

BRIGHTON & HOVE CITY COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL ON BULLYING IN SCHOOLS

4.00pm 1 JULY 2013

COUNCIL CHAMBER, HOVE TOWN HALL

MINUTES

Present: Councillors Buckley (Chair), Brown and Gilbey, Sam Watling, Youth Council Co-optee and Amanda Mortensen, Parent Governor Co-optee

Also Present: Professor Robin Banerjee, Panel Advisor

PART ONE

6. PROCEDURAL BUSINESS

6.1 There were no declarations of interest and no declarations of party whip. Substitutes are not allowed on scrutiny panels.

7. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 13 JUNE 2013

7.1 The minutes of the Panel meeting held on 13 June were agreed.

8. CHAIR'S COMMUNICATIONS

8.1 Councillor Ruth Buckley, Chair of the Scrutiny Panel, welcomed everyone and reminded the meeting that the third and final meeting planned for 11 July was being postponed until a new date in September, to be agreed.

8.2 The Chair said the scrutiny panel was set up by Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee after a request from Councillor Wealls.

8.3 At the end of the evidence gathering meetings the panel would agree draft recommendations. Final approval of the report will be required by the Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The final scrutiny report will then go to decision-makers and on to Full Council.

9. INFORMATION FROM WITNESSES

9.1 Carlton Hill Primary School

9.2 Carlton Hill Primary school's Headteacher Louise Willard (LW) and Healthy Schools/PSHE Lead Teacher Isabel Reid (IR) set out the school's approach to anti-bullying. They said it was important to have a clear shared language understood by adults and children especially on different kinds of bullying and ways to respond.

9.3 The school promotes good behaviour using 'Golden Rules' in which children are entitled to 'Golden Time,' that formed part of the whole school behaviour system. Anti-bullying is an

important part of this, being shared in assembly and involving staff training, teaching children a script to help establish assertiveness, PSHE themes and including 'bubble time,' for a child needing to speak to an adult that day.

9.4 Anti-bullying had a higher profile in the Autumn term with more training prior to anti-bullying week, re-visiting the school definition of bullying, and sending home bullying definitions, scripts and responses. The school acted on feedback from the Safe and Well at School Survey (SAWSS) data, though numbers of cases of bullying in the school were relatively low.

9.5 Any behaviour incidents could be put on record and bullying can be highlighted on the form. The School Behaviour Policy and incident record blank forms were tabled.

9.6 In reply to questions..

Children can become a target of bullying because of real or perceived differences or poor social or communication skills; we can counteract this by actively celebrating the fact that we are all very different in family, skills and ability. This is reflected in the school motto – that 'fair' means everyone gets what they need, not that everyone gets the same.

9.7 Children who bully might do it because they might feel different, or have their own unhappiness outside of school. eg domestic violence can lead to bullying or aggressive behaviour. Being a target of bullying in the past can lead to bullying behaviour towards others.

9.8 A consistent approach is key, shared language and shared responses from all in the school community. This depends on good staff training and a clear understanding by all. We have a 'listening culture' so that children know who to talk to and to make sure that they are believed.

9.9 Vulnerable groups can be minority groups, who may have feelings of 'unjustness,' or where children may have behaved unfairly to one another. That is why staff remind children of people's different needs. A good relationship with parents is important, informing them what has happened, working as a team and drawing up an action plan together where necessary.

9.10 An example of bullying that is not always easy for adults to notice is; a year 5 child with health issues, perceived by some in the class to be receiving preferential treatment, being called names and excluded from events.

9.11 Schools can make referrals to the Behaviour Inclusion Learning Team (BILT) for in-school support.

9.12 Cyberbullying does not happen directly in the school, however some parents are anxious and angry about cyberbullying and those issues spill into school. At present this is an issue for parents but as we see younger and younger children using facebook we do expect this problem to grow in primary schools. Cybersafety and internet safety is included in Key Stage 2 PSHE lessons. Training for staff is really important. There is a need to communicate to parents about cyberbullying.

9.13 Children know the consequences of being bullies in the Golden Time system. There are rewards for good behaviour but there are also sanctions for persistent bullying behaviour, such as denying access to the playground. Perpetrators are supported with a behaviour plan often

involving parents. We have to focus on finding solutions eg by mentoring and supporting friendships as we cannot always split up children into different classes.

9.14 Rates of bullying have dropped in recent years. From our monitoring we can tell if any classes have particular bullying problems. Exclusion is very rare and always involves behaviour other than bullying. We know the children and we work to support them over a long time, sometimes involving outside agencies, signposting parents, setting up an assessment framework.

9.15 The transition year is handled very carefully including visits and a picnic. We belong to the local network of schools, the City Centre Partnership. We always flag up vulnerable pupils because in the larger secondary school they can become more vulnerable eg they can't have the same level of knowing the adults in the school.

9.16 With regard to possible gaps in anti-bullying in schools in Brighton & Hove:

If a school is unsure how to respond, the Healthy Schools team provides active and positive help in dealing with challenging issues. This has worked well.

It's important to develop and maintain a 'whole-school' approach; not all schools have this. PSHE network meetings are very important to local schools. Teachers need easy opportunities to meet each other and share anti-bullying practice.. The Autumn Anti-Bullying network meeting is key here.

The citywide SAWSS survey is a good reflection on what goes on in schools. We make sure KS2 pupils understand the survey and encourage them to answer truthfully. The SAWSS data shows trends within a school and can be used to inform further anti-bullying work.

Answering an additional Panel question, LW and IR gave the following information after the meeting, from a governor at Carlton Hill Primary School, who has long-standing experience of working in a crèche...

"The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) is the time for 'groundwork', setting the foundations for attitudes to difference, identifying potential vulnerabilities and giving the children the tools and language to express how they feel.

The children need to be taught to recognise when they feel unsafe and to develop a range of strategies for dealing with this.

Learning and practising good listening and 'sharing' skills is key to the development of empathy, understanding and the ability to speak out.

Some key points for primary school staff :-

1. Making and maintaining good links with community nurseries, nursery schools and classes and childrens centres and ensuring a focus on any individual needs/ potential vulnerabilities at the point of transition.

2. Building a culture of parental involvement which celebrates diversity openly.

3.Regular use of circle time and small group work to reinforce all of the above. For example, using Persona Dolls to talk with the children about different types of people or situations; using a 'Talking Stick / stone' to emphasise turntaking and listening skills.

4.Accessing resources from specialist agencies with particular focus on these areas of work. e.g. Safety Net for using Protective Behaviours and other safety strategies with children in the EYFS; the Early Childhood Project for books, display materials suitable for work with young children on anti bias / anti bullying themes and info / resources suitable for parents and staff."

9.17 Member of Youth Council

A student and Member of the Youth Council (MYC) spoke to the Panel about her own and her friends' experiences of being bullied.

9.18 In Year 7 MYC had her school bag hidden, her belongings pushed on the floor, was pushed over and then called a cry-baby. Her tutor noticed she had been crying, spoke to the bully who was placed in exclusion for a few days. The bullying continued but MYC did not report it again, as she thought it was being dealt with.

9.19 In Year 4 MYC told her tutor that she was being bullied but MYC was made to think that she, not the bully, needed to change.

9.20 MYC's friend who has red hair, was bullied and she reported the matter. The boy was excluded for some days but her friends ganged up on her saying 'why did you snitch?'

9.21 Another friend on the autistic spectrum and with attention deficit hyperactive disorder was bullied and someone else tried to step in. However that person was criticised for 'having a go' at the bully. Sometimes stepping in can lead to more bullying.

9.22 Another friend was followed home from school, insulted and pushed into traffic. MYC thought this should be reported to the school but it was not. Another friend was bullied socially, verbally and physically. MYC used to walk home with her to ensure she was safe but the friend ended up moving school because her safety in school was at risk. The bully remained at the school.

9.23 MYC said students did not know how to report and respond to bullying behaviours. Students did not know - should they or should they not report an incident?

9.24 Asked what can be done to reduce bullying, MYC felt that bullying couldn't be stopped entirely. However students ought to know that something can be done about bullying, and how to do it.

9.25 MYC told the Panel that there needed to be a proper check that a bullying experience had been dealt with. Sanctions ought to be monitored to check that they actually work. People needed to be clear when 'banter' between friends becomes bullying.

9.26 Cyberbullying is a particular problem because bullying can start on-line eg by texting and that can get transferred into real life.

9.27 Young people should make sure that friends are really treating you as a friend and if not, that needs to be talked about more openly... although it's not a good idea to call someone a bully in front of the whole class as that can encourage the perpetrator to do more bullying.

9.28 MYC advice to someone who has been bullied or who has seen bullying is; not to just walk away; not to cry; be supportive, especially at a time of other stresses eg exams; be a friend.

9.29 MYC said the feelings of the victims had to be taken into account otherwise it can be counterproductive and the victim is made to feel worse. Teachers should use their authority to help students work through bullying issues and not just impose their own solutions on the students involved.

9.30 Answering questions:

Bullying takes place in classrooms as well as elsewhere. It would be better if I were not sitting near to the person who bullied me but in fact one teacher did place me right next to the bully.

9.31 Yes, I was a victim of cyberbullying. That was in Year 7 and my parents dealt with it.

9.32 We know that there is a school policy on bullying. We know we should report to an adult but we don't know who and there doesn't seem to be a good way to tackle bullying. I would say there is a general ambivalence about the policy. You can easily get laughed down if you try to use it.

9.33 There is little information on what will happen if we report bullying. If I am bullied again now, I think I would like to talk about it. But I don't know whether to go to my form teacher, to another trusted teacher, or someone else. There isn't an easy way to say to anyone 'I am being bullied.'

9.34 Some teachers do notice the behaviour of students. But you can't blame teachers because bullies hide what they are doing. know teachers want to stop bullying – they do try to do that by using their best judgement at the time.

9.35 If I were to be bullied outside of school I wouldn't know who to report it to. I would 'write it off.'

9.36 The Chair Councillor Ruth Buckley thanked MYC for taking the scrutiny panel into her confidence and for her honest and insightful presentation.

9.37 ICT Support for Schools

9.38 ICT support for School Paul Platts (PP) told the Panel he was formerly a full-time teacher and now undertakes computer safety training. PP is Child Exploitation and Online Protection agency (CEOP) trained. He provides training mostly to staff; also to parents.

9.39 E-safety had not been a huge issue in schools until the advent of social media. It then did become a concern where children were using home computers. Now social networking problems including cyberbullying for children and young people are becoming more prevalent both outside and inside schools - to the extent that schools are forced to deal with cyberbullying issues that happen outside school.

9.40 Cyberbullying could be equally if not more harmful to childrens' well-being and was no different from bullying, other than it is done electronically and has a much greater audience. It was easy to do and hard to block. Some students who do not normally bully, do cyberbully. He said children can experience a behaviour change when on-line, and the attitude of some parents can make matters worse.

9.41 A national survey had shown that nearly 2/3 of primary age schoolchildren would say a horrible thing on-line. PP's role was to train teachers on computer safety in secondary, primary and special schools. A little training for students was done via the PHSE curriculum and PP had attended assemblies with PCSOs.

9.42 PP said parents can get 'freaked out' by the technical side of the internet. He provided training sessions for parents to cover the technical issues, warning signs to look out for, how children become on-line bullies. There were very good resources available for parents, suitable for students of different ages. But despite testing different start-times, numbers of parents attending the sessions had been minimal.

9.43 PP said that his role tended to be reactive. He was working in schools together with UK Safer Internet Centre to provide safeguarding sessions and explained some actions that schools can take eg having items removed from Facebook.

9.44 'Rather than schools only trying to block access and provide 'clinical' on-line environments, I'm sure education and awareness are the best solutions we have; I'd like to do more,' he said. 'I'd like all schools to have more of an 'open access' policy and to monitor more closely any use of the computer.'

9.45 Some secondary schools were now using computer monitoring and PP hoped all others would too. PP was currently replacing filtering software in schools and undertaking an audit of the e-safety policies of all primary and secondary schools. Further teacher training was being done alongside this.

9.46 Answering questions:

PP did not generally work with younger people.

Internet safety is generally improving and some schools are really working hard to educate their students on the issues.

CEOP was promoting the use of an 'abuse' warning button – the CEOP button is not blocked in schools.

Some Panel members asked if governors could take more of a role in promoting suitable services/resources.

9.47 AHA Support Group

9.48 Ruth Hilton (RH) who runs the AHA support group for SEN children and young people, spoke to the panel based on her experience in consulting with students with disabilities, plus her work in local schools and speaking to students and staff from these and other local schools.

9.49 RH said: There has been a radical change of attitude towards bullying among local schools since I became an Advisory Teacher at the beginning of 1990 when the prevalent and consistent stance was 'there is no bullying in this school'.

9.50 This scrutiny panel may be hearing more negative than positive evidence but in the main, schools are doing pretty well, though there are areas for improvement. Even if the school gets it right in 99 cases out of 100, it's the one case they don't get right that people will hear about and that gets remembered.

9.51 I believe a number of factors have influenced this change including high profile recognition that institutionalised bullying against identified groups (particularly disabled, gay and lesbian and non white) was endemic but unacceptable, the requirement to report incidents, acknowledgement that this was an issue common to all schools and the focus on reducing bullying in anti bullying week.

9.52 All the children and young people I spoke to know that bullying is repeated victimising or unkindness from one or more towards other individuals. They know that it means saying unkind things to or physically hurting someone and that it is not about swearing. They are very clear about what is considered to be unacceptable behaviour, that their school does not condone bullying or any unacceptable behaviour and on the whole say that their school handles both bullying and unacceptable behaviour well. Those young people who have been in one school for many years all say that the way their school manages behaviour has got better.

9.53 All the children and young people had learnt or been told about bullying at a number of occasions in school: PSHE lessons, assemblies, after incidents had been reported, during anti bullying weeks. Although some were not sure that they had ever had a formal lesson about bullying, staff are clear that there should be identified lessons within the PSHE curriculum and one of the schools has at least one PSHE lesson for every class every half term about bullying including cyber bullying.

9.54 They know that if they are being bullied or are aware of someone else being bullied they must tell an adult but say that some children and young people don't tell because they are scared, some see reporting incidents as 'grassing' and some don't have immediate access to a member of staff they feel they can trust. They all say that there is some inconsistency in the way incidents are dealt with. They recognise that some of their peers have been bullied and that bad memories about bullying last for a long time.

9.55 Quotes from pupils... 'I get loads of help from teachers if I'm stuck. I sometimes get bullied – more often in the past – and I'm not always powerful enough to deal with the bullies myself so I get help from the teachers.'

'Bullying is a really big issue. It's happened a lot on the past, if I say I'm too busy and people want attention then they try and bully me and wind me up. I do get good support from teachers, but it doesn't always work, and it hurts so much inside: it's hard to deal with when you aren't feeling 100 per cent.'

9.56 They were less clear about whether or not their schools have Anti Bullying and Behaviour Policies and even when they knew there is a Policy had little idea of what it said and what steps have been identified for dealing with bullying and unacceptable behaviours.

9.57 A number of staff are unaware of what their Anti Bullying and Behaviour Policies say and none of the schools have or were able to produce an Anti Bullying or Behaviour Policy that was

written in collaboration with pupils and presented in pupil friendly language although I believe that other schools do have pupil versions of their Policies.

9.58 A number of the children and young people said that there didn't always seem to be time for staff to sort out both bullying and single incidents of unacceptable behaviour and that sometimes only one perpetrator was punished. Staff accept that that may appear to be the case but gave some assurance that all parties involved were dealt with if at other times and places during the school day.

9.59 There is some confusion about whether or not bullying is treated the same way or differently from single incidents of unacceptable behaviour and say that sometimes repeated incidents of bad behaviour (not necessarily bullying) are not all tackled or not dealt with in a consistent manner. That some members of Staff are more rigorous than others. They all believe that sometimes their peers behave badly to show off.

9.60 Quotes from pupils... 'Teachers need to do more about bullying, they don't always pay attention, they don't always take action when we report bullying, if it's not being addressed properly there's not much point in reporting. There should be members of staff in all schools you could go to who you trust, like a counsellor who can give you advice.'

'Teachers want to hurry young people up and don't give them the time and space they need. If I'm upset and want to talk to my friends, teachers always have to come out of the classroom and see what's going on.'

9.61 Some of the pupils and students have a clear understanding of the hierarchy of strategies their school uses to manage incidents of bullying and unacceptable behaviour, some are aware of a range of punishments that might be meted out and some think that the way incidents are dealt with is pretty random. They understand that some pupils and students need to be treated differently all the time and that there may be times when others need to be treated differently. They all think that when pupils or students need to be told off it should happen in a private place. (But they want to know that all parties involved have been 'dealt with'!)

9.62 Some of the schools have opportunities for pupils and students to take themselves out of stressful situations or if they need calming down such as a quiet room or staying in at playtimes. They can self refer or be referred by staff.

9.63 For some there are issues about confidentiality and trust. They may not report incidents because they want confidences to be maintained and they have been broken in the past. Those who have had access to a counsellor or Family/Student liaison officer say that it is/was easier to talk to the counsellor or liaison officer than to teachers and some said that TA's often had more time to listen.

9.64 RH Areas for Recommendations:

9.65 School Anti Bullying Policy should be integrated into the Behaviour Policy and pupil friendly versions should be produced in collaboration with pupils. Policies should clearly state the range of strategies the school will use to manage bullying or unacceptable behaviour either as a hierarchy or cluster. They should be regularly reviewed (minimum every 2 years) with pupils to monitor effectiveness.

9.66 Schools should make pupils and students aware of the boundaries of confidentiality in curriculum time and identify to pupils and students who they can talk to in (relative) confidence if they are worried about themselves or another pupil. Ideally an on site counsellor or student liaison officer who is easily accessible to pupils and students should be available in all schools.

9.67 Schools should use curriculum time to discuss reasons why some pupils and students are treated differently when they are involved in incidents, to explain the boundaries of confidentiality and the difference between 'grassing' and keeping their peers safe.

9.68 Schools should take the time to train staff and implement No Blame or Restorative Approaches both of which have been proven to give children and young people a clearer understanding of the effects of bullying, restore confidence and self esteem in both victims and perpetrators and considerably reduce incidents of bullying.

9.69 Schools could implement specific reward systems for good behaviour that identify any pupil or student who has made up for bad behaviour.

9.70 Schools could introduce an anonymous incident reporting box for pupils and students who don't feel they can speak to members of staff

9.71 Answering questions:

It's usually a good idea for children and young people to speak about bullying incidents to their friends first, before talking to teachers.

9.72 It should be made easy to report incidents of bullying. Some schools have a virtual learning environment (VLE), that can be used for this and it can work well.

9.73 I recommend the 'no blame' and 'restorative justice' approaches. These should be used more. In one, the victim writes an account and expresses their feelings: the perpetrators/collaborators are presented with the account and asked 'how would you feel' and asked to make suggestions how to help. In the other, the victim and perpetrator meet each other. Perpetrators may need counselling to help understand why they are bullying and punishments may still be necessary if bullying continues.

9.74 Young people with disabilities do generally understand what is bullying behaviour; they have the same feelings about bullying and the reasons for their being bullied are similar to all children and young people. However they may need more frequent repetition and additional activities to help understand the effects that bullying can have.

9.75 Feedback to the child being bullied and their parent/carer is really important. Other people need to know what's happened, too. But it is time-consuming to build trust. Schools are under pressure and this needs to happen outside of class time.

9.76 For especially serious cases, a readily available Student/Family Liaison Officer specialist would make a real difference. This would be someone not involved in the class, with a separate remit and a different relationship with the students. They would need to be someone with the experience to build trust with the pupils/students and their families, easily accessible (on site most of the school day and no long waiting lists to see them) and supportive and constructive in their approach to dealing with the behaviour issues rather than negative and condemning. Ideally they would have some experience with No Blame or Restorative Practices

and be prepared to work with the Staff. Pupils could self refer initially during 'open surgery' sessions, through email or writing and the Liaison Officer could then assess the need for additional sessions. Staff referrals could be made with face to face contact at the time of incident reporting (or afterwards but fairly rapidly) and again through email but these would be more effective with a fairly rapid response. The Liaison Officer also needs to have an identified space in which to work within the school and all Staff need to understand what behaviours qualify for referral.

9.77 On the role of CAMHS in schools – that would be useful to help perpetrators and victims to manage their behaviour, but CAMHS is over-subscribed and it would be difficult for CAMHS to take a direct active role in schools in anti-bullying.

9.78 Re; any link between bullying and exclusions – Bullying may or may not form a part of 'extreme behaviour,' which is one reason cited for time-limited or permanent exclusions. I'm not sure that all children see exclusion as a punishment. Hopefully schools try to discover why a student's behaviour has changed but this takes time and few members of staff can take time out of the classroom or have the time available to deal with changed or challenging behaviour in as in depth a manner as may be necessary.

9.79 I think that the repeated unacceptable behaviours that constitute bullying may often go unnoticed as they can be sly and apparently insignificant to anyone other than the victim – and the bully - unless the victim's behaviour undergoes significant change. Unfortunately with adolescents, this is sometimes difficult to differentiate from 'normal teenage' behaviour which is why pupils and students need to be given the confidence and understanding of how to report bullying in a way that will not make them more vulnerable to the bullies. This is not usually the case with other incidents of unacceptable behaviour which are often quite blatant.

9.80 The Chair Councillor Ruth Buckley thanked the speaker on behalf of the Panel for sharing her valuable long-standing experience.

Youth Councils

9.81 Sam Watling Youth Council Panel Co-optee (SW) and Youth Participation Worker Paul Belluscio (PB) described the key themes emerging from the Information-gathering Day held by the four Youth Councils on 31 May 2013.

9.82 A written summary of the session was circulated (below).

9.83 Speaking on behalf of the 4 Youth Councils (The Youth Council, The Children in Care Council, The Younger Children in Care Council, The Disabled Young Peoples Council) SW said that even though things like perceived differences or weaknesses, can make someone more likely to become a victim of bullying, it can happen to anyone. *Anything*, like having a tatty pencil case, is enough.

9.84 Bullying is more likely where there is a low teacher/student ratio. It happens in the playground and during 'wet break' as well as in the classrooms, corridors and PE changing rooms.

9.85 Sometimes people react to a bully because they are provoked into acting in self-defence. Teachers need to check on behaviours after an incident.

Teachers do not always follow up thoroughly enough to find out what happened. Unless incidents are dealt with effectively, they can easily flare up again.

9.86 Some schools run an anti-bullying campaign. An anti-bullying culture needs embedding over a long period - it's for a lifetime, not just for a week. Anti-bullying work needs to be based around the whole school culture. Incidents should not be seen in isolation – they are about the victim, the bully, bystanders, teachers, other staff and senior staff too.

9.87 PB added that the Youth Councils reported as much bullying in class as elsewhere. Youth Councils' view was that a response to bullying when the teacher is present depends more than anything else, on the teacher as an individual. He said they brought out their view that there needs to be clear anti-bullying processes in place that are known about and understood by young people; that meant written in a way that young people understand.

9.88 SW pointed out that bullies don't always want to bully. He felt that restorative justice approach works well. Victims needed constructive support over a period of time. He asked about the role of CAMHS in this.

9.89 Active bullying was easier to spot than passive bullying, such as passing notes or hiding possessions, but it had a similar effect on the way the victim feels. 'Just because a teacher cannot see bullying doesn't mean that it's not happening,' he said.

9.90 A recording of the 31 May Youth Councils' group discussion was shown and SW gave a summary of the main points:

9.91 Good practice examples were;

- Drop-in counselling in schools
- Anonymous 'bully box' for suggestions
- Each class has a school 'councillor' who is a student trained in peer support.

9.92 Problems highlighted were:

--Students being bullied by being isolated from and by their peers is hard to spot but very hurtful.

--Bullying seems to happen naturally – it seems more likely to occur than to not occur.

--Teachers and school staff are not always seen as helpful.

--Victims are scared to tell an adult, for fear of making the situation worse.

--When asked, 3/19 people said they were happy with the way their school or college deals with bullying. 7/19 said they were not. 8 chose not to put their hand up or didn't know.

9.93 SW said it seemed to the Youth Councils like, until it happened to you, it didn't affect you. However dealing with bullying was something 'not easy to pick up as you go along.' A teacher that you trusted enough to tell, may not necessarily know about how to respond and the available services. Therefore schools as a whole needed to be more proactive.

9.94 Bullying seemed like an individual problem between the victim and the perpetrator. It seemed a taboo subject, seen as a sign of weakness, and shameful for both. That inhibited reporting bullying; often bystanders won't acknowledge what had happened.

Bullying in schools: Information Gathering Day 31/05/2013

Groups Involved:

Brighton & Hove Youth Council
Children in Care Council
Younger Children in Care Council
Disabled Young People's Council

Facilitated by the Participation Team.

The Session:

During the first part of the session, the children and young people were split into groups and asked to talk about their opinions on bullying in schools. A youth participation worker was with each group, and noted down their discussion points. These are displayed below, along with the questions that were used to prompt discussion.

During the second part of the session, the children and young people were brought together for a group discussion about bullying. The group were asked to share examples of good practice that they have experienced in their school. They were also asked to talk about what could be done better as part of their schools anti-bullying work.

Their responses and the discussion that followed were recorded and will be shown as part of the feedback from the session.

Question 1: What are the causes of bullying?

People can be bullied about their looks, if they're too 'nice' and how they act. If it makes them different, they can be bullied for it.

Sometimes it can just be because your 'stuff' isn't as good – like your pencil case or shoes or something.

Sometimes fall-outs can turn into bullying cycles.

Some people just stand out as an easy target.

Sometimes, if someone's jealous of someone it can lead to bullying.

Any difference can lead to bullying – clothing, appearance, language or way of speaking, back ground, the area you're from, level of intelligence, how much teachers like you, behaviour and reaction to banter.

If something happens to the bully, they can take it out on you.

There's sometimes a social hierarchy in schools. It seems the lower down it you are, the more likely bullying is to take place.

You can be bullied for being too good at things as well as not good enough.

I think anyone in any sort of minority group is more likely to be bullied than anyone else.

It looks like people with low self esteem get bullied more.

Social deprivation? If you come from a different background it can single you out.

Question 2: Why might someone become a bully?

It's a way of exercising control and power.

Peer pressure – like getting talked into it.

Sometimes it's to stop it happening to you.

It can help you fit in with your groups of friends.

Fear of people that are different.

Dislike of other people.

Just something for the bully to do.

Question 3: What can be a 'trigger' for bullying?

Sometimes bullies are bullied themselves; it can seem like a vicious circle.

It can happen in the 'top' social groups too.

Some teachers don't seem to see it as a big deal.

Maybe some parents encourage their children to be more likely to bully – like acting tough but then acting tough on the wrong people.

Bullying is much more likely during wet breaks.

It's often worse on trips.

Bullying is most likely to happen when the students are together, like in the play ground, in classrooms, during PE too.

It always happens in PE changing rooms. That's where I feel least secure.

It happens in class too, during the school day and at afterschool clubs.

Facebook and twitter can let bullying go on behind closed doors.

It can happen online...it's easier as you don't have to be there – its faceless too.

There can be physical bullying in the classroom – I think this is more likely as you can't get away, and if there is a teacher there who can't control the class, the bullies can get away with it.

If there is a teacher there who lets it go unchecked then it's more likely to happen.

Question 4: What can prevent bullying?

An authoritative presence helps – If you're in a corridor and a head teacher walks down, you're probably not going to get bullied.

When groups that share interests like music or style are together, there is less likely to be bullying within that group.

A good teacher presence stops bullying.

Removing the bully from the situation, not the victim.

If groups who don't bully can be praised for the way they act, the culture might spread.

I think it's less about the location, and more about who is there.

Question 5: What can adults do to prevent bullying in schools?

It seems that if teachers care, then they take things further.

Stricter teachers often stop bullying in the classroom.

Sometimes it's a good idea to split the bullies up around the classroom – if their behaving badly. That can cause more of a distraction though.

If the head teacher gets involved-this usually stops things.

If observers intervene it can stop the bullying.

If bullies understand what bullying is and know the punishments; that could help.

Conflict can lead to bullying – if conflict can be resolved rather than ignored maybe bullying will stop.

Manage groups – why do teachers just randomly put people together if they don't get on?

Teachers need to tell bullies off more – 'having a word' just doesn't work.

Sometimes a teacher will say that they will help, but then they don't take it any further; they need to take it further.

Question 6: What aspects of school culture can help to reduce bullying?

It helps if the teachers know you. Sometimes it's hard if they don't.

Sometimes it seems like teachers have favourites, this can make it less likely for people to talk about bullying to them.

It can make things worse when teachers say they are going to do something, then don't! This can put people off telling them.

Sometimes teachers try to be 'down with the kids' and join in!

Sometimes it seems that teachers notice, but ignore bullying.

More signs about stopping bullying would be good.

Question 7: What have you seen happen in your school to tackle or prevent bullying?

I think once a group of people who had been behaving badly and intimidating others got taken on a trip out. This didn't seem very fair to us. It seemed like they were being rewarded for being mean.

Sometimes the senior leadership teams in schools get involved. This is really helpful.

Sometimes bullies get put in isolation. This stops it for a bit but doesn't really do anything in the long term.

Question 8: Are there wider aspects of our culture that makes bullying in schools worse?

The news and media doesn't help. TV programmes can highlight differences and sometimes make bullies look cool too.

The News! It can incite hatred.

If we had a more inclusive society it might help. To stop bullying we need to counter society, and the media influences that encourage bullying. Its one sided – it's more likely to happen than to not happen.

Question 9: What can make someone more likely to be bullied?

Quiet groups seem more likely to be bullied. Shy groups too.

Sometimes having different beliefs or backgrounds can be a difference that leads to bullying.

Social stigmas.

Sometimes learning ability – if you find learning easy or hard you can be singled out for it.

Question 10: What can schools do better to prevent bullying?

Teachers need to actually do something, like follow up. People don't just listen to them, they need to follow up.

There need to be really clear punishment and sanctions for bullying. Then we can see if the teachers do what they should when we tell them about bullying.

Mediation is good. Actually it's really helpful. This should happen all the time. Then both people can tell the other how they feel.

I think bullies need to be helped too - to find out why they bully to try and stop it from happening again.

I think teachers need to follow up with the victim more. Not just a quick check in as they pass in the corridor, but a proper check in.

Sometimes a victim will react and they're the ones that get into trouble. This is really upsetting.

Question 11: How can individual children and young people help prevent bullying in schools?

Reporting it when they see it - not reporting bullying is almost as bad as bullying itself. Its like, if you're not part of the solution...

Bystanding is not helpful at all – young people need to be taught about how pivotal bystanders are.

Victims need to be befriended!

Question 12: What action can be taken to support those involved in bullying in schools?

Maybe bullies should be just asked why they bully. That might make them think – especially if they didn't know that they were being bullied.

Awareness about this issue should be increased in every school – I bet some bullies don't know they are bullies and would be shocked to find that they are.

Teachers often support us, but we need the support we want, not just what they feel like giving us.

Victims aren't always asked what they want to happen. They can be powerless anyway so this doesn't help.

Question 13: How can children and young people be supported by schools when it comes to bullying?

Bullies need to be helped to stop. I don't think very many people actually want to be a bully.

Bullies should be punished. And complaints need to always be followed up to lead to this. But this may not help – the bullies need to be supported too.

People always need to talk. A dedicated teacher to help those who are being bullied might be helpful, especially if it's confidential.

Parents need to be involved and supported in helping their children if they are either bullies or being bullied.

Parents and carers could be taught how to recognise signs that their children are being bullied.

Counselling for bullies may be helpful.

Maybe other students can challenge bullying, not jumping in, but helping in some way.

Also, students could tell teachers if they see people being bullied. That way the bully doesn't have to say it themselves.

Students should be taught how to discourage bullying.

9.95 Panel Advisor

9.96 The Panel Advisor Professor Robin Banerjee thanked all the contributors for their work in giving evidence, and summarised the meeting's proceedings.

9.97 He emphasised the need to create a culture that works towards preventing bullying, with three key themes regarding a preventative whole-school approach emerging from the meeting:

Availability – of staff and adults to listen

Awareness – by everyone of the agreed approach to bullying

Consistency – in the adoption of an explicit approach to bullying

9.98 The meeting had heard how anti-bullying was often left implicit, e.g., assuming that people have a shared understanding of bullying and know how to report bullying and how to deal with bullying. But the witnesses' testimony showed how important it was for anti-bullying policy and practice to be discussed explicitly and brought out into people's awareness in order to build a consensus, he said.

9.99 He also focused on how useful and valuable it is for schools to have support from the Healthy Schools team and other relevant specialists. Even where there is an agreed and known anti-bullying strategy, teachers can find individual cases difficult – e.g., transgender, ICT and cyberbullying. Therefore building connections and finding specialist support will continue to be important. Teachers need to know where to go for support, and it will be important to foster partnerships of schools that act as networks to disseminate knowledge and exchange good practice.

9.100 Prof Banerjee also emphasised that even though the Safe and Well at School Survey indicates an overall reduction in bullying, evidence from the Youth Councils showed that some schools did not have a consistent approach. Students did not always have confidence that bullying would be dealt with well.

9.101 But it has to be remembered that at the Youth Councils' workshop, when students are asked 'Is bullying being dealt with?', it is very difficult for them to reply 'yes' where they are aware of just one difficult case, even if the majority of cases are resolved successfully. So it is important not to lose sight of the significant progress of schools in tackling bullying.

9.102 When thinking about how to respond to bullying, the meeting highlighted the importance of clear communication. Children and young people sometimes reported uncertainty regarding:

- how to report bullying, who to report to and when to report it
- whether to report – is it important enough? will I be believed?
- what will happen, even if the school has a 'listening' culture – could telling make it worse?
- whether incidents would be followed up or monitored to ensure that the matter had been fully dealt with.

9.103 Prof Banerjee emphasised that effective communication does not reside only in a policy on a piece of paper – the anti-bullying approach needs to be brought to people's awareness and understanding, and especially in a pupil-friendly format.

9.104 The Panel had heard that potential specialist resources could include specialist staffing CAMHS, anti-bullying counselling, School Liaison Officer, inclusion services, pastoral services. But it was emphasised that all school staff needed to be engaged and knowledgeable when it comes to anti-bullying work.

9.105 There were questions on the potential value of peer support strategies for tackling bullying:

- Can this be effective – when, how and why?
- How could it be supported?

9.106 The role of parents in anti-bullying was an emerging key theme. Yet the Panel had heard the difficulty experienced by schools in reaching more than just a few parents when offering cyberbullying sessions. Engaging with parents and families inside and outside of school life was a challenge not to be ignored; this was a ‘critical task,’ said Professor Banerjee.

9.107 Suggestions for further investigation from the panel and the members of public present included:

- Information from CAMHS and other services
- Evidence from more schools, more people who have been bullied
- Evidence re cyberbullying
- Evidence from nursery/pre primary schools (Professor Banerjee said that work to supporting children’s learning of social and emotional skills can start in early years settings, to help establish an anti-bullying ethos)
- Minority groups (e.g., disabled people) can be bullied outside of school life

The Panel Chair Councillor Ruth Buckley thanked everyone who had provided helpful information on bullying.

10. RELATED INFORMATION

10.1 Members noted the information provided by the Carers’ Centre.

11. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING TO BE AGREED

11.1 A new date for the final Panel meeting would be arranged (Later agreed – Wednesday 4th September at 4pm in Hove Town Hall)

12. EMERGING THEMES

12.1 Key themes would be discussed at the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 6.30pm

Signed

Chair

Dated this

day of