

Bullying - Teacher's Advice

Recognised Methods Used Within Schools to Prevent/Combat Bullying Problems

Although I am sure you have been made aware through various training days or official reports of all of the methods currently in use, the reason I am still adding this category is I have also researched into how effective each approach is according to official findings undertaken by registered organisations that specialise in Child Welfare. I have also spoken to a teenager of a close friend of myself who is a victim of bullying and asked for her opinion on the approaches that her school have tried so far. As well as all the information I have gathered which is fact based, I have also noted my thoughts on each of the methods, based on how I would have felt if my school adopted the approaches when I was at school. Although I do not believe that I know more than you, or even think for one second that I could do a better job in tackling bullying in the School you teach it, I'm sure you would agree that other opinions and different points of view can be a great advantage to many problems.

Before I look into the methods I have researched, I found a couple of random pieces of information whilst plowing through hundreds of pages on information, that although I am sure you would either do, or are already aware of. I am not trying to insult your intelligence or be disrespectful. Its just I think that it doesn't hurt to make sure, and it provides me with peace of mind that I am providing all the information possible.

- Know the Bully- Some students may react in an anti-hero manner, thriving in the limelight of harsh punishments issued.
- All Staff members that have a pupil who is a victim of bullying should have direct access to their parents phone number in case of emergencies
- Try to make sure that the victim does not endure too much disruption whilst dealing with the situation, as they may feel like they are being punished.
- Each complaint of bullying should be taken seriously.

MEDIATION BY ADULTS

The idea behind this method is to get all the people involved in the bullying situation to communicate with each other and try and sort out their differences under the supervision of a teacher. A rule often incorporated within this practice is the no blame approach in which no one is allowed to accuse and the 'he said she said' bickering is kept to a minimum.

Although this is one of the more popular methods to deal with bullying it is not proven to be successful. After research it has been discovered that the victim can often feel intimidated and unable to voice his/her own opinion. The bullies also tend not to take the matter seriously and as they have not received a punishment they more often than not return to bullying the other pupil and often with much more severity because they know its upsetting them and for telling (grassing) on them as well. My teenage source has tried this method and says that the exact negative outcome found in the research was what she experienced following Mediation. I also tried this, after telling my Woodwork teacher I was being bullied she saw that myself and the three main culprits were given the chance to resolve our problems. I am in no way criticising my teacher as at this time there was no recommended ways to combat bullying, in fact the anti bullying policy didn't even exist, and I know that she was genuinely concerned and was looking

out for my interests. So in the classroom's giant cuboard with the three people who picked on me every day but without a teacher present (although she was in the classroom) I remember not saying much and vaguely remember talking about park swings and spinning on roundabouts. The bullying continued as normal.

Many victims find the 'No Blame Approach' both unfair and impossible as they can't fully express their feelings or talk about situations. Granted, in some incidences of bullying both parties may be partly responsible. The victim may have initially wronged/upset the others involved, and it has now become out of hand. A lot of the time someone is isolated because of a distinguishing feature, or interests and even academic abilities/learning disabilities. In these cases the person on the receiving end feel that they have to justify the way they are because no one is to blame. Feelings of resentment often arise as victims in these circumstances feel that the people who isolate them purely because of appearance or personality are at fault and should be issued with a punishment

MEDIATION BY PEERS

The same approach as Mediation by Adults, rather than a teacher being present a fellow student takes the staff members role. As well as the same downfalls as the other mediation process there is the added concern that the student mediator may not act responsibly during the meeting, may be friends with one of the bullies or be persuaded by peer pressure causing them to join in with the bullies. They may also become a victim themselves.

ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING GROUPS

A program to help victims improve their self esteem and ways to build confidence. My beliefs along with the research and my teenage resource who has had help from mentors regarding esteem issues is that if this program is run alongside other successful methods adopted by the school it could prove to be very effective and may help students not only at the present time but in the future during their adult life.

BULLY COURTS

This is a relatively new idea in which a judge and jury consisting of fellow pupils, which is supervised by a member of staff are assigned to a case of bullying where both the victim and bully explain the events, effects and reasons of past events, enabling both students to voice their opinions without interruption. The outcome is an appropriate punishment that has been chosen by fellow students that are on the jury in which the judge then enforces.

This has been proven to be quite a success since being introduced as most students who repeatedly bully others are feared more than liked. Using this approach allows fellow pupils to make a stand against them in a more diplomatic way showing that they won't tolerate their behavior. This tends to deter repeat offenders as they rely on impressing and the approval of their fellow peers to boost their esteem. Most people who regularly bully others are doing it because of their need for power, and wouldn't want to be put on show. Removing their power and allowing others to stand up to them is often an effective deterrent.

ACTIVE LISTENING/COUNCELLING

Usually undertaken by a trained counsellor who comes from outside the school who offers support and advice to victims of bullying. He/she listens to the students problems/fears and as they have no background knowledge of the problem they give students the reassurance that their opinions and thoughts are not bias towards either party and can only offer advice on the facts that are given by the student. Personal issues and feelings can be expressed with more ease talking to someone outside of the school than perhaps with someone who teaches them regularly as it could cause feelings of embarrassment afterwards.

This should be available in all schools, as not only will a trained professional be able to detect possible threats to a pupils health. This should also be run alongside other successful methods, alone it will not be able to reduce bullying.

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INVOLVING/CO-OPERATION WITH PARENTS

This should be the first course of action undertaken by every school as soon as they are made aware of the problem. Both the victims and bullies parents should be notified of the situation. Schools should not rely on the individual to tell their parents that they are being bullied. The person should always be consulted and advised that it may be in their best interest to involve their parents/guardian, although there may be a legitimate reason for not wanting to involve them. The parents of the student who is harrasing others should be notified on all occasions. This may deter some from future bullying. If not, the pupils parents may be able to advise on the best form of punishment/method the school has currently adopted. Parents can also re-inforce the punishment at home with the means they feel necessary.

This can only work if the parents in question have sufficient control over their childs actions, and if they feel that it is their responsibility to deal with the matter. It is becoming a growing concern regarding a parents ability to control the behaviour of their children, who may be being influenced by peers who are encouraging them to go off the rails. Or that the parents themselves aren't as consciencious of their responsibility to ensure that their childrens behaviour is checked as they should be. Plainly speaking there are a few parents that don't care what their children do outside of their home as long as they are not inconvenienced by any of the consequences of their offsprings behaviour. Unfortunately the number of cases which bear similarity to this is rapidly rising, especially in socially deprived backgrounds where a great deal of motivation and sense of community has been lost, areas with a high rate of single parent families relying on a low income or benefits. Unfortunately I am not being stereotypical, as I live in a former mining villiage that is still being affected by the closure of the coal mine and the lack of alternative employment available at the time. This created the start of the downward spiral of this area which now boasts the highest rate of teenage pregnancy in the country, high rate of benefit claims and a very obvious drug problem. Even though over the past two decades, career opportunities have been created and factories offering training and employment for local people without any previous skills, the area is now considered to be part of the benifit culture, where many residents have little or no self esteem and have adopted the negative approach of 'Why Bother?'. Unfortunately the next generation who are influenced by their parents continue the vicious cycle and don't think they any other prospects other than the situation they grew up in.

TRAINED PLAYGROUND SUPERVISORS

All schools have lunch and break attendants/dinner ladies. If added training was provided for the people assuming these roles, playground harassment could be greatly reduced. The training involves learning how to recognise incidents of bullying and methods to deal with the problem in an effective way. Along with the Bully Court approach this is another effective method as it provides much less opportunity for aggressive behaviour to take place within school grounds.

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SAFE ROOMS

Schools should consider making certain classrooms available for vulnerable students during break times. These rooms should be monitored by a member of staff with the authority to deal with any problems that may arise, or CCTV. This will provide security for many people who are on the receiving end of long term bullying/violence as they know that there is somewhere available to go that can guarantee their safety.

SUPPORT GROUP (NO BLAME)

Using the No Blame approach this is an option which offers support, counselling and advice to both victim and the bully. Although this may help with the underlying issues and low self esteem a bully may be experiencing, the victim may be under the impression that although his/her fellow student may have problems. It is unacceptable to harass others. This may cause resentment and many people feel it is unfair that no punishment is being enforced.

CIRCLE OF FRIENDS

This idea can only realistically be achieved during group tutorials. When a group tutor made aware of a situation, or feels that there are matters that need to be addressed within the group each student including the teacher sit in a circle on identical chairs to acknowledge that during this time everyone including the teacher is equal. Using an inanimate object such as a stick or a ball each person who wishes to express any feelings or confront an issue takes their turn to speak. Only the person who is holding the object is allowed to speak, all other participants must listen without interruption until they are handed the object allowing them to have their say. This method can help willing students improve communication and listening skills and may help people to look at other points of view as well as generating empathy and understanding. If the person/people who are harassing other individuals does not take others opinions seriously (which is most likely) the matter will not be resolved until they are issued with consequences for their actions as if it is left unchecked they will think that nothing that they do to others is unacceptable.

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