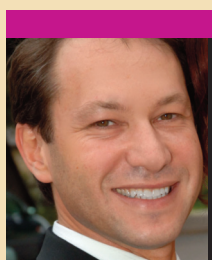


5 WAYS TO BEAT BULLYING

It's an area of growing concern, and one in which many schools state they would welcome support – **Lawrence Royston** shares his top tips to help protect students from each other, and themselves...



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In March this year, the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) published its most recent statistics on bullying. The most disturbing of these included that from 2011-2013, 31,599 children called ChildLine about bullying; 46 per cent of children said they have been bullied in school at some point in their lives; and bullying was the main reason that boys called ChildLine. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that tackling this serious issue ranks high on the priority list for many headteachers and Senior Leadership Teams. Fortunately, there are a number of ways that they can support and effectively enhance the anti-bullying campaigns, policies and initiatives they have in place.

1. GET CLEAR; STAND FIRM

Earlier this year, the NSPCC delivered the 'Safeguarding in Education Service Briefing: Roles and responsibilities of schools, academies and colleges in England for tackling bullying.' Schools were given guidelines on how they should develop, evaluate and review their anti-bullying policies, procedures and practices and the issue of cyber-bullying was addressed. With cyber-bullying increasingly becoming a problem in modern day schools (38 per cent of young people have been affected by it according to the NSPCC's research) schools may need to re-address their own procedures and policies, particularly if they are a few years old, to ensure they reference cyber-bullying.

Many of the schools I have worked with have addressed this by revising their anti-bullying policies at least once a year and ensuring that all members of staff and pupils are kept abreast of any amendments as soon as they are made. Anti-bullying procedures and policies should be made clear to everyone and schools should remain firm when dealing with any reported incidents of bullying.

2. BE AWARE; MAKE CHILDREN AWARE

The charity Family Lives offers advice to parents who are worried that their child is being bullied, or may even be bullying others. It also offers practical advice to teachers on how to spot the signs of bullying in the classroom. It suggests carrying out projects in class to find out whether bullying is a problem in the school, or whether or not the

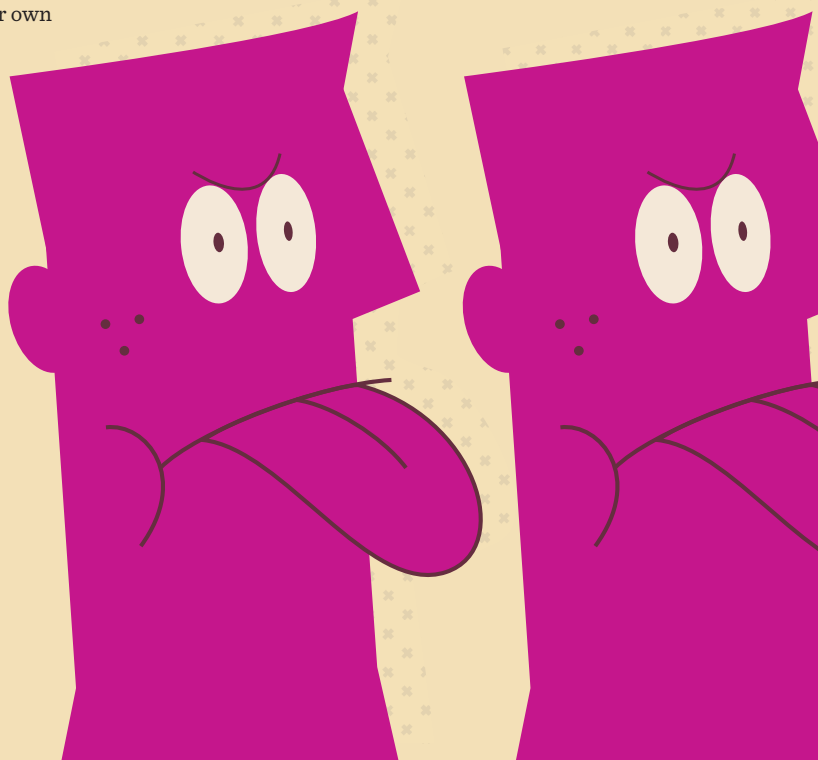
school's anti-bullying policy is effective.

The charity's website offers lots of advice for dealing with specific issues and provides teachers with a number of great ideas they can use in the classroom to tackle bullying. In addition, class projects of this nature raise awareness of bullying amongst the students themselves. Projects can be used to emphasise the emotional scars bullying leaves behind and increase empathy among students. They can also highlight the seriousness of bullying and the ramifications for those who partake.

One teacher told me how she worked with her students to create a guide as to what actually counts as bullying, to help them understand when they should speak up. It brought to the forefront the realisation that bullying didn't just include physical or verbal abuse, but also extended to excluding people; this was a real eye-opener for some of her students.

3. INVOLVE PARENTS

Bullying.co.uk, also part of the Family Lives charity, offers advice on what parents need to know about bullying at schools and academies. While it is quick (and right) to point out that the vast majority of pupils are well behaved, it highlights the fact that bad behaviour and disruption in class can stop teachers from



18%

OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE WORRIED ABOUT BULLYING SAID THEY WOULD NOT TALK TO THEIR PARENTS ABOUT IT

teaching and pupils from learning. It also states, 'A school's behaviour policy is informed by the governing body's written statement of general principles on behaviour. When making or reviewing this statement, the governing body must consult parents'.

It is imperative that parents know what their child's school behaviour policy is, as it directly affects their child; a good policy will outline exactly what is regarded as bad behaviour, what constitutes as bullying, what measures are in place to prevent bullying among pupils and the consequences for those who bully others. The site goes on to explain that, 'schools must publish details of their behaviour policy (including the governors' statement of principles which informs that policy) online. In addition, the headteacher must bring it to your attention at least once in every school year'.

Increasingly, schools are telling us that, across the board, parental engagement is rapidly improving; whether schools are reaching parents to inform them about school trips, truancy issues, school dinners or parents' evenings, modern technology means the messages are being received and consequently, are being acted upon. Updates and information on bullying policies and incidents should be no exception; the more parents are being informed about what goes on after they leave the school gates in the morning, the more they can help schools to tackle the issue of bullying.

4. BRING IN THE TECHIE HEAVY

Undoubtedly, technology has infiltrated every facet of our everyday lives; it's actually difficult to think of a task we do on a regular basis that doesn't involve technology. Yet, with more than 500,000 apps currently in the marketplace, why aren't there any that schools can use to tackle bullying? Good news - there are! Emerge, for example, has behaviour write-back for SIMS and features for photographic and video evidence functionality. This means that all incidents are

tracked as they happen in real-time and are written back to the pupil's profile in SIMS. Wouldn't the thought of being caught on video make any bully think twice about his or her actions?

Schools should alert all pupils to any similar technologies they have implemented as a deterrent to any future acts of bullying.

5. PROMOTE THE SCHOOL'S ETHOS

While the majority of schools will have a strong ethos that promotes tolerance and inclusion, there are a number of ways that this can be enhanced to support anti-bullying practices throughout the school. Schools have told us that they have noticeably ramped up class activities and lessons that promote tolerance amongst students. Using awareness days to teach students about different religions, sexualities, races and so on, has really helped to bring these issues to light in a way that is meaningful and relevant to students.

I recently read a piece from creative writer and poet Tinnেকে Bebout, that really resounded with me largely due to the research we have been doing around bullying; she writes, "Fear of the unknown and the other is the root of almost all hate. It is born of ignorance and fed by those who would keep us divided". Looking at this concept at its most basic level, it seems to suggest that in order to eradicate the hate which ultimately leads to bullying or worse, children (and some adults too) need to be educated about everything they regard as 'different' from them. The more familiar they become with these things and the more commonplace they become, the less taboo there is around them. As this continues to grow, I have no hesitation in saying that bullying will begin to decline.

BULLYING: THE STATS

- + ALMOST HALF (46%) OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAY THEY HAVE BEEN BULLIED AT SCHOOL AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES.
- + A SURVEY OF PUPILS IN ENGLAND ESTIMATES THAT 16,493 YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 11-15 (4.4%) ARE FREQUENTLY ABSENT FROM STATE SCHOOL OR HOME EDUCATED BECAUSE OF BULLYING.
- + 31,599 CHILDREN CALLED CHILDLINE IN 2011/12 (10% OF CALLS) ABOUT BULLYING.
- + BETWEEN 8% AND 34% OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE UK HAVE BEEN CYBERBULLIED; GIRLS ARE TWICE AS LIKELY AS BOYS TO EXPERIENCE PERSISTENT CYBERBULLYING.

(COLLATED FROM GOVERNMENT REPORTS AND RESEARCH)

