

C HAPTER 1

What this Book Will Do for You

This chapter sets the tone for the book both in style and content. It opens with an outline of the key principles that are central to the book, including that the most effective anti-bullying approaches and policies are whole-school issues. The book is full of activities which raise awareness and inform practice, and this chapter contains an outline of those activities that provide a first reference point for staff addressing bullying. Through the first activity, staff are invited to appraise the current standing of their own school on the bullying issue.

This book is designed to help all staff in schools prevent one of the major impediments to their attempts to raise standards and improve schools, and that is the issue of bullying amongst pupils. The book highlights and unravels some of the complexities of bullying and provides ideas and practical solutions to the problem of writing policy and realizing its aspirations. It has been designed and written for teachers, teaching assistants, student teachers and other educational professionals in schools who are the creators of that policy and who also are responsible for its implementation. It aims to raise awareness and develop effective policy and practice in preventing bullying by combining theory, research and experience of working in schools with a number of practical exercises which have been fine-tuned through my work with adults and children in schools. The activities included in the book provide the necessary elements of an anti-bullying policy based on effective practice.

The contents of the book are designed to:

- increase awareness and understanding of bullying;
- provide practical ideas that challenge assumptions, inspire discussion and support anti-bullying strategies undertaken in classrooms and around schools;
- inform the development of anti-bullying policies and inform practice that seeks to prevent bullying.

It offers ideas for those who work in schools and have already addressed bullying, as well as those who have yet to develop effective policy and practice in the area. With the focus on prevention it provides education professionals with opportunities to engage in activities and ideas whose effectiveness may not be measurable, since it would be impossible to quantify events that did not take place because they were prevented! It is not intended that acting upon ideas generated by this book will provide an instant set of solutions to bullying in schools – too many ideas are foisted upon professionals with an attached implication of ‘do this and you will be doing the right thing and the problem will be resolved’. This book is about professionals exploring ways forward, providing structures, systems, policies, practices and, most important of all, understanding of a highly complex issue. First, let us consider what prevention involves.

Prevention and Principles

Prevention comprises:

- collaboration between all parties, rather than the assumption that it is one person’s responsibility to ensure reconciliation, improved behaviour or, at least, an end to the bullying;
- regarding parents and caregivers as key players;
- clarity and consistency of procedures and interventions that recognize the difference that schools can make;
- empowering pupils to take responsibility for changing and maintaining their behaviour and influencing the behaviour of others;
- early intervention at the first signs of problems occurring within a relationship.

The contents of the book are based on many years and forms of research into pupils’, teachers’ and parents’ experiences and perceptions of bullying, and I am also indebted to those who have joined me on professional development days and higher degree courses that have addressed the subject. Throughout the book theory, research and practice come together and are integrated with a view to enhancing understanding of bullying and providing staff with greater knowledge and expertise. All too often those charged with writing policies on bullying do so in isolation and are the sole arbiters of content with little ownership or knowledge existing beyond the writer. Using this book provides opportunities for staff and children to work on policy generation together, with the result that it is known, understood, agreed, owned and used by all.

The ideas within are not offered as a medicine which, when taken, alleviates symptoms or completely eradicates disease, but as ways of addressing the problem of bullying in schools in an open and direct way. Included in the principles that inform what follows are my beliefs that:

- 1 *Bullying is a whole-school matter.* Any anti-bullying approach should step beyond those pupils who are directly involved. Everyone has a part to play in countering bullying in schools, and addressing it is an opportunity to review the values that the school holds as central. A recent Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED) report, HMI 465 (OFSTED, 2003), linked schools that were successful in tackling bullying with consultation with pupils and observed that the schools found that active involvement of pupils arising from consultation was a key component in any preventative approach.

- 2 *A single incident is one too many.* Numerous researchers and writers have tried to quantify the extent of the bullying problem and have focused on measuring how many children are bullies or being bullied. Indeed, there will be limited reference to statistics that help to illustrate points in this book as they provide relevant data. However, it is essential to note that measuring levels of bullying may help to monitor the effectiveness of a policy, but bullying is a qualitative experience and just one incident can have a major impact on a child, those who know about it and the school itself.
- 3 *The importance of openness and transparency.* Being open and addressing the issue of bullying directly, in an informed and imaginative way, is preferable to perceiving it as something that only affects a few pupils and is, therefore, a background matter, a problem that is of little consequence. Bullying is not a topic that is side-lined into an occasional lesson or addressed through an occasional assembly. It is about teaching and learning. Pupils being bullied are not likely to achieve their full potential, nor will those who live in fear of bullying, nor will observers or bystanders unless the problem is resolved. Even perpetrators may achieve more academically with a positive deployment of their energies.
- 4 *A policy is more than a written document.* One of the benefits of the relatively recent interest in bullying in schools has been the encouragement that pupils often receive to speak openly about it and not consider it a secretive matter. However, with more open approaches, there comes a demand that action be taken, be seen to be taken and that schools are now required to have specific anti-bullying policies in place. Reducing bullying is so much more than the writing of a policy. It requires changes in attitudes and behaviours of staff who can provide a negative model by using aggression and inappropriate power and permit bullying by not intervening. Any written statement in the form of a policy contains statements that reflect more than the management of an anti-social behaviour; they mirror the values that underpin the school and all those who work in it. It is a *live* dynamic document – one which should be referred to, written on, questioned and revised. Unfortunately, schools are compelled to address such a range of issues that policies are all too often perceived as documents not manifestations of good practice.

The Structure of the Book and How to Use It

There are six chapters:

- 1 *What this book will do for you.* This sets the scene on what has informed this book, where attempts to create bully-free classrooms and schools have reached and what this book offers for those on that journey.
- 2 *How do we know when it is bullying?* Most anti-bullying policies open with a definition in an attempt to provide focus and to distinguish between bullying and other forms of aggression. Included here are a number of ideas on generating definitions, how problematic any definition can be and how to explore meaning as part of policy generation.

- 3 *Who are involved in bullying?* This chapter is a look at the traditional idea that bullies and victims are the involved group and provides helpful insights and advice. It then moves on to suggest that it is the bystander that has much to offer and that this term applies to pupils, staff and parents.
- 4 *What is needed in an anti-bullying policy.* This is an examination of the process of developing a policy as well as suggestions as to what a policy might contain.
- 5 *What might be put in place.* This is an account of a number of ways in which bullying can be countered and includes ways in which approaches may be introduced into the school.
- 6 *How to move your school forward.* This is a summary of the main themes, and some pointers towards the future.

Within each chapter is a *discussion* of the main issues that include advice for professionals, areas of debate and rationales for ideas, plus *findings* from professional development projects and research undertaken in schools and enhanced by a variety of tables that illustrate ideas and promote discussion. In addition, there are the *activities* for staff and pupils that inform professional development, and exercises that raise awareness and understanding in the classroom and beyond. These activities state whether they are designed for staff, pupils or both, but can be adapted to your own specific context. You will find it useful to appoint a co-ordinator to facilitate organization, discussion and decisions reached, but they do not have to be the policy-writer or the resident 'anti-bullying expert', indeed that is not a helpful model. Sharing the task of co-ordinating activities mirrors the model that we *all* have a responsibility to make a difference, not foist the role on the resident expert. If we are looking for experts, look no further than the pupil who gets called names all day long, or has his or her possessions taken or is socially ostracized, or all of these. They are the experts.

The Activities

Prior to undertaking any activity, staff involved in developing an anti-bullying policy and in tackling bullying should refer to the Index of Activities in the book (page 5) and select the activities that would form a professional development programme that addresses areas that require more awareness and enhanced practice. Completion of the activities will lead to completion of an anti-bullying policy and so much more than that, as they aim to provide insights into staff knowledge and values and also ideas and experiences of children. The index helps in the selection of the activities and whether they are designed for staff, pupils or can be used for both. Many of those designed for staff can be adapted for use with pupils, although some are clearly not suited. One process that helps to facilitate progress through the activities is to invite participants to undertake discussion in groups of three or five. They are working with concepts of majority decision and the idea that to disagree and have a minority viewpoint is legitimate. This not only helps to facilitate decisions, but also models good practice in creating arenas in which there is a voice for all. Nearly all the activities in the book require large sheets of paper and felt-tip pens for groups and whole staff or classes to record decisions, problems or ideas. Most will also require photocopies of materials specified within the activity itself.

Index of Activities

Focus of activity	Page(s)
At what level is the school addressing bullying? Staff assess their school's current performance in anti-bullying policy and practice.	7
Definitions from the literature. Staff are asked to construct their own definition and compare it with definitions from research and professional literature.	12
Working with incidents to construct a definition – set A. Participants use a variety of incidents to raise awareness of the language used in bullying and use it to review their own definitions.	14
Working with incidents to construct a definition – set B. Similar to the previous activity but a wider range of incidents that need to be designated as 'bullying', 'could be bullying' and 'not bullying'.	16
Who are the victims? Staff discuss who are the victims in their classes or pastoral groups and why it is they are singled out.	32
Who should change their behaviour? Staff consider whether it is the responsibility of victims to change their behaviour and/or in what circumstances they might be asked to do so.	33
Edward – case study of a victim of bullying. Staff consider the best strategies to adopt in dealing with a victim of bullying.	36
Working with parents. Staff consider how best they can provide support for parents whose children are involved in bullying as bullies, victims or both.	39
Bystanders: the keys to the solution? Staff look at the reasons (excuses?) that are offered by both adults and children for not dealing with bullying that they know about and the implications for policy.	44
Pupils' views on the importance of dealing with bullying. Pupils consider, with the aid of a table of comments, why they think bullying should be countered.	46
What action parents think staff and pupils should take. With the aid of a table of comments staff consider what actions parents think they and their pupils should undertake to counter bullying.	49
Preparing to write an anti-bullying policy. A consideration of fundamental questions such as the values of the school, who should be involved in policy generation and other preparatory matters.	55
The pro-bullying and the anti-bullying school. A self-evaluation of the school and what exists within the school that prevents, permits or even actively promotes bullying. The version included here is aimed at staff but is easily adapted for pupils.	56
The components of an anti-bullying policy. Staff are invited to consider a list of components that might form the elements of their anti-bullying policy and add anything that they think might have been omitted.	58
'True for you': statements on bullying for pupils' consideration. Pupils are asked to look at numerous statements about bullying and decide on their responses to the statements.	61
Planning to gather data on bullying. Staff or staff and pupils plan the gathering of data including methods, participants and processes.	67
Enhancing the role of meal-time assistants. A consideration of comments made by teachers and pupils on the role and status of MTAs as a basis for reviewing and enhancing their role.	71
The drawbacks of punishing bullies. Staff consider the drawbacks of punishment, with the notion of restorative justice to inform discussion.	74
The no blame approach and the shared concern method. Staff consider their responses to both approaches and link findings to age of pupils, modifications required to the approach, if any, and the implications for working with parents.	80
Setting up a peer mediation project. Staff consider a range of issues that will inform the development of an action plan that informs the introduction of peer mediation in the school.	91

Where Are You in your Handling of Bullying? The Four Types of School

Any teacher wishing to pursue a study of bullying 20 years ago would have found a paucity of literature on the subject, but since the pioneering work of Olweus in Scandinavian, and the subsequent Sheffield Project in the UK, there have been several books and many research papers that inform practice and anti-bullying policies. They have helped schools and colleges to develop and undertake innovative schemes. However, there remain schools and staff within schools who do not know how best to deal with bullying and, even worse, a few who appear not to care.

A recent piece of research (Oliver and Candappa, 2003) funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) concluded that over half of secondary and primary pupils considered bullying to be a problem. High levels of being bullied were reported in many year groups, 28 per cent in Year 8 and 51 per cent in Year 5. Such variation and levels are linked to how bullying is defined, who defines it and what research instrument is used. I will return to these themes later. What was even more significant was that a 'considerable variation was reported in the level of bullying between schools' (Oliver and Candappa, 2003, p. 5). Schools then make a difference and it follows that, within schools, how teachers and other staff work with their pupils, manage their classes and deal with bullying will also make a difference. One of the positive findings of the research was that most pupils expressed positive views about how schools handled incidents. However, there are inconsistencies at individual and school level. There is a small number of adults who say 'it is not my problem' and see it as simply a matter between pupils that they should resolve themselves and that it is a natural part of the social maturation process. Others see it as another issue they have to confront alongside the myriad of topics and innovations which schools are compelled to embrace and act upon. Finally, there are those adults who perceive how pupils feel and what they experience socially and emotionally as an integral part of the learning and the school experience. To them a pupil who is being bullied will be inhibited in their learning and will be failing to derive full academic, social and emotional benefit from being at school.

The attitudes of staff and the culture they nurture will influence which anti-bullying strategies 'best fit' the school, and it is highly likely that anti-bullying practices in themselves help to facilitate change in the school culture. For example, a school that is prepared to look to peer mediation to resolve bullying conveys a clear message that countering bullying is the responsibility of everyone and also that pupils can be trained in skills that mean they are given the power to bring about conflict resolution. It is unlikely to work in a school in which power rests solely with a single person or a small senior management team and the voice of the pupil is neither sought after nor heard, and it is hard to imagine extensive pupil involvement in a school in which the tone is authoritarian and staff themselves feel bullied.

Bullying is a complex subject that arouses high emotions and the language used to describe it demonstrates the range of views held. For some it is a 'scourge' (Pervin and Turner, 1994), others view it as 'The Silent Nightmare' (Smith, 1991). Alternatively, there are those who, whilst they do not sanction it, ask that we should regard it as 'normal' (Maines and

Robinson, 1991). Just as it is regarded differently by individuals, so schools have also responded in different ways. I have noticed that there are basically four stances that schools adopt towards-bullying, although they may also represent stages that they go through as they develop practice.

- 1 Denial: 'it is not a problem here'.
- 2 Token: 'we have a policy somewhere'.
- 3 Moving: 'we have well thought through policy and practice'.
- 4 Motoring: 'we have clear policy and practices that all know and feel ownership of'.

It would be easy to be swept along a course that leads to Stage 4, but not all schools would see it as either desirable or necessary to bring such radical change to their culture. It may be that this stage needs to be worked towards gradually as part of a programme that invites pupils to have increased responsibility and influence and also perceives their anti-bullying policies to be part of a democratic ethos. A further problem is that of perception, for certain staff might consider the school to be at Stage 1, whilst others feel that the school has a more enlightened approach. Related to notions of inconsistency are the perceptions of parents who also need to know about the school's approach and what ideas and strategies predominate. If they perceive the school to be at a different stage of development or are unaware of how the school addresses bullying, then tensions are inevitable.

ACTIVITY

At what level is the school addressing bullying?

Participants: Staff

Time: 40 minutes

Equipment: List of questions on sheet or transparency, copies of the table **The four stages of school development in dealing with bullying**, large sheets of paper and felt-tip pens.

A facilitator distributes copies of the table amongst staff who consider, in small groups, the following questions and record findings on large sheets of paper.

- 1 At what stage is this school currently performing?
- 2 What stage should it aim to achieve?
- 3 If there is a difference between (2) and (1), what needs to be put in place to achieve (2)?
- 4 What are the implications of differing views?

Following that, display the sheets, share views and feedback areas of agreement and difference of opinion, and from this devise three key areas which need addressing.

The four stages of school development in dealing with bullying

<p>1 Denial</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a policy somewhere, written by someone, some time ago; ■ bullying is not a problem in this school, but is viewed as a natural part of the growing up process; ■ little can or should be done about it; ■ if it were to be a concern for us it is important that we keep the issue 'in-house'; ■ being open about our anti-bullying approach would imply that it is a problem and could be bad publicity for the school.
<p>2 Token</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There is a policy, written by a nominated person following a professional development day; ■ it is occasionally waved in front of parents and the inspectors; ■ few people know what it says, but many rest secure that bullying has been discussed; ■ one 'expert' is identified as dealing with the issue and they were the creative force behind the written policy.
<p>3 Moving</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The issue is taken seriously and there is a regular review of the policy which incorporates advice and support for pupils, parents and staff; ■ staff share effective practice and materials that they have found useful; ■ preventative practices are in place; ■ ways of dealing with it that are known by adults and pupils in the school.
<p>4 Motoring</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The school has clear policy and practices that all know, helped to create and feel ownership of; ■ it self-monitors by gathering data about the experience of key players, including parents. All acknowledge that there is bullying beyond the school; nonetheless, staff and pupils combat it in school by constantly adapting, revisiting and experimenting; ■ there is recognition of the importance of involving a wider community and of the value of sharing effective practice with parents and other significant parties; ■ preventing bullying forms part of a programme that focuses on involving and empowering pupils in playing a positive role in school and making wise choices throughout their lives; ■ pupils are supported in developing strategies that not only provide personal protection, but also develop positive peer relationships; ■ preventing bullying is synonymous with promoting an ethos in which all pupils who attend the school value and respect each other.