Addressing Poverty Through Action on Bullying in School

Contents

Introduction

Bullying casts a long shadow on children's lives, affecting engagement in school and mental and physical health and wellbeing in both the short and long term (University of Warick, 2014). There is strong evidence that **children living in families on a low income are at a higher risk of experiencing bullying**, yet conversations around bullying can sometimes miss this link ((Chen et al., 2024 & Evans, 2024).

To prevent and address bullying, including bullying related to income inequality, schools must know about pupils' experiences, **promote learning about bullying, and act quickly, consistently, and effectively**.

In the Poverty Proofing© the School Day Bradford sample by Children North East, they raised several points that need further work within this area.

In **53%** of schools, there were reports of **isolated poverty-related bullying** – 'They ask where you got your shoes from and say 'eww'- it made me feel really sad.' (pupil)

In **23%** of school's pupils believed they can **identify poverty based on clothing/lack of clothing** - "People laugh at what other people are wearing.' (pupil) and '*People pushed me over and said I had nits and smelt because my top was a bit ripped.*' (pupil)

In **25%** of school's pupils were **reluctant to report bullying to staff** – 'No one tells as you get labelled a snitch, snake etc.' (pupil)

Use this document to **consider how bullying is experienced and addressed in your school with a poverty lens.**

Questions To Ask Your School

	Question	Page
	• Do you create a range of opportunities for children to learn about bullying and what they can do about it? • **Do you challenge ideas and explore the impacts of poverty in school?**	3
	• Do all staff and pupils know the process that the school follows if bullying is reported? • **Is there a monitoring system in place for bullying reports?** (including relating to material possessions)	5

Promoting understanding of bullying

What Citizens Say

> 'Bullying is physical, verbal and mental attacks which happen over a long period of time or to the same person a lot.' (pupil)
>
> 'People being naughty' or 'where you might say something mean.' (pupil)

What Your School Can Do?

Barriers	Guidance
There is a lack of understanding amongst younger pupils about what bullying is.	• Include **extra sessions on bullying** in **PSHE** and **assemblies** to address any misperceptions. • Ensure children **understand the difference** between poor **behaviour and deliberate, consistent, and targeted bullying**.
Some pupils believe **behaviour cannot be changed.**	• Through **PHSE lessons, assemblies, and in-staff routines and practices (i.e., what staff say to pupils), create a positive ethos that people's behaviour** can **always change.**
Bullying is based on what children look like, what they wear (e.g., on non-uniform days or in relation to cleanliness and newness), or on **material possessions** such as bags or shoes.	• Use the **Living Well School uniform toolkit**. • **Raise awareness around material possessions** and explore the impact of poverty. • Consider organising activities around **anti-bullying week** to help children be more vigilant about poverty-related bullying.

Case Studies

Bradford Schools

Some Bradford schools really **support Anti-Bullying Week** – children commented **positively** on it and said it made them **more vigilant:**

'*We know what to look out for now, so we know when to stop it*.' (pupil)

Dealing With Bullying

What Citizens Say

> 'The teachers sort it out. Even if it starts again, the school keep going.' (pupil)
>
> 'They've a zero tolerance for bullying.' (parent)

What Your School Can Do?

Barriers	Guidance
Parents or children **worry that incidents of bullying won't get dealt with quickly or consistently.**	• Can pupils **produce a video** on the process that happens when bullying happens? • Have a **flow chart explaining** what happens in an incident of bullying on the website. • Make sure pupils **know what to do** if they see or experience incidents of bullying.
Children think some staff take bullying incidents more seriously than others.	• Have a **clear process** that the school follows if incidents of bullying are reported, including clarifying and debunking any assumptions.
Some **children feel uncomfortable** about **reporting** incidents of bullying to **staff.**	• Consider implementing a **'buddies' scheme** to ensure children have someone to approach in the playground. • Consider creating a **'bully box,'** a place where children can put details about any bullying that does happen without saying who it is from.
Teaching staff **do not know how many poverty-related incidents** occur.	• Ensure that there is a **monitoring system** for bullying, including any incidents of poverty-related bullying.

Case Studies

Bradford Schools

In one school, children spoke **positively** about the **restorative approaches** that have been put in place: '*It helps us to **move on afterwards** and **not be broken anymore.**' (pupil)

A restorative school approach is an ethos and way of **building healthy relationships** focused on ensuring **safety** and that **needs** are met. It involves **resolving conflict** by focusing on **repairing harm** that has been done and involves all those involved.

There is some **evidence** that restorative approaches can be effective at **preventing bullying.**

Appendix

Links Referenced

Anti Bullying Week – Anti Bullying Alliance	https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/anti-bullying-week-2024-choose-respect/anti-bullying-week-2024-choose-respect

References

Evans, M (2024) Why are we not talking about bullying and poverty? Anti-bullying Alliance, https://anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/aba-our-work/news-opinion/why-are-we-not-talking-about-bullying-and-poverty

Chen, L., Chen, Y., Ran, H., Che, Y., Fang, D., Li, Q., Shi, Y., Liu, S., He, Y., Zheng, G. and Xiao, Y. (2024). Social poverty indicators with school bullying victimization: evidence from the global school-based student health survey (GSHS). *BMC Public Health*, 24(1). doi:https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-024-18119-3.

University of Warick (2014) The long shadow of childhood bullying, https://warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/the_long_shadow_of_childhood_bullying1/

If you have any feedback on this document or good practice that your school is doing, **we would love to hear from you.**

Please email **schools@mylivingwell.co.uk**.

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