PDST
Professional Development Service for Teachers | An tSeirbhís um Fhorbairt Ghairmiúil do Mhúinteoirí

Anti-Bullying Support Material

Primary Resource

> *The role of the school is to provide an appropriate education for all its pupils. A stable, secure learning environment is an essential requirement to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education. Research shows that bullying can have short and long-term effects on the physical and mental well-being of pupils, on engagement with school, on self-confidence and on the ability to pursue ambitions and interests."*
>
> (Department of Education and Skills Anti Bullying Procedures, 2013; 1.1)

Introduction

This PDST anti-bullying support material is intended to be used by schools to assist them in the implementation of the Department of Education and Skills Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013).

Key to addressing bullying, within the school environment, is the fostering of an ethos under which bullying is unacceptable. A school wide anti-bullying ethos is enhanced and supported by:

- The development of a school wide anti-bullying policy.
- A climate that encourages the disclosure of bullying behaviour.
- Anti-bullying awareness raising measures amongst teachers, students and parents.
- A school wide agreement regarding procedures and supports.
- Collaboration with local agencies.
- Ongoing evaluation of the overall effectiveness of the anti-bullying work.

The DES anti-bullying procedures recommend a school wide approach to dealing with bullying behaviour as a key element of best practice.

"School-based bullying can be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour. While it is recognised that home and societal factors play a substantial role both in the cause and in the prevention of bullying, the role of the school in preventative work is also crucial and should not be underestimated." (DES, 2013; 1.1.2)

In accordance with the procedures, parents and pupils have an important role in supporting the school in addressing bullying behaviour and in dealing with any negative impact within school of bullying behaviour that occurs elsewhere.

"This is not a problem schools can solve alone... bullying is a complex social issue and can occur in many different settings including in the home, in wider family and social groups and

during sporting and youth club activities" (Action Plan on Bullying, 2013, p.10).

Key principles of best practice in preventing and tackling bullying behaviour

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) Anti-Bullying Procedures outline key principles of best practice for both preventing and tackling bullying and require all schools to commit to these principles in their anti-bullying policy. The key principles are:

- positive school culture and climate which
  - is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity
  - encourages pupils to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour in a non-threatening environment
  - promotes respectful relationships across the school community.
- effective leadership
- a school-wide approach
- a shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- implementation of education and prevention strategies (including awareness raising measures) that-build empathy, respect and resilience in pupils; and explicitly address the issues of cyber-bullying and identity-based bullying including in particular, homophobic and transphobic bullying;
- effective supervision and monitoring of pupils;
- supports for staff
- consistent recording, investigation and follow up of bullying behaviour (including use of established intervention strategies)
- on-going evaluation of the effectiveness of the anti-bullying policy (Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools).

Definition of bullying

In accordance with the 2013 Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools bullying is defined as "unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time.

The following types of bullying behaviour are included in this non-exhaustive definition:

- deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- cyber-bullying
- identity-based bullying such as homophobic bullying, racist bullying, bullying based on a person's membership of the Traveller community and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs.

In addition, in the context of these procedures placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image, or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people will be regarded as bullying behaviour.

Isolated or once-off incidents of intentional negative behaviour including a once-off offensive or hurtful text message or other private messaging do not fall within this definition of bullying and should be dealt with, as appropriate, in accordance with the school's code of behaviour. (DES, 2013, 2.1)

Bullying; indicators, frequency and effects

Anyone can be a victim of bullying. Students are bullied because they are perceived as different in some way - appearance or mannerisms or simply because they do not 'fit in'. Having a disability, physical or intellectual leaves a child vulnerable. The students of overly protective or overly domineering parents also seem to be subjected to bullying more than others.

Most students who are picked on constantly are anxious, insecure, or provocative. Provocative victims may be bullies themselves. Some talented students who are high achievers also are subjected to bullying, often out of jealousy on the part of perpetrators. The following indicators may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

Physical Indicators

- unexplained bruising, cuts etc.
- loss of/ damage to personal property
- hunger or thirst
- frequent minor illnesses, headaches, tummy aches
- bedwetting
- loss of appetite
- obsessive behaviour, physical appearance, weight
- stammering
- Requests for extra money.

School Related Indicators:

- reluctance to go, wanting to be accompanied
- returning in bad form
- changing route
- avoiding certain days/lessons
- nervousness in class
- punctuality problems
- poor concentration
- deterioration in school work
- expressions of hopelessness
- fewer phone calls, friends calling, invitations.

Emotional/Psychological Indicators

- outbursts of anger, temper, irritability at home
- bullying brother and sisters, parents
- well behaved child suddenly troublesome
- signs of depression
- changes in: mood, appetite, sleep pattern
- tiredness, neglect of appearance,
- expressions of sadness, worthlessness

Frequency of bullying

The table below outlines the percentage of young people in Ireland who reported in a World Health Organisation study that they had bullied others occasionally and frequently in the previous couple of months (WHO, 2014).

Bullied Others	GIRLS			BOYS		
	11 yrs	13 yrs	15 yrs	11 yrs	13 yrs	15 yrs
Occasionally	14%	16%	18%	24%	32%	31%
Frequently	1%	2%	3%	6%	8%	8%

Meanwhile the following table outlines the percentage of young people in Ireland who reported in a World Health Organisation study that they had have been bullied occasionally and frequently in the previous couple of months (WHO, 2014).

Have been bullied	GIRLS			BOYS		
	11 yrs	13 yrs	15 yrs	11 yrs	13 yrs	15 yrs
Occasionally	31%	23%	18%	30%	32%	23%
Frequently	9%	7%	5%	11%	12%	6%

The following table outlines the findings of a number of research studies carried out in Ireland on the extent of bullying amongst school going students.

Percentage	Age Cohort	Source
40%	9 year olds	Growing up in Ireland Study, 2009
23%	9-16 year olds face to face bullying	EU Kids Online, 2011
4%	9-16 year olds Cyber bullied	EU Kids Online 2011
22%	9-16 year olds on and off line	Net Students Go Mobile 2014
32%	10-17 year olds Traveller young people	State of the Nation's Students report 2012

Effects of bullying on individuals

The effects of bullying on individuals are many and varied. In the following table, these effects are outlined under three headings: Physical, Social, and Psychological.

Physical	Physical ill health (Rigby 1999)
	Physical injury (Olweus & Limber 2000)
	Aggression/Violence (Olweus 1994)
	Damage to personal belongings or loss of property
Social	Loss of confidence
	Loneliness (Hawker & Boulton, 2000)
	Low self-esteem (Ross 1996)
	Social isolation (Rigby 1996)
	Social anxiety (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).
Psychological	Fear (Olweus 1993)
	Generalized anxiety (Rigby 1996)
	Anger (Rigby 1996)(Borg 1998)
	Depression (strong predictor of peer victimisation (James, 2003)
	Suicidal thoughts or behaviour (James 2003)

Students with Special Educational Needs (SEN)

Students with SEN and/or disabilities are more likely to be victims of bullying. They may have behaviours or characteristics that may make them more vulnerable to bullying.

The Action Plan on Bullying 2013 outlines some of the recent research in relation to the high levels of bullying amongst students with SEN. In particular, it highlights the prevalence of bullying of students with Autism. A recent study (Tippett et al, 2010) of parents of students with autism found that two in five students with autism experience bullying and that for high functioning students with autism this figure went to almost three in five. The study also found that boys were more vulnerable and students in mainstream settings are more likely to experience bullying.

School Wide Approach to Prevention

The most effective way for schools to raise awareness and prevent bullying behaviour is through a school wide approach, which encompasses classroom practices, curriculum implementation, and individual pupil needs. The following section is designed to assist schools to implement the main elements of a school wide approach to bullying.

The National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) continuum of support documents for primary and post primary schools may also be useful resources to schools in this area:

- Special Educational Needs – A Continuum of Support Guidelines for Teachers and Resource Pack (Primary)
- Behavioural, Emotional and Social Difficulties – A Continuum of Support (Primary)
- A Continuum of Support for Post Primary.

According to Dr. Ken Rigby, the international expert on bullying behaviour, there are two aspects to the task of reducing bullying:

- the proactive or preventive aspect
- reactive aspects using effective intervention methods.

The proactive or preventive aspect.

This is concerned with how schools can help pupils to establish and maintain more positive relationships with each other and deal more adequately with interpersonal conflict. It includes work in classrooms with pupils to develop greater empathy, to act assertively when necessary, to become more resilient, and to help others who are being bullied, for example, through positive bystander behaviour. All this can help to reduce the number of cases of bullying that may otherwise require intervention by the school.

Reactive aspects to counteract bullying that require the use of effective methods of intervention with cases of bullying.

Research in England, Australia, and the US concurs in claiming that interventions are frequently unsuccessful. About 30 per cent of students reported having been bullied to teachers but around 50 per cent of students have indicated through anonymous surveys that their telling did not result in their situation improving.

School climate and culture

The DES Anti-Bullying procedures outline the centrality of respectful relationships across the entire school community including pupils, staff, parents, and management.

> *"A cornerstone in the prevention of bullying is a positive school culture and climate that is welcoming of difference and diversity and is based on inclusivity and respect". (DES, 2013; 6.1)*

In addition, building positive relationships of mutual respect and mutual support among students, staff, and parents is one of the principles underpinning an effective Code of Behaviour (National Education Welfare Board, (NEWB) 2008).

It is therefore incumbent on schools to consider the strategies and initiatives that ought to be in place to ensure the promotion of and the development of a positive school culture and climate.

The key elements of a positive school culture and climate are outlined in Table A, Chapter 6 of the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures (2013) and Appendix 2 outlines some practical tips for building a positive school culture and climate. Further recommendations on actions that schools may undertake to promote positive relationships can be found in the NEWB, *Developing a Code of Behaviour: Guidelines for Schools* (2008) and in "*Well-Being in Post Primary Schools- Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention*" (NEPS, DES, DOH, HSE, 2013).

(Similar Well-being guidelines for the primary sector will be issued to schools over the coming months.)

The characteristics of schools that display a high level of confidence in their willingness and ability to resolve bullying issues are set down in the Ofsted, 2012, report. In summary the report found that these schools

- Paid particularly close attention to pupils' views about behaviour and experiences of bullying, and took action in response.
- Gave pupils a range of structured opportunities to take responsibility for others in the school.
- Systematically taught pupils strategies to manage their own relationships with others and to resolve conflicts (Ofsted,2012).

Monitoring supervision and pastoral care

Effective monitoring and supervision will help reduce incidents of bullying in the school. There are many examples of pastoral care in and across the school setting. A strong support system in a school can be the vital first step in addressing difficulties, whether through providing in-school interventions or through involving specialist services. *Student Support Teams in Post-Primary Schools: A Guide to Establishing a Team or Reviewing an*

> *A high degree of school-wide vigilance and openness is important in ensuring that bullying behaviour can be adequately tackled. (DES, 2013; 6.3.3)*

Existing Team (National Educational Psychological Service, (NEPs) 2014) will support schools in developing a system for this.

Role of bystanders

Bystanders or witnesses play important roles in the dynamic of bullying. According to one study (Pepler & Craig, 1997), 85% of bullying takes place with bystanders present. The same study found that nearly 60% of the time bullying would stop in less than ten seconds when peers intervene. However, another study (Pepler & Craig, 1997) showed that bystanders attempted to intervene less than 20% of the time.

Thornberg (2007) gave the following reasons for student's inaction to another student's distress:

- seeing an incident as insignificant or normal
- feeling that it has nothing to do with them because they weren't involved in the incident or aren't friends with the victim
- not wanting to add to the embarrassment of the victim or to incur personal embarrassment
- not getting involved because no one else is doing anything,
- wanting to get on with their own work
- compliance with existing routines or behaviours
- because they feel it is someone else's responsibility.

However, when a bystander intervenes to support the victims or let the bully know that their behaviour is unacceptable, this action can inspire positive action by other bystanders and can reduce the negative effects of bullying on the victim.

Research (Menesini et al, 2003) has shown that bystanders can be influenced by teachers to intervene when they witness bullying behaviour and this is more likely to occur when peer group pressure is mobilised to bring this about.

In relation to cyber bullying, the distinction between bystanders and active participants can be less distinct. Responsibility often goes beyond the person who creates and posts harmful content online. Sharing, or commenting on content on social networking websites or joining, subscribing, or following online sources of content intended to humiliate or harm individuals can also be considered bullying behaviour.

The school-wide approach should aim to seek to change behaviour and encourage students to report bullying and change anti-bullying attitudes to anti-bullying behaviour.

Given that most bystanders already hold anti-bullying attitudes or beliefs, intervention strategies could potentially utilise these to encourage bystanders to act in supporting victims of bullying when it is witnessed. By raising awareness of their role as bystanders and

increasing understanding of the impacts of bullying on victims, bystanders can be encouraged to help to reduce bullying among the peer group. However, they need to be taught how to respond in a safe and constructive way. A shared understanding of clear reporting processes is important.

> While bullying can happen to any pupil, it is known that some may be more vulnerable to or at risk of experiencing bullying. Such vulnerable groups include pupils with disabilities or special educational needs, those from ethnic minority and migrant groups, pupils from the Traveller community, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) pupils and those perceived to be LGBT and pupils of minority religious faiths. . (DES, 2013; 4.3.2)

Vulnerabilities of children with special educational needs (SEN): including exceptionally able pupils and dual exceptionality

Pupils with SEN are more vulnerable for many reasons including

- the prevalence of language processing deficits in pupils with SEN can be 10 times higher than in the general population
- limited understanding of social cues and normal social mores
- social, language and communication skills emerge as key issues in much of the bullying that affects pupils with SEN and/or disabilities
- transfer of learning often compromised – inability to generalize
- SEN students are more trusting and naïve
- lack of understanding with regard to being victimized and also perpetrating bullying behaviour
- SEN students may give out private information- cyberbullying.

Children with SEN need specific consideration as part of the school wide approach to bullying. For example, it may be appropriate to adopt a school wide policy on the explicit teaching of targeted skills.

In addition, a school-wide approach has to be considered with regard to supervision and monitoring by staff with specific focus on the additional vigilance required around SEN

pupils. In some instances it may be necessary to assign staff to monitor areas considered to be bullying 'hot spots'.

A school-wide approach to the development of protocols to be adopted in less structured situations may also be appropriate in countering bullying behaviours e.g. school yard friendship stop; playground cops; buddy system etc.

Promoting and maintaining an anti-bullying culture – some initiatives

Confidential questionnaires

This is the simplest and most obvious way of discovering who needs help in dealing with bullying in school and can be a very useful within a school-wide approach. Schools can act proactively by using this questionnaire with all the students once a month or once a term. This can help create a climate where students can believe that it is safe to tell in their school, that bullying is clearly seen as unacceptable, that teachers take bullying seriously and that those involved in bullying will receive help.

Every student in a group fills in the anti-bullying questionnaire privately and discreetly at the same time. As well as providing students with the chance to self-disclose about bullying, they can also be given the opportunity to peer-disclose; a crucial aspect in empowering bystanders to act pro-socially on behalf of others.

Questionnaires could also be answered at home, signed by parents and returned in a sealed envelope to the school.

Friendship week

A well-planned friendship week can be extremely effective in highlighting the school's attitude to bullying behaviours as being unacceptable, while simultaneously promoting positive attitudes of co-operation, friendship, and mutual respect across all the relationships within the school community. This whole-school focus is cross-curricular and also draws in the wider community of parents. A well-run friendship week can pay a huge dividend in terms of excitement and fun in the school. However, perhaps more importantly, it can help

improve the atmosphere and ethos within a school and sends a clear message to all staff, students and parents that the school is being pro-active on bullying, that bullying is unacceptable, that it's ok to talk about bullying and that people will be given help.

Anti-bullying agreement

Formulating a school anti-bullying agreement can be a useful strategy for raising awareness amongst the school community about bullying behaviours and procedures that are in place for dealing with bullying behaviour. Pupils, parents, and staff should all be required to sign up to the agreement. A sample anti-bullying agreement can be found in the appendix.

School surveys

A bullying sociogram (see explanation below), a class observation form, and/or a bullying questionnaire can be very useful in determining the prevalence of bullying behaviour in the school or indeed issues related to bullying behaviour. Where a specific technique such as the bullying sociogram or class observation form are being used to respond to a particular situation in a class, it is important that all teachers involved with the pupils are informed of the approach being taken and are given appropriate feedback.

Bullying sociogram

A sociogram is a useful strategy for understanding relationships in a class or group. The method employed is to ask each student a series of questions to uncover the social dynamic in a class, thus identifying positive and negative influences in the group. It can help identify the power structure among the students, the levels of bullying and victimisation, the students involved in the bullying and the students at risk. Having identified the often hidden dynamic within a class, the teacher is better placed to identify strengths within the group, empower bystanders, and encourage mutual support between students. A sociogram can be used in a proactive pastoral approach (preventative) or as an immediate response to bullying, that is non-confrontational and can help reduce the possibility of retaliation. It is also useful in situations where teachers need to approach a particular problem obliquely or subtly because of fear on the part of a victim. Alternatively, it may be used as a monitoring

mechanism at regular intervals with class groupings. A sample Bullying Sociogram can be found in the Appendix C.

Anti-bullying/ friendship questionnaire:
A confidential pupil survey on bullying can help the school discover the extent, location, frequency, and nature of bullying behaviour. Individual class teachers/year head may administer the survey. A sample survey is provided in the appendices.

Peer mentoring:
Many young people, parents, and teachers (Cassidy et al., 2013) support the concept of peer mentoring programmes. However, these interventions will only be effective if mentors are given sufficient training to mentor their peers and ongoing support from adults throughout the process (Thompson & Smith, 2010). This is especially important given the finding that some peer led interventions can lead to an increase in victimisation (Farrington & Ttofi, 2009). Peer mentoring, and other peer led interventions, should not be seen as a stand-alone intervention that can be useful in preventing cyberbullying without a corresponding effort on the part of school authorities in creating an open and trusting environment for all students where they are confident in reporting experiences of cyberbullying to the relevant authorities. They also need to be monitored by school authorities to ensure they are being conducted in the ways intended as in some cases they can create conflict within mentoring groups (Paul, Smith & Blumberg, 2010).

Classroom Based Prevention

In addition to the school-wide approach, specific consideration needs to be given to how, within the classroom, awareness with regard to bullying behaviour can be addressed and prevented.

Classroom management and organisation

An important aspect of any anti-bullying prevention in the classroom is the active involvement of students in formulating rules and sanctions for those found to be in breach of the rules. In building a positive school climate in which students feel empowered it is important to acknowledge the crucial role that students themselves play in creating such an atmosphere.

National and international research has consistently shown that the qualified classroom teacher is the best-placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that s/he can have a powerful impact on influencing student's attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education.

The creation of a safe and caring classroom environment where the rules, rights and responsibilities of all are equally respected is fundamental. Students need to be clear on their rights and responsibilities in relation to bullying behaviour within the classroom and to have clear expectations on how issues will be dealt with by the class teacher.

While teachers are ultimately responsible for behaviour in the classroom and must not tolerate bullying behaviour research shows that students respond better in situations where they have a vested interest in the rules that apply and feel better empowered to oversee their enforcement. Involving students in the formulation of class rules helps build respect and pro-social behaviours. Rules should be clear, simple, and applicable to all.

> "There is space within the teaching of all subjects to: foster an attitude of respect for all; promote value for diversity; address prejudice and stereotyping; and to highlight that bullying behaviour is unacceptable". (Action Plan on Bullying, 2013)

Classroom rules and responsibilities need to set out the behaviour expected of pupils in the classroom, playground, and school. Clear examples of bullying behaviour must be made explicit to pupils, including cyberbullying, identity based and homophobic bullying. The class rules must make it clear that pupils are expected to 'say no' to anything that they think is wrong and to report their concerns to the class teacher. Suggestions for lessons to develop a class anti-bullying agreement can be found in SPHE Resources such as the Stay Safe and Walk Tall programmes (primary) and the Cool School Lessons (Post-Primary).

It is good practice to display rules / rights and responsibilities on the walls of classrooms – see them as the 'golden rules' or a 'classroom charter'.

The consistent application of rules promotes positive relationships between students and teachers within the classroom and ensures an 'ethic of care' within the classroom where students realise that the teacher takes bullying seriously.

Social Personal and Health Education

Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is the overarching context for anti-bullying work in schools. SPHE is intended to support the personal development, health, and well-being of young people and help them to create and maintain supportive relationships. It is an aspect of the school curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming students' attitudes and values and skills. The flexible framework proposed in SPHE enables schools to plan and implement positive measures in the way best suited to their individual needs. There are provisions within the primary and secondary school curricula to prevent victimisation and harm among students. For primary schools the 'Stay Safe' programme works to enhance the self-protective skills of students across a range of situations and encourages telling an adult when harmful situations arise. The SPHE curriculum is a mandatory component of both the primary curriculum and the current junior cycle curriculum at post-primary. SPHE is designed to promote the personal development and well-being of students and time can be allocated to focus on issues around bullying including conflict resolution, friendship, safety and, relationships.

Opportunities can be found to address issues relevant to bullying across other curriculum areas e.g. through the Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE) in secondary schools-issues such as privacy, rights and responsibilities and raising awareness of bullying and its impacts are addressed.

In addition to the formal implementation of curricula that specifically address bullying informal opportunities should be used to address situations as they arise.

SPHE curriculum and pupils with SEN

Due to the increased vulnerabilities of pupils with SEN, special consideration needs to be given to how these pupils can be better enabled to achieve the learning outcomes of the SPHE curriculum. Some SEN pupils may need more time to explore the concepts in the lessons and/or more opportunities to develop strategies and skills needed for their protection. To that end personal safety and anti –bullying lessons should be revisited by resource/ learning support teachers on a one-to-one basis or in a small group situation as appropriate.

In addition, the NCCA Guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities may provide additional support for teachers in differentiating for SEN pupils
Resources available at www.ncca.ie or www.sess.ie/resources/curricular-material/

SPHE curriculum primary:

Bullying and matters related to bullying behaviour are addressed across the SPHE Curriculum under a number of strand units such as: Safety and Protection, Making Decisions, Relating to Others, My Friends and Other People and Media Education. Other strand units of the SPHE Curriculum promote the further development of issues related to bullying e.g. feeling and emotions and self-identity. The consistent application of a two year SPHE cycle will ensure that pupils are afforded the opportunity to explore all strand units of the SPHE Curriculum in their entirety.

Primary Curriculum Resources

Stay Safe Programme

The Child Abuse Prevention Programme (CAPP)-Stay Safe is a primary school based approach to the prevention of child abuse. The aim of the programme is to reduce vulnerability to child abuse and bullying through the provision of a personal safety education programme for students at primary school level, continuing professional development for teachers, and training for Boards of Management and information sessions for parents.

The Stay Safe programme itself is a personal safety skills programme designed for use with primary school students from Junior Infants through to sixth class. The programme seeks to enhance students' self-protective skills by participation in lessons on safe and unsafe situations, bullying, inappropriate touch, secrets, telling and stranger danger.

The programme aims to give students the skills necessary to enable them to recognise and resist abuse/victimisation and teaches them that they should always tell (an adult that can help) about any situation that they find unsafe, upsetting, threatening, dangerous or abusive.

The DES *Circular 0065/2011 Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools* requires that all primary schools fully implement the Stay Safe programme.

The revised Stay Safe Programme (due to be made available to all primary schools in 2015) will provide comprehensive anti-bullying lessons for all class levels through which pupils can explore bullying behaviour (including homophobic, identity based and cyber bullying) and develop skills and strategies to enable them to deal with it.

For further information: staysafe@pdst.ie / www.staysafe.ie; Tel: 01 6206347

Walk Tall Programme

The original Walk Tall classroom materials were devised in the mid-1990s on foot of a Ministerial Task Force Report (1996) which recommended that substance misuse preventative strategies should be put in place as early as possible in the classroom. The original aims of the Walk Tall were to give students the confidence, skills, attitudes, and knowledge to make healthy choices in their lives. The updated programme (due to be

available for primary schools in 2015) has been broadened in terms of tailoring the classroom materials to a more diverse pupil population, updating some of the content (e.g. stories), and making the link between Walk Tall and the content objectives of the SPHE Curriculum (1999) more explicit in order to assist classroom planning. The Programme combines skills, knowledge, values, and attitudes in an age-appropriate, developmental set of materials that are both practical and comprehensive. The content is delivered through a variety of active learning strategies, all of which facilitate engagement and enjoyment by pupils. Detailed lesson plans are provided to support the class teacher in delivery of the Programme. The Programme now covers many aspects of the SPHE curriculum.

For further information: healthandwellbeing@pdst.ie Tel: 053-9239105

Relationships and Sexuality Education

The Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) resource materials are based on the Interim Curriculum and Guidelines for Relationships and Sexuality Education prepared by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

RSE is part of SPHE. RSE provides children with structured opportunities to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values, beliefs and practical skills necessary to establish and sustain healthy personal relationships as children and, subsequently, as adults.

RSE seeks to provide children with opportunities to acquire knowledge and understanding of relationships and human sexuality, through processes which will enable them to form values and establish behaviours within a moral, spiritual and social framework agreed upon by the partnership of parents/guardians, teachers and Boards of Management during the formulation of an RSE policy in each school.

 There are two Strands in the RSE Curriculum and Guidelines: "Myself" and "Myself and Others". Within these Strands the topics are arranged in Strand Units. Under "Myself" the Strand Units include self-esteem, growing and changing, new life, feelings and emotions, keeping safe and making decisions. Under "Myself and Others" the topics are based on relationships with family, friends and other people.

For further information: healthandwellbeing@pdst.ie ; Tel 053-9239105

Webwise Primary Programme

The Webwise Primary School Programme has been specifically designed for primary school teachers who wish to introduce internet safety into their teaching of the SPHE curriculum — This Education Programme has been developed to assist and support educators when teaching students about the safe and responsible uses of the Internet. It is envisaged that the Webwise Education Programme will be taught as part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum in schools for students between the ages of 8 and 12.

To order a free copy hard copy or download the resource visit:

www.webwise.ie/teachers/resources/

Webwise Anti-Cyber Bullying Primary Pack:

Webwise, the internet safety initiative of the PDST has developed the *Webwise Anti-Cyber Bullying Pack* in 2014 to help schools to engage upper primary school students on the topic of cyber bullying. This pack supports schools with the prevention and awareness raising measures on all aspects of cyber bullying required by the Action Plan on Bullying.

This resource aims to give pupils opportunities to recognise cyber bullying and empathise with the people involved in cyber bullying, to encourage them to act responsibly online and seek help when they encounter cyber bullying, and explore the strong emotions that can lead to and be caused by cyber bullying.

The centrepiece of the resource are three animated case studies and associated lesson plans that help teachers to integrate the topic of cyber bullying into the implementation of the SPHE curriculum in their school. The resource helps students develop the necessary skills, understanding to be responsible, socially conscious, and effective internet users, as they explore social networks for the first time. In particular, it helps teachers to build empathy, respect, and resilience in students.

To order a free copy hard copy or download the resource visit:

www.webwise.ie/teachers/resources/

Garda Primary Schools Programme

The Garda Schools Programme is an education programme for fifth class pupils in Primary Schools throughout the country. It promotes sensible and responsible behaviour and fosters a positive attitude towards the Gardaí. It achieves this through visiting the classroom and engaging in discussion with the students.

The programme consists of a series of presentations given to the school students by their local Gardaí on the role of the Garda, road/cycle Safety, bullying, vandalism, personal safety, drugs, and crime prevention.

In 2012, the Garda Primary Schools programme introduced a new initiative called 'Respectful Online Communication'. This initiative addresses the personal safety issues that arise through communicating using media and technology. It aims to foster a sense of care and respect for others online and to equip students with the skills to deal effectively with cyber bullying.

E mail: schoolsprogramme@garda.ie 01-6663891 or contact your local Garda station

Using external resources

National and international research has consistently shown that the qualified classroom teacher is the best-placed professional to work sensitively and consistently with students and that s/he can have a powerful impact on influencing students' attitudes, values and behaviour in all aspects of health education.

School management, principals, and teachers have a duty to provide the best quality and most appropriate SPHE for their students. They also have a duty to protect students in their care at all times from any potentially harmful, inappropriate, or misguided resources, interventions or programmes.

The DES issued *Circular 22/2010 (Primary) and 23/2010 (Post Primary) 'Social Personal and Health Education, Best Practice Guidelines'* to schools setting out guidance for the use of external resources in the context of the SPHE and RSE programmes. These circulars outline clearly the requirements of schools with regard to inviting visitors or guest speakers to work with students.

Prevention at Individual level

As part of the overall school wide approach to bullying school staff need to consider the supports that ought to be in place for individual pupils – those who are especially vulnerable, those who may have been victimised or those who may be the perpetrators of bullying behaviour.

Some pupils may need additional and dedicated time to

- explore the concepts taught as part of the SPHE curriculum
- develop strategies and skills needed for their protection
- develop understanding and empathy for others
- build resilience and to strengthen self
- build positive and respectful relationships with peers and staff
- explore how they make and keep friends
- discuss and agree behaviours that are unacceptable in their class
- make an agreement on how they will behave in class.

Opportunities for direct teaching, learning, role-play, modelling, repetition, and use of social stories may need to be considered as part of overall planning within the school.

> In certain cases, however, it may be necessary for the school to seek the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as NEPS, HSE social workers, community workers, Gardaí etc. (DES, 2013, 6.3.5)

The NCCA Guidelines for teachers of students with general learning disabilities may be a useful additional support for teachers differentiating for SEN pupils. Resources available at www.ncca.ie or www.sess.ie/resources/curricular-material/

In some situations schools may have to look to agencies outside the school for support or advice in relation to individual pupils.

Investigating and Intervention

The procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying are outlined in section 6.8.9 of the DES Anti Bullying Procedures, 2013 available at

http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Anti-Bullying-Procedures-for-Primary-and-Post-Primary-Schools.pdf

Appendix E: *Implementation of the DES Procedures on Anti-Bullying Checklist* may be of some help to schools in clarifying the roles and responsibilities that apply to school management and school personnel.

Appendix F: *Checklist for Teachers….Is it Bullying?* may be useful to support schools in determining if a particular situation constitutes bullying.

In accordance with the DES procedures the member of teaching staff who has responsibility for investigating and dealing with bullying is referred to as the 'relevant teacher'. At primary level, the relevant teacher will normally be the class teacher, while, at post-primary level the school has the discretion, having regard to its own circumstances, to determine which teachers have this responsibility.

> The primary aim for the relevant teacher in investigating and dealing with bullying is to resolve any issues and to restore, as far as is practicable, the relationships of the parties involved (rather than to apportion blame). (DES, 2013, 6.8.9 (i))

The DES procedures outline processes through which the relevant teacher should investigate and record incidents of bullying behaviour.

Advice and suggestions for relevant teachers in the DES procedures in relation to investigating and resolving bullying include:

•   Suggestions on the approach to be taken

•   Practical strategies for investigating and resolving bullying and

•   Interviewing techniques for use at individual level

However, while the DES procedures outline how schools must record serious incidents of bullying behaviour or instances of bullying behaviour that have not been satisfactorily resolved (DES, 2013, Appendix 3) the management authorities of the school must determine, within their anti-bullying policy, their requirements for recording of all other instances of bullying behaviour.

In addition, suggestions in relation to investigating and dealing with bullying are contained in the sample anti-bullying policy available on the PDST website at http://pdst.ie/node/4202 They include suggestions included in the DES Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post–Primary Schools, which will guide relevant teachers.

Intervention approaches to address bullying behaviour

Section 6 of the schools anti-bullying policy requires schools to outline the established intervention strategies used by the school for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour.

As stated earlier, according to Dr. Ken Rigby, there are two aspects to the task of reducing bullying i.e. i) The proactive or preventive aspect or ii) the reactive aspects to counteract bullying that require the use of effective methods of intervention with cases of bullying.

> The Action Plan on Bullying published on the Department's website in January 2013 highlighted the importance of schools identifying and consistently implementing established evidence-based intervention strategies for dealing with cases of bullying behaviour and preventing its continuation. (DES, 2013, 6.8.5)

Cases of bullying are not all alike and may require different methods of intervention. Most bullying is relatively mild, consisting of repeated verbal slights or insults, occasional pushing around and deliberate but temporary exclusion by a group. Such treatment can nevertheless be extremely hurtful to some pupils and need to be addressed. If it is not addressed effectively, more serious forms of bullying such as physical assaults and comprehensive long-term exclusion from a peer group are likely to follow.

Interventions need to take into account not only the severity of the bullying but also whether there is group involvement. Interventions at whole school level or targeted at group or individual level should always be consistent with the school's anti-bullying policy and philosophy. In his work, Dr. Rigby cites six major methods of intervention that schools can employ to deal with bullying.

Six major methods of intervention in cases of school bullying.

The following is an overview of the six main responses to addressing bullying behaviour (Rigby, K., 2010, 2014):

1. The Traditional Disciplinary Approach
2. Strengthening the Victim
3. Mediation
4. Restorative Practice
5. The Support Group Method
6. The Method of Shared Concern

In deciding on which method to use, the following factors should be taken into account:

- the nature of the cases (some are dealt with more effectively with one method than another)
- the level of training and skill that the teachers have in applying the method.

The traditional disciplinary approach

According to surveys of teachers and counsellors across many countries including the US, Australia, Canada, Germany, Norway and Finland, the disciplinary approach is seen by about 75% of school staff as the most appropriate way of dealing with most, if not all, forms of bullying (Bauman, 2008; Rigby, 2010). Essentially, it seeks to prevent bullying from continuing by imposing sanctions on the pupils(s) who were engaged in bullying behaviour. Sanctions imposed may include verbal reprimands, meetings with parents, temporary

removal from class, withdrawal of privileges, school community service, detention, internal school suspension, short-term external suspension, and permanent exclusion from school.

Parents often favour this approach also, especially if their children are being bullied at school, because it is perceived as giving a message to other pupils about what will happen to them if they engage in bullying.

The approach is often viewed as straightforward: the rules of behaviour established by the school are invoked, cases are investigated, and the transgressors duly punished. This apparent simplicity is contrasted with other more complex approaches in which counselling approaches are employed. By stating the consequences of different forms of bullying behaviour in advance, the school can represent the outcome for the pupils who engage in bullying as being brought about by their own actions.

Although this approach may deter some pupils from bullying, it can also result in pupils continuing to bully in more covert and less detectable ways that are at least equally hurtful to those they bully especially if the pupil who engages in bullying believes that the sanction imposed was unjust. This can result in a strong degree of resentment and a desire to continue the bullying, often in ways that are difficult to detect.

The approach requires a high degree of surveillance, which is often impossible or difficult to maintain. However, in cases of very violent or criminal behaviour, or in cases for which counselling approaches prove unsuccessful, sanctions are generally required.

Critics of the traditional disciplinary approach argue the there is an assumption that when pupils are deterred from acting anti-socially they will be open to engaging in pro-social behaviour, especially if they are rewarded or praised afterwards for doing so. Rigby (pp. 43-44, 2010) makes ten recommendations to schools to support the traditional disciplinary approach:

1. Make it as clear as possible to the staff and to the pupils what bullying is, the forms it takes and especially the harm it does.
2. Carry out classroom discussions with pupils on the issue of bullying and especially on the kinds of rules that ought to govern relations between pupils in

the school. Have the class compile a list of reasonable guidelines for pupil behaviour.

3. As far as possible gain acceptance from the pupils that some 'consequences' are justified in cases of bullying. When more pupils are involved in the formulation and development of an anti-bullying policy, acceptance will be more widespread.

4. Intervene *as soon as possible* after an act of bullying has been identified so that the memory of the nature of the offence is present in the mind of the pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour.

5. Where possible, apply sanctions that are appropriate to the behaviour; for example, sanctions requiring recompense and restorative action to be undertaken rather than largely unrelated impositions such as writing 'lines'.

6. Apply positive reinforcements whenever the pupil acts constructively or helpfully towards another pupil, thus setting up habits that are incompatible with bullying.

7. Engage in 'serious' talks with the pupil to be punished (and if appropriate the parents too), giving the reasons for the actions being taken by the school.

8. Maintain a practice of rigorous surveillance of pupils' interpersonal behaviour in the classroom and playground. Punishment is more likely to work if behaviour is being carefully monitored.

9. Do whatever is possible to ensure that the authority of the school and teachers is justified and respected. This is particularly important among older pupils who are generally more distrustful of institutional authority than younger pupils.

10. Recognise that any action taken by teachers at the school that is widely seen as unfair or arbitrary will increase the distrust and disrespect felt by pupils, and result in disciplinary action taken in cases of bullying being less than effective.

According to research over 90 per cent of schools use the traditional disciplinary approach in the majority of bullying cases (Rigby, K., 2014).

Strengthening the victim

This approach to dealing with cases of bullying aims at assisting the pupil who is bullied to cope more effectively in interactions with pupils engaged in bullying behaviour. To this end, pupils who are being targeted are advised or trained to become less vulnerable, for example, by learning to act more assertively. The self-esteem of the pupil who is bullied rises and the school need not take action to discipline the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour, thereby avoiding any negative consequences associated with the use of sanctions.

The decision to use this approach will depend in part on an assessment of the situation and on the views of teachers as regards the suitability of the approach for individual pupils. Can the pupil acquire the necessary capability to resist effectively?

In an online survey conducted by Bauman et al. (2008) of 736 teachers and counsellors in the US, 36% of respondents thought that they would *'tell the victim to stand up to the bully'*; 40% thought they would not; and 24 per cent were uncertain. Some teachers believe that there is a large imbalance of power between a pupil who is bullied and a pupil engaged in bullying and they are concerned that this will affect any efforts that the pupil who is bullied can make. Sometimes teachers consider that the pupil who is bullied is doing his best and if he could resist, he would. Still others believe that there are ways in which the pupil who is bullied can be helped to act in order to improve the situation.

Strategies for strengthening the victim

If this approach is adopted a school needs to consider the following strategies:

Building student confidence

Class, small group and individual programmes (depending on the age and ability level of students) on building student self-esteem need to be prioritised to organise for the explicit teaching of self-esteem and communication skills in named subject areas. A cross-curricular approach is then required to transfer the teaching and learning of these skills across the curriculum for the pupils.

Fogging

This is an assertiveness technique that can be taught to pupils who are being targeted to assist them in coping with insults and putdowns (MacNeill, 2009; Rigby, 2010). The technique has two stages:

1. This involves the pupil who is being bullied openly acknowledging that the pupil engaged in bullying may actually believe the negative things he/she is saying and refusing to be disturbed or intimidated by the comments (e.g. 'That's your opinion'; 'You might think so'). It can be effective in some cases of one-to-one bullying but is limited to bullying that is verbal. The technique avoids directly challenging the pupil who is engaged in bullying so he/she gets little or no reaction. The pupil who is bullied reacts unemotionally so the intended insults are dissipated as in a dense fog. In cases of mild bullying this is a useful and practical technique and can result in a be-escalation of a conflict.

   However, reacting to the pupil who is engaged in bullying in this way can be difficult for a pupil who is bullied and some training and rehearsing is generally needed before this technique can be confidently and effectively employed. Instead of competing with the pupil who is engaged in bullying behaviour in being offensive, the pupil who is bullied responds in a nonchalant way, acknowledging that what is said may be how the other pupil actually sees things. By focusing on the *perceptions* of the pupil who is engaged in bullying, the sting is taken out of what the pupil (engaged in bullying) is actually saying. The words used by the pupil who is bullied must be words that he/she is comfortable in using.

2. This stage involves arranging a meeting between the pupil who is bullied and the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour. The pupil engaged in bullying behaviour is asked to explain his/her behaviour thus requiring him/her to think about why such comments were made. It is crucial that the pupil who is bullied is both comfortable that the meeting takes place and prepared for the

meeting. He/she may decide to ask a close friend of a similar age to attend as a peer support. The pupil who is bullied should rehearse what he/she intends to say to the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour before the meeting. If the teacher running the meeting gives too much direction, the pupil may respond in an unnatural way. It is advised that useful responses be worked out before the meeting.

Strengthening the victim approach as a response to bullying behaviour is best used in tandem with other school approaches. In deciding to adopt this approach, school staffs need to take into account both the vulnerability of the pupil who is bullied and the capacity of staff to upskill the pupil in assertiveness training. It is crucial that the adoption of such a technique does not expose pupils to more persistent forms of bullying (e.g. responding in an offensive or super-smart way that could antagonise the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour). Considerable care is needed in matching the mode of strengthening the victim with the capability of the pupil who is bullied.

Strengthening the victim approach can, however be used in a complementary way to other interventions. For instance, sanctions may be applied to deter further bullying and strengthening the victim may be important in those cases where the traditional disciplinary approach is not entirely effective. Techniques that build up the confidence and social skills, especially the social intelligence of pupils who are bullied can be very helpful. When taught carefully, techniques such as 'fogging' can benefit many pupils in a school.

Mediation

Mediation is an attempt to bring about a peaceful settlement or compromise between pupils through the intervention of a neutral party. Mediation is different from arbitration, which is sometimes carried out in schools when pupils in conflict accept the verdict of a third party (e.g. a teacher, Deputy Principal, Principal) as to how a conflict is to be resolved. With mediation the pupil who is bullied and the pupil who is engaged in bullying enter into negotiation with each other freely and are assisted by a trained mediator to reach an agreed

and peaceful solution. The mediator may be a trained member of staff or a student who has received relevant mediation training. The latter are known as peer mediators. There are advantages in training pupils as mediators. Pupils do not generally come across as authority figures and are less likely than teachers to impose their will on the proceedings. In addition, pupils are more likely to understand the situation in which other pupils find themselves.

Typically, mediation involves the following stages:

1. Identify pupils who are in conflict and are ready to negotiate, with the help of a mediator, to resolve their differences peaceably. Without this initial commitment mediation cannot proceed.

2. Arrange a meeting with the pupils who are in conflict. This is best organised when tempers have cooled. Generally, a private place is found where there are no interruptions.

3. All pupils are required to agree to certain rules that make the process of mediation predictable. This includes a requirement that only one pupil talks at a time while other the other pupil listens without interrupting and each stay to hear each other out.

4. The mediator asks each pupil to describe in turn what has been happening. Each participant must repeat what has been said without making any judgements or comment. The mediator may prompt, if necessary, to seek more information and clarify what is being said. Importantly, at this stage there is to be no discussion or point scoring.

5. While the pupils describe what they see as having happened, the mediator must listen carefully and then summarise what has been said to the satisfaction of those involved.

6. Having established what happened according to the pupils, the next stage is to enable the pupils to share their feelings about each other's actions. Again, each of the pupils is expected to say how they felt without being interrupted and the other pupil reflects back what has been said – without making any comment. Again, the mediator summarises what has been said.

7. Next, the mediator invites the pupils to make suggestions about what could be done to improve matters and these are listed.

8. Having a list of options before them, the pupils are then invited to choose a solution to the conflict that is most acceptable to them. This may involve the pupils in finding a win-win course of action that effectively solves the problem or they agree a compromise. It is not up to the mediator to say which solution is best.

9. The mediator records the actions that the pupils have agreed to carry out, using their own words and each pupil signs a document to indicate that he/she will abide by the agreement.

10. Subsequently, the behaviour of the pupils is monitored and, if necessary, further meetings may be held.

In practice, there may be variation in how mediation is carried out. For instance, some schools have sought to mediate between pupils AFTER the pupil who is bullying has been sanctioned. Other schools give pupils who have bullied others the option of being sanctioned or accepting mediation. While other schools hold the threat of sanctions over the pupils who engages in bullying behaviour if they do not cooperate with mediation. These three variations are inconsistent with the general ethos of mediation, which requires that those in dispute are treated impartially, non-judgementally and helped to reach a solution that is in no way forced or part of a process that implies coercion or manipulation.

It is generally accepted that mediation is difficult in the following situations:

• If there is an imbalance of power between the pupil who is bullied and those that engage in bullying behaviour especially if the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour is admired by other pupils. For the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour there may be little or nothing to be gained from ending the bullying. The role of the mediator is to help bring about an agreed solution between all parties and in this situation the mediator may find it difficult to take a neutral stance

• If the bullying is severe and the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour is highly culpable. It may be difficult to find staff to mediate in such circumstances.

• Sometimes pupils may distrust the mediation process fearing that they would be ridiculed if they asked mediators for help. They also fear that confidentiality would not be respected.

- In certain cases, perceived norms are such that pupils feel obliged to fight and in these cases, mediation is rejected as a soft option. This suggests that changes in the school climate or ethos may sometimes need to be made before teacher or peer mediation is considered as one of the school's responses to addressing bullying behaviour. Once cases of conflict and bullying are dealt with successfully through mediation, the school ethos itself begins to change.

- When teacher or pupil mediators are poorly trained and/or time and resources for monitoring and supervising the mediation process is limited. A school environment that provides strong support for the mediation process is crucial to the success of the approach.

Mediation can not only effectively address certain forms of bullying behaviour but can also help to create a school ethos in which bullying is less likely to thrive. In a study of fifteen Year 5 mediators in a school in England, it was reported that all of the peer mediators had conducted at least one successful intervention and eight of them had been *'frequently successful'* (Cremin, 2002). According to research, teachers however are divided evenly about the acceptability of this approach.

Restorative practice

Restorative Practice (RP) is based on the concepts and principles of Restorative Justice. RP places relationships at the core of all problem solving. Bullying is viewed as a violation of people, property, and relationships. The practice involves getting the pupil who engages in bullying behaviour to reflect upon his/her unacceptable behaviour, experience a sense of remorse, and act to restore a damaged relationship with both the pupil who is bullied and the class and/or school community.

RP can be used to resolve problems of bullying involving two individuals, a small group or a class group. It can also be used at school community level (as a community conference) and can be attended by those involved in the bullying plus significant others such as parents. Necessary elements include the prior existence - or subsequent emergence - of remorse on the part of the pupil who engages in bullying behaviour and the readiness of the pupil who is bullied and others to accept the apology and restorative action of the pupil who bullied.

The application of RP has become increasingly popular in schools over the past 15 years, especially in Great Britain, Australia, the United States, Canada, and New Zealand. Like Mediation, Restorative Practice is often seen as a reaction against the traditional disciplinary approach that does not necessarily work to repair relationships, although both approaches are concerned with justice and seek to bring about a desired change in the pupil who engages in bullying behaviour.

The essence of RP is to bring about good or tolerable relationships when things have gone wrong. It seeks to heal the hurt that has occurred; to put it behind both the pupil who is bullied and the pupil who engaged in bullying behaviour. It puts repairing harm done to relationships over and above the need to assign blame and dispense sanctions.

RP may take many forms but all forms exist within an explicit framework of Fair Process, which allows everyone to understand the rationale for their actions. This Fair Process builds trust and commitment and involves three elements:

1. Engagement – include all pupils/adults who are involved in the bullying behaviour.
2. Explanation – adopt a shared understanding of the situation by all involved.
3. Clarity – involve all in a vision for the future.

Restorative Practice is not one action; rather it is a continuum involving the following:

- Restorative dialogue
- Restorative class meeting or group conference
- Mediation
- Restorative school/community conference and problem-solving circle.

Irrespective of the stages decided on for a resolution of the bullying behaviour the following key questions are utilized to ensure a fair process for all concerned:

- **Questions for the pupil(s) engaged in bullying behaviour**
    - *What happened?*
    - *What were you thinking about at the time?*

- o *What have your thoughts been since?*

- o *Who has been affected by what you did?*

- o *In what way have they been affected?*

- o *What do you think needs to happen next?*

- • **Questions for pupil(s) who is bullied:**
  - o *What happened?*

  - o *What were your thoughts at the time?*

  - o *What have your thoughts been since?*

  - o *How has this affected you and others?*

  - o *What has been the hardest thing for you?*

  - o *What do you think needs to happen next to make thinks right?*

Restorative continuum for schools

For all stages of the continuum, it is crucial that the facilitator has been trained in Restorative Practices and before any RP meeting commences a set of ground rules are agreed by all present. Class/group meetings and school/community conferences require very careful planning. Stages of the RP continuum are as follows:

- • **Restorative dialogue** – A restorative dialogue is a meeting between the pupil who is bullied and the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour. A member of school staff who is trained in RP (class teacher, resource teacher, Principal Etc.) facilitates the dialogue. This can be done on the spot in response to a report by the pupil who is bullied or a member of staff who has witnessed repeated incidents viewed as not of a serious nature (e.g. a put-down or nasty comment, property borrowed without permission, a pupil bring pushed). Time is given to both the pupil who is bullied and the pupil engaged in bullying to explain not only what happened but also how they felt about the behaviour. After a restorative action has been suggested, undertaken, and (importantly) accepted by the pupil who is bullied, the case may be concluded and the situation may continue to be monitored. Teachers often appreciate such a detailed script as it provides clear guidance and structure in dealing with cases of bullying behaviour. Depending on the age and cognitive ability of the pupils, an RP facilitator may give more detailed direction e.g. post agreement the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour may be explicitly taught how to

make an appropriate apology and the pupil who is bullied may be explicitly taught how to respond positively to such an apology. Incidents of a more serious nature require a more formal dialogue at a designated time.

- **Class meeting or group conference** - In some cases it is considered appropriate to apply restorative practices in a class or group situation, for example, when the issue is of a more serious nature and is one in which a full class or group is implicated and their views are relevant to a successful resolution of the problem. In such a case, a meeting is held involving all the pupils in a class/group, including those who have not participated in the bullying in any way. The RP principles and set of questions remain the same. A class/group meeting requires careful planning, preparation and cooperation around timetable issues and may involve several teachers. The pupil who is bullied and the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour are encouraged to speak and explain how they have felt about their experiences. How the other pupils respond is of crucial importance. The expectation is that the reactions and views of the other pupils will exert pressure on the pupil who is engaged in bullying behaviour to feel remorseful and act restoratively. This class/group meeting is not a trial by pupils. Its purpose is to give a message to pupils who engage in bullying behaviour that their behaviour is reprehensible and that restorative action is desirable. If this happens, it will meet with the approval of the wider group. Parents are usually notified before and /or after the meeting or conference. They also receive a copy of the agreement including plans for monitoring and follow-up.

- **Community conference** – According to the National Centre for Restorative in Education a community conference is a formal process which 'seeks to repair the harm done to relationships within a community by allowing everyone involved to meet and gain a better understanding from each other of the impact of a particular incident (s), the reasons for it and the preferred outcomes. The process usually involves the pupil who is bullied and his/her parents and/or supporters and the pupil who engaged in bullying and his/her supporters as well as key school personnel and behaviour/resource support staff, where applicable'. The intension of such a conference is to promote a comprehensive understanding of what has happened on the part of everyone present – the pupil who is bullied, the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour and all interested parties – in order to restore peace and harmony. The effectiveness of such a meeting depends in part on the work done 'behind the scenes' by the RP facilitator in contacting

and preparing the participants for the conference. After both set of pupils (pupil who is bullied and pupil who is engaged in bullying) are given an opportunity to be heard, the role of those present is to consider and accept whatever apologies and restorative acts are forthcoming. Only a trained RP facilitator should conduct this meeting.

In preparing for the introduction of Restorative Practice, some schools initially introduce a restorative approach to their current practices. This allows all members of the school community to gain a clear understanding of RP from the staff members who received training. It also ensures that all staff are included in the change process to RP practices.

The Support Group Method (formerly the No Blame Approach)

Psychologists Barbara Maines and George Robinson devised the Support Group Method in 1991. It was originally called the No Blame Approach. This is a non-punitive approach and, as with Restorative Practice, the emphasis is on

- getting the pupil involved in bullying behaviour to appreciate the suffering they have inflicted on the pupil who is bullied
- providing a solution to the problem rather than providing retribution for wrongdoing.

There are however, important differences to the Restorative Practice approach such as the fact that the Support Group Method does not assume that remorse on the part of the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour is a necessary precondition for a positive change in the behaviour of a pupil engaged in bullying behaviour. The focus is on moving the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour from one who behaves hurtfully to one who is motivated through empathic feelings to give help.

There are seven steps in the Support Group Method, beginning with an interview with the pupil who is bullied; then holding a meeting with a group of pupils including the pupil who is engaged in bullying behaviour; and ending with meetings with the pupils who have been part of the application of the method.

Step 1 – Talking with the pupil who is bullied

The teacher meets with the pupil who is bullied to establish the impact that the bullying has had on the pupil. The pupil is not asked to describe particular incidents but is encouraged to provide a detailed and graphic account of the distress that he/she has experienced. This can take the form of a verbal account or alternatively a piece of writing or drawing that expresses how the pupil has been affected by the bullying. The pupil is then asked to identify the names of the pupil(s) engaged in the bullying behaviour and to suggest the names of other pupils who will form a group to help solve the problem.

Step 2 – Convening a group meeting

This meeting includes the pupil who has been identified as having been engaging in bullying behaviour, and some other students who are selected by the teacher because they are expected to be helpful in bringing about a positive outcome. The pupil who is bullied is not required to be present. Generally, the size of the group is around six to eight.

Step 3 – Explaining the problem

The teacher draws attention to the problem and especially to the distress that the pupil who is bullied is experiencing, using evidence provided by the pupil himself/herself. Specific incidents are not described and no accusations are made.

Step 4 – Promoting Shared Responsibility

This meeting makes it clear that no one is going to be punished. A group has been convened to help solve the problem and everyone has a responsibility to improve the situation.

Step 5 – Asking for Ideas

The teacher asks for suggestions about how things can be made better for the pupil who is bullied. Each pupil present is asked to make a personal statement on what he/she will do to help.

Step 6 – Leaving it up to them

Having explained the situation, the teacher passes responsibility for the problem over to the group, thanks them for their support, and indicates that there will be further meetings with the each of the pupils to see how things are going.

Step 7 – Final meetings

A week or so later the teacher meets with members of the group individually to discuss progress. The pupil who is bullied is also interviewed as part of the monitoring process.

Although no one is blamed for the bullying, the Support Group Method approach is quite confrontational and insists that all pupils in the group share joint responsibility to improve the situation for the pupil who is bullied. If the bullying behaviour is of a very serious nature (e.g. physical assault or serious cyber bullying incident), a disciplinary approach is seen as more appropriate.

An important assumption of the approach is that pupils who have bullied someone can be motivated to respond empathically to the plight of the pupil who is bullied. This assumption is one of a number of objections to this approach by some prominent educationalists, politicians, and anti-bullying organisations over the years who object to the philosophy underlying the method. This philosophy states that blaming individuals for their involvement in bullying incidents is not helpful in bringing about a successful resolution to a bullying problem.

The approach, however has received support from teachers, especially in England who view the approach as an effective way of dealing with some forms of bullying behaviour because the pupil who engages in bullying must take equal responsibility with the other pupils in the group for a resolution of the bullying. They have a responsibility to take action to improve matters for the pupil who is bullied. Care must be taken, however in applying this method to ensure, as far as possible, that actions taken by the group are what the pupils choose to do and were not forced to do by a teacher.

The Support Group Method is seen as appropriate for non-violent, non-criminal forms of bullying. However, it does not take into account any provocation that may have occurred to

precipitate the bullying and the need, in some cases, for changes in behaviour on the part of both parties.

The Method of shared concern

The Method of Shared Concern originated in Sweden in the 1980 (published in 1989) through the work of Anatol Pikas, a Swedish psychologist who adopted a solution focused approach to resolving issues of bullying. It is a non-punitive method of dealing with bully/victim incidents aimed at empowering pupils who have contributed to bullying behaviour, or who have become aware of bullying to act to resolve the problem. Although the method involves a non-blaming approach, it does not in any way seek to excuse or condone bullying. It is direct and strongly invites and expects a responsible response.

The method involves a multi-stage process, beginning with separate one-to-one interviews with pupils suspected of bullying, and with pupils who are bullied leading on to group meetings with both sets of pupils. As the process develops, it is assumed that the bullying is strongly influenced by the relationships the pupils have with each other. According to Pikas, this intervention process can cause a shift in the group dynamics, and provide an environment in which the pupils may engage in a negotiation process to bring about a peaceful and sustainable outcome. The method involves the following stages:-

1. **Individuals involved in a bully/victim problem are identified.**

   Information about what has been happening is <u>ideally</u> obtained through observations and/or receiving reports rather than through someone talking directly with the pupil who is bullied. The risk of the pupil being bullied further is reduced when it is clear to all concerned that no punishment is intended.

2. **A number of pupils are identified as likely to have taken part in bullying behaviour, or to have supported it in some way and are interviewed by a trained interviewer (teacher).**

   Each pupil is seen in turn, starting (if known) with the likely ringleader. Under certain circumstances, if desired, other pupils aware of the problem, e.g. bystanders, may be

included as they may sometimes play an important role in influencing the bullying. It has become customary to differentiate between the different roles bystanders may play.

The interviews take place in private and without interruptions. Each interview begins with the teacher inviting the pupil to sit in a chair opposite (without an intervening desk). The teacher waits for eye contact before the interaction begins. At these meetings with individual pupils, it is important that no accusations are made.

The teacher first explains his/her role, to help pupils feel safe at school, then points out that it has been noticed that a particular pupil has been having a hard time at school with other pupils. The teacher describes what has been discovered about the plight of the pupil e.g. being upset, isolated, or staying away from school. Once the concerns of the teacher has been clearly and sincerely conveyed, the pupil is asked to say what he or she has noticed or knows about the situation.

As soon as the pupil has acknowledged some awareness (not guilt) relating to what has been happening, he/she is asked directly <u>what can be done to help improve the situation.</u>

Commonly, suggestions are made about what can be done by the pupil. But if they are not, the teacher may make suggestions. It is important that the suggestions are not difficult to carry out. Strong approval is expressed for any constructive proposals; then another meeting (at an agreed time) is arranged to see how things have gone. Importantly, at this meeting no threats are made nor any warnings given. The remaining pupils in the group are seen, again individually, and the procedure repeated.

3. **The pupil who is bullied is interviewed.**

   The pupil who is bullied is seen after all the suspected pupils engaged in bullying behaviour have been interviewed. The teacher begins by explaining his/her role and

support over what has been happening. It is important that a trusting relationship is developed. However, questions need to be asked to find out whether the pupil has been doing something to bring on the bullying e.g. by acting as a provocative victim. Importantly, no blame is directed at the pupil. This line of questioning is done sensitively. Often the pupil is wholly innocent. The teacher discloses that they have actually talked with the pupil suspected of engaging in bullying behaviour and the pupil has given an undertaking to carry out some actions to improve the situation. The pupil who is bullied is asked to look out for signs of change. The teacher arranges to meet again with the pupil to see how things develop.

4. **Several days later, follow-up meetings are held with the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour, as previously arranged.**

   The aim here is to ascertain whether the suspected pupil has carried out the actions, as promised, to improve the situation. Only when the teacher is satisfied that progress is being made can a meeting be convened with the suspected pupil or whole group of pupils suspected of being involved in bullying behaviour.

5. **At the group meeting of Suspected Pupils engaged in Bullying Behaviour, each member is asked to say what they have done to try to improve the situation.**
   Prior to this meeting the teacher meets separately with the pupil who is bullied and the pupil suspected of engaged in bullying behaviour to clarify any issues remaining. The group meeting commonly has the effect of promoting further positive social interactions with the pupil who is bullied.

6. **A brief meeting with the pupil who is bullied.**
   He/she is invited to join a meeting with the pupil suspected of engagement in bullying behaviour for a final meeting, with assurances that progress can be made at the meeting. If the pupil who is bullied does not wish to attend, his/her decision is respected.

7. **When progress has been made, a meeting is held with the pupil(s) suspected of engaged in bullying behaviour to plan how the problem might be resolved.**

If agreeable, the pupil who is bullied joins the meeting and an agreed solution is negotiated. Although this approach can be time-consuming, outcomes are overwhelmingly positive. The method has been found to be uniquely appropriate for dealing with cases of group bullying in which the pupil who is bullied has behaved provocatively. This occurs in about 20 per cent of cases. Good planning and preparation is essential for this meeting. In this final stage, the teacher will need to act the part of mediator.

Pikas, the originator of the method, has argued that the method is best suited to problems involving older, secondary pupils, because a greater level of cognitive maturity is sometimes required on the part of the pupils. This view is consistent with reports from Stevens, de Bourdeaudhuij and Van Oost (2000) in Belgium. The method has been found to be particularly effective in cases where the pupil who is bullied is behaving in a provocative manner. However, Duncan (1996) reported that successful interventions were obtained using the method with children in the second and third years of primary school in Scotland. Unlike other methods, including the Traditional Disciplinary Approach, Restorative Practices, and the Support Group Method, this method does not assume that the pupil who is bullied is wholly innocent.

The Method of Shared Concern differs radically from the Traditional Disciplinary Approach because it seeks to resolve cases of bullying without the use of sanctions. In this regard, it is similar to Restorative Practices and the Support Group Method. It however differs crucially from Restorative Practices in not seeking to induce or take advantage of a sense of remorse in the assumed pupil engaged in bullying as a step towards getting the 'wrongdoer' to act in a restorative manner and bring about a satisfactory relationship with the pupil who has been targeted. In place of 'remorse', it seeks to cultivate a sense of 'empathy' with the pupil who is bullied. It differs also in emphasising that enduring solutions to the problem of bullying can best be accompanied using group meetings involving those pupils who have participated in bully/victim incidents.

The Method of Shared Concern also differs from the Support Group Method in that it firstly begins work with each individual suspected of bullying behaviour rather than engaging in

discussions immediately with a group of pupils among who are suspected pupils who are engaged in bullying behaviour. The method assumes that this strategy is the most practical and effective way of proceeding. Violent or criminal behaviour is normally not handled using this approach.

Practical Strategies for Investigating and Resolving Bullying

It is important that the prevention, investigation, and management of bullying be an ongoing process in schools. There are many opportunities for school staff and management to address bullying, both formally and informally, for example by communicating with feeder schools, by asking for information on enrolment forms, by conversing with parents at induction and at parent teacher meetings.

Informal networking between teachers on a day-to-day basis provides opportunities for pre-empting and monitoring. Where a specific technique is being used to respond to a particular situation in a class, it is important that all teachers involved with the class be informed of the approach being taken, and be given appropriate feedback.

In any approach to resolving bullying, care should be taken to ensure that information supplied to or by a teacher is not used to further torment a victim.

The Cool School publication *"Investigating and Resolving Bullying: Further Steps for Teachers"* uses an approach based on Restorative Justice. This is available on the SPHE website: www.sphe.ie . Central to the approach is an ethos of respect in the school. The following strategies, based on the Cool School recommendations, can be used as preventative measures as well as tools for investigating and resolving bullying. Relevant teachers in the school can use them.

Confidential questionnaires

Confidential questionnaires (see school wide prevention section), as well as providing students with the chance to self-disclose about bullying, can also provide the opportunity to peer-disclose – a crucial aspect in empowering bystanders to act pro-socially on behalf of others. In addition, confidential questionnaires can also be used to monitor the effectiveness of a school's implementation of anti-bullying measures.

Bullying sociogram

A bullying sociogram (see school wide prevention section), is a useful preventative strategy as described earlier but it can also be used as a non-confrontational intervention approach to:

- Investigate reported instances of bullying. This includes one-to-one bullying or incidents involving a group.

- Stop bullying by providing an immediate response, and reduce the possibility of retaliation.

Steps for Implementation:

a) Decide who should administer the sociogram and consult with school management, relevant teachers and/or the in-school anti-bullying support team, or pastoral team.

b) Explain the purpose of the sociogram to students. Inform the whole class that you are going to talk to everyone about their experience of the class atmosphere, and whether it needs to be improved. Explain that this exercise is part of the school's anti-bullying measures. Tell the class that you will give them feedback.

c) While the class / subject teacher continues work with the class individual students are interviewed privately (See sample sociogram for key questions). Inform each student of the confidential nature of the interview, reassuring them that they will not be identified as having provided information. Be clear that all students will be asked the same questions as this protects victims from retaliation, on the basis that the picture you have formed comes from the whole class contribution. Have the class list to hand to record information. You may find it helpful to make a visual representation of the information on a chart, especially where there is a recurring problem. Record the details.

d) A clear picture of the class dynamic will emerge. Discuss general findings with the whole class. Identify ways in which the class is working well in terms of co-operation and friendships. If this is overwhelmingly positive, the preventative aspect of the strategy will still have come into play. Praise the class for their co-operative spirit, and reward them if possible.

e) If problems have been identified, deal with problem behaviour immediately after having interviewed all students. Discuss evidence privately with individual students who were identified as behaving in a bullying manner.

f) Be specific about the problem behaviour, explain why it is wrong, and challenge the inappropriateness of it. Be clear that it is totally unacceptable in the school. Seek agreement on Facts, Future behaviour and a Follow up meeting.

g) Negotiate or renegotiate a class agreement regarding future acceptable behaviour.

h) Feedback results of the sociogram to class teachers /year heads etc. and decide on a strategy for supervision and monitoring.

i) Arrange to review progress with the class and with class teachers.

Class observation

Class observation involves all teachers recording peer behaviour over an agreed period, pooling the information, and deciding on an agreed course of action.

Class observation aims to:

- Improve class atmosphere, thereby protecting the rights of pupils and teachers.
- Co-ordinate teachers' response to bullying behaviour.
- Identify and encourage constructive influences in the class.
- Record problematic behaviour accurately
- Identify pupils who need support including those engaged in questionable behaviour
- Provide management and parents with accurate information about bullying.
- Enable teachers to establish standards of what is acceptable and unacceptable and to implement these.

This observation is carried out unobtrusively and can be a useful tool for discovering the dynamic at work in a group and to provide a more comprehensive method of dealing with negative behaviour and maximising constructive behaviour. It can also be used to monitor events following the use of the Bullying Sociogram.

Teachers may find class observation useful where bullying is suspected but more evidence is required to identify its source. In cases where bullying has been reported and there is a risk

of retaliation, this strategy protects confidentiality and enables evidence to be gathered through direct teacher observation. It may also be used to gather information where teachers are being bullied, especially by a group of students.

Class observation is best carried out discreetly and confidentially with the support of a principal who will facilitate teachers' meetings to pool information and ensure follow up.

Steps for implementation:

a) Convene an initial meeting of relevant staff.

b) Indicate the nature of the problem.

c) Explain the procedure.

d) Emphasise confidentiality.

e) Fix a date for returning completed forms. Two weeks should suffice, but urgent issues arising should be dealt with immediately under school procedures.

f) Gather evidence and record on *Observation* Forms.

g) Convene follow up meeting of relevant staff and pool information.

h) Decide on appropriate response.

i) Interview students concerned. (See following section on interview techniques)

j) Review progress with class teachers.

Interviewing Techniques for Relevant Teachers

This section deals primarily with interviewing a student found to have been engaged in bullying behaviour. However, the general approach and structure may also be used with victims and bystanders, adjusting the content as necessary.

Background considerations

Young people who are bullying others may respond in different ways when confronted. It is important to be aware of how an involved person might feel and the attitudes that may be displayed. The fear of being caught, labelled a bully, punished or expelled may inspire defiance or a visible display of power. Students who feel cornered may decide never to admit wrongdoing.

Some young people may feel ashamed of their involvement in bullying behaviour, and may feel guilty. Because of a desire to save face, they may deny all knowledge of involvement. Other pupils when challenged may respond by saying nothing, or by agreeing with everything that is said. The likelihood here is that the student will offer temporary compliance, without fundamentally reconsidering a change of behaviour.

Occasionally, bullies have no feelings of shame, guilt, or empathy with their victim's suffering. Expecting a response based on remorse may not be productive. In such cases, the consequences of bullying behaviour must be made very explicit.

Even when there is an anti-bullying policy in place, some young people may be unaware that their bullying behaviour is wrong. This will have to be explained clearly, especially to those who tend to respond aggressively to problematic situations.

In school environments, where bullying has not been effectively addressed, many of the bullying behaviours which students inflict on each other may be socially acceptable. Pupils may be modelling the behaviour of others, or may be behaving in accordance with accepted hidden traditions. This occurs, for example, where there is covert acceptance by students and staff of bullying of first year students, new students, or of vulnerable students.

The challenge to a teacher is to disarm these attitudes, fears and beliefs and the non-confrontational approach suggested here may help to diffuse tension.

Key elements of an interview

Before proceeding with an interview with a young person in relation to a particular incident, it will be very useful to have used the sociogram as described above.

Privacy

Pupils usually disclose more in private because they feel safer. Dealing with incidents in public can cause unnecessary embarrassment for the victim, increasing vulnerability, and may encourage confrontation and denial on the offender's side. Privacy is also important for witnesses and other members of the class. They may be experiencing subtle pressure to support one side or the other, or worse still, threats may have been made. In a case where group bullying is suspected, teachers will find it helpful to enlist the help of a colleague to interview members of the group individually.

Non-confrontational approach

After welcoming the pupil and thanking them for their co-operation let him/her know that you see yourself as facilitating problem solving, rather than as a person who dishes out punishment. Take a non-confrontational approach and use "I" statements (see examples below). This will reduce tension and build trust. Avoid labelling of the young person as a "Bully". Refer to the behaviour rather than the person. Be calm, constructive, and adopt a problem-solving approach, and allow enough time for the interview. Most young people respond to patience, and the opportunity to talk, rather than to pressure, anger, or impatience.

Suggestions for interviewing

These opening statements are designed to inspire confidence in the young person that he/she will be treated fairly. You may wish to use some or all of them, depending on your own style.

"There seems to be some difficulty between young people in your class/group. I am here to help resolve the situation. I need your co-operation to get it sorted out, because I feel your contribution to the solution is going to be extremely important. Your help is going to make all the difference". (Allow time to respond.)

"If you have made a mistake in your behaviour, even if it is a serious one, I want to help you work things out. The most important thing from everyone's point of view is that it never happens again. I think it is very important that it is settled here and now". (Allow time to respond.)

"We have dealt with a lot of different kinds of situations and we usually manage to sort things out, even serious problems." (Allow time to respond.)

At this point, it should be clear to the teacher whether the young person is responding to the approach being taken. Every opportunity to co-operate is being extended to them in as person understands what you are saying, and what your approach is. Ask whether they would like anything clarified or repeated. Give them time to think over what you have said.

Seeking further information:

The following questions will provide the teacher with contextual information:

• *How do you get on with the other student/s?*

• *Did you know one another before this incident took place?*

• *How long do you know one-another?*

• *Is there a history to what happened, or did it come out of the blue?*

• *Do you think it will be easy to get back on good terms with the other person?*

Offer a choice between writing down what happened, and talking about it. Writing is less confrontational, especially for young people who might regard any one-to-one interaction with a teacher as adversarial.

Examples of questions / statements:

- *Let us have a look at the incident now…*

- *I need to understand your involvement……*

- *Can you help me fill in the details from your point of view?*

- *This is what I need to be clear about: What happened? When and where did it take place? Who was involved? What part did you play? Was there more than one person involved on either side? Were there any witnesses? Did this take place more than once? Have you been involved in anything like this before?*

Encourage the young person to focus on taking responsibility for their own actions, rather than attributing blame to others or the group. Do not accept standard techniques for saving face such as "I was only messing", or "We were all doing it". Bypass these comments and ask the young person to talk about their specific role at the time. For example, ask:

- *What did you actually say or do?*

- *How would someone else who witnessed the incident describe your actions?*

- *Would you do the same thing again, or act differently?*

- *What did you do wrong?*

- *Do you understand what was wrong about it?*

- *What is the problem about what you did?*

- *How do you feel about the situation?*

- *Are you worried about what is going to happen?*

- *What do you think is fair in the situation?*

This is what I think is fair: (Outline a fair outcome such as, apologising, agreeing to mediation, signing an agreement with a parent present, agreement to speak with a counsellor, paying for damage, returning money or the equivalent value of   property, detention, suspension.)

A co-operative attitude should be praised on the spot. If all concerned agree the solution to the problem, the matter may be concluded.

What if there is complete denial?

Cases will arise from time to time where there is complete denial of involvement. Repeat the evidence as you see it, and try again. It may be necessary to protect the confidentiality of the source of your information. Stay focussed on what you believe actually took place. Do not accuse the young person of lying. For example:

This is the situation as I see it. (Give details).

Anybody who examined it would think the same about your responsibility.

I do not accept that I am hearing the full story from what has been said so far.

Explain your role again as above, and let the young person know that this is a very positive opportunity for them to be forthright and honest. If there is still denial, explain that you are not going to let the matter rest until it has been resolved, and outline what the next steps are according to school policy. For example: Reporting the matter to the Principal; Initiating a wider investigation; Contacting parents; Contacting outside agencies such as the National Educational Psychological Services (if it appears that there are psychological difficulties); Juvenile Liaison Officer, or the Gardai.

Whether or not there is an admission of involvement, it is critically important to be unequivocal about the immediate and future behaviour of the young person.

It should be made clear that:

- The specific behaviour you have discussed should cease immediately.
- That the young person is made aware that disciplinary implications already apply in the situation.
- Agreement should be sought about not taking revenge against the victim or others whom the bully suspects may have provided information to teachers.
- If agreement is not forthcoming, a warning should be given which also extends to friends of the bully.
- Measures need to be taken by the school to ensure the safety of the victim, and to supervise the behaviour of any others involved.
- A case discussion involving school management and other relevant personnel will decide on possible sanctions.

- If bullying continues, management have to choose between suspension/expulsion or referral of the offender for clinical psychological assessment. An assessment will point to whether the young person has psychological/psychiatric difficulties contributing to the behaviour or not, and whether anger management training might be a useful next step.
- Discuss with the parents the possibility of counselling their son/daughter.
- Keep a record of the interview.

A Conceptual model for investigating and resolving bullying

A useful framework for dealing with bullying behaviour is offered by the concept of Restorative, as opposed to Retributive Justice. This contrasts the traditional model of apportioning blame and applying punishment with a more holistic view, which seeks to restore the balance of relationships between pupils in school. The process of dealing with bullying incidents in school does not have to be draconian.

In addition to supporting victims, a restorative model also takes into account the needs of the person who is bullying.

Retributive Justice	Restorative Justice
Misdemeanour defined as violation of school rules	Misdemeanour defined as violation of one person's rights by another
Focus on establishing blame, on guilt, on the past	Focus on problem-solving by expressing feelings and needs first, and then how to meet those needs
Adversarial relationship and process	Dialogue and negotiation. Everyone involved listening to each other
Punishment to deter/prevent	Restitution. Reconciliation and restoration as goal
Accountability defined as taking punishment	Accountability defined as understanding the impact of the action, deciding to put things right and making reparation
Conflict seen as individual versus school	Misdemeanours recognised as interpersonal conflicts. Value of conflict as potential opportunity for learning recognised

Adapted from Hopkins (2002).

Investigation and interventions and the students with special educational needs

While it is important that all steps in investigation and intervention be carried out in accordance with the DES procedures, some of the following considerations may be helpful when students with SEN are involved:

- Parents may need to be involved from the beginning.

- When investigating it may be more effective if the student has a positive relationship with the teacher involved.

- When investigating consideration ought to be given to using additional methods to support the student in explaining what happened, for example LAMH, visuals, role play etc.

- Choose most appropriate intervention strategy as per school policy.

- Reflect on what needs to be added to the preventative strategies for specific students, for example, teach additional and specific personal and social skills, leisure skills, anger management, script etc.

- Consider breaking patterns that may be contributing to the bullying, for example, distraction/diversion, development of meaningful activity.

- Ongoing close observation of student may be necessary.

- Referral for further support, for example, language and communication, psychologist, etc.

Links with other Policies

In addition to having a specific Anti-Bullying Policy as part of the school's Code of Behaviour it is important to establish the links between the school's anti bullying policy and other relevant policies in the school.

These policies may include:

Code of Behaviour	The Anti-Bullying Policy of the school forms part of the overall school Code of Behaviour (in line with NEWB Guidelines, 2008) and the standards of behaviour that are outlined in the Code of Behaviour apply to the Anti-Bullying Policy of the school.
Child Protection	In accordance with the DES Child Protection Procedures 2011; "*in situations where the (bullying) incident is serious and when the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school should consult with the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan*". (DES Child Protection Procedures, 2011, 6.3.5) In addition serious instances of bullying behaviour should be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services. (DES Child Protection Procedures, 2011, 6.3.5)
Acceptable Use Policy	The practices outlined in the Acceptable Use policy for safe use of the Internet must reflect the requirements of the anti-bullying procedures and must be adhered to at all times. This also applies to the use of other technological devices, including mobile phones digital cameras and other devices
Health and Safety Statement	The Anti-Bullying Policy outlines the key principles of best practice for preventing and tackling bullying behaviour.
Curricula Requirements - Implementation of the SPHE curriculum /	*Implementation of SPHE / RSE*: Circulars 22/2010 (Primary) and 23/2010 (Post Primary) "Social Personal and Health Education, Best Practice Guidelines" outline

RSE and Stay Safe programmes.	the approaches to the consistent implementation of the SPHE curriculum including RSE.
	Circular 37/2010 (Post Primary) 'Relationships and Sexuality Education' outlines the obligations of Post Primary schools to:
	• develop a school policy in regard to Relationships and Sexuality Education; and
	• implement a programme in this area as an element of Social Personal and Health Education at junior cycle, and as an RSE programme in senior cycle.
	Implementation of the Stay Safe Programme (Primary)
	Circular 65/2011 *'Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary schools'* requires all primary schools to fully implement The Stay Safe programme.

Appendix A: Pen Pictures from Schools

The Pobal Project- Scoil Phádriag, Westport

One of the teachers undertook the Pobal Project, Sharon Brady, in Scoil Phádriag, Westport, Co Mayo. The aim of the project was to establish a positive awards programme for the school and in doing so create a more caring and inclusive environment with a rights respecting ethos.

The whole staff agreed in the initial stages to teach the children two lessons. The first lesson related to the United Nations Community and its internationally recognised Charter for Children's Rights. The second lesson aimed to encourage the children to see the school as another significant community in their lives, and they were also asked to brainstorm a Charter of Pupils' Rights to suit the school. The lessons helped the pupils to realise that being part of a respectful community is not just something you do because the teachers go on and on about it. It showed them that what we must strive to achieve in a school community is firmly rooted in the global community.

The ideas that the children had developed on developing a charter for the school were collated and a charter of rights was drawn up for the school. The charter was launched at a school assembly. The assembly was a very positive and affirming event for the pupils in the school. It was agreed at assembly that a Friendship week would be convened in the school. At the end of the assembly each child was given a large cut-out hand and invited each to 'extend the hand of friendship' to someone for that week. Each child decorated their 'hand' and soon the school was festooned with a multi-coloured chain of hands. Friendship Week was a wonderful success and a real school spirit booster.

Following the success of the early assemblies, regular Pobal assemblies are now held, during which various aspects of the Charter are highlighted. The children now have a 'Pobal' song, a 'Pobal' rap, and a 'Pobal' mantra, which they enjoy performing, and which remind the children in a friendly way about the core messages of 'Pobal', i.e. rights, responsibilities, and

respect. A 'Pobal' committee has been formed, made up of children and teachers, and they meet regularly to plan fun and interactive whole-school events, to further embed the 'Pobal' ethos in the culture of the school.

There is a huge 'visual' element to 'Pobal'. The Pobal logo was painted onto the wall near the school entrance so that the children would have a visual reminder every day as they came to school that 'Pobal' is now the way things are done in Scoil Phádraig. There is also a colourful 'Pobal' bulletin board display in the school lobby. Visitors to the school frequently ask the children about it and they take great pride in telling how the school works hard at being a caring and helpful 'Pobal'.

The school also devised the 'Reach for the Stars' programme, where each class can work towards achieving a Pobal award by scaling up the class 'rocket'. The awards initiative is ongoing, and allows both individual children and the whole class group to win awards through being 'caught' exhibiting positive, rules respecting and caring behaviour. On reaching the top of the rocket, they receive a 'Pobal' award from the teacher, from an agreed list of possible treats.
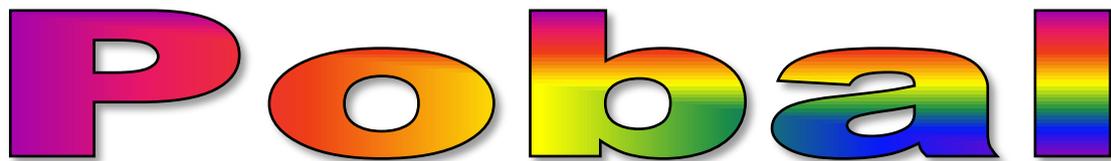
Scoil Phádraig Charter of Pupils' Rights

Education

My Rights
- A good education
- To be allowed learn
- To be different
- To make mistakes
- To ask for help
- To be included

My Responsibilities
- To listen and do my best
- To let others learn
- Accept differences in others
- To learn from my mistakes
- To help others
- Never to leave anyone out

Property

My Rights
- To have personal property respected
- To use school resources
- To a clean and tidy school environment

My Responsibilities
- Never to damage other pupils' things
- To look after resources
- To keep things tidy

Our School

Our Spirit

Safety

My Rights
- To be safe at school
- To be treated fairly
- To be protected

My Responsibilities
- To work and play safely
- To walk through the school with care
- To stand up for what is right
- To be in the right place at the right time

Getting along with others

My Rights
- To be listened to
- To my own opinion
- To be treated with respect
- To be told the truth
- Not to be called names
- Not to be made fun of

My Responsibilities
- To listen to others
- Not to act on my opinion if my actions would hurt others
- To treat others with respect
- To be honest
- Not to call others names
- Never to make fun of someone else

Presentation College Headford

The link below is a performance of 'I won't stand for it anymore' by students of Presentation College Headford in relation to bullying, which is adapted by Lorde's "Royals" with new lyrics by Isobel McMahon, a student in the school.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=ceTFre1y0Xw

The school decided to host an anti-bullying month. In preparation for the event the school ran a song writing competition and the winning song was performed at the opening event and also an art competition was held in the school and the art work completed by students was displayed and the winner of the art competition announced. During the month there was a particular focus on SPHE with particular lessons taught to all students for 2 classes per week. During tutor time, tutors went through the revised anti-bullying policy with all students. The school also ran a basketball match with the teachers playing against the students and the theme of the match was 'PCH say No to Bullying'.

Second year students were a particular focus for the school in relation to bullying work. An awareness day was held for the second year group and with the support of the staff the students worked in small groups for the day with three carefully planned sessions on bullying. The definition and the effects of bullying were teased out with the students on this day. A survey completed with the student after the event highlighted that the students found the event extremely positive and the staff felt that the day unearthed issues in the school that they had previously been unaware of.

#UP2US Pen Pictures

The #Up2Us campaign is all about young people taking the initiative, themselves, to do something about cyber bullying. As part of the campaign, competitions for second-level students were run to encourage participation. The aim of the group competition was to capture, showcase and celebrate best practice amongst groups making efforts to address bullying and make their communities more inclusive. The prize for the winning group was a private gig with upcoming singer-songwriter, Gavin James

Post-it Posters and Peer Mentoring

Caitlin and Robyn from Finglas, Dublin created and led an anti-cyber bullying mentoring programme for the first year students in their school.

Robyn explains what they did:

"Caitlin and I have been running an anti-bullying campaign with first years. In it we get their take on cyber bullying, show them videos, ask them to fill out questionnaires and make posters with them which are displayed in their classrooms."

CyberSafe- Wristbands and USB Keys Bishopstown Community School

Transition Year students from Bishopstown Community School decided to tackle cyber bullying through their innovative wristband USB keys

"We have produced a wristband which contains a USB key to store digital information. Our Wristband combats the problem of Cyber bullying in three ways:

- *By purchasing and wearing our wristband, you are highlighting your awareness of the dangers associated with cyber bullying.*

- *On the attached USB key, there is information and key steps to take if you feel you are the victim of cyber bullying. You can also use the USB key to save any evidence of cyber bullying, and present it to someone you trust e.g. teacher, parent, relative.*

- *By wearing your wristband you are saying to others that you will not stand by as part of the silent majority and do nothing if you witness cyber bullying."*

Coláiste Chiaráin, Croom, Co. Limerick

The Student Council in Coláiste Chiaráin, Croom, Co. Limerick decided to take tackling cyber bullying into their own hands. Here Student Council member Eoin explains what went on during their Anti-Cyber Bullying month.

"Our Student Council launched the campaign in the school by holding different events throughout the month of April. Every year in the school was introduced to the concept of trying to stop cyber bullying through the #Up2Us interactive poster packs. The posters were made during religion classes and then were displayed through the classrooms in the school to enforce the message." As well as using the poster packs, every year group had a cinema day where they sat down and watched different videos that brought home the message of combating cyber bullying. The cinema days were followed up by Q&A sessions with the different students and teachers involved in providing advice and addressing concerns raised by younger students. They also invited Humour Fit Theatre Group into the school to conduct a workshop on cyber bullying.

Let's Kick it Out- Student Council Drimnagh Castle

The Student Council in Drimnagh Castle helped create a school wide campaign called 'Let's kick it out'. Held during Anti-Bullying Week, the campaign included workshops and a video on cyber bullying. Emmet from Dublin explains in more detail here:

"We facilitated workshops for first-year students to educate them about the topic of cyber bullying and ways of combatting it. Methods include simple instructions such as utilizing the 'Block Button' and 'Report Button'. The response was great, and the students felt the workshops were very beneficial. We created an awareness video for the workshops and we also created an edited version for Primary schools which we also facilitated workshops in. We held all this in Anti-Bullying week."

Appendix B: Friendship/Anti-Bullying Questionnaire

Class	Name	Date
Would you like to talk to someone about bullying?	Yes ☐ No ☐	
Do you know anyone who is having a hard time?	Yes ☐ No ☐	

Appendix C: Sample Bullying Sociogram

- Are you happy with the atmosphere in your classroom?

- Who are your friends?

- Are you being bullied in any way? (Take details and reassure student that the problem will be addressed)

- Is there anyone in class having a hard time or being picked on?

- Is anyone being left out, or ignored?

- Is anyone spreading rumours, gossip, using notes, phone calls, text messages, or e-mails to make others feel bad about themselves?

- Is anyone being unfair to others?

- Is there a group of pupils making life difficult for others?

- Are pupils from other classes giving anyone in this class a hard time?

- Can you give examples?

- Who do you think is causing the problem?

Appendix D: Sample: Class Observation Form

Teacher_____Class_____Date_____

Time	Name of pupil/s	Behaviour	Directed towards

Appendix E: Implementation of the DES Procedures on Anti-Bullying Checklist

The following checklist may be useful for school personnel in relation to the implementation of the DES Procedures on Anti-Bullying:

Actions to be undertaken by Board of Management	YES	NO	Comment
Initiate policy development or review (see PDST website for supports)			
Publish the policy on the school website			
Provide a copy of the Anti-Bullying policy to the Parents' Association			
Ensure that staff and students are familiar with the policy			
Ensure all staff receive training on bullying prevention and intervention			
Ensure that the school has set out ways in which anybody can report bullying			
Ensure that staff, including temporary and substitute staff, have sufficient awareness of the school's code of behaviour and anti-bullying policy			
Conduct an annual review of the policy and its implementation (see Appendix 4 of the Anti-Bullying Procedures)			

Actions to be undertaken by School Management	YES	NO	Comment
Promote and support anti-bullying ethos and school-wide approach			
Liaise with BOM			
Support planning for policy development and implementation, ensuring consultation with parents, students, and staff			

	YES	NO	Comment
Ensure links between relevant school policies, for example, Code of Behaviour, Acceptable Use Policy, Child Protection, procedures and Anti-Bullying Policy			
Appoint relevant teachers in consultation with BOM and staff			
Support relevant teachers in investigating and resolving issues, for example, when meeting parents			
Develop a records management policy in relation to records kept on bullying			
Access supports and training for staff appropriate to their individual role			
Establish and support an anti-bullying team or care team where possible (Post-Primary)			
Ensure bullying is regularly addressed at school assemblies			
Ensure measures are in place to ensure that new staff are informed about school policy			
Inform parents of the procedures for contacting the school			
Report to BOM at the end of each term			

Actions to be undertaken by all staff	YES	NO	Comment
Be familiar with the school's anti-bullying policy and other relevant policies			
Staff are aware of issues of confidentiality when dealing with issues of bullying			
Prioritise awareness raising and implement education and prevention strategies			
Role model positive behaviour and attitudes consistent with school policy			
Be vigilant about student's behaviour individually and in groups			
Take proactive approaches in relation to supervision,			

monitoring of behaviour especially classrooms, corridors, school yards and common areas. An awareness of the importance of being vigilant.			
Report all instances of bullying to the relevant teacher and to keep records in accordance with school policy			
Implement relevant Intervention strategies as agreed in school policy			
Monitor subsequent behaviour to ensure that everyone is safe			
Contribute to annual review of Anti-bullying measures as initiated by the Board of Management			

Actions to be undertaken by Relevant teachers	YES	NO	Comment
Investigate and resolve incidents in line with interventions specified in the school's policy			
Liaise with staff in relation to providing support for students who bully others or who are being bullied			
Maintain and store accurate records of incidents investigated and be familiar with the use of the DES template for recording bullying behaviour (Appendix 3 of the Procedures)			
Ensure that the principal/deputy principal is furnished with copies of reports where appropriate			
Consult with School Management and other personnel if appropriate during the process of dealing with bullying			
Liaise with Parents as appropriate			
Monitor the success of interventions with all concerned			
Serious cases of bullying behaviour, in accordance with DES Child Protection Procedures, should be referred to the HSE Children and Family Services, TUSLA, as appropriate			

Actions that may be undertaken by Support Personnel as determined by school management (These may include care teams, guidance counsellors, learning support and resource teachers)	YES	NO	Comment
Counselling- giving care and support to students learning to cope with many aspects of growing up			
Advice – suggestions based on experience			
Specifically focussed personal and social development programmes – relating to self-awareness, decision-making and planning etc.			
Referral – to other professionals, or referral by other groups to the counsellor e.g. teachers, Board of Management, school management and parents			
Consultation – parents, staff, students			
Feedback – to the Board of Management, school management and staff on the needs of individual students			
Networking - establishing links with relevant agencies and institutions			
Promoting change – assisting curriculum development in the school			
Managing, organising, and co-ordinating guidance activities into a coherent programme (see the DES and the NCGE, *Planning the School Guidance Programme*, 2004)			
Contributing to the development and implementation of anti-bullying policy e.g. awareness raising with students and parents; helping to plan anti-bullying/friendship weeks			
Counselling students that are both affected by bullying behaviour and those that perpetrate bullying behaviour			

In consultation with other staff identification of target groups of students with particular needs within the school who may require further support or targeted teaching			

Actions that may be undertaken by Home School Community Liaison Teachers as determined by school management	YES	NO	Comment
Support parents in a community context			
Promote anti bullying awareness raising in the local community			
Support the Parents' Association			
Communication with feeder schools			

Actions that may be undertaken by Care Team/ Anti-bullying team (if appropriate)	YES	NO	Comment
Organise Friendship week			
Organise student surveys / sociogram			
Appoint a member to liaise with Student Council or other student bodies / year groups			
Appoint a member to liaise with other staff			
Appoint a member to liaise with Parents			

Appendix F: Checklist for Teachers...Is it bullying?

One of the primary characteristics in bullying behaviour is the range of serious effects it can have on the victim and others who may observe it.

These can include physical effects such as physical ill health (Slee 1995) for example headaches or/and stomach pains (Olweus & Limber 2000), physical injury (Olweus & Limber 2000) and aggression or violence (Olweus 1994).

Effects may include social maladjustment such as social isolation (Rigby 1996), loneliness which is a strong predictor of peer victimisation (Hawker & Boulton, 2000), poor social self-concept and low self-esteem (Besag 1989), and social anxiety (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

Psychological Maladjustment may also be a characteristic for example levels of distress and upset (Hawker & Boulton 2000), fear (Olweus 1993; Rigby 1996), generalized anxiety (Rigby 1996, Slee 1995), and high levels of anger (Rigby 1996)(Borg 1998).

Depression is an effect but also another strong predictor of peer victimisation (Hawker & Boulton, 2000) and may sometimes involve suicidal thoughts or behaviour (Slee, 1995)(Hawker & Boulton, 2000).

Other characteristics may include the presence of an imbalance or abuse of power (Craig et al 2000), that the victim is generally defenceless (Roland 1998)and that the behaviour may be unprovoked (Olweus 1994).

Characteristic	Indicator	Yes/No
Effect	Is the person distressed/upset? (Hawker & Boulton 2000) Humiliated, In real fear, Angry, Sad, Depressed?	
Aggression	Is there physical, verbal or psychological aggression? (Olweus 1994**)**	
Imbalance of Power	Is there an abuse of power? (Craig et al 2000).	
Planned or Repeated	(Olweus 1993)	
Defencelessness	Does the person feel helpless? (Roland 1998)	
Unprovoked	Does the person ask 'Why me?' (Olweus 1994**)**	

Questions based on the DES definition of bullying.

Is it Bullying?   Checklist

	Consider....	Yes	No
1	Is the behaviour repeated? Only repeated incidents can be regarded as bullying. Once off incidents fall under the Code of Behaviour. However see 2 below		
2	Have there been any offensive or hurtful public messages or images placed on a social networking site or other public forum? Can the bullying image, statement or message be viewed or repeated by other people? NB: One such incident qualifies as cyber bullying.		
3	Is the behaviour planned?		
4	Is there unwanted negative behaviour inflicted on the victim?		
5	Is the unwanted negative behaviour of a physical, verbal or Psychological character?		
6	Is the behaviour inflicted by one person, or is there a group involved?		
7	Is the victim deliberately targeted?		
8	Do the behaviours involve deliberate exclusion, isolation, malicious gossip or other forms of relational aggression?		
9	Are the behaviours targeting an aspect of the victim's identity? For example physical, verbal or psychological aggression which is directed at their sexual orientation, their race, religion, ethnicity or traveller background.		
10	Are the behaviours targeting the victim because they have Special Educational Needs?		

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