implies that all adults should not only be in agreement as to what constitutes acceptable behaviour between people, but also provide positive role models for children and young people. This understanding should underpin policies and practices at all levels.

The Anti-Bullying Alliance paper 'An anti-bullying toolkit for Local Authorities' (2006) quotes the recommendations of the Children's Commissioner (originally contained within a paper published in November 2004) outlining effective anti-bullying strategies within schools and other children's settings. These effective strategies:

- Demonstrate a visible commitment to dealing with bullying and adopt a whole school approach with strong leadership and a range of preventative measures including building emotional resilience, empathy and self-esteem, as well as having clear procedures for identifying and managing bullying
- Base anti-bullying strategies on clear, current knowledge of the local issues within the school. The Anti-bullying Alliance describes the need to investigate where, when and how bullying occurs and whether any peer groups are particularly responsible. This should include an annual survey of children.
- Recognise the distinction between bullying and other types of conflict and aggressive behaviours
- Ensure the active involvement of children and young people, their families and community partners in developing and implementing strategies and in promoting a culture of respect and valuing diversity
- Identify vulnerable children and young people, and those critical moments and transitions when they may become vulnerable, and provide additional support when needed
- Support the ongoing development of empathy, emotional resilience and a sense of responsibility for behaviour from early years to adulthood and beyond
- Apply clear and consistent Rewards and Sanctions Policies that are understood by all members of the school community and are suitable for the age, maturity and understanding of the child or young person
- Ensure all members of staff are trained, supported and model positive relationships.

Examples of specific strategies:

- The Curriculum. Addresses the issues of bullying through programmes of intervention within the school and at classroom level provided in:
 - Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE),
 - SEAL
 - Behaviour and Attendance National Strategies
- Cross-curricula approaches and strands
- Counselling Services
- Peer counselling, mentoring, playground buddying and befriending schemes
- Group courses on self-esteem and anger management
- Emotional Literacy strategies, such as Circle Time and Circle of Friends
- Support in identifying and changing the behaviours for those who bully
- Drama and role play
- Mediation

- Advocacy
- Restorative Justice

The quality and effectiveness of any preventive, intervention and reactive strategy depends on:

- Good communication
- Flexibility of response, particularly timing
- The ability to meet the identified needs of the members of the school/children's setting/ community
- Responsiveness of the strategy to evaluation

Any strategies should be sensitive to the severity and persistency of the negative interactions. Bullying is part of a continuum of negative behaviours within relationships that extend from day-to-day disagreements occurring within the majority of relationships, through to extreme forms of bullying involving violence and death.

ADULTS WHO BULLY

If an adult bullies a child, procedures should be in place to enable the child to complain about the bullying to a trusted adult within the school. The relevant complaints and disciplinary procedures should be implemented immediately, with support arrangements in place for the child victim whilst the complaint is being investigated.

When there is a concern that an adult employed by or accredited as a volunteer by any public, private or voluntary agency and who is entrusted with the care or control of a child or has contact with a child in the course of their work, has:

- Behaved in a way that has harmed a child, or may have harmed a child
- Possibly committed a criminal offence against or related to a child
- Behaved towards a child in a way that indicates s/he is unsuitable to work with children (which may include allegations of bullying from a child against an adult)

The incident should be reported to the Local Authority Designated Officer following the procedures for Allegations Against Adults.

ADULTS WHO ARE BULLIED

Although we are considering bullying mainly in the context of children being bullied by other children or by adults, it is necessary to recognise that adults within our schools may also be subject to bullying. This bullying may be by another adult in the same way as children bully other children, but there are also situations where an adult may be bullied by a child or a group of children. Examples of this form of bullying are name-calling, using threatening gestures and signs/symbols, misuse of technology, e.g. camera & video facilities used to record "happy slapping" and assaults.

When an adult is being bullied by another adult, there are procedures within the workplace which can be used to deal with the situation. However, when the context is of an adult being bullied by a child or group of children, the response will be similar to that applying to child-to-child bullying, i.e. the safety and support of the victim will be the primary concern whilst the behaviour of the bully/bullies is challenged and addressed.

The school needs to adopt firm measures to protect staff from bullying by children and young people both on and off site. When facing bullying off site, staff need to be made aware that they have the same rights of protection from threats as any citizen in a public place and that their first concern must be for their personal safety. Staff should be advised to:

- Make it known to the child/children that they have been recognised
- Use their judgement as to how best to get away safely from the situation without escalating the confrontation

The school should then address the bullying with the child/ren when they are next present. Schools should also liaise with the police and the Youth Offending Team as to which off site bullying behaviours would result in a referral to the police. DCSF and Home Office guidance on Safer School Partnerships illustrate how this type of agreement can be developed.

THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF BULLYING

Pepler and Craig (1995) found that bullying is often not an isolated event, and, that “peers are present in 85% of bullying episodes”. Bullying is therefore often within a social context. The emphasis should be taken away from victim and bully and should explore the role of all parties including “followers and bystanders”.

More complex interactional contexts and dynamics, therefore, need to be considered when combating bullying, for example:

- A bully abusing a number of children
- Bystanders observing the bullying, either passively or in support
- Peer group pressure on the bully
- The involvement or influence of members of the wider community on bullying incidents in school
- Incidents of extreme power imbalance, such as an adult bullying a child or young person

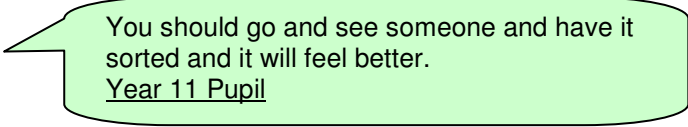
RESPONDING TO BULLYING

Working with bullies requires time and skills. It is important to remember that:

- Bullies can be from any background or ability group.
- National surveys indicate that half the children and young people who bully had been bullied themselves
- Male bullies are twice as likely to be in trouble with the police than their peers
- Bullies can have distress in their own lives and use fighting and threatening behaviour as a way of coping
- Some are heavily influenced by sub-cultures where bullying and abuse are the norm

- Some carry family feuds into schools and parents encourage their bullying as normal behaviour

Appropriate steps need to be taken in relation to both the bully and the victim. Any reports of bullying should be taken seriously and acted upon. Whether the incident is witnessed or reported, prompt action should be taken to ensure the safety of the victim and to challenge and address the behaviour of the bully.



You should go and see someone and have it sorted and it will feel better.
Year 11 Pupil

In supporting the victim, actions may include:

- A staff member taking time to talk with the child in a safe environment in which the child feels comfortable
- Encouraging the child to discuss their preferences for how the issue is addressed
- Discussing strategies for how the child may deal with the current and any future incidents
- Gaining access to older pupils trained as a peer mentor to whom the victim may turn for help or a 'circle of friends'.
- Providing a safe play area or quiet room for younger pupils or those who feel threatened at break times
- Referring the child for support or therapeutic intervention from relevant agencies
- Actively monitoring the child to assess whether the bullying has stopped and initiating further action if required

When dealing with the bully, actions may include:

- A staff member talking to the child about their behaviour and the possible reasons for it
- Referring the child for support or therapeutic intervention from relevant agencies
- Restorative Justice where the bully will have to face up to their behaviour and consider alternative ways of behaving in the resolution of conflict
- Discussing strategies for how the child manages their feelings of anger and frustration
- Providing a safe method of releasing stress or frustration
- Actively monitoring the child to assess whether the bullying has stopped and initiating further action if required
- Serious incidents of bullying may require the removal of the bully from the class; withdrawal of privileges or participation in activities; detention; fixed period exclusion
- Involvement of the police where the bullying constitutes a crime

WORKING WITH PARENTS / CARERS

Effective liaison with parents is vital to tackle bullying successfully. Schools need to involve parents/carers at an early stage in order to explain the situation fully and parents should be informed of any bullying incident within 24 hours of it being reported to the school. Parental concerns must be taken seriously. Failure to do so can result in a formal complaint to the governing body or the local authority. Parents of a victim of bullying will want action taken. They need to be fully included in the process to prevent a serious breakdown of confidence between them and the school. Support may need to be provided for the parent/carer in working with the school over bullying issues as some parents may themselves feel intimidated by attending meetings in school or may feel worried about the consequences for their child.

Parents of children that are alleged bullies often find it hard to accept the image of their child presented by the school and deny that their child is capable of such behaviour. It is therefore important that discussions are based on well-documented evidence. Schools are able to use parenting contracts as an early intervention strategy to ensure parents tackle problem behaviour before a child/young person reaches the point of being excluded from school.