



Quick Practical Tips on dealing with bullying in schools

Prevent and reduce bullying

- 1. Classroom Dynamics:** Manage the classroom dynamic - who sits next to whom? Choose partners to work together, direct and manage the way the group interacts, where they sit and who they work alongside as much as you can where necessary. Remember, bullies have 'henchmen' and 'colluders' without whom they are less powerful. You might need to send a vulnerable or disruptive pupil out of the room on an 'errand' to another staff member with a note if you are aware that a situation is brewing. Agree this beforehand with other staff. Establish an ethos of respect and calm. Praise those who are kind or considerate. Offer class an outing if they reach a target number of WOW points for kindness.
- 2. Define bullying:** Ensure everyone understands what bullying is. This avoids people reporting every little thing and also helps people come forward to report behaviour they did not realise was bullying. Discuss a definition and ask pupils to put it into child friendly language. Include: power imbalance, intent and repetition.
- 3. Reporting made easy:** Agree several ways in which people can report bullying, making sure that bystanders can also report anything that worries them.
- 4. Parents:** Do all parents know the school's approach to bullying intervention and how to share any concerns they might have? Good procedures can reduce the incidents where upset parents rush in demanding to see the headteacher without an appointment.
- 5. Teachers:** Do they all know the school strategy, policy and how to get help if a case is complex? Include information on induction and regularly top up in staff meetings, INSET days or use outside training. Include a Serious Incident Protocol and advice on safe use of ICT. Demonstrate reporting and recording mechanisms.
- 6. Recording:** Use an incident recording form or software to log all concerns so that if a mild incident develops into a bullying campaign of victimisation you have a record and can identify patterns. Log all actions taken to deal with this behaviour.
- 7. Pupils' experiences:** Anonymous surveys give you a picture of what pupils experience and their views on how effective your strategy is. BIG Award offers free pupil surveys, on paper for primary; all others online.
- 8. Focus group:** set up an anti-bullying focus group to steer the school's strategy. Include young people alongside staff from SMT, designated governor and also dinner ladies, playground supervisors, outside agencies and community safety police officers, school nurse, people such as the local care manager if their LAC pupils are in school.
- 9. Training:** staff training can be made more effective if you ask them about their training needs and devise a programme based on this. BIG Award offers a short questionnaire for members to use.
- 10. Pupil ownership:** Unless the pupils 'own' the strategy you will find a need for more and more staff vigilance and supervision. Develop a partnership with young people and have regular activities and events in which they take the lead in addressing bullying through art and graphics, drama and music, debates, friendship groups, clubs and visits.

11. Communication: Communicate the school's approach on bullying and equality using all the media at your disposal. In the school handbook, homework books, induction materials, posters, screensavers, mouse mats, screens in school corridors, artwork on walls, school magazine or newspaper, through logos, slogans, agreed rules, manifestos, assemblies and groupwork. Communicate it also to new and prospective parents, on the website and in parents' evenings. Use a comprehensive Anti-Bullying Policy to communicate values and procedures to everyone.

12. Relationships: Build good relationships not only within school but within the whole school community and neighbourhood. This is vital when help is needed from a group in the community or an outside agency or local school. Bus companies, local police, contact all local agencies or charities concerned with wellbeing of children and young people. Invite some in to give talks, share expertise and make relationships for the day when you need to call them up for advice.

Deal with angry or upset pupils or parents/carers

1. Voice matching: Is your voice at the volume and intonation you expect from pupils? If you are loud and aggressive you will probably receive a similar response when talking to the alleged perpetrator.

2. Effective Listening: Listen attentively and if necessary take the person to a more private space. Recapitulate and check that you have the facts right. Note them down. Offer support and understanding. Ask for ideas on what they would like to see happen. Be prepared for disclosures - sometimes bullying is linked with domestic violence, coercion or inappropriate sexual behaviour. Response could range from deciding you need to use a serious incident protocol or simply monitor the situation. Always ensure the victim is safe. Do not rapidly announce to the whole class that x is being bullied. Choose an approach and notify all relevant staff and parents as necessary. Follow up.

2. Stay calm: Bullies and their parents usually deny it. Remember that the first person who needs to calm down in a confrontation is you! Avoid using the word 'bully'. Describe good points about the pupil, then describe recent 'bullying behaviour'. Keep an appropriate distance from the angry person, not too close but not far enough away to need to shout. Meet in a room with the door open. When needed, have another member of staff with you or nearby. Use the parent/carer's names and name of their child. Provide evidence and note down any new evidence offered. If needed, bring the log of actions taken and explain what steps are being taken. Ask for co-operation.

3. Acknowledge distress: Parents of victims can be angry through distress. Acknowledge how upset/angry this person is and say the school is taking the issue seriously. Repeat back to them the points they are making, to ensure you have got it correctly.

4. Agree next steps: Say you will investigate and get back to them and when.

5. Written records: reply to parents in writing to create a written record of actions taken and points discussed. Phone calls and meetings can be logged.

6. Explain how their child is being helped to be safe: Try to build parents' confidence in the school to keep their child safe by outlining what steps you have taken. These could include supervised clubs at lunchtime, peer supporters, nurture groups, quiet rooms, signals they can use to staff to indicate how they feel, emotions charts and safe arrangements when leaving school.

7. Confidentiality: you can only keep the information confidential if there is no risk of harm. If there is a risk a child could come to harm or cause harm then you are obliged to share the information with the designated person in your school and relevant agencies.

8. Safe on arrival? Some pupils arrive in school in a distressed or anxious state. Some experience threats, taunts and even violence on the way to school. Work to calm them down before the day begins or they will carry this 'fight or flight' response with them all day spilling into confrontations or aggression. Work with local community safety officers on safety in the neighbourhood and transport. If necessary, work with the family, provide breakfast and clothing.