



Governors briefing

Every November, the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA) and its 70 member organisations shine a light on bullying, sending a clear and positive message that bullying is neither acceptable nor inevitable in our schools and communities. The theme of this year's campaign is **Taking action together**. Taking action together means working not only with pupils to tackle bullying but working with the whole school and the community in which it serves. It means working with school governors and non-teaching staff, extended services, parents and carers, neighbouring and feeder schools, youth workers, police and residents to realise our vision of a society where everyone feels safe from bullying.

Whilst much has been done to tackle bullying in schools – the number of children reporting bullying both within and out of school is still too high.

Bullying statistics

- In a survey for DCSF carried out during the autumn term 2009, 28.8% of children reported having been bullied in school during the previous 12 months. Of these 23% were bullied most days, and 11% every day. Out of school, 21% were bullied - a quarter of them in the previous four weeks. (*Tellus 4 National Report. DCSF Research Report 218. DCSF 2010*)
- While the majority of schools are working hard to tackle bullying, over a quarter of the children who took part in the Tell Us 4 survey (DCSF 2010) reported that schools deal 'not very well' or 'badly' with bullying.
- There were 26,134 calls to ChildLine about bullying in 2008-9.
- A longitudinal study of young people in England showed that 47% of children report being bullied at age 14; 41% at age 15; and 29% at age 16. (*Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools. DFE Research Report 001. DFE 2010*)
- 65% of young LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) young people had experienced homophobic bullying at school (The School Report. Stonewall 2007).
- 8 out of 10 children with a learning disability had been bullied. Bullying Wrecks Lives. (Bullying Wrecks Lives. Mencap 2007)
- ChildLine received 300 calls from girls and boys about sexual bullying in 2008-9. (*NSPCC Policy Summary: Sexual bullying in education settings. NSPCC 2009*)

What do we mean by bullying? ABA defines bullying as the repetitive, intentional hurting of one person by another, where the relationship involves an imbalance of power. Bullying can be physical or psychological. It can happen face to face or through cyberspace.

There are still schools where children do not feel safe to learn; streets where children do not feel safe to walk; children who are too scared to get the bus to school; parks where children will not play; and clubs that children do not feel safe to join.

Headteachers and governors have clear responsibilities for safeguarding the welfare of children and young people; and for the prevention of, and response to, all forms of bullying (Children Act 2004, Education and Inspections Act 2006). The law empowers headteachers to impose discipline measures for inappropriate behaviour, such as bullying both in school and off-site (Education and Inspections Act 2006). Preventing bullying and harassment is also an essential part of ensuring compliance with equalities legislation.

However, for most schools, we know that the motivation to prevent and respond to bullying goes beyond the law – schools know that children and young people who are safe and happy, learn better. The Longitudinal Survey of Young People in England (DCSF 2008) showed that young people who reported being bullied had lower Key Stage 4 scores than other young people; and, at the age of 16, were more likely to leave full-time education and much less likely to be in education, employment or training (NEET). Tackling bullying is vital for the life and success of any school and community.

Bullying will only stop if we take action together. Whilst this is a collective responsibility for all members of the community – not just schools – as

What do we mean by bullying behaviour?

Bullying can take many forms – it includes behaviours such as name calling; spreading hurtful rumours; excluding someone from friendship or games; making demeaning comments about gender, culture, religion or sexuality; making demeaning comments about an educational need, disability or illness; taking possessions or money; sending hurtful texts, web messages and images; making silent or threatening calls; and hitting, pushing and kicking.

governors you can lead the way in making sure your school plays a central role in supporting this important endeavour.

Governors provide positive role models in the school and the wider community, and can play a vital role in supporting the headteacher and senior staff to ensure all staff and pupils work together to prevent and respond to bullying. Here are some practical ways in which you can contribute to Anti-Bullying Week 2010.

Discuss with your headteacher what is being planned for Anti-Bullying Week 2010: Ask if there are ways you can support the school with any of the following.

Recommend that the school uses the week to review its anti-bullying policy and practice: While the majority of schools are working hard to tackle bullying, over a quarter of the children who took part in the Tell Us 4 survey (NFER 2009) reported that their school dealt with bullying 'not very well' or 'badly'. To assist schools to plan, implement and measure the impact of their approach to anti-bullying, we have designed the ABA School Assessment Tool. This is available free through the ABA website www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/school_assessment_tool

Make sure that all members of the governing body have a good understanding of the issues relating to bullying: If there is a particular area of bullying that you know less about – such as cyberbullying or homophobic bullying – you may wish to consider inviting an outside speaker to the school to deliver training to you and your fellow governors and staff.

Use the week to spend time talking to pupils and their parents and carers about how effective the school is in tackling bullying: This could be done one-to-one, in small groups, or through surveys. ABA has produced questionnaires that can assist with this work and/or you might want to use the activity below, which is designed specifically by ABA for teachers and governors. Visit www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/audit_questionnaire

Consider how your school can help tackle bullying beyond school: As governors, you will be aware that pupils may be affected in school by bullying beyond the school gates. This is increasingly the case with the use of cyber-technology to bully and intimidate;

Is cyberbullying different? Cyberbullying is bullying that takes place using mobile phones and the internet. Cyberbullying can be either an individual or group behaviour that includes, for example, sending hurtful texts; spreading rumours through social networking sites; uploading private or distorted images or film; sending abusive comments through gaming sites; and assuming a false identity to cause harm or mischief.

but children and young people can also be bullied on the way to and from school, by pupils from neighbouring schools and colleges, on public transport, in parks and play areas, in youth clubs and in the home. Schools can only take action against bullying in these situations through strong partnership work with other members of the community. You may wish to use the week as an opportunity to meet governors from neighbouring schools partner primaries to consider ways that you can work together to tackle bullying. Consider the suggested activity below.

Neighbours

Purpose: For governors and senior school staff to consider whether there are ways that they can work with partner primary or neighbouring schools to share their anti-bullying vision, pledges and policy. A shared vision or strategy ensures continuity and may reduce bullying in the wider community (for example, between pupils outside school).

1. Invite staff and governors in the partner primary or neighbouring schools to meet to share anti-bullying vision, pledges and policies.
2. You may want to consider inviting staff from the local authority to support this session. The session could also include police where appropriate.
3. The aim of the meeting is to learn from one another; to consider ways you could review your own policy; and to consider whether there are areas where it would be useful to have a shared and public commitment to tackling bullying (for example, you may want to consider how you would manage a case of cyberbullying involving pupils from neighbouring schools).
4. If you are meeting with partner primary schools, you may want to consider ways in which a shared anti-bullying vision or policy can assist with transition work.
5. If you agree to devise a shared policy or list of commitments, you may want to consider making these public through your school and local websites, the local newspapers, or by holding an event in the community.
6. You may also want to consider ways in which pupils can work together from different schools to prevent and respond to bullying. For example, you could encourage members of your school councils to meet together, once a term, to discuss any bullying concerns in the wider community and to agree common goals and commitments.

What if I want to focus on a specific form of bullying? You can adapt the activities in this briefing to focus on a specific aspect of bullying behaviour. The ABA website has resources on tackling homophobic bullying; bullying of children with SEN and/or disabilities; bullying relating to race and religion; sexual and sexist bullying; transphobic bullying (bullying those of transgender); and cyberbullying. The ABA website also has links to its 70 member organisations, many of which have produced resources on tackling particular kinds of bullying. Visit www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk

Further resources

There are lots of resources relating to all forms of bullying on the Anti-Bullying Alliance website. The Anti-Bullying Week 2010 pages include further resources that relate to the theme of Taking action together. Visit www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/anti-bullyingweek

The Anti-Bullying Alliance has also produced a specific guide on bullying for school governors. This will be available soon through the ABA website.

Help and advice

ChildLine

ChildLine is the UK's free, confidential helpline for children and young people. Trained volunteers are on hand to provide advice and support, by phone and online, 24 hours a day. Call ChildLine on 0800 1111 or visit www.childline.org.uk

CyberMentors

CyberMentors is a safe social networking site providing information and support for young people affected by bullying. Young people aged 11–25 are trained as CyberMentors, in schools and online, so that they can offer support and advice to other young people. CyberMentors are also supported by trained counsellors, who are available online if needed. For more information and free CyberMentors resources for teachers, visit www.cybermentors.org.uk

Kidscape

Kidscape works UK-wide to provide individuals and organisations with the practical skills and resources necessary to keep children safe from harm. It runs assertiveness training courses for children and young people under the age of 16, their parents or carers, and those who work with them. Kidscape operates a telephone helpline for the parents and carers of bullied children. Call 08451 205204 or visit www.kidscape.org.uk

Parentline Plus

Parentline Plus is a national charity that works for, and with, parents. Its Be Someone to Tell website (see address below) offers advice on dealing with bullying in all its forms. You can also get support and advice from the Parentline helpline on 0808 800 2222; or email them at parentsupport@parentlineplus.org.uk for a free personalised response within three working days. www.besomeonetotell.org.uk