

ST ANNE'S RC SCHOOL – ANTI-BULLYING

Introduction

Aim

To identify participants' perceived and received values and beliefs with regard to anti-bullying principles and practices within St Anne's RC Primary School.

Achieved by

Focus Group Sessions were carried out in the Summer Term 2001, which were a benchmarking and research exercise.

The purpose of this exercise was to gain information from members of St Anne's School Community, with regard to anti-bullying strategies, in order to use this information to inform the principles, practices and guidelines for St Anne's Anti-Bullying Policy.

This information enabled the researchers to gain the opinions, views and experiences of the children, their parents/carers, teachers, non-teaching staff and governors with regard to bullying; thus recognising that there may be significant differences in how various children, parents/carers and staff in schools receive and perceive what bullying is, how it should be prevented and what strategies and approaches should be implemented with regard to both the victims and the perpetrators.

The findings, together with other existing research will be written into an Anti-Bullying Policy which will include the existing good practice, so that the whole School Community will work together in partnership towards preventing and dealing effectively with bullying.

The focus group discussions which took place in separate groups were in the following order:- Parents/Carers, Teaching Staff, Teaching Assistants, Pupils & Governors.

These sessions served two purposes: firstly to provide an environment which quickly facilitated an open discussion about the issues being addressed, and secondly to produce comparative data with regard to attitudes, beliefs and experiences concerning bullying, that can be analysed.

The Anti-Bullying Policy was formed utilizing the information gathered from a number of focus group discussions involving pupils, parents, teaching staff, teaching assistants and governors.

The focus group discussions took place in the Summer Term 2001 and took between two and three hours each.

ST ANNE'S RC PRIMARY SCHOOL – ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

Our Mission Statement

Together towards excellence, with God as our guide
We aim to achieve this by:
Nurturing a love of learning
Developing positive and supportive relationships
Valuing prayer, worship and faith development
Respecting individuals and our environment
Working in partnership with parents, the parish and the wider community
Celebrating the richness of our cultural diversity
July 2001

Why does St Anne's School need to have an Anti-Bullying Policy?

We at St Anne's School are aware of the existence of bullying in our school, as in other schools and other areas of life.

Yet, no matter how widespread, we do not regard it as 'normal' nor accept it as a natural part of growing up.

Bullying is a form of behaviour, which does great harm to the victim as well as to the bully. Like a fungus it thrives in the dark becoming an engrained way of life for both parties.

At St Anne's our duty is clearly to throw light on such activity, wherever it is found, to improve every child's experience of personal and academic achievement in our school.

What is Bullying?

Bullying takes place when an individual or group physically, mentally, emotionally or verbally threatens, abuses, victimises or excludes another person or group. It is any deliberate and persistent action that makes another feel uncomfortable and powerless to redress the situation.

Examples include

calling names, teasing, punching, kicking, making faces, racism, sexism
being mean, hurting others physically and hurting their feelings, leaving out.

Statement of Intent

We aim to make St Anne's School a sanctuary for open and honest discussion, where all children are encouraged to speak, confident that they will always be listened to. It shall become so easy, natural and normal to report bullying as soon as it is observed or suffered, that not to do so will be more difficult and unusual. St Anne's School will be out of bounds to bullying.

Recognising Bullying Behaviour

If bullying is to be dealt with effectively it is vital that everyone in the school needs to be vigilant so that the habit of bullying does not take hold.

"The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken."
Dr Samuel Johnson (1709 – 84) British poet

To be regarded as bullying there will always be a pattern of repetition; this could be repeatedly victimising the same pupil(s) or abusing a number of different pupils on single occasions.

Obvious forms of bullying – the bully

Where the same pupil is repeatedly observed hitting, pushing, kicking other children or threatening them in any way.

Examples include:

slapping, pulling ears, headlock, tripping-up, trying to embarrass other pupils by calling them names, being racist, hurting feelings by mocking religion, skin colour, or size.

Obvious forms of bullying – the victim

Where a pupil repeatedly complains that another pupil(s) keeps picking on them, hitting or threatening them etc.

Where a pupil is always the last to be chosen by groups

When a pupil threatens 'if you are his friend you are not mine'

When a pupil is given the 'silent treatment'

When a pupil is excluded from a group.

Less obvious forms of bullying – the bully

Where a pupil intimidates with [quiet threats](#) or [merely a 'look'](#). Where they use followers to carry out bullying for them to avoid being caught.

Less obvious forms of bullying – the victim

Where a once confident child stops answering questions in class and their work deteriorates 'they become withdrawn'. A pupil starts feeling sick, unwilling to come to school, complains of headaches, doesn't feel hungry. A pupil starts misbehaving in class and maybe even picking on others, in contrast to their previous behaviour.

ONLY 'HAVING FUN'

Many bullies may try to pass off acts of aggression as 'having a bit of a laugh' between friends. Bullying has three identifying intentions:

1. There is a power difference between the individual being bullied and the bully;
2. There is negative intent on the part of the bully to hurt, embarrass or humiliate the other;
3. The behaviour is repeated, perhaps with others, perhaps with the same person, perhaps with the same person over time.
4. Why do children bully?

They don't know that it is wrong because they haven't been challenged, or they have been challenged inappropriately, or the behaviour has continued because they want to impress friends and gain acceptance. The bully might see the behaviour as normal, because it is learnt behaviour. At St Anne's School our aim is to ensure that pupils understand that bullying is anti-social behaviour and they must take responsibility to report it and not become a bully.

Reporting Bullying

A bully's best friend is SILENCE

If you are being bullied – TELL SOMEONE

If you are bullying – STOP IT - TELL SOMEONE – REALLY? – YES

If you SEE bullying – TELL SOMEONE

If you don't tell YOU'VE JUST JOINED THE BULLY'S GANG

IT'S COOL TO TELL

You will hear people say 'DON'T TELL TALES OUT OF SCHOOL' – that's right because tales are made up stories and that will make it hard for people to believe you again and help bullies in the future –

BUT DO TELL THE TRUTH, TELL IT LIKE IT IS

We know the bully and bullied need to be

LISTENED TO -
WE ALWAYS WILL LISTEN

Responding to the bully so that they stop their behaviour and take responsibility

'Successful' bullying can favour the bully with dominance and access to a beneficial status within the group if only on a superficial though tangible level.

The bully herself/himself is a victim of her/his own inappropriate behaviour which, if left unchecked, will increasingly harm their own life, as well as the life of her/his victims, excluding them from the richness of mutual friendships and condemning them to a life of repressive relationships.

A Policy relying on compliance by prevention, policing and punishment of the bully will have limited 'success'. Work needs to be done on establishing the values of empathy, sensitivity, indeed of true Christianity.

Look at the bully's behaviour and what makes them behave the way they are, rather than personal characteristics.

Procedures to follow

It is vital that all members of the school community report and record bullying, so that a true picture of bullying is made. It is also important to ensure that there is consistency in preventing bullying, intervening with bullying and dealing effectively and supportively with the victim and the bully(s).

What do you do if there is a serious incident of violence?

When a pupil is seriously assaulted physical or verbally by another individual pupil or a group of pupils then the usual sanctions might be applied, i.e. involving external agencies, as well as parents/carers.

Advice to Parents/Carers

If your child has been bullied or you think they are being bullied

1. Find the right time to be able to talk calmly to your child about their experience
2. Listen carefully and let them talk about it – try not to prompt them

3. Make a note of what they say, particularly
 - Who was involved
 - What happened
 - Where it happened
 - How often it has happened
4. Reassure your child that they have done the right thing by telling you
5. If your child feels that they are a victim of bullying tell your child that, if it happens again, they should tell a teacher immediately
6. Make an appointment to see your child's teacher
7. Explain the problems your child is having to the teacher

If you feel that your child is a bully:-

1. Find the right time to be able to talk calmly to your child about their behaviour and that what they are doing is unacceptable and making other children unhappy
2. Listen carefully and let them talk about it – try not to prompt them
3. Make a note of what they say, and discourage other family members from bullying behaviour or from using aggression or force to get what they want
4. Show your child how they can join in with other children without bullying
5. Make an appointment with your child's teacher and explain the problems you are experiencing
6. Discuss with the teacher how you and the school can work together to stop your child bullying
7. Regularly check with your child how things are going at school
8. Give your child lots of praise and encouragement when they are co-operative or kind to others

The SEVEN STEP GUIDE to be taken when bullying has been observed or reported

Step One

Interview with the victim. When the member of staff finds out that bullying has happened, they start by talking to the victim about their feelings. They do not question them about the incident but need to find out who was involved. (Often trying to extract the 'truth' leads to more conflict and hostility – Training and discussions between all members of the school community will enable more of a debate to take place about recording 'accurate events').

What about victims that 'provoke' bullying? Some victims may appear to show behaviours, which might appear to encourage bullying; for example, a pupil who has poor social and interpersonal skills or who is very unassertive. They should be offered guidance and support with learning more assertive behaviours. This DOES NOT imply they should stop the bullying themselves.

Step Two

Have a meeting with the pupil(s) involved. This will also include some bystanders or colluders who joined in but did not initiate any bullying. A group of six or eight pupils works well. It is felt that bullying rarely takes place in real isolation – there is always some knowledge and maybe consent from a group, even if they disapprove and refuse to join in. Secret bullying is rare and hard to discover. A peer group should be given the opportunity to help put things right, even if they are not actively involved in the bullying. If a pupil who is bullying is extremely troubled and has extremes of anti-social behaviour then they too should be offered the 7 Step approach, but they might also require additional monitoring and/or external support. Talk calmly with the pupils about the experience

Step Three

Explain the problem. The member of staff tells them about the way the victim is feeling and might use a fable, a poem, a piece of writing or a drawing to focus on the distress and hurt felt by the pupil being bullied. At no time does the member of staff discuss the details of the incident(s) or allocate blame to the group.

Step Four

Share responsibility. The member of staff does not attribute the blame, but focuses on the belief that the individuals within the group are responsible and can do something about it. Positive reinforcement of what is acceptable and what is unacceptable should continue through other preventative work in both the formal and informal curriculum.

Step Five

Ask the group for their ideas. Each pupil is encouraged to suggest a way in which the pupil being bullied could be helped to feel happier and included in the class/school. The member of staff gives some positive and supportive responses, but does not go on to an extract of a promise of improved behaviour.

Step Six

Leave it up to them. The member of staff ends the meeting by passing the responsibility to the group of pupils to solve the problem. It is important that the member of staff arranges to meet with the group again to check out how things are going and arranges a time and place to meet with them.

Step Seven

Meeting the group again to find out how progress is being made. About a week later the member of staff discusses with each pupil, including the pupil being bullied, how things are going. This allows the member of staff to monitor the bullying and keeps the pupils involved in the process.

Pupils should be actively involved in making decisions about issues, which affect their lives and the lives of their peers.

Taking responsibility for creating a safe and secure environment is the responsibility of everyone in St Anne's School community; refusing to watch bullying, and reporting bullying incidents, are all effective ways of preventing bullying.

Initiatives to Recognise and Prevent Bullying

- Key member of staff with responsibility for Anti-Bullying – Racial Harassment – Diversity & Equal Opportunities
- Roles and Responsibilities – Guidelines for all members of the School Community at St Anne's School
- Class visits made by the Co-ordinator to each class in order to make observations, but fundamentally to build up trust and co-operation between staff and pupils
- Vigilance by all staff and pupils
- All staff and pupils record and report bullying
- Procedures for reporting and dealing with bullying are reviewed and monitored pupils and staff
- Pupil and staff supervision and monitoring in the playground

- Self-help information – Childline and Helplines displayed in all classes and around the school
- Zero Tolerance Posters around the school which have been designed by the pupils
- Bullying Awareness Week – organised and prepared by pupils and the school community – including parents and local residents
- Peer Counselling
- Mentoring Programme
- Peer Mediation
- Counselling of both bullies and victims
- PSE Interactive Drama
- Cross Curriculum Programme
- Staff Training
- Monitoring and Evaluation: Regular review and monitoring of reports of bullying by pupils and staff