

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The research leading to this report was conducted by the Unit for School and Family Studies, based at Goldsmiths, University of London with support from the Anti-Bullying Alliance. The project ran from September 2008 to November 2010, and included an evaluation of the effectiveness of the peer mentoring pilot commissioned by the former Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF). The full report [DFE-RR098] presents the most detailed and comprehensive investigation of anti-bullying strategies in schools ever published, and runs to over 200 pages.

This Summary reproduces the main recommendations from the **Executive summary and main recommendations** [DFE-RB098], including the references [in square brackets, italicised], to the parts of the full report where the approaches are described and analysed in much greater detail. It focuses on the three main approaches that were distinguished by the research team: **proactive** strategies; **peer support** strategies; and **reactive** strategies.

## 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

### Whole-school recommendations

By law, a head teacher is required to determine a school's behaviour policy with a view to, amongst other things, encouraging good behaviour and preventing all forms of bullying among pupils. Anti-bullying policies can be either contained in the behaviour policy or be a separate policy.

- Anti-bullying policies need a clear definition of bullying and set of procedures if bullying happens – what to do and what the schools does; they should cover a range of bullying (including homophobic, race-related, gender-based, faith-based, disability-based, and cyberbullying).
- The anti-bullying policy provides a framework for a consistent whole-school approach. As such it needs to be effectively disseminated to all teaching and support staff; parents and pupils.

### **Accepted good practice includes:**

- **A toolkit of strategies** providing a range of interventions is fundamental as all students and bullying incidents are individual. What works for one will not necessarily work for all.
- **Having a consistent approach** is important for a whole-school approach (e.g. restorative approaches; rights respecting schools; assertive discipline). It needs to be expressed in the anti-bullying policy; all staff need to be trained; students briefed; parents informed; peer supporters trained and embedded in the curriculum. [Full Report, pp. 99-102, Section 4.3.6; further analyses of restorative approaches, p. 82, Section 4.1.7].
- **Staff training** including knowledge about bullying, and the range of anti-bullying interventions, should be a part of initial and ongoing teacher training, for a wide range of staff. For more advanced training, [e.g. in restorative approaches, Full Report, pp. 105-108, Section 4.3.11], 'train-the-trainer' schemes are an economical approach which supports consistency.
- **Auditing for bullying behaviour** on a regular basis provides base line information from the students about the levels and types of bullying prevalent in the school.
- **Multiple reporting systems** should be in place that are non-stigmatising and exposing. Identify vulnerable students at intake; track student behaviour to target additional peer support; and provide evidence for the effectiveness of interventions.
- **A centralised recording system** identifies vulnerable students at intake; tracks student behaviour for evaluation of support and provides evidence for the effectiveness of interventions including peer support.
- **Regular evaluation of anti-bullying work** is vital to know whether what you use works.
- **Training providers and resources** need an approved standard for an informed choice.

### Proactive strategies

Schools need to use a range of proactive strategies to create an environment that inhibits bullying both in the school building and playground.

- **Staff lead by example in modelling behaviour** with full support from the school. [Full Report, pp.20-21, Section 2.2.8]

- **Encourage parent/carer involvement** with an 'open door' policy for access to staff. [Full Report, pp.19-20, Section 2.2.7; also restorative approaches pp.102-104, Section 4.3.8]
- **Use assemblies to underpin a clear, anti-bullying message.** [Full Report, p.18, Section 2.2.5]
- **Consider using a school council as an effective reporting system** but schools need to listen; acknowledge and act on the student feedback or it becomes tokenistic. [Full Report, pp.18-19, Section 2.2.6 and bully busters, pp. 56-59, Section 3.9]
- **Consider developing a restorative ethos and culture to support the development of social and emotional skills.** [Full Report, pp. 21-22, Section 2.2.9 and restorative approaches pp. 93-112, Section 4.3]
- **Use curriculum work to embed anti-bullying work**, particularly through **interactive methods** (e.g. drama), **PSHEE** [Full Report, pp.16-17, Section 2.2.2] and **SEAL** [Full Report, p.17, Section 2.2.3], **circle time** [Full Report, p. 24, Section 2.3.3], and consider use of **cooperative group work** [Full Report, p. 23, Section 2.3.2] and **quality circles.** [Full Report, p. 25, Section 2.3.4]
- **Schools should develop a playground policy** (such as playground rules or a playground charter) – this is underused but effective. [Full Report, p. 27, Section 2.4.2]
- **Consider improving the school grounds** – anti-bullying maps produced by students can identify hot spots – playgrounds need quiet zones and zoning for activities. [Full Report, pp. 26-27, Section 2.4.1]
- **Training lunchtime supervisors** is essential if supervising a peer support scheme; schools need to find creative and accommodating ways of overcoming lunchtime supervisors' reluctance to be trained possibly by asking them what they need most. [Full Report, pp. 27-28, Section 2.4.3]

### Peer support strategies

Peer support strategies are an inclusive way of involving students in anti-bullying work.

- **Recruitment:** Recruit the right number to avoid drop-out: too many become bored, too few become overworked. Older year groups are preferred by students but sixth-form peer supporters can be intimidating for younger students. Applications with a personal statement and C.V. preferred to peer nomination. [Full Report, buddy schemes, p. 40, Sections 3.2.4 and peer mediation schemes, pp. 43-45, Section 3.3.4 and peer mentoring schemes, p. 48, Section 3.4.4]
- **Positively promote schemes** and keep a high profile through assemblies; notice boards; TV screens and the intranet. [Full Report, peer mediation schemes, pp. 41-42, Section 3.3.2 ; peer mentoring schemes, pp. 46-47, Section 3.4.2 and peer listening schemes, pp. 49-50, Section 3.5.2]
- **Training** can be structured using a rolling programme to prevent gaps in provision and provide opportunities for trainees to shadow experienced peer supporters; 'train-the-trainer' schemes can be more economical. Peer supporters trained in a reactive strategy (e.g. restorative approaches) are more effective in dealing with low level bullying. [Full Report, peer mediation schemes, pp. 41-42, Section 3.3.2 and peer mentoring schemes, pp. 46-47, Section 3.4.2]
- **Supervise** peer supporters by designated supervisor(s), preferably trained with the peer supporters, through regular meetings. [Full Report, peer mediation schemes, pp. 43-45, Section 3.3.4; peer mentoring schemes, p. 48, Section 3.4.4]
- **Provide peer supporters with a designated space** otherwise students do not know where to find them; supervision can be problematic and peer supporters can feel undervalued. [Full Report, peer mentoring schemes, p. 48, Section 3.4.4 and peer listening schemes, pp. 51-52, Section 3.5.4]
- **Peer support schemes can be targeted at transition** but Yr 7 form tutors, heads of Yr 7 and new teachers need training in working with peer supporters to use the scheme fully; the peer supporter/student ratio needs to be high or support for the new intake is compromised. Outreach work to feeder primaries for peer supporters targeted at transition establishes good relationships and helps make induction days easier for the newcomers. [Full Report, peer mediation schemes, pp. 43-45, Section 3.3.4 and peer mentoring schemes, p. 48, Section 3.4.4]
- **Having peer support schemes for inside and outside the school** is effective particularly for larger schools (e.g. buddy schemes; playleader or sport mentor schemes based in the playground and peer mediation; mentoring or listening schemes based inside). Schemes based in the playground provide activities and can refer students to the other scheme for support. In smaller schools, playleaders and buddies can be trained to provide activities and mediate in low level conflict. [Full Report, buddy schemes, pp. 38-40, Section 3.2; peer mediation schemes, pp. 40-45, Section 3.3; peer mentoring schemes; pp. 45-48, Section 3.4; peer listening schemes, pp. 49-52, Section 3.5 and playleader/sports mentoring schemes, pp. 54-56, Section 3.8]
- **Access to peer supporters** needs to avoid public exposure and be discrete and non-stigmatising; a drop-in centre or lunchtime club is a good example to be encouraged. [Full Report, peer listeners, pp. 51-52, Section 3.5.4 and lunchtime clubs, pp. 62-63, Section 3.11]
- **Senior management teams need to be supportive of the peer support schemes** otherwise scheme supervisors and mentors become demoralised. [Full Report, peer mentoring, p. 48, Section 3.4.4]

## **The former DCSF peer mentoring pilot** [Full Report, pp. 68-72, Section 3.13]

- **Mentoring and Befriending Foundation peer mentoring schemes**

[Full Report, pp. 69-70, Section 3.13.2]

The primary resource needs to be revisited as there were mixed reviews from schools. Some said it was too simplistic; others too complicated. The secondary resource needs to include guidance on child protection and safeguarding.

- **ChildLine in Partnership with Schools (CHIPS) peer support schemes**

[Full Report, pp. 70-71, Section 3.13.3]

Both primary and secondary school training need refreshing and training delivery needs to be of a consistent standard. Trainers need to provide follow-up and on-going support to schools. Workshops size must not be driven by cost effectiveness alone as training can be compromised.

- **BeatBullying cybermentors**

[Full Report, pp. 71-72, Section 3.13.4]

School staff need more contact through feedback and ongoing support to make them feel included. Inconsistencies in the filter software need addressing.

## **Reactive strategies**

Reactive strategies are used by schools to respond to a bullying incident.

- **Direct sanctions** work best as a clear set of consequences expressed in both the anti-bullying policy and school or classroom rules; mostly used within the framework of other reactive strategies. [Full Report p. 87, Section 4.2.5; also pp. 88-89, Sections 4.2.7 and 4.2.8; general findings, pp. 73-82, Section 4.1]

Also consider:

- using a seclusion or isolation room for internal exclusion, complemented by a safe haven for more vulnerable students. [Full Report, p. 90, Section 4.2.10]
- providing a re-integration process for excluded students. [Full Report, p. 89, Section 4.2.9]

- **Restorative approaches** provide an effective, flexible range of strategies to prevent and respond to bullying, but need to be used consistently and throughout the whole school. [Full Report, pp. 99-102, Section 4.3.6; general findings, pp. 73-82, Section 4.1].

If adopting restorative approaches as a whole-school approach:

- provide whole staff training – adult modelling is critical to consistency and effectiveness of the strategy, and staff need training in restorative approaches before attempting to apply it to a bullying incident. [Full Report, pp. 105-108, Section 4.3.11]
- embed restorative approaches with the students – including training any peer schemes in restorative approaches. [Full Report, pp. 99-102, Section 4.3.6; also peer mediation pp. 41-43, Sections 3.3.2 and 3.3.3]
- make restorative approaches transparent in policies and procedures. [Full Report, p.102, Section 4.3.7]
- direct sanctions are needed as a back up if the restorative process fails. [Full Report, pp. 104-105, Section 4.3.9]

- **Support group method** can be effective especially for relational bullying. The strategy is most appropriate for older primary students and younger secondary students, particularly at transition. [Full Report, pp. 117-118, Section 4.4.7; general findings, pp. 73-82, Section 4.1].

If used:

- provide staff training before attempting to apply the support group method to a bullying incident. [Full Report, pp. 116-117, Section 4.4.6]
- other strategies such as restorative approaches or direct sanctions are needed as a back up if the process fails. [Full Report, p. 116, Section 4.4.5]

- **Pikas method**<sup>1</sup> may be effective as one of a range of strategies either when other group-based approaches did not work or for 'provocative victims'. [Full Report, pp. 121-126, Section 4.5 and general findings, pp.73-77, Section 4.1.1- 4.1.2].

If used:

- provide staff training before attempting to apply the Pikas method to a bullying incident;
- other strategies such as restorative approaches or direct sanctions are needed as a back up if the process fails.

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<sup>1</sup> The Pikas method (also called the method of shared concern) is essentially a six-stage problem-solving approach that seeks to arrive at a durable solution through a series of meetings with individual students and with groups of students, avoiding the use of punishment.

- **School tribunals** can be an adapted form of school council, and facilitate student involvement. [*Full Report, pp. 126-130, Section 4.6 and general findings, pp.73-77, Section 4.1.1- 4.1.2*].

If used:

- schools must use school tribunals with care – facilitators need to be trained and all involved thoroughly briefed and clear about procedures and rules;
- participating students, particularly primary, need to be mature enough – it is not appropriate for very young students;
- other strategies such as restorative approaches or direct sanctions are needed as a back up if the process fails.

**The full research report can be viewed/downloaded at: <https://www.education.gov.uk/publications> > Entering DFE-RR098 in the Search field.**

**The Research Brief (DFE-RB098) containing the Executive summary and main conclusions can be accessed from full report download page via the above.**