

STOP BULLYING!

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

Prepared by Mark Cleary *for*



Legal requirements ...

Schools not only have a moral obligation to reduce bullying, their charter agreement between the school's trustees and the Minister of Education specifically directs the school to **"provide a safe physical and emotional environment"**.

National Administration Guideline number 5

A fuller discussion of the issues, supported by various forms, is available on the New Zealand Police Youth Education Service Internet Site:

<http://www.police.govt.nz>

The need for an anti-bullying policy

Bullying can be found in every school in the country. It is all too often part of the way young people interact in our society. **Every school** must recognise its extent and impact and take steps to stop it happening. When bullying is ignored or downplayed, pupils will suffer ongoing torment and harassment. It can cause life long damage to victims. Both bullies and those regularly victimised are more likely to become criminals. A school's failure to deal with bullying endangers the safety of all its pupils by allowing a hostile environment to interfere with learning. **There is clear, unambiguous evidence that school action can dramatically reduce the incidence of bullying.**

The size of the problem

Scientific studies show that bullying is an international problem that affects all schools. There is a remarkable similarity in the incidence of bullying from country to country, school to school. Bullying knows no international boundaries, socio-economic status or ethnic boundaries.

Country	Primary		Secondary	
	Rates	Often bullied	At least weekly	Often bullied
New Zealand	not available	not available	15%	9%
England	27%	10%	10%	6%
International	23%	15%	10%	6%

Few pupils tell a teacher when being bullied (only 20% in one recent Auckland study - Adair, 1998).

Bullying ...

Usually has three common features:

- » it is a deliberate, hurtful behaviour
- » it is repeated
- » it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves

There are three main types of bullying:

- » *physical*; hitting, kicking, taking belongings
- » *verbal*; name-calling, insulting, racist remarks
- » *indirect / emotional*; spreading nasty stories, excluding from groups

Bullies

- Are often attention seekers.
- Will establish their power base by testing the response of the less powerful members of the group, watching how they react when small things happen.
- Find out how the teacher reacts to minor transgressions of the rules and wait to see if the 'victim' will complain. It is important that teachers are vigilant and consistent.
- Bully because they believe they are popular and have the support of the others.
- Keep bullying because they incorrectly think the behaviour is exciting and makes them popular.
- If there are no consequences to the bad behaviour; if the victim does not complain and if the peer group silently or even actively colludes, the bully will continue with the behaviour.

Victims

- Often have poor social skills.
- Lack the confidence to seek help.
- Don't have the support of the teacher or classmates who find them unappealing.
- Blame themselves and believe it is their own fault.
- Are desperate to 'fit in'.
- View is very often reinforced by the attitude of adults in their lives.
- It is highly unlikely that they will seek help.

Most pupils (80%) are not actively involved in bullying. They neither bully nor are victims. They know it's wrong but unless they are asked for help, or are made to feel they have a responsibility or duty to act, they will silently collude with the abuse.

“Every pupil has the right to a safe school and the responsibility to stop bullying.”
Cleary

Making schools bully free ... Taking Immediate Action

Dealing with a bullying incident:

First:

- Express relief that the bullying is now out in the open and can be dealt with.
- Avoid focusing on the shortcomings of the bullying victim.
- Concentrate on where the immediate problem is - the behaviour of the bully.
- The aim of any intervention must be to **stop the immediate abuse**.
- Ensure that the bully changes his or her behaviour.
- Make the peer group aware and **ask** them to help the victim.

Provide support for the victim

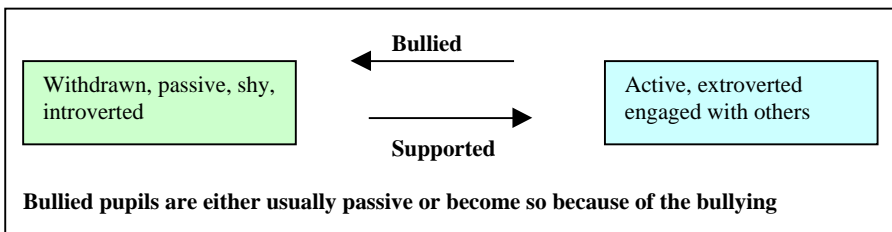
- Ensure the victim has access to a bully free environment at all times.
- Use reliable peers, teacher aids, senior volunteers and others as supporters.
- Spend time with the isolated pupil. This can only be a short-term measure, as most victims of bullying want to be with their peer group.

A special safe room that has adequate staff supervision is useful.

- Senior students can be used to help run a quiet activities room.

Withdrawn and isolated victims

- Need the opportunity to be involved in special confidence building programmes.
- Have difficulty integrating with their peer group.



Bullied pupils are either usually passive or become so because of the bullying

"I believe that schools ... have a positive duty to be vigilant ... to guard against bullying and to deal with it and stamp it out if it occurs. The consequences of a failure to do that can be very profound."

1997 Coroner's Report

Change the behaviour of the bully:

- Use small group or individual intervention programmes such as:

- **No Blame Approach.** It focuses on seeking the support of the peer group.
- The method of **Shared Concern** targets the bully as an individual to accept responsibility before bringing everyone together in a group, including the victim.

Isolate the bullying behaviour

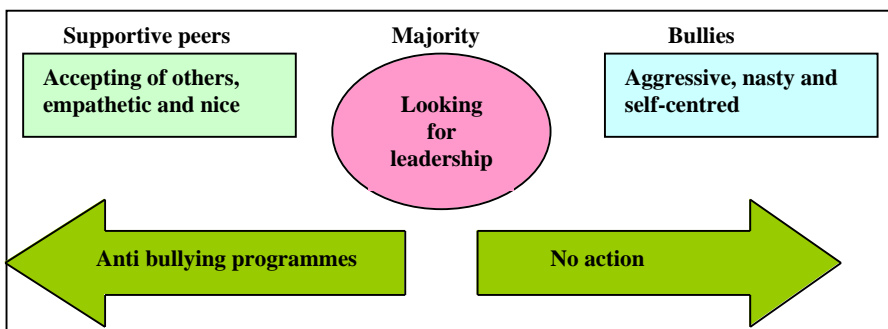
- Remove the bully from the environment, see they know why they are being excluded.
- Have the bully reflect on reasons for the isolation.
- Ask the offender to write a letter home explaining why he / she has been isolated.
 - Check that the letter goes beyond “Because ‘victim’ narked on me”.

Working with persistent offenders

- Some pupils find it difficult to leave behind aggressive ways of relating to other pupils.
- The aggression may have been so reinforced that an ongoing programme aimed at developing prosocial skills is necessary. Consider involving Children Young Persons and Their Families Service, Specialist Education Services or other appropriate agency.
- In cases of physical assault, involve your local police.

Peer programmes

Peer mediation programmes have been successful in encouraging young people to seek help when they are in a conflict situation. This may well result in the bully understanding the hurt he/she is causing and modifying their behaviour.



“Successfully dealing with bullying involves building a genuine community within the school. Everyone accepts they have the right to be free from harassment and that they have the responsibility to support their weaker and more vulnerable peers.”

Cleary

What Works Best: A Whole School Approach

Serious international academic studies have found dramatic reductions in bullying of between 20-80% when school wide strategies are used.

The two key messages from these studies are that:

1. *“There is a direct correlation between the time and quality of effort spent in developing a **whole school policy** and the reduction in the levels of bullying.”*
2. *“... the process of developing a **common understanding** of the problem is as important as any other factor.”*

Stages in the Whole School Approach

There are several clear stages a school needs to go through to become bully proof or bully free:

1. **Use a full staff meeting to raise awareness and knowledge of the issue.** The anti-bullying initiative must be tied to the school’s philosophy as laid out in the charter. Emphasise the school’s statutory obligation to provide a safe environment.
2. A brief presentation to the **Board of Trustees** about **the nature of bullying** will be useful to ensure that the subsequent policy will gain their support and acceptance.
3. **Gather Information:**
 - Find out what similar schools have done.
 - Survey staff to find out what existing programmes or initiatives in the school complement an anti-bullying approach.
 - What approach would best fit the current culture of the school?
 - Develop some base-line data that will give some quantitative information on levels of bullying.
 - Investigate perceptions staff, pupils and parents have on bullying.
4. The development of a **‘common understanding’** of bullying and expressing this in a **policy** is the key to reducing bullying. It must be supported by clear guidelines on how to deal with cases of bullying.
5. **Parent / caregiver meetings** that allow everyone to look at the issues, the nature of the behaviour and the consequence and impact of bullying on all participants, work well.
6. Develop **advice / information pamphlets**. Personalise the Police / Telecom “Stop Bullying” leaflet. Widely advertise the Internet site: <http://www.nobully.org.nz> and the Freephone **0800 nobully.org.nz** (0800 66 28 55) information line. They contain essential information for at risk pupils.

The immediate problem is the harassment and that is what must be stopped.

Curriculum Action

All pupils in the school will need to have their awareness raised in a variety of ways. This can be:

- Formalised within the curriculum, i.e. taught as part of health / social studies etc.
- Part of special year group training sessions, or as
- Part of a special prosocial skill development programme.

The goal is to sell the idea that:

STOPPING BULLYING IS EVERYONE'S RESPONSIBILITY

Within this, themes need to be carefully developed and reinforced:

- What is bullying?
- Why do people bully?
- Links with other abuse activities.
- Bullying can be stopped!
- Sharing the problem; telling friends, parents and teachers is an essential step.
- Everyone needs to share responsibility to help stop bullying behaviour.
- The problem is the bullying behaviour, not the victim.

These messages must be reinforced in school wide forums such as assemblies and newsletters. They must have the active and visible support of all staff.

There are several options in organising the anti-bullying curriculum and each school needs to choose the approach that is most appropriate for them:

1. Integrating an anti-bullying component into existing curriculum areas.
2. Introducing a series of discrete anti-bullying modules.
3. Anti-bullying modules become part of the health curriculum.
4. Anti-bullying awareness days are held.

Classrooms must always be safe places:

- ✓ Free from ridicule, harassment and isolation.
- ✓ Where possessions are not stolen or 'borrowed' by others.
- ✓ Where learning takes place in a supportive environment.

Teacher Action

All staff must be committed to a common response to bullying when it does happen.

- Immediate intervention is crucial.
- Clear procedures must take place when a case of bullying is discovered.

The school needs to provide necessary support for the individual teacher so that they are able to maintain a safe classroom environment. The discipline policy and structures are mechanisms to support and maintain safe supportive classrooms.

There must be clear guidelines that stipulate the responsibilities teaching staff have when dealing with a case of bullying. Everyone needs to accept that his or her classroom must be a safe, supportive environment where bad behaviour is not tolerated and bullying is recognised, publicly condemned and dealt with.

- Many teachers and schools find it helpful to develop clear statements of what is appropriate behaviour in the classroom.
 - This may be in the form of a school-wide **Code of Conduct** or in an individual classroom or school statement.
- Because victims can be passive and withdrawn, others need to tell when they see bullying.
- Good teachers **encourage the ‘telling of tales’**.
- They develop mechanisms to ensure that their pupils can report bad behaviour without fear of retribution or being chastised for telling tales.

A good teacher will:

- Notice when a pupil is isolated and sad.
- Look for the reasons for this.
- Not see it as just play-fighting, name-calling, a bit of fun or just part of growing up.
- Work with the victim to stop the offending behaviour.
- Not tell the victim to ignore it, to sort it out themselves or to hit back.

“Teachers must recognise that a safe classroom is the most effective way of developing a positive learning environment.”

Cleary

Pupil Action

- Schools will develop a **‘telling environment’** when they gain pupil trust and support.
- If pupils know that the telling will result in a fair resolution they will trust the adults with information about bad behaviour.

This environment can be supported by constant attention to:

- Basic codes of behaviour.
- The maintenance of a co-operative, well ordered, tolerant classroom.
- When pupils have the opportunity to tell, without attracting the attention of offending peers. Where their actions are affirmed by the teacher taking appropriate action.

Senior pupils may play a vital role in many anti-bullying activities. They can fulfil a very important role by providing non-threatening contacts. Use them in drama role-plays and during curriculum discussions on bullying.

Outside the classroom:

The ‘active’ nature of most bullies makes it very important that free time is well supervised and that there are plenty of opportunities for them to be kept busy.

- Have as many activities as possible available with clear rules to avoid the minority dominating.
- Ensure that pupils who feel vulnerable, or who are currently in a bully-victim relationship, have a safe place to go.
- Survey pupils as to the places and times they may feel vulnerable or not safe.
- Provide adequate supervision in places and times that pupils identify.
- Target areas and activities where bullies dominate. Introduce activities that will involve the bullies and encourage them to participate positively.
- Have discipline procedures in place that isolate the bad behaviour by removing the persistent offenders from the environment.
- Monitor the movement of pupils around the campus between classes. Their arrival and departure from school and what they can do at lunchtime are important issues.

Young people are searching for leadership, support and clarification from the adults in the school.

What resources are available?

Whole School Approaches / Intervention Programmes:

Kia Kaha, Police Youth Education Services Resource Kit. Contact your local police education officer at the nearest Police Station.

Keeping Ourselves Safe, Police Youth Education Services Resource Kit. Contact your local police education officer at the nearest Police Station.

Eliminating Violence Managing Anger, contact your local Specialist Education Services, Internet; <http://www.ses.org.nz>

“No Bullying Starts Today”. An English one day pupil awareness training programme available from Lucky Duck Publications, 34 Wellington Park, Clifton, Bristol BS8 2UW, United Kingdom. Phone/Fax +44 117 973 2881 E-mail: luckyduck@dial.pipex.com

Cool Schools: Peer Mediation Programme. The Foundation for Peace Studies, Aotearoa/New Zealand, PO Box 4110, Auckland. Fax 09 379 3017.

Johnson, M., Munn, P., & Edwards, L. (1991) **Action Against Bullying: A Support Pack for Schools**. Scottish Council for Research in Education, Edinburgh.

Maines, B., & Robinson, G. (1992) **Michael’s Story, The No Blame Approach**. Bristol, Lucky Duck

Useful Books and articles

Olweus, D. (1993). **Bullying at school: What we know and what we can do**. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Pikas, A. **The Common Concern Method for the treatment of mobbing**. In Roland, E., and Munthe, E. (eds.) (1989) **Bullying - An International Perspective**. London: David Fulton

Sharp, S., & Smith, P. (1994) **Tackling Bullying in Your School** London: Routledge

Rigby, K. (1996) **Bullying in Schools and what we can do about it**. Melbourne ACER. **Set Special; Students at Risk, October 1996**. NZCER, PO Box 3237, Wellington.

Helplines / Advice Agencies

0800 NO BULLY (0800 66 28 55). An automated phone helpline that offers advice for pupils who are being bullied. Developed and supported by the New Zealand Police and Telecom New Zealand Limited.

The Police / Telecom “Stop Bullying” website <http://www.nobully.org.nz> offers practical advice and gives some excellent links to other anti-bullying sites.

Other sources of Information or Support:

The Office of the Commissioner for Children, PO Box 12537, Wellington.

Ministry of Youth Affairs, PO Box 10-300 Wellington, <http://www.youthaffairs.govt.nz>

New Zealand Children Young Persons and Their Families Service (see phone book blue pages Government Phone Listings for local number).

Mental Health Foundation, refer to your local Health Authority.

Youthline, phone **0800 376 633**.