

# Bullying: types, effects and government initiatives



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**Abstract**

The UK Government defines bullying as; Repetitive, wilful or persistent behaviour intended to cause harm, although one - off incidents can in some cases also be defined as bullying; internationally harmful behaviour, carried out by an individual or a group and an imbalance of power leaving the person being bullied feeling defenceless. Bullying is emotionally or physically harmful behaviour and includes; name - calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, pushing, taking belongings, inappropriate text messaging and emailing, sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet, gossiping, excluding people from groups and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours. (HOC 2007, Frederickson et al 2008).

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### Introduction

This dissertation is going to investigate the links between education and bullying within secondary schools. Chapter One will give an overview of what bullying is and why is such a serious issue within secondary education, the chapter will then focus on the different types of bullying that happens within schools and what effects bullying has on both the person who is doing the bullying and their victims. It will include statistics concerning how many children/young person who have reported getting bullied, as well as the types of bullying these children have had to deal with. The remainder of the chapter will focus on the bully or bullies experiences before their started bullying another child/young person, paying particular attention to their educational experiences and disadvantages, but also taking into account any additional contributing risk factors which can affect a child's/ young person's behaviour and their education. These risk factors include risk around the child's/young person's family, along with wider risks associated with poverty and deprivation. Risk factors such as peer pressure, jealousy and being bullied themselves, which relate to education more directly, will be discussed in more details.

The following chapters discuss the educational provision available to those children/young people who are being bullied and also those who doing the bullying, analysing the types of bullying the effects of bullying and also the types of provision and factors related to the reasons of why bullying happens. Chapter Two focuses on the educational provisions for the children who have been bullied, but Chapter Three addresses issues around

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reintegration and wider Government policy. Both chapters critically analyse current provision, whereas the conclusion will draw this analysis together and consider the extent to which the current system can be seen to be working in the interests of all concerned.

## **Chapter One: The Types and Effects of Bullying**

The UK Government defines bullying as; " Repetitive, wilful or persistent behaviour intended to cause harm, although one - off incidents can in some cases also be defined as bullying; internationally harmful behaviour, carried out by an individual or a group and an imbalance of power leaving the person being bullied feeling defenceless. Bullying is emotionally or physically harmful behaviour and includes; name - calling, taunting, mocking, making offensive comments, kicking, hitting, pushing, taking belongings, inappropriate text messaging and emailing, sending offensive or degrading images by phone or via the internet, gossiping, excluding people from groups and spreading hurtful and untruthful rumours". (HOC 2007: 7-8, Frederickson et al 2008: 176-177).

Bullying takes many forms. It can be physical bullying, this is when a child is being pushed, beaten or thumped by bare hands. It can involve a weapon and threats. Bullying can also be verbal and emotional, racial or sexual. Elliott (1997a: 2) " it would seem that boys are more likely to be physical in bullying, while girls tend to be cruel verbally". Research by Olweus (1993: 19) indicates that " girls are more often exposed to harassment such as slandering, the spreading of rumours and exclusion from the group rather than physical attacks". Olweus (1993) continues it must be emphasised that these gender differences are general and that in some schools, girls are also

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expose to physical bullying. In more recent times there have been cases in the UK in which girls have violently and aggressively attacked other girls. An example of this was "fourteen year old girl was cornered in the playground by a gang of ten boys and girls. She was stripped to the waist and had to beg on her knees to get her clothes back. She was pushed, punched and had her hair pulled. 'Tell and you'll get worse' was the parting words from one of the girls. The victim did not tell until they did it again and took photographs. When her mother confronted the school, she was told it was only 'horseplay'. The victim, who attempted suicide after the latest incident, was transferred to another school in which she is now thriving". (Elliott 1997b: 1), this incident had a more positive ending, which is not always the case. There have also been deaths caused by bullying within schools, mainly in secondary schools. An example of this was in 2000 a 15 year old school girl committed suicide after being bombarded with anonymous calls on her mobile phone, the inquest into her found that she was being bullied through her mobile phone - 'Mobile Phone Bullying/Cyber Bullying' (The Independent, 2000). The incidence of girls being violent does seem to be increasing and is a trend that must be viewed with concern, as female bullies, especially in groups or 'gangs' are getting just as violent if not more violent than male bullies.

Studies show that bullying takes place in every type of school. Studies on bullying within schools date back to the 1980's, were the first UK nationwide survey was conducted by Kidscape from 1984 to 1986 with 4000 children aged 5 to 16. The survey revealed that "68 per cent of the children had been bullied at least once; 38 per cent had been bullied as least twice or had

experienced a particularly bad incident; 5 per cent of the children felt it had affected their lives to the point that they had tried suicide, had run away, refused to go to school or been chronically ill" (Elliott and Kilpatrick 1996). Subsequent studies have found very similar results. Researchers at Exeter University questioned 5500 children aged 13 and found that 26 per cent of boys and 34 per cent of girls had been afraid of bullies sometime in their lives (Balding 1996). Bullying calls to ChildLine are growing at a rapid rate, ChildLine (2006) counselled 37, 032 children about bullying between 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006. A further 4018 called ChildLine for other reasons but went on to talk about bullying. Every Month ChildLine counsels more than 3, 000 young people about bullying, that is a quarter (23%) of all calls to the services. One area of growing concern is homophobic bullying. (ChildLine 2006).

Bullying is not only a UK problem, it happens throughout the world. Olweus (1993: 19) has been researching the problem of bullying in Norway since 1973; " he estimated that one in seven pupils in Norwegian schools has been involved in bully/victim problems" (Olweus 1993). Similar findings in other countries indicate that if adults are willing to listen and investigate, children will tell them that bullying is one of the major problems children face during their school years.

There are different forms of bullying behaviour that has been identified, such as indirect and direct, as involving individuals or groups, verbal and physical. It is generally agreed that the most common form of bullying is verbal abuse is and name calling, followed by various forms of physical bullying. Within this type of behaviour/bullying, there are some important differences, based <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-types-effects-and-government-initiatives/>

on age, gender, sexuality and ethnicity. The main types of bullying within school, especially within secondary schools, these are physical school bullying, emotional/verbal school bullying, electronic bullying or Cyber - bullying and sexual/homophobic bullying. Physical bullying is when an individual bully or a group of bullies physical harm their victim, examples of this type of bullying are punching, shoving and slapping, and this can also be direct bullying.

Emotional/Verbal school bullying is when a bully or bullies use poor and offensive language. Examples of emotional bullying includes the spreading of bad rumours about their victims, keeping their victims out of a 'group', teasing the victim in means ways and cussing them, getting other people/bullies to 'gang up' on the victims, name calling, harassment, provocation, tormenting, whispering to another/others in front of the victim, walking in groups around school and keeping secrets away from a so - called friend(s).

Electronic bullying or cyber bullying is when bullying happens online or electronically. It occurs when the bully or bullies bully their victims through the internet, mobile phones or other electronic means and devices.

Examples of this type of bullying are sending mean spirited text messages, emails and instant messages, posting inappropriate pictures, messages about their victims in blogs, on websites or social networking sites and using someone else's user name to spread rumours or lies about their victims.

Sexual bullying/homophobic bullying is any of the above bullying behaviour, which is based on a victim's sexuality or gender. It is when sexuality or

gender is used as a weapon by boys or girls towards their victims, although it is more commonly directed at girls. This type of bullying can be carried out to the victim's face, behind their back or through the use of technology (cyber bullying). However, it is also argued that "sexist bullying or harassment in school is frequently dismissed as inoffensive or legitimised as part of the normal process of gender socialisation, and that it is a form of abuse engaged in by male teachers and male pupils alike" (Stainton Rogers 1991). Furthermore, sexual harassment, of a physical as well as verbal kind, has been described as "part of the 'hidden curriculum' of many co-educational schools" (Drouet 1993).

Indeed, Duncan (1999: 128) presents a complex scenario in relation to what he terms 'gender abuse' in schools. "In deconstructs bullying as a manifestation of gender conflict 'in the pursuit of a desired sexual identity'". He concludes that "both girls and boys can adopt a variety of active and passive roles in relation to bullying, but that sexualised nature of much gender abuse serves to remind girls that power is gendered. The threat of rape was identified as a potential sanction against girls who do not conform to male expectations: 'rape may be (comparatively) rare but physical and sexual assault are not and the lower range of conflictual sexualised gender practices keeps that threat alive on a daily basis'. Some school girls have identified sexual assault and even rape within their understanding (and possibly experience) of bullying". Duncan (1999: 128).

The pervasive nature of homophobic abuse in schools has been widely commented upon, whether the intended target is known to be gay, or not. There is evidence to suggest that "homophobic abuse serves to 'police' <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-types-effects-and-government-initiatives/>



gender identities, and establish norms of sexual behaviour and gender identity" (Mac An Ghail, 1989: 273 - 286, Douglas et al, 1997)

Rivers (1996: 19) argues that a " significant feature of homophobic bullying is the severity of the abuse. In a retrospective study of gay men and lesbians' experience of bullying, one gay man reported having been raped by a teacher, others reported having their clothes set alight, and being burnt with cigarettes while being held down. One lesbian reported having been raped by a male pupil, and another of having been dragged around the playing field by her hair".

Other types of bullying are gender bullying which could be linked directly to sexual and homophobic bullying and another type of bullying that is increasing is racist bullying or racial harassment, number of studies on the relationship between bullying and racism. However there appears to be some ambivalence concerning the conceptualisation of racist bullying. Tizard et al (1988: 2), for example, " report that name - calling relating to physical appearance, personal hygiene and race represented the three most frequent forms of 'teasing' reported among 7 year olds". Loach and Bloor (1995: 18 - 20) and Siann (1994: 123 - 134) argue that " bullying can function as a 'cover' for racism". A report by the Commission for Racial Equality (1988), describes various case studies of what is defined as 'racial harassment' in schools. Regardless of the terminology used, Gillborn (1993) argues that " racism in schools reflects a wider and racially structured society, and consequently, racist abuse carries extra weight".

In terms of prevalence, Kelly and Cohn's (1988) survey of first (year 7's) and Fourth Year (year 10's) pupils in school in Manchester found that two - thirds of pupils said that they had been bullied. Racist name - calling was recorded as the third most common form of bullying. In recent survey of Black and ethnic minority pupil in mainly white schools, " 26% said that they had experienced racially abusive name - calling during the previous week, while at school, or while travelling to and from school" (Cline et al 2002: 1).

However, it is common with many surveys on bullying, that it is likely that racist bullying or harassment is under - reported.

There is some debate in the literature concerning both the value and validity of identifying typical 'victim' or 'bully' characteristics. Stainton Roger (1991) for example, argues that " any child can be a bully or a victim, and that neither denotes an individual psychopathology: 'bullying is a reflective practice". Bullying creates victims, victims create bullies'. On the other hand, Sharp et al (2002: 139) " claim that some children are more likely to fall into a bully role or victim role, and that is how children learn to manage aggression and assertion in interpersonal skills represents a key contributory factor".

Olweus (1993: 19) described bullies as " physically stronger and victims as having characteristics that differed from the norm, for example in appearance sporting or academic ability". Boulton and Underwood (1992: 73 - 87) also found that " children who perceived themselves to be different in some way, felt more vulnerable to bullying". Olweus (1984: 58) found that " approximately 20 per cent of bullies were also victims, and that they represented a particularly disturbed group". Others have claimed that "

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some children fall neither into the victim nor bully category and that they therefore provide a useful 'normative contrast' with which to analyse bullying and victim behaviour" (Schwartz 1993 and Glover et al 1998).

The effects that bullying has on both the bully and especially the victim can be life changing, in a negative way and have severe consequences not just short term, bullying can also have a long term effect on the victims. The effects of bullying have been said to be very serious, it has been reported that " around ten children in the UK kill themselves each year because their lives have been made so miserable by being subjected to bullying" (NSPCC 2009). There are many effects of bullying, these include feeling depressed and sad most of the time, having sleeping problems such as insomnia or having nightmares, not wanting to go to school, not eating or over eating, suffering from stomach aches and headaches, feel less confident and also lose their self confidence and stop believing in themselves, feel unhappy and miserable which will result in enjoying life less. The longer the victim is subjected to bullying will probably in turn become a bully themselves, it will take longer for the victim to recover from it and may continue to destroy the self confidence of the victim, leading to possible suicide.

In 1999 Kidscape conducted the first ever retrospective survey of adults to discover if bullying at school affected those who had been bullied in later life. The survey showed that being badly bullied as a child had a dramatic, negative, knock - on effect throughout life. The extensive survey of over 1000 adults, showed that " bullying affects not only your self - esteem as an adult, but your ability to make friends, succeed in education, and in work and

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social relationships. Nearly half (46 per cent) of those who were bullied at secondary school contemplated suicide compared with only 7 per cent of those who were not bullied. The majority of the adults reported feeling angry and bitter now about the bullying they suffered at school as children. Most received no help at the time to stop the bullying and telling either made the bullying worse or had no effect. Of the 1044 adults who took part in the survey 828 were bullied at school and 216 were not and of those bullied 70 per cent were women and 30 per cent were men and of those who were not bullied, 49 per cent were women and 51 per cent were men" (Kidscape 1999: 1).

However, problems may occur if the school fails to recognise and resolve bullying within school, whereby a child may become at risk of truanting and disengagement from education, which could then lead to the risk of self harming and possible suicide. Should a child not experience an educational experience supportive of building resilience against bullying, then those exposed to bullying can turn to someone before it is too late. The following chapter aims to discuss the educational provision available for children who are victims to bullies and the consequences of those who do the bullying. It focuses purely on those children who get bullied in secondary schools.

## **Chapter 2: Educational Provision within Secondary Schools**

This chapter aims to discuss the educational provisions available for those children who have been bullied and are still getting bullied. It focuses first on the provisions available for children who have been bullied throughout secondary schools, before examining the experiences of those who are living through bullying and also those who are the bullies. The importance of

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education as a preventative measure against bullying will be discussed along with how education is delivered to those children who are suffering at the hands of bullies.

The Government has made tackling bullying in schools a key priority and the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) has made it clear that no form of bullying should be tolerated. Bullying in schools should be taken very seriously, as it is not a normal part of growing up and it can and will ruin lives. It is compulsory for schools to have measures in place to encourage good behaviour and respect for others on the part of pupils, and to prevent all forms of bullying. The DCSF supports schools in designing their anti-bullying policies and their strategies to tackle bullying, by providing comprehensive, practical guidance documents. Regional advisers with expertise in the field of bullying are also on hand to help schools implement the guidance and draw on best practices.

Teachers can help to reduce bullying both by the way they teach and by what they teach. In terms of approaches to teaching, although it may seem obvious, it may be helpful to consider teaching approaches along a spectrum with, at one extreme approach which actively promote bullying and at the other ones which specifically seek to prevent bullying. An example of actively promoting bullying is whenever a teacher deliberately humiliates a pupil, then the teacher is quite simply engaging in bullying. It really does not matter to the pupil whether the intention is merely to exert control or gain personal gratification. It would be pleasant to assume that this kind of teacher bullying was something that only happened in the past.

Unfortunately most secondary school pupils, at least, will tell you that in their

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school there are one or two teachers who regularly use intimidation, sarcasm, belittling or harassment towards pupils, and that most teachers, on occasions, will resort to this kind of behaviour (Lawson 1994), showing the pupils that it is acceptable to bully others.

The contrast from 'actively - promote bullying' is bullying - preventive teaching. This is an approach to teaching which is alert to and aware of the condition which makes some pupils vulnerable and avoids endorsing these. This is about treating all pupils with a level of respect and avoiding making jokes at the expense of the weakest. It is about not contributing to a pupil's vulnerability, about not setting up victims. It is also about acting as a good role model, as somebody who does not misuse the power they have. More proactively bullying - preventive teaching is about publicly acknowledging that bullying is not acceptable, putting it specifically on the agenda within the secondary school and in the classroom, and creating opportunities which will help staff and pupils to develop strategies to counteract bullying. Overall what is needed is to change the way that pupils behave towards each other. To do this the pupils themselves must want to change and they need strategies and they must know how to change.

The 1996 Education Act placed responsibility on head teachers for discipline and behaviour in schools, and in 1994 the Department for Education encouraged head teachers, in consultations with their governing bodies, staff and parents, to develop 'whole school' behaviour policies and approaches which are clearly understood by pupils, parents and the school staff. The guidance recommended that schools should also have an anti - bullying policy; 'School staff must act and importantly be seen to act firmly against

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bullying whenever and wherever it appears. School behaviour policies and the associated rules of conduct should, therefore, make specific reference to bullying. Governing bodies should regularly review their school's policy in bullying. School prospectuses and other documents issued to parents and pupils should make it clear that bullying will not be tolerated. Prospectuses should also explain arrangements through which pupils troubled by bullying can draw their concerns to the attention of staff in the confidence that these will be carefully investigated and, if substantiated, taken seriously and acted upon. " Individual members of staff must be alert to signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it. Failure to report incident may be interpreted as condoning the behaviour" (Elliott 1997c: 118).

In more recent times, when a secondary school uses SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning), if used effectively it contributes to the work secondary schools are doing to reduce bullying. " When a school implements SEAL effectively across the whole school it establishes strong foundations to its work to prevent bullying. At the core of SEAL are the social and emotional skills, which are all important because high levels of these skills create social climate that does not tolerate bullying behaviour" (DCSF 2007)

The partnership between ChildLine and Schools is a recent initiative, called CHIPS which was established by ChildLine aiming to work directly in schools, youth clubs and other settings with children and young people across the UK. In 2007/2008 CHIPS " worked with more than 66, 000 children and young people across more than 700 primary schools and secondary schools and almost 100 special schools and youth groups, to endorse the view that children and young people can help each other, can play a part in making

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changes to improve their own lives, and have a right to be listened to and respected. CHIPS provides a range of services from awareness raising assemblies, workshops dealing with bullying issues, to setting up peer support schemes, that encourage children and young people to support each other" (NSPCC 2008), all of those services are done within the schools.

There are many implications when it comes to initiatives and provision, the first is less attention appears to have been paid to children's support needs during periods of transition, for example between primary school and secondary school. Children often fear bullying at points of transition in their lives, or at particular turning points, for example, during the move from primary to secondary school. Children in their last year of primary school may be seen as the 'leaders' of their school. Primary schools are generally smaller, both in the fabric of the building and in the size of the school population. Secondary schools are, by contrast, frequently viewed as fearfully large places, where newcomers represent the lowest rung of a long ladder. Children who change schools as a result of moving home may also feel vulnerable to bullying. It would therefore seem useful for more research to be conducted on the support needs of children as they learn the ropes of their new environment.

Another implication is making sure that all schools have an anti - bullying policy within school and that it is used effectively and at all staff knows how to use it. Some of these studies were prompted by the concerns raised by parents and pupils that anti - bullying policies and strategies were having a limited effect). The evidence shows that " adopting an anti - bullying policy is



not enough; policies need to be effectively implemented and sustained over the long term" (Glover et al, 1998).

Parents and teachers is another implication as they are not seen to be working together or not working together as much as they should. It is every child's democratic right to attend school in safely. As education is one of the very few compulsory activities that parents and the government impose onto children, it involves all adults, in whatever capacity, to ensure that this is possible. Parent and teachers, being the most closely involved have the most valuable role to play. " Parents are often extremely anxious to have a bully situation speedily resolved and so will offer the highest level of commitment. Their level of distress can often be reduced by inviting them to become actively involved in any plan as feelings of helplessness may be increasing their concern" (Besag 1992: 155). It may be easier for the victim to confide in a teacher rather than in their parents who are often bewildered by the child's reluctance to discuss the matter and refusal of their offers of help. The situation in such cases remains shrouded in mystery, and parents rely heavily on teacher to support the child and communicate with them appropriately.

Another implication is when a parent does not feel that the school of their bullied child has not dealt with the bullying in an effective way and stopped it, and they withdraw their child from the school where the child is getting bullied and either moving them to another school or even educating the child at home, this may have a negative effect on the victim, as if they attended a new school, they would have to make new friend and there in not certainty that they will not get bullied at the new school, it will also have an effect on <https://assignbuster.com/bullying-types-effects-and-government-initiatives/>

the child's education because they may possibly be at different stages in the curriculum at the new school compared to the school that they were previously at. If the parents of the bullied child decide to educate their child at home, they would have to sort out materials and resources themselves, and this could take time and money. Parents should be warned that if they decide to educate their child at home, they have opted out of the state education system and should not expect any assistance in educating their child from the LEA (Local Education Authority). Under the Education Act 1996, "parents have a legal duty to ensure that their child receives an efficient full time education suitable to the child's age, ability and aptitude, whether this be at school or otherwise in some kind of education". (Elliott 1997d: 124).

### **Chapter 3: Government Initiatives and the Education of Children who are being bullied**

The barriers to education both before and after the point at which a child is bullied set out above can be institutionally specific, but it is also clear that some barriers and some of the problems of provision difficulties around reintegration are dependent on government policies and the wider educational system.

This chapter will analyse the effectiveness of Government policies, initiatives and how these influence educational systems and may both increase educational involvement or attainment and reduce bullying. However, because of the plethora of local initiatives the chapter will focus on the larger scale initiatives, which aim to tackle the main problems (as set out and evidenced in previous chapters), therefore the primary discussion will focus

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on how the current Government has tackled the issues as mentioned above since they came into power in 1997.

For almost two decades, bullying in schools has attracted the interest and concern of governments and policy makers. In the late 1980s a public enquiry was launched into unruly behaviour in schools, the result of this enquiry was the Elton Report (1989). The Report highlighted the issue of bullying, and " suggested that a positive school ethos provides the essential factor in facilitating academic success and positive pupil relations. A 'positive school ethos' has, however, proven a difficult concept to define or quantify. Instead, research has tended to focus on the relative merits of different approaches or 'interventions' designed to reduce or prevent bullying" (Mackinnon et al 1995: 43).

In the 1990s an extensive research funded by the DfEE, indicated that bullying was far more prevalent in some schools than others, and that the reasons for this pattern could not always be attributed to single cause (such as social deprivation, or geographical location). Some schools were also shown to be more effective than others at introducing and sustaining anti - bullying work. Despite these complexities, the research provided much needed evidence on " what had up till now remained a largely hidden phenomenon, and provided the basis for the government's first major attempt to provide schools with evidence - based research on effective anti - bullying strategies" (DfE 1994, DfEE 2000).

Almost a decade later, bullying continues to represent an important issue for public policy, not least because of the links between bullying, academic

underachievement and mental health problems Guidance issued to " teacher and school governors highlights their duty to prevent all forms of bullying: 'the emotional distress caused by bullying in whatever form - be it racial, or as a result of a child's appearance, behaviour or special educational needs, or related to sexual orientation, can prejudice school achievement, lead to lateness or truancy, and in extreme cases, end with suicide, low report rates should not themselves be taken as proof that bullying is not occurring'" (DFEE, 1999: 24- 25).

The National Healthy School Standard (DfEE 1999) also recommended the " development of anti - bullying initiatives as part of a whole - school approach to raising educational standards, improving the health of children and young people, and reducing social exclusion". The DfES has also recently announced that, as part of the government's national behaviour and attendance strategy, guidance and training will be offered to all secondary schools on tackling bullying from September 2003. However, while the 'whole school approach' might be interpreted as echoing the notion of a 'school ethos', in other respects the issue of bullying appears to be beset by a numb