

Bullying involving children and young people with SEN or disabilities.



Youthworks

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YOUNG Voice

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Activities and ideas for Anti-Bullying work.

Participation and how to enable it

'Inclusion and participation are essential to human dignity and the enjoyment and exercise of human rights.' (The Salamanca Statement).

Communication systems.

A 'communications passport' is widely used. This has been developed by the charity Scope and can be adapted for use in bullying situations. The Educational Psychology & Specialist Support service of Norfolk County Council has created a series of cards with clear messages on each which can be used by a pupil to aid communication.¹ Mencap offers 'Bullying: Don't stick it', which contains stickers and some useful illustrations on types of bullying.

Booklets and leaflets using images and simple clear statements can be personalised with a photograph of the support base staff person or the peer mentor.

- Keep sentences short and positive
- Associate pictures with words
- Types of bullying can be illustrated
- Use clear illustrated cards or worksheets²
- Simple graphic diagrams are helpful

¹ Pearson, A., & Goodfellow, H. in press, Norfolk County Council

² Mencap (2007) Don't Stick it Stop it!

All learners as respected decision makers

Training in decision-making language and skills can enable very young children to participate more fully. Might this be useful for children with learning difficulties? A children's participation study in 9 classrooms taught young children the language tools and skills to give their views, express nuanced opinions and make decisions. By using timelines of their day, even non-literate children were able to record when they made decisions. Children used photos, videos and coloured blocks to vote or give their views on what could be improved in school. Through analysing the data (particularly looking in detail at the visuals they had made), the children began to distinguish between their own personal views and independent data analysis. They used matrices and other devices to make decisions, including setting out arguments for and against certain choices. The language of decision-making became an integral part of the classroom culture. Children learned to qualify what they said.

Work of this type may help children to articulate their reasoning. The study noted the impact on children's use of language and their development in terms of speaking and listening. The value of visual and practical approaches to communication and decision making made it more accessible to a wider range of children, than if they had relied on written records. It was apparent that writing was more likely to distract the children from the process of thinking about and making decisions. The variety of activities (making visual representations such as timelines and matrices and using counters and cubes to show preferences) accommodated children's different approaches to learning. The project enhanced inclusion through children learning to see and accept others' points of view.³

Learners as researchers and creators

- Write out the options on a large sheet of flip chart paper – each learner (with helpers as necessary) chooses where to place his or her sticker to denote priorities or choices.

³ Cox, S., Currie, D., Frederick, K., P. Robinson-Pant, A., Stubbs, I, Taylor, T. and White, D. Children Decide: Power, participation and purpose in the primary classroom CfBT.

- Use single-use cameras. Children take pictures of 'Where I feel safe' and 'Where I feel scared'.
- On a drawing or enlarged photo of the school or setting ask children to mark with coloured pens the spaces where they don't feel safe or where bullying takes place.
- Create 'Strengths' cards and have children arrange them to illustrate what they CAN do.
- Make a booklet with disabled children on their experiences of bullying
- Consider The 'Mosaic Approach' used in nursery education.⁴

Inclusive activities to enhance and illustrate unity.

- Thumbprints on flip chart – everyone inks a thumb and plants their thumbprint on a large sheet to indicate that we are all the same and we unite against bullying.
- Blue Friday - customized shoes day – everyone decorates their shoes in something blue for Blue Friday. This shows solidarity against bullying. (Blue Friday is an annual event, the last day in Anti-Bullying Week.)
- Drumming together with bongo and other African drums promotes a sense of belonging and does not require verbal skills.
- A Hearing Impaired group can contribute lip synching and signing to pop songs on stage at a youth performing event against bullying. (Seen in Wolverhampton)
- Involve disabled pupils in developing and delivering presentations alongside peers (Oxfordshire).
- Make a wishing tree – draw a large tree on flip chart paper and encourage the learners to place leaves onto the tree. Each leaf can represent a wish – these can be drawn, written, pictures torn from magazines, photos or symbols. (With thanks to The Creative Connection).

With grateful thanks to Wolverhampton Anti Bullying Coordinators, Downsfield School, Wolverhampton; Castle School Walsall, Oxfordshire Anti Bullying conference, Bartholomew school. Shepherd School, Notts.

Success with interventions is less likely where the pupils with SEN are not fully involved alongside peers. Research has demonstrated that if they were not in the classroom when the curricular work on bullying was done for example, or when

⁴ Alison Clarke and Peter Moss. 2001, The Mosaic Approach, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

pupils with hearing impairments were absent from drama groups or film-making on bullying, the interventions were less likely to succeed.⁵

These activities were assembled by Young Voice. Below there are some ideas and visual aids for developing questionnaires adapted to children and young people with SEN.

⁵ Whitney, I, Smith, P.K. and Thompson, D. in Smith, P.K. & Sharp, S. (Eds) *Insights and Perspectives on Bullying and Children with Special Educational Needs* pp213-240 Routledge

Inclusive questions/activities that can enable children with SEN to report or discuss bullying.

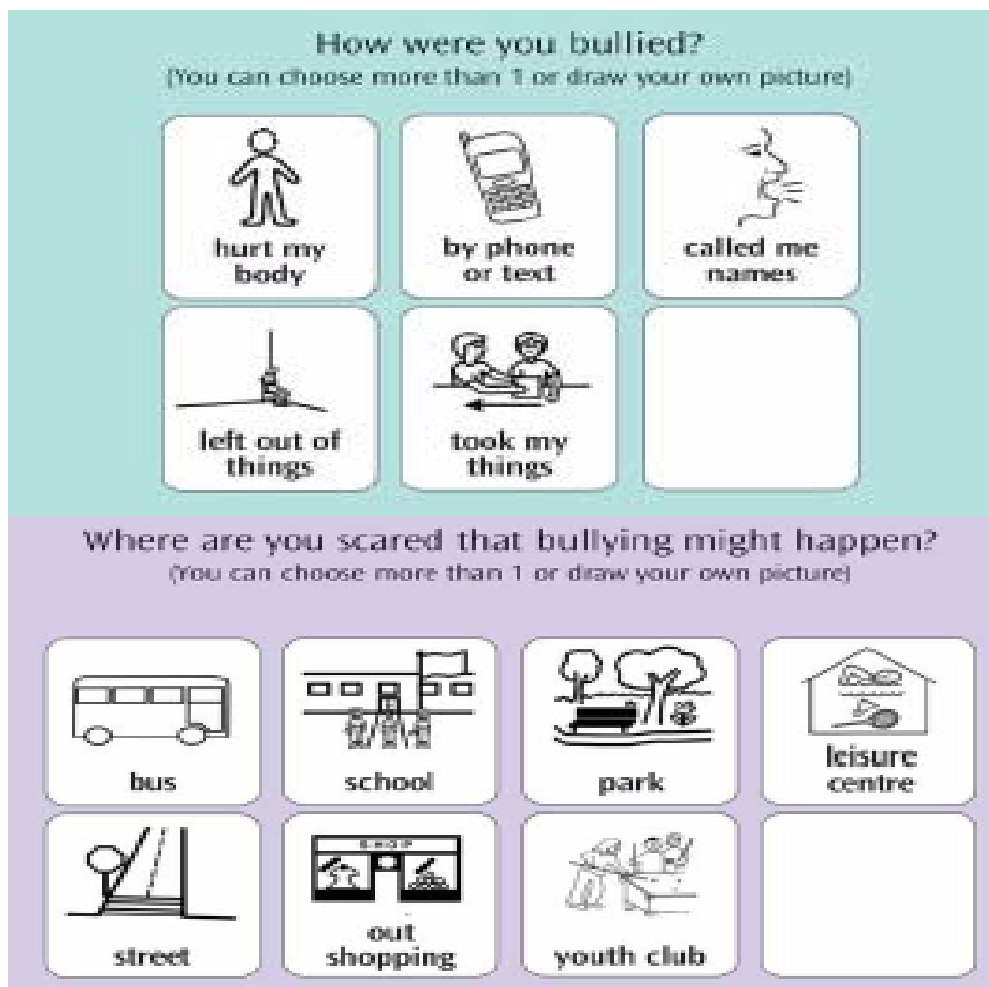
Asking children About Bullying

Visual Aids

Cartoon pictures can be used to illustrate different types of bullying, for example, physical, verbal, cyberbullying and social exclusion. This can aid pupil's comprehension. Visual aids may be particularly important for very young children or children with Learning Difficulties.

Simple adaptations to questionnaires can enable wider participation. For example, for those with sight impairments a recorded questionnaire can be provided. Illustrations or smiley/sad faces, and graphics or simple scales from one to five can assist learners with learning difficulties to give their views. Learning assistants may be asked to help. Expect results from learner and teacher reports to vary, especially with peers' accounts included.

A few examples are illustrated. Below are cartoons from Mencap. These are available from the *Don't stick it, Stop it!* This booklet is available from Mencap. http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/campaigns/anti_bullying/2006_320_anti-bullying_booklet.pdf .



Cartoons to use with very young children or children with more severe learning difficulties

The following cartoons devised by Monks et al. (2003)⁶ have been used successfully in a number of research studies to attain peer and self nominations of victimization (aggressors, victims and defenders) for children as young as 4.

Questions to use with the cartoons below

For peer nominations for the 'bully/aggressor' role you would ask: (after each cartoon has been described). 'Some children ... (e.g. hit or kick other children/say nasty things to other children). Do any children in your class do this?'

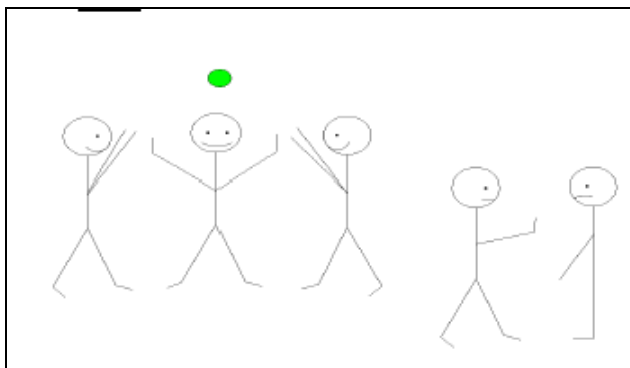
For peer/self nomination for the victim role (if they nominated any children for the victim role) ask: 'Who do they do this to?' (they could nominate other children or themselves)

For peer/self nominations of the defender role ask "If anyone in your class saw any of these things happening to another person, do you think they would do anything about it? Do you think anyone in your class would tell an adult about it or tell that person (the bully) to stop doing that or look after that person (the victim) afterwards"

To attain a self nomination for the bully/aggressor role you would ask 'Do you do this (e.g. do you say nasty things to other children)?'

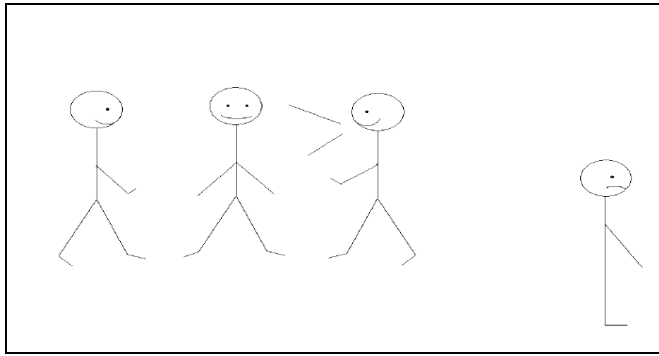
Continues below...

Some children never let other children play.

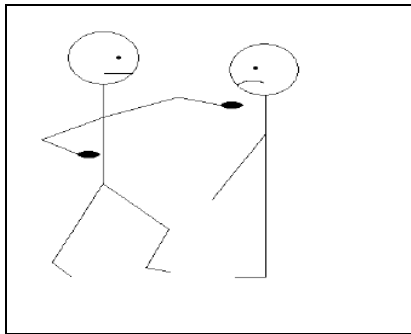


Some children say nasty things about other children

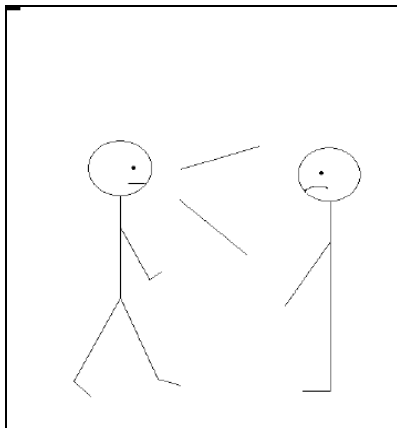
⁶ C.P., Smith, P K. and Swettenham, J. (2003) Aggressors, Victims, and Defenders in Preschool: Peer, Self-, and Teacher Reports
Merrill-Palmer Quarterly , 49, 453-469



Some children hit or kick other children



Some children say nasty things to other children



Circle Time activities

- For children who may have difficulties with concentrating and/or who may be hyperactive, more physical means of gathering information about bullying could be used. For example- 'sit down/stand up if you think there is bullying in the school', or running to one side of the room to express 'Yes' and the other side to express 'No'.
- Games about difference can be followed by discussions. Ask everyone wearing black shoes to stand up and go into the middle of the circle. Then return to their places. Follow this with people wearing brown shoes or trainers. Demonstrate how trivial these so called differences are and reinforce unity by having every child place a footprint on a large sheet of paper in the centre.

- Ask each child in turn to finish the sentence 'I don't like it when.....' This often brings up the subject of bullying for example: 'I don't like it when people are nasty to someone'.
- Children can discuss why they think people bully others. This may reveal some individual's reasons for bullying.

Using creative methods

- Write out the options on a large sheet of flip chart paper – each learner (with helpers as necessary) choose where to place his or her sticker to denote priorities or choices.
- Use single use cameras. Children take pictures of 'Where I feel safe' and 'Where I feel scared'.
- On a drawing or enlarged photo of the school or setting ask children to mark with coloured pens the spaces where they don't feel safe or where bullying takes place.
- Create 'Strengths' cards and have children arrange them to illustrate what they CAN do.
- Make a booklet with disabled children on their experiences of bullying
- Social stories (copyright Carol Gray)

These activities assembled or developed by Young Voice with grateful thanks to all those who contributed so generously.

Appendix

School approaches and activities - what works?

3.33 The practical activities described here have been contributed by schools, children and young people with SEND. Their active participation models the recommendation that they are fully involved in the development of an anti-bullying policy. They prioritise the question of seeking help and feeling helpless:

Seeking help

'You can't do anything about it. You can't tell. 2 reasons – 1... you don't know their name [said due to size of the school] so they'll get away with it, 2... you'll get bullied even more cos they'll call you a grasser.'

'If you tell they'll beat you up more.'

'Grassing makes things worse – makes you scared to tell – like blackmail.'

3.34 Where learners with SEND are concerned, communication across the staff team is essential. All staff working with children need to know of risks, although they will not all need to have detailed information on a particular child's impairment unless there is a specific reason, such as a reasonable adjustment to support their needs. They will need to know the extent to which learners' SEND may lead them to bully others or display disruptive behaviour. Staff need to be observant when there are changes in learners' behaviour and make sure they understand the cause. It may often be due to factors unrelated to their SEN or disability. Further, they will need to know the best way of communicating with each child and their capacity to understand the nuances of behaviour and interaction.

3.35

'They don't always believe you when you tell'

Children with impairments maintain that they are often not believed if they do tell, or that they have been threatened and are too scared to tell a teacher what is happening to them.⁷

3.36 Learners go through a complex decision-making process when deciding whether or not to report bullying. They will consider the risk, the extent to which they trust that effective action will be taken, and the procedures in place to enable them to do so. A number of learners with SEN or other SEND may not recognise that they are being bullied, are unable to report that they are being bullied, or as seen above, are fearful after receiving threats concerning reporting bullying. This makes preventative strategies and a strong anti bullying ethos all the more important. *'Safe to Learn'* [para 5.1] illustrates approaches schools have taken to give learners a range of ways to report bullying, for example use of questionnaires, bullying boxes and nominating particular staff to be available.

3.37 The list below highlights what to consider to make sure learners feel confident they can report bullying and be heard.

⁷ *'Bullying wrecks lives; A report about the experiences of bullying of children and young people with a learning disability.'* Mencap 2007 and children interviewed for this guidance.

- A quiet place to communicate
- Understand the child's communication needs
- Can they understand you?
- Are their communication tools available to them?
- Have they had time to calm down and fully tell what they want to?
- Allow plenty of time
- Do they need a supporter?
- Are staff visible and available to all learners?
- Learners with a range of needs including learning disability, sensory impairment and EBD will require specific communication and staff will need to check their understanding. Many children with autism for example are assumed to understand much more than they do.
- Do staff know about and understand how to use communication passports?

'Doesn't matter how many rules are in place. Teachers can't do owt about it, bullies are everywhere'

'They don't always believe you when you tell'

Pre-arranged signals to support learners who are bullied

3.38 In this simple but personal approach a teacher agrees that a check will be made several times a day or week. The teacher will simply give this signal to the pupil who will signal back in return showing whether things are going well or not:

'Thumbs up, means things've been good, thumbs down mean it's been bad' (If children report bullying, someone checks on the child each day by giving discreet thumbs up. If child gives a thumbs up it means it is a good day, if thumbs down, they go and talk to the child in private. Children who are bullying are also talked to.) (Pupil in Mainstream Primary)

Playground and lunchtimes

If learners are consulted about bullying 'hot-spots', and playtimes are identified as a particular problem, supervision can be increased at playtimes, or alternative games offered. Some children may be particularly vulnerable to bullying at these times, especially if they do not have many friends or they find unstructured time difficult, as is the case with many learners on the autistic spectrum. Clubs and quiet rooms or re-designed playgrounds are responses that have made substantial changes to the experience of learners at unsupervised times. Chess and computer clubs are popular alternatives to physical play. Certain learners who have particular sensory sensitivities may need to have a quiet retreat away from noise, close contact with others and even smells. Some enjoy playing with sand or water. Schools frequently permit a friend to join a disabled child in a designated area.

'We actually try not to call it a unit, more another resource base that children can use. We have an open-access policy. Able bodied children can also choose to go in there. Any child is free to go into the unit - it can serve a purpose for them also - can be a safe place to play. There are lots of different things to do that children enjoy - such as a computer room. There are some parts that are only

suitable for severely disabled children but if at all possible, all children are allowed in. Our work is inclusive high level integration work.'

Curriculum

3.40 Curriculum based activities are successfully used in many settings to improve social relationships: PSHE and Citizenship lessons offer explicit opportunities to explore bullying and discrimination. The Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) primary resource includes a unit on bullying, 'Say No To Bullying'. Some Special schools are adapting the SEAL resources to meet the specific needs of their children. Safe To Learn [p.44] identifies lessons which can be used to raise awareness of issues, explore difference, facilitate understanding of bullying and resolve conflict. Further information on using the curriculum to support learners with SEND can be found in 'Implementing the DDA in schools and early years settings' available at:

www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/sen/disabilityandthedda/ddapart0

3.41 **Music and drama workshops** are popular with children and young people and offer group work opportunities to develop songs against violence and bullying.

Drama offers the tools to rehearse situations and ask the audience to help by telling the characters what to do next. Hot seating can be used to enable pupils to experience situations in turn.

Learners can be helped by watching, then acting out scenarios to rehearse in advance what they could say or do if an incident occurs. This can also help some children with SEND understand what bullying is and put their own experiences into context. This work is inclusive and many can join in. Successful work with learners who bully has used specially written plays⁸ reflecting back at them how their own behaviour comes across; deploying them to help other younger or vulnerable learners and, in some cases other learners with SEND, in whole class drama and music workshops. These workshops publicly examine how the whole class feels about bullying without identifying individuals by name. Drama and music distance participants from the situation and allow them to talk about how they feel and what might be the reasons for the bullying behaviour.

Rewarding Positive Behaviour

'Pupils should be aware that there are consequences for their behaviour with the focus on positive behaviour management and explaining to children and young people the impact of their behaviour.' [secondary school]

3.42 Rather than a focus on the undesirable behaviour, this approach provides attention, praise and rewards for positive behaviour. It also uses group management techniques.

'For every negative comment that is made we make sure that there are at least 3 positive statements made about that child's behaviour.' (Teacher)

Managing the way teams or partners are picked can change the dynamics of the group as this learner explains:

⁸ By Val McFarlane Durham Anti Bullying Service

'In my primary school, we did this sports day team thing, where they picked these teams so you could work together but loads of people didn't get picked cos they didn't have any friends, so like what I thought was everybody should just pick different people and give them a chance so they could show what they could do not what they couldn't do, then they could all work together and help each other.'

More influential than a focus on negative behaviour are simple activities that reinforce loyalty, trust, or kindness while offering rewards for positive behaviour.

'We've got WOW's in class... miss can you explain?' – Teacher "if the students behave well, they get a WOW sticker" – student: "makes us feel great [when we get one] like we've really achieved something. At the end of the week we count em all up and on Friday we get all our WOW's out and we get to choose something.'

.. it's like you get stamps, and when you get a certain amount of stamps you get a merit and what you could do you could do is you could get a card if you'd been reported to bullying, and you could get a stamp if you didn't bully, you'd get a big reward.'

3.43 Strategies to reinforce positive behaviour can exert pressure from the whole class on each member to achieve the promised reward. These may not be long lasting where children have EBD, but are effective for the duration of the activity.⁹

The Chill Pill: Exploring consequences

Assisting young people to explore and identify the consequences of particular actions and behaviour may help some learners when tackling bullying.

3.44 Below is a description of a technique for choosing an action and thinking through the consequences. Described here by an autistic 9 year old, he clearly understood that he had to 'count to ten and look at my options – if I don't take the chill pill I don't have time to think about what might happen next'.

*'I'm autistic and ... we do this comic strip about someone who accidentally ran over this dog. We draw these Calm Down Chill Pills. There are boxes with Y for yes and N for no. You see what happens if you choose Y or N. Y is for if you take the Chill Pill N is if you don't. If you don't choose Y a whole lot of other awful things happen. You need to take the time to think about what might happen before you decide what to do.'*¹⁰

Transitions

Pupils with disabilities experience frequent transitions – from special school to mainstream – often every week, from a unit within mainstream school to mainstream activities and back and often from special school to college within every week. Add to these transitions the usual changes from primary to secondary or secondary to college and it seems bewildering and difficult to fit in

⁹ Evans, Harden, Thomas, Benefield (2003) NFER

¹⁰ (Young Voice Coventry inclusion study 2005)

with peers. Schools are using new technology such as web cams to familiarise students with the place they are going to next. Welcome DVD films are made by pupils at the other site, welcome booklets or web pages can be produced with helpful hints and friendly tone.

AntiBullying week can be used to make some of these welcoming resources.

Schools on a larger campus with multiple sites might like to use Anti-Bullying week to develop a multi-site policy and get sign-up from every site so that pupils are protected as they move from site to site. Pupils can produce posters for all sites and agree or negotiate a set of principles they will adhere to on all sites. These should include treating everyone fairly and a 'no harassment' rule.

Appendix. Sample Adapted Charter

Learners should be helped to understand

How to recognise bullying

That they do not 'deserve' it nor should they accept it

How to report it

Who they can turn to

That steps will be taken to make them feel safe

That they can get support from others

That the school is constantly working to reinforce the anti-bullying strategies.

For pupils who engage in bullying behaviour:

Sanctions and learning programmes will hold them to account for their behaviour

All forms of prejudice will be tackled

They will be helped to:

Recognise the impact of their behaviour on others

Develop their social and emotional skills

Take steps to repair the harm they have caused

Recognise that every pupil is entitled to be safe

The school community

The school will use a 'menu' of methods to make the anti-bullying policy a living policy understood by all. The school community includes all pupils, parents, staff and support staff.

Everyone in the school community will be helped to:

Understand the anti-bullying stance of the school

Contribute to monitoring bullying in the school

Participate in developing and reviewing the anti-bullying work in the school

Celebrate the success of anti-bullying work,

Include and value pupils with SEND

Beyond the school community

Partnerships will be built with the community outside the school to help keep pupils safe on their way to and from school.

Transport services carrying pupils will be encouraged to support the efforts of the school to keep pupils safe.

Community safety teams will be encouraged to maintain pupils' safety beyond the school gate.

By Young Voice