



# BULLYING AT SCHOOL

## KEY FACTS

**A.B.C.**

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## WHAT IS BULLYING?

**“Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others.”**

*Department of Education*

*Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary & Post Primary Schools (Dublin 1993)*

Bullying in Ireland is a behavioural problem which affects the lives of thousands of school children and their families. The humiliation, fear, frustration, social isolation and loss of self esteem which children experience when bullied results in absenteeism from school, poor or deterioration schoolwork, personality changes, illness, depression and unfortunately sometimes suicide.

Most People are unaware that bullying exists, yet this behaviour often remains largely unchallenged until it manifests itself as either directly impacting on someone we know and care about or as a problem that has become to serious to ignore.

National and International research has shown that bullying knows no boundaries of age, sex or socio-economic background. It can take many forms, it can be short term, or continue over long periods, even years.

**Bullying Behaviour quickly causes pain and distress to its victims.**



## TYPES OF BULLYING

### **Verbal Bullying...**

...may involve persistent name-calling, 'slagging' or using a person consistently as a butt of jokes. Verbal attacks can be of a highly personal and/or sexual nature and can be directed at the child's family, culture, race, or religion. Malicious rumours are particularly insidious forms of verbal bullying. This type of bullying can leave children feeling angry, frightened and powerless. If children are unable to share their feelings with someone else, it can leave them emotionally bruised and exhausted. Their powers of concentration can suffer, adversely affecting their capacity for learning.

### **Physical Bullying...**

...can consist of pushing, shoving, kicking, poking, tripping up, punching or striking someone with weapons or objects. When challenged, it may often be written off as 'horseplay', 'pretend', or 'just a game'. While children do play roughly, in the case of bullying be aware that these 'games' can be a precursor to vicious physical assaults. Both boys and girls indulge in physical bullying, though boys perhaps more so as they have a greater tendency towards physical aggression.

### **Gesture bullying...**

...can rely on many different forms of non-verbal threatening gestures, which can convey intimidating or frightening messages, i.e. the state or look that accompanies bullying behaviour.

### **Exclusion Bullying...**

...is particularly hurtful because it isolates the child from his/her peer group and is very hard for the child to combat as it directly attacks their self confidence/ self image.

**Extortion Bullying...**

...young children are particularly vulnerable to extortion bullying. Demands for money, possessions or equipment, lunch vouchers or food may be made, often accompanied by threats. Children may also be dared or forced to steal from the school leaving them (at the mercy of the bully) open to further intimidation.

**E-Bullying/Cyber-bullying...**

...in an ever more technologically advanced world, a new strain of bullying has emerged amongst children, which utilises web pages, emails and text messaging to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly i.e. rumour mongering.

**WHY DO PEOPLE BULLY?**

While constitutional factors play a part in aggressive behaviour, it is recognised that factors within the home, school and wider society influence the development of aggressive behaviour.

If aggressive behaviour is not challenged in childhood, there is a danger that it may become habitual. Indeed, there is research evidence, to indicate that bullying during childhood puts children at risk of criminal behaviour and domestic violence in adulthood.

**Factors which contribute to aggressive behaviour in the home are:**

- Lack of love and care
- Too much freedom
- Inconsistent discipline
- Permissive management of aggressive behaviour
- Violent emotional outbursts on part of adults
- Excessive physical punishment
- Cruelty

### **Factors which contribute to aggression in school are:**

- Inconsistent and inflexible rules
- Poor staff morale
- Inadequate supervision
- Punishment that is too harsh, abusive or humiliating
- Few incentives and rewards for non-aggressive behaviour
- Curriculum that affords few feelings of success and achievement

Other factors in wider society include violence portrayed on cinema screens and on television. Research suggests that children who consistently view violence on TV and video develop more aggressive tendencies and less empathy with victims of aggression. This is especially true of children who experience violence in their home and their neighbourhood as part and parcel of their daily lives.

## WHO GETS BULLIED?

For most people, when you talk about a child who gets bullied there is a clear mental image in their head of the 'class' school victim. The small, perhaps chubby, bespectacled individual straight out *Tom Brown's School Days* or *Billy Bunter*.

The truth of who gets victimised is, however, far less clear cut. Any pupil, through no fault of their own may be bullied. Anything, no matter how small, that sets the victim apart from the bully or bullies may be sufficient 'justification' in their eyes. Sometimes all it takes is for the child to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Therefore it is not unusual to find that there are many children victimised through bullying who are popular and socially well adjusted.

It has been recognised that many of the negative and unsympathetic characteristics that are often ascribed to victims may be the result of long-term bullying rather than a cause of bullying.

There are, though, some children who unwittingly invite attacks by behaving in ways that cause tension and irritation in their immediate vicinity. Such children, often referred to as 'provocative' victims may have inadequate social skills or learning difficulties.

Sadly, however, research shows that no matter what the true origin of the bullying is, children who are bullied tend to see the cause of bullying in themselves and feel or imagine that there is something 'wrong' with them.

## BULLYING IN IRELAND - HOW WIDESPREAD IS IT?

The Nationwide Study of Bullying in Irish first and second level schools conducted by Dr. Mona O'Moore in Trinity College Dublin indicates that some 31% of Primary Students and 16% of Secondary Students have been bullied at some time.

From our circa 8700,000 school going population, approximately 23% or 200,000 children are at risk of suffering the ill effects of bullying. *(For more information contact the A.B.C. Trinity College)*

### Nationwide Study Primary & Post-Primary Schools Total No. of Pupils = 20.442

	Primary (=9599) <i>percent</i>	Post Primary (=10,843) <i>percent</i>
<b>Pure Bullies</b>	12.3	10.8
<b>Pure Victims</b>	17.1	11.5
<b>Bully/Victims</b>	14.1	4.1
<b>Total Involved</b>	43.5	26.5

## WHERE DOES BULLYING TAKE PLACE?

Bullying can occur almost anywhere, but particularly where there is either inadequate or no adult supervision.

Results from the Nationwide Study on Bullying Behaviour in Irish Schools (O'Moore, 1997) show that in Primary schools in Ireland, 74% of children who said there were bullied reported that they were bullied in the playground. While 37% claimed that the bullying occurred in the classroom.

At Secondary level, the most common place to be bullied was in the classrooms with 47% of victimised children placing the incidents there. The next most likely place, at 37%, was in the corridors, with the playground at 27%.

Other areas, within the school, where children reported bullying to go on, at both levels, included the toilets, changing rooms, locker areas, and dormitories in boarding schools.

19% of primary school children who said they were bullied said that the incidents occurred going to or from school, while 8.8% of post-primary students said the same.



## THE EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Some of the effects of bullying include:

- Stress
- Reduced Ability to Concentrate
- Lack of Motivation or Energy
- Poor or Deteriorating School Work
- Anxiety About Going to School
- Loss of Confidence & Self Esteem
- Lack of Appetite / Comfort Eating
- Alcohol, Drug, or Substance Abuse
- Aggressive Behaviour
- Depression
- Problems with Sleeping: Nightmares, Bedwetting, Sweats
- Stomach & Bowel Disorders
- Panic Attacks
- Nervous Breakdowns
- Attempted Suicide

## THE TELL TALE SIGNS

If a young person is being bullied there can be certain characteristic signs and behaviours, which may be exhibited. As a parent or teacher, you should watch out for:

- Unexplained bruising, cuts or damage to clothes
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress but a refusal to say what's wrong: Remember bullying is often surrounded by secrecy and the young person being bullied might fear the repercussions of telling someone what is going on
- Unexplained mood swings or behaviour: These changes in behaviour may include becoming withdrawn, clingy, attention seeking, or increasingly aggressive
- Lower confidence and self-esteem
- Out of character behaviour in class
- Deterioration of educational attainments
- Loss of concentration: The young person may be distracted from his or her school work because of worries surrounding the bully
- Loss of interest in school

- Erratic attendance and mitching
- Lingerin behind in school after classes are over: This may be done in order to avoid confrontation by the bully
- Increased requests for pocket money, or stealing money
- Loss of or damage to personal possessions and/or equipment

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## BULLYING

*By*

*Gemma Louise Davies—Age 10*

*Castle Park School, Dalkey*

Coming home from school, just bullied, on a dreary day  
 Not daring to tell my mum or dad.  
 For fear it should happen the next day

Rushing to my room and pretending to my mum that everything is okay  
 I hide the sadness and my bruises from her,  
 As on my bed, sobbing, I lay

The Pain, the sting, oh how it hurts. I cry out, aloud.  
 “What’s wrong?” Mum asks, coming upstairs.  
 “Nothing, nothing” I said with head bowed

I lie awake, all night long, tossing and turning in my bed.  
 How can they be so cruel and mean?  
 Fear of it again tomorrow, gives me an aching head.

Should I tell, should I speak? Who should I go to now?  
 Half the school is afraid of this bully.  
 Should I be the one to sort it out now?

In school now, avoiding the bully, I rush into the classroom...quick.  
 I jump for joy, and click my heels. What do I find?  
 He’s sick!

## THE KEY TO CHANGE

To prevent the cycle of violence from one generation to the next, adults in all possible situations must intervene.

Failure to act gives a silent but powerful message that aggressive behaviour is appropriate and acceptable. Moreover, valuable opportunities are lost for shaping society's general attitude to violence and oppression.

## WHAT PARENTS CAN DO?

*(for more information request our Parent's Booklet)*

**Prevention is better than cure.**

Empower schools to act...

...remember, your child can be either the victim or the bully, we all have the ability to bully others within us. Make sure that your child's school has the policy and the programme in place that ensures that, in either eventuality, your child's problems will be identified and acted upon.

Empower Pupils to report incidents...

...statements to children like "you shouldn't tell tales" and discouraging 'whistle blowing' at a young age, can have detrimental repercussions when it comes to incidents of bullying. Always make it clear to your children that it is always right to tell when they see something wrong.

Discuss Bullying Behaviour with your children...

...make them aware that bullying is not simply 'physical' and discuss what kind of effects it can have.

Challenge every incident of Bullying Behaviour that is witnessed...

...lead by example. Where you see negative behaviour, highlight it.

Be aware of your own behaviour...

...don't confuse your children by talking one way and acting another, avoid inconsistent discipline and power-assertive methods of discipline. Exercise democracy in your home, give the children responsibility. Promote confidence and enhance their self-esteem.

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## WHAT TO TELL CHILDREN IF THEY ARE BEING BULLIED

### **What to do:**

Act as confident as you can. Face them and tell them clearly to stop. Try and be calm and move away from them.

### **Don't hit out:**

If someone is bullying you don't try to hit/kick them. You may get badly hurt in a fight and even if you don't, the bully can sometimes use how you hit them against you, and make it seem like you are the bully.

### **If they call you names:**

If they tease you or slag you off, try and laugh it off. Don't let them see that they have hurt you. Bullies like to get a reaction, if they don't get one there is no point in bullying you.

**Remember, it's not about you:**

Often people who bully other people do it to make themselves feel better, because they are unhappy, at school or at home. Remember that they have the problem not you. Don't believe what they say to you, and don't blame yourself.

**Tell your friends/people you trust in class:**

Tell them what is going on and how you feel. Ask them to come with you to tell a teacher if you are afraid. Ask them to stand up with you against the bully.

**Tell Someone!**

If you're being bullied, try and tell someone about it.

Talk to: your parents

Some in your family

Your teachers

A helpline

*If your school has a peer mediation or mentoring program try to use it. No one can help you if you don't tell them. If you are afraid to tell because it might make things worse, tell the person you talk to that you are afraid if they do anything it might make it worse, ask them to find a way to help you deal with it so it won't.*

**What to say when you tell:**

- Tell them what has happened
- Who is doing it
- How often it has happened
- Did anyone see or hear what went on
- What have you tried to do about it

## WHAT SCHOOLS SHOULD DO



### ***There is no such thing as a bully-free school.***

*Just because there are no reports of incidences or because they are not witnessed by school staff it does not mean it is not happening. The National Study on Bullying in Irish Schools reported that children often don't tell.*

All schools should implement the recommendations put in place by the Department of Education's Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post Primary Schools (Sept. 1993).

### **Raise Awareness of Bullying in the School...**

...run an annual awareness week where various classes and events are run to increase knowledge of what bullying is and what impact it can have. Run competitions on the theme, in art, poetry, and prose. Combine with the children to write a play and perform it for the school.

...run a staff day for the teachers to deepen their understanding of the matter and solicit suggestions on how to proceed. Set up a working party.

...invite the parents, school management and wider community to an evening in the school to enlighten and inform the subject and involve them in the drafting of the school policy.

### **Draft a School Policy on Bullying...**

...develop a whole school, pro-active and constantly evolving policy on bullying within the framework of an overall school code of behaviour and discipline. Involve and inform the parents and wider community.

### **This Policy Should Include...**

- A clear definition of bullying and the forms it takes
- A statement that bullying is unacceptable behaviour and that it will not be tolerated
- That pupils should support each other by reporting all instances of bullying
- That all reports of bullying will be investigated and be dealt with sympathetically
- A clear statement on how the school will handle and alleged case of bullying

### **Implement Preventative Measures...**

...apart from raising awareness, put in place programmes designed to help children view and deal with conflict in a positive manner.

...give them the skills and the mandate to deal with some forms of conflict themselves. Put in place peer mediation or mentoring programmes.

*(Many bullying incidents escalate out of small scale arguments/ misunderstandings, if the children have the skills and the confidence to deal with them themselves, many bullying incidents could be prevented. Classes could be a safer more co-operative place of learning and in addition, teachers would have to spend less time on small disputes and disciplinary measures, freeing up their time for teaching, benefiting all.)*

***For more information contact A.B.C., Trinity College.***

## A.B.C IT'S HISTORY & IT'S AIMS

The Anti-Bullying Research & Resource Centre was set up by Dr. Mona O'Moore in the Education Department of Trinity College Dublin and was opened officially in January, 1996. The Centre opened on the heels of work done by Dr. O'Moore and her team on the Nationwide Survey of Bullying at School in Ireland.

The Anti-Bullying Centre was set up initially as an independent research body targeting the area of bullying, a course it continues to follow. The Resource side of our work, including our counselling and "victim support" aspects, evolved as a result of our research.

As researchers began to contact the centre about our work, a resource library was set up to aid them in their work. Word of our Centre spread, and the support line evolved, due to the demand of school, organisations and individuals searching for information and options in regard to bullying. These organisations and individuals contacted us because they had a problem and, quite simply, had nowhere else to go.

In endeavouring to assist them, and though we remain unfunded in our work, we have built together a team of highly trained individuals to help us with this work. Our aims in regard to school bullying remain:

- To conduct research into the multi-level and multi-factorial nature of bullying behaviour
- The creation of greater awareness and understanding of bullying behaviour
- The promotion of ways and means by which bullying behaviour may be prevented or reduced
- The provision of advice, guidance, counselling and resource materials for researchers parents, schools and organisations seeking to counter bullying behaviour

## A.B.C SERVICES PROVIDED

- A resource reference library
- Advice & guidance, by phone or in person for
  - Researchers
  - Parents
  - Teachers
  - Schools
  - Organisations
- Research advice and survey assistance for individuals, schools, and organisations examining the extent and nature of bullying.
- Counselling services for both the victim and the bully.
- In service and staff development days for schools and organisations

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## THE A.B.C TEAM

**Mona O'Moore, Ph.D., F.T.C.D**

**Founder & Co-Ordinator**

Prof. Mona O'Moore is the Founder and Director of the Anti-Bullying Research Centre in the School of Education in Trinity College Dublin, the first of its kind in Ireland. She is Professor of Education and a graduate and fellow of Trinity College, with a MA in Child and Educational Psychology from the University of Nottingham and a PhD in Psychology from the University of Edinburgh. Prof. O'Moore also served as Head of the School of Education in Trinity College. She has written widely on the subject of bullying, including *Understanding School Bullying: A Guide for Parents & Teachers* (Veritas, 2010) *Dealing with Bullying in Schools: A Training Manual for Teachers, Parents and Other Professionals* (Sage Publications Ltd, 2004) and *Inclusion or Illusion?: Educational Provision for Primary School Children with Mild General Learning Disabilities* (Blackhall Publishing Ltd, 2009).



**Administration & Research:**

Lian McGuire, B.A, Dip.Med.; M.Ed. (Aggression Studies)

Murray Smith, B.L.

Claire Healy B.A. M.Ed. (Aggression Studies)

**Psychologists/Counsellors:**

Garret O'Moore, M.Sc (Occupational Health Psychologist)

Anne Frey, I.A.T.C., A.C.C. (Reality Therapy)

**Workshop Co-ordinators:**

Garret O'Moore M.Sc.

Ann Frey, I.A.C.T., A.C.C (Reality Therapy)

**Occupational/Art Therapist:**

Marja Wilmer, S.R.O.T., A.T. Dip.

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## PUBLICATIONS & RESOURCES

*The list of resources here are on the following pages, is in no way meant to be exhaustive, merely representative of some of the materials available for teachers, parents, schools, and researchers. Most, though not all, of these resources are available through the Anti-Bullying Research & Resource Unit's lending library service. These books and packs are generally available for purchase or order through any good bookstore, or via the internet.*

### BOOKS

Understanding School Bullying: A Guide for Parents & Teachers, O'Moore, M., 1st, Dublin, Veritas, 2010

Dealing with Bullying in Schools: A Training Manual for Teachers, Parents and Other Professionals, Mona O'Moore & Stephen James Minton, 1st, London, Paul Chapman Publishing, 2004

The Anti-Bullying Handbook - *Keith Sullivan, Sage Publications Limited.*

Don't Pick on Me. *Rosemary Stones, London: Piccadilly Press Limited.*  
(2005).

Bullying and Teasing: Social Power in Children's Groups. *Macklem, G. New York: Plenum. (2003).*

How to Stop Bullying in Your School: A Guide for Teachers. *Varnava, G. David Fulton Publishers: London. (2002).*

Bullycide: Death at Playtime. *Marr, N. and Field, T. Oxfordshire: Success Unlimited. (2001)*

Stop the Bullying: A Handbook for Schools. *Rigby, K. Jessica Kingsley Publishers: London. (2001).*

6-Steps to a Trouble-free Playground. *Hinson, C. Sprint Quality Printing: USA. (2001).*

Bully Busters: A Teachers Manual for helping Bullies, Victims and Bystanders—*Newman, Horne & Barlomucci, Research Press, 2000.*

Crying for Help: The No Blame Approach to Bullying—*Robinson & Maines - Lucky Duck Publishing, 2000.*

The Bully Free Classroom: Over 100 Tips and Strategies for Teachers -*Allan Bane, Free Spirit Publishing, 1999.*

Bullying in Our Schools - *David Fitzgerald, Blackhall Publishing, 1999.*

The A.B.C. of Bullying - *Murray & Keane, Mercier Press, 1998.*

101 Ways To Deal With Bullying: A practical guide for parents - *Michele Elliot, Hodder & Stoughton, 1997*

Bullying in Schools & What To Do About It -*Ken Rigby, A.C.E.R., 1996.*

Teenscape: A personal safety programme for teenagers -*Michele Elliot, New Ed. Health Promotion, England, 1995.*

Bullying - *Vivette O'Donnell, C.A.B., 1995.*

Bullying A community Approach - *Brendan Byrne, Columba Press, 1994.*

School Bullying: Insights & Perspectives - *Sharp & Smith, Routledge, 1994.*

Bullying: A practical guide for coping in schools - *Michelle Elliot (Ed.), Longman, 1991.*

Practical Approaches to Bullying - *Smith & Thompson, Fulton, 1991*

Bullies & Victims in Schools - *Valerie Besag, Open University Press, 1989.*

## RESOURCE PACKS & VIDEOS

Silent Witnesses, *A.B.C. and Animo Productions, 2006*

[A DVD intended to assist schools and parents to raise awareness of the problem of bullying and to help them manage the problem. Available via ABC.]

Bullying - Photocopiable Resources for Schools—Prim Ed. <http://www.prim-ed.com/ie/catalogue/sphe/bullying/bullying>

Bully Off: Towards a Whole New Ball Game of Relationships in Schools - *Kevin Browne, First and Best in Education Ltd., 1995.*

Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence, an anti-bullying pack for schools - *HMSO*

No Bullying Starts Today—an awareness pack for schools - *Robinson, Sleigh & Maines, Lucky Dog Publishing, 1995.*

Action Against Bullying: A school Pack - *S.C.R.E., 15 St John Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8JR, 1992.*

Supporting Schools Against Bullying: Secondary Pack - *S.C.R.E., 15 St John Street, Edinburgh, EH8 8JR, 1992.*

We Don't Have Bullies Here - *Valerie Besag*

The No Blame Approach to Bullying - *Robinson, Sleigh & Maines, Lucky Dog Publishing, 34 Wellington Park, Bristol, Bs8 2UW, England.*

Stamp Out Bullying - *Robinson, Sleigh & Maines, Lucky Dog Publishing, 34 Wellington Park, Bristol, Bs8 2UW, England.*

Cycle Of Violence - *Peter Smith, Drake Educational Associates.*

Broken Toy - *Thomas Brown, Lucky Duck Publishing, 34 Wellington Park, Bristol, BS8 2UW, England*

But Names Will Never Hurt Me - *Brown, Robinson & Maines, Lucky Dog Publishing, 34 Wellington Park, Bristol, Bs8 2UW, England.*

Hands on Bullying - *Tony Jewes Productions, 1998*

In The Pink- *Central Television Productions*

Welcome To The Dollhouse - *Suburban Pictures, Feature Length Movie (Over 15's)*

## BOOKS FOR PARENTS DEALING WITH BULLIES & VICTIMS

The Parent's Book About Bullying: Changing the Course of Your Child's Life - *William Voors, Hazelden Information & Educational Service, 2000.*

(Disabled) Words will really hurt me. How to protect your child from bullying - *Martine; The National Autistic Society Helpline. The National Autistic Society; 1999.*

Parents & The Bullying Problem - *David Fitzgerald, Blackhall Publishing, 1999.*

Keys to Dealing With Bullies (Barron's Parenting Keys)

- *MacNamara & MacNamara, Barron's Educational Series, 1997.*

Bullies Are a Pain in the Brain - *Trevor Romain, Free Spirit Publishing; 1997.*

Helping Children Cope with Bullying - *Sarah Lawson, Sheldon Press, 1994*

