

## Concluding Discussion

The findings of the briefing paper can be summarised as follows:

Most young people (whatever category of bully, victim or neither they fell into) viewed school positively. However, bullies were more likely to report negatively and less likely to report positively about their perceptions of school in general, their teachers and peers; they reported being truant more frequently and their scores on parental monitoring were lower.

**Q** In your experience, do these findings about bullies apply to the majority of children who bully others? Is this, in fact, what these research findings say?

**Q** In your experience, are there any other characteristics that many bullying people have in common? Make a list.

**Q** In your experience, roughly what proportion of your pupils are occasionally involved in bullying others. As a group agree a %age.

**Q** How does your estimate match with the figure of 5.2% (reported earlier in HBSC Briefing Paper 8).

Bullying is a complex behaviour with a variety of possible causes and consequences. Knowledge and understanding are the key to tackling it effectively, but HBSC Briefing Paper 9 suggests a number of areas where further research would be helpful.

As a group, discuss and agree one research question which, if answered, would help you to tackle bullying in your school better, e.g.

**Q** Are there regional differences in bullying behaviour?

**Q** Do variations in observed patterns of bullying reflect differences in school ethos?

### Has this Discussion Paper helped you to reflect on practice in your school?

We would welcome constructive comments on this Discussion Paper. The kind of feedback that would be useful is as follows:

- ☞ Ways in which it was used
- ☞ Any actual or hoped for outcomes from those activities
- ☞ Specific suggestions on what might have made the Discussion Paper more useful

These should be sent by e-mail to [abn@education.ed.ac.uk](mailto:abn@education.ed.ac.uk)  
Thank you!

Anti-Bullying Network  
University of Edinburgh  
Moray House School of Education  
Holyrood Road  
Edinburgh  
EH8 8AQ



## SO WHAT DO YOU THINK ?

### – ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE INVOLVED IN BULLYING

### A Discussion Paper to Accompany CAHRU Briefing Paper 9 – Social Context of Bullying Behaviours

#### Introduction

Research underpins and informs anti-bullying work in schools but its value is diminished if research findings are not accessible to, and discussed by, those people who are responsible for tackling bullying in school and the wider community. The HBSC Briefing Papers about bullying published by Edinburgh University's Child and Adolescent Health Research Unit (CAHRU) have been distributed to all Scottish schools and are available on the Internet ([www.education.ed.ac.uk/cahru/publications.html](http://www.education.ed.ac.uk/cahru/publications.html)). This supplement to Briefing Paper 9 is intended to be used by adults in schools (i.e. teachers, non-teaching staff, parents, psychologists, health educators, police officers etc.) during discussions about these findings. It is intended as a tool to encourage practitioners to engage with the findings of the research, and to reflect on anti-bullying work in their own schools and settings.

**Q** Is this similar to the definition of 'bullying' used in your school?

**Q** Are there any problems in your school community in agreeing what counts as bullying? Sometimes differing cultural and social norms can make agreement difficult. In some languages there is no direct translation for the English word "bullying". How can you make sure that all staff, parents and pupils understand each other when bullying is being discussed?

**Q** Definitions are important when it comes to deciding whether an incident should be recorded as "bullying", or be considered to be so trivial as not to be worth recording at all. Can you think of some examples of incidents in your school which have been reported as being "bullying" but which you have decided not to record?

**Q** Why did you decide not to record these incidents?

**Q** Can you think of any incidents of bullying which you have decided to record or act upon even though they might not have appeared serious to a casual observer?

**Q** What was it about these incidents that concerned you?

#### Definitions

There are many different definitions of the word "bullying". Talking about definitions can help people to understand and tackle the problem better. It can also help them to decide which incidents should be recorded or logged. The following definition of bullying was used in this study:

We say a pupil is **BEING BULLIED** when another pupil, or a group of pupils, say or do nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a pupil is teased repeatedly in a way he or she does not like, or when they are deliberately left out of things.

It is **NOT BULLYING** when two pupils of about the same strength or power argue or fight. It is also not bullying when the teasing is done in a friendly and playful way.

## Perceptions of Peers

*Young people involved in bullying, either as bully or victim, were less likely to feel supported or helped by their peers. This finding seems to support the belief that peer support systems should be a key element of a whole school anti-bullying approach.*

**Q** It is unsurprising that bullied children are less likely to feel supported by their peers than those who are not involved in bullying. Can you think of any reasons why a bullying child might also feel the same?

**Q** Peer support systems are often set up by schools in order to provide support to vulnerable pupils who might be targeted by bullies. How might the development of a peer support system, such as buddying or befriending, influence the behaviour of bullying children?

## Perceptions of Teachers

*Teachers like to think that they make a difference to pupils' development and behaviour. That is, after all, what their job is about.*

**Q** Study Figure 2. List possible explanations for the different views of teachers apparently held by bullying young people and non-bullying young people.

**Q** How could teachers help young people to have access to the findings of this research?

**Q** Which three aspects of a teacher's behaviour and methods do you believe are most likely to influence levels of bullying?

## School Atmosphere

**Q** To what extent do you agree with the two widely held beliefs listed alongside?

*Levels of bullying will be reduced in schools with a positive and participative ethos.*

*Most bullied young people are unhappy most of the time at school.*

**Q** Do the research findings on School Atmosphere support either or both of these views?

**Q** Can you think of any reasons why young people who bully seem less likely to be happy at school than those who are not involved in bullying at all?

## Truancy

*Accounts from the parents of seriously bullied young people often stress the amount of schooling they have missed because of their fear about attending school or because of stress-related illness.*

**Q** Do the research findings summarised in Figure 4 provide any support for this explanation for non-attendance?

**Q** Is it possible that these findings have been affected by the fact that some young people involved in bullying were not present at school when the survey took place?

**Q** Split into pairs and discuss some examples of persistent truants known to you who have attended (or not attended!) your school. Did bullying play any part in their truancy? If so were they mainly bullying or being bullied?

## Perceptions of Parental Monitoring

*Parents have to try to balance their responsibility to monitor the safety and welfare of their children with their children's right to socialise with their friends freely.*

**Q** In general, do most young people in this survey think that their parents know a lot or not very much about what they do in their spare time?

**Q** What might the consequences be for young people, in terms of bullying, of having parents who are over or under vigilant?