

# **Violence reduction in schools – how to make a difference**

## **A handbook**

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# Introduction

## **What is the target audience for this handbook?**

This handbook is written to support the Council of Europe's aim to help decision makers and others to implement consistent policies of awareness-raising, prevention and law enforcement to combat violence in everyday life. In particular it fulfils this Organisation's declared intention to prepare a handbook on the implementation of strategies to prevent violence at school, on the basis of the conclusions of the conference on "Local partnerships for preventing and combating violence at school" held on 2-4 December 2002 (Council of Europe 2003), and including a number of specific examples of good practice.

The handbook is designed to be used by all schools, primary, secondary or special. It is written for all education professionals, not only teachers and head teachers but also the growing numbers of professionals who work with schools in support of children. Indeed, it may help anyone who wants to improve the way schools work, within their locality, to ensure that they are safe and caring communities where children can learn in an environment free of repression, intimidation and violence.

## **Why will others interested in school *convivencia* find the handbook useful?**

In Chapter 1, we adopt a definition of violence, used throughout the book, as that which acts against *convivencia* – the Spanish word for "living together in harmony". This definition supports and explains the two essential strands of all school strategies for violence reduction:

- establishing and maintaining a learning environment where violence is not tolerated – so that an ethos of *convivencia* is always present;
- responding to violence when it occurs so that the ethos of *convivencia* is protected.

Both strands can be implemented only if there is a partnership with the local community. Research referred to in this handbook indicates that most schools throughout Europe are havens of safety and peace for pupils but, where a further reduction in violence is necessary, it can only be achieved as a shared responsibility with the society in which the children live.

Consequently, the handbook should be of interest and use to all members of the school's local community, including community leaders and administrators. Without their local action, children will experience dual standards inside and outside their school and will not be able to apply the lessons they learn. Their schools become islands of *convivencia* in an increasingly violent society.

Just as this handbook should be of interest to all members of the wider school community, its partner “Preventing school violence: a handbook for local partnerships” (Council of Europe 2005) should be of interest to all schools. The two handbooks can be used together when planning any programme to improve *convivencia* in school.

## **How might this handbook help schools?**

Research into levels of violence in schools (see Chapter 1) offers no conclusive evidence that the general level of violence in European schools is increasing in spite of the fact that, in all countries, media reports sometimes give the opposite impression. So this handbook is not a response to a perceived crisis.

The need for advice and support, though universal, differs in degree and there are regional and local variations which make it difficult to generalise. The handbook does not have the capacity to take account of all the extremes of need – for example where children are affected by serious conflict in society that results in violence, including the horrors of war.

It is common for schools to be seen as agents for social change requiring them to set higher standards and ideals than those in the community they serve. Consequently, good schools use solution-focused approaches to improve *convivencia* (see Chapter 4) even when the only lasting solution is a societal change. The handbook may help achieve a sense of realism here. Violence occurs everywhere in society and schools should select carefully what they do to tackle identified problems, within their capacity to implement solutions, so that they do not attempt the impossible.

The handbook offers a process for focusing efforts on actions likely to be most effective in the user’s context by sharing ideas that seem to have worked in other places through case studies and accounts of personal experience and research.

Research in Europe identifies a growing number of national and local initiatives to tackle the problems of violence and provide support for schools. It is beyond the scope of this handbook to even mention them all. However, we have included several examples of good practice from across Europe which may encourage school staff to search out more from within their locality and from the websites and bibliography listed.

## **What help does it offer?**

The chapters cover the key areas that schools will need to address if they are to review and improve their current practice. There is no “quick fix” to reducing violence levels. Experience from across Europe indicates that, for effective violence reduction, it is essential to:

- agree a whole-school, consistent approach based on shared beliefs and principles;
- audit how well organised the school is to establish and maintain an environment of *convivencia*;
- plan a variety of improvements – there is rarely one simple solution;

- implement and monitor the improvement plan, including the teaching of social, emotional and behavioural skills;
- respond effectively to violence when it occurs with actions that will avoid a recurrence.

Evidence also shows that, in working to improve *convivencia*, effective schools listen to and involve pupils at all stages. Valued and encouraged, they are the most influential and powerful ambassadors for improvement in any school. Effective schools also ensure that staff are role models for pupils and set the standards in the school by their actions as well as by their words

### **How should this handbook be used?**

This handbook aims to help schools to plan whole-school approaches that will reduce violence and, in doing so, achieve the consistency that is essential if pupils are to develop the social, emotional and behavioural skills that they need to become citizens who know how to resolve conflict in a non-violent way.

It does not attempt to offer all the solutions. It aims to help schools to plan a programme for achieving improvements in *convivencia* and appropriate responses to violence when it occurs. The chapters cover the major areas that will need to be considered. Although each chapter can be read and used by itself, it is unlikely that a school will gain full benefit from the range of topics covered without working through the sequence of all the chapters before selecting activities that suit their particular priorities.

### **What is the sequence of topics and how do they interrelate?**

In the first chapter, "Getting started", Peter Smith explores the definition of violence and, through a review of current research, identifies the key components of, and fundamental principles underpinning, any programme for violence reduction in school.

This leads on to Chapter 2, "Finding out more", in which Peter Galvin describes how to construct an audit of violence in schools that will identify how well organised a school is to address the issues. He moves on to explain how to interpret audit results before describing how to draw up an action plan to target intervention. Although he uses the example of a secondary school model, the process applies equally well to all schools.

In Chapter 3, "Agreeing and applying policy", Julie Shaughnessy describes how school policies can be formulated and implemented to create and support a whole-school ethos of *convivencia*. She emphasises the importance of schools working collaboratively with parents and monitoring progress to ensure action plans are as effective as possible.

In Chapter 4, "What should be taught?", Julie Casey uses the example of the Department for Education and Skills national programme in England for the teaching of social, emotional and behavioural skills to describe the key issues in designing a school curriculum that will help pupils develop the personal skills needed to manage conflict without resorting to violence. In this chapter, a primary school model is used but it can be applied equally well to all schools.

In Chapter 5, “Involving pupils”, Helen Cowie analyses European examples of good practice which involve pupils and discusses the research findings about the effectiveness of this essential element in any school strategy for reducing violence. In particular this chapter looks at strategies for reducing bullying.

This leads on to Chapter 6, “Protecting children”, in which Mona O’Moore extends this focus on involving pupils by examining strategies for making schools safe and secure learning environments. Interestingly, this is not simply a matter of making improvements to the premises. In a handbook emphasising strategies for creating a climate of *convivencia*, the major part of this chapter examines how pupils can be engaged in creating that security amongst themselves. It includes further insight into tackling the problem of bullying.

In the final chapter, “Supporting school staff”, George Robinson looks at staff training. He deals with a range of topics for inclusion in a development plan and offers exercises to illustrate how a school might engage all its staff in tackling violence reduction. Subtitled “Planting the peace virus” it finishes a journey through all the stages that a school should consider if it is to employ a comprehensive range of strategies to reduce violence.

### **How should the activities in each chapter be used?**

Activities punctuate the chapters so that readers can reflect on the key issues. They allow readers to pause and check the relevance of the chapter content and to apply the key issues to their own situations. The activities will be particularly helpful when a group is studying a chapter together because they provide an opportunity to discuss with colleagues and share perspectives on the relevance or relative importance of the chapter content in an individual school setting.

Schools may find the activity materials useful as part of staff professional development. Within the context covered by the chapter, these could be used in various combinations as stimulus materials for staff discussions and training. Taken together, the activities could be used to help to achieve agreement within a school on all the stages and elements of designing and implementing an improvement plan following the sequence outlined in the chapters.

### **What are the lessons for the future?**

The first lesson for the future concerns building a closer association between research and practice and further sharing of solutions across Europe. Despite the many valuable and learned research programmes – well catalogued by, amongst others, the European and United Kingdom observatories for non violence in schools and publications such as Peter Smith’s *Violence in schools: the response in Europe* (2003) – research, as Smith points out, has had an apparent lack of impact in schools.

Consequently, there is a continuing need to bring researchers and practitioners together in Europe, in the way that the Council of Europe has been doing, so that schools gain the direct benefit of accumulated research findings. However, researchers should concentrate on what practitioners want – the analysis and verification of strategies that seem to work and ways of applying solutions to their particular situations.

An example of current work in the United Kingdom – the Violence Reduction in Schools Programme (VIRIS) at the Department for Education and Skills in England – is taking account of some of the wide array of experience in Europe and sharing policy and practice via a programme of intergovernmental co-operation with the French Ministry of Education. The VIRIS programme is researching into case studies where schools in England and Europe claim to have identified solutions to violence in their institutions. The research is analysing the reasons why these apparent solutions seem to be effective. The research methodology includes causal analysis, without which trend analysis will be of little use to practitioners in schools. The outcome in England will be the publication of revised guidance for all schools together with training materials for staff at all levels. This work has already uncovered common ground with the needs of European practitioner colleagues as well as making the programme team aware of how little they know about successful experience in other countries. Information on VIRIS as well as links to other UK initiatives on reducing bullying can be found on the Department for Education and Skills Improving Behaviour and Attendance website at: <<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandattendance>>.

The second concerns networking and opportunities to share good practice through meetings and exchanges. The information in this handbook is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the range of effective practice in Europe. Despite the inevitable preponderance of examples from England and the Republic of Ireland in some chapters, the authors have made every effort to relate the work they are doing to the context of European schools and we are particularly indebted to Peter Smith, Helen Cowie and Mona O'Moore for their insight into the current European perspective, based on their extensive work in Europe. However, they have also made us acutely aware of what is not included – even, for example, the impressive and highly relevant work underway by our neighbours in Scotland (see <<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk>>).

Networking is important but schools will be impatient if the network is “a talking shop” for academics. Yet, if it is confined to an exchange of practical solutions, it will not bring researchers, administrators and practitioners together. The ideal would be a combination of Europe-wide seminars and conferences which extend personal contacts and identify universal solutions and common approaches to violence reduction with representatives of research, teaching and administration. The findings and case studies would be networked throughout Europe on a website.

In the meantime, we have arranged for the UK National Behaviour and Attendance Exchange to place all important links, including those in this handbook, on their website at: <[http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/npsl\\_ba/exchange/](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour/npsl_ba/exchange/)>. This is therefore a one-stop shop for those who wish to follow up anything in this handbook and extend their knowledge of good practice around Europe.

There is no doubt that European schools have similar needs to address similar problems of violence in schools for which there are similar solutions and a similar methodology. The many ongoing government and local initiatives have much to teach us all and should be shared. The need remains for continued sharing and co-operation across Europe and for the Council of Europe to



continue its role of bringing researchers and practitioners together to share experience of what works in reducing violence in schools. This handbook is intended to help in that process.

# Chapter 1

## Getting started

### Tackling violence in schools: a European perspective

*Peter K. Smith*

This chapter will help schools to:

- develop an understanding of the concept and definitions of violence;
- learn about a selection of European initiatives;
- consider what factors may influence the climate for violence in a school;
- identify the influences on pupils;
- review what they are currently doing to reduce violence.

#### **The European context**

There are good reasons to be concerned about the issue of violence in schools. Firstly, it is immediately damaging – to those persons who suffer the violence, or to the school environment in cases of vandalism and secondly, it can create insecurity and fear that works against the purpose of the school; a climate of violence in school is the opposite of the education for citizenship that we broadly aim for, and it goes against the rights of pupils and young people to live free from fear and intimidation (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child).

Schools can take positive steps to reduce violence and the likelihood of violence, and this handbook outlines some of the key processes to achieve this. However, even if we are only discussing violence in schools, it is worth saying that it is not just a problem for the schools themselves. Those in school are affected by the media and by attitudes to violence in the wider society, and even by international events. The media present many violent acts, sometimes in ways that make them seem attractive and successful. Actual violence often takes place in society outside schools, and it is sometimes approved of. Violence of parents against children (such as physical smacking) is quite legal and quite common in many European countries, but not in all. Violence in the sense of retaliatory action taken against criminals (retributive violence), or groups perceived as engaging in terrorist activities, is often approved by a majority. The perceived legitimacy and effectiveness of school actions against violence may well be affected by these wider issues. All citizens bear some shared responsibility in a democratic country.

Obviously the definition of what we mean by violence is raised by this discussion.

### **Activity 1.1: Some key sources of information**

The first activity is simply to note some key sources of information on violence reduction and perhaps to visit some of the websites which schools may find useful.

Useful sources for the topic of violence in schools are widespread, but some particularly relevant for a European perspective include the following:

- The Council of Europe project site for “Responses to violence in everyday life in a democratic society”: <[http://www.coe.int/T/E/Integrated\\_Projects/Violence/](http://www.coe.int/T/E/Integrated_Projects/Violence/)>
- The United Kingdom Observatory for the Promotion of Non-Violence. This is the site on which all links relevant to this handbook will be posted and updated: <<http://www.ukobservatory.com>>
- The European Observatory of School Violence: <<http://www.obsviolence.com>>
- The European Union funded CONNECT project “Tackling violence in schools on a European-wide basis” (1998-2002), which collated reports from 15 of the EU member states, and two associated states (Iceland, Norway), with the findings available at: <<http://www.gold.ac.uk/connect>>
- Five other projects on school violence funded under the CONNECT initiative: <[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/index_en.html)>
- The ICCRM for the Pacific Pathway Programme, a conflict resolution programme for schools, in English and French versions from Canada: <<http://www.iccrm.com>>
- The *Journal of School Violence* dedicated to this issue: <<http://geneslight.com/JSV.html>>
- The UK Department for Education and Skills site for the Violence Reduction in Schools Programme (VIRIS): <<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/behaviourandat-tendance>>
- UK anti-bullying site: <<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying>>
- The World Health Organisation site – see particularly fi-006 in the contents table for an action plan proposal to tackle violence in school: <<http://www.health.fi/connect>>
- The Anti-bullying Centre, Trinity College, Dublin, with information and links to world-wide sites about bullying: <<http://www.abc.tcd.ie>>
- Restorative justice. Two organisations with useful information are: <<http://www.transformingconflict.org>> and <<http://www.realjustice.org>>

### **Definitions of violence**

What is “violence”? The English word violence has linguistic cognates in the Latin languages: Spanish *violencia*, Portuguese *violência*, Italian *violenza*, French *violence*, for example; but other terms in European languages have quite different linguistic origins, as in German *gewalt*, Greek *βία* or Icelandic *ofbeldi*. And even any one term such as the English “violence” is open to different interpretations. Children themselves define school violence in different

ways depending on their age, their language and their culture (Smith et al. 2002). Let us look at three adult definitions.

The *Encarta World English Dictionary* (Encarta 1999) definition of violence is: (1) the use of physical force to injure somebody or damage something; (2) the illegal use of unjustified force, or the effect created by the threat of this.

The definition used by Olweus (Olweus 1999, p.12) is that violence or violent behaviour is: aggressive behaviour where the actor or perpetrator uses his or her own body or an object (including a weapon) to inflict (relatively serious) injury or discomfort upon another individual.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence as: the intentional use of physical and psychological force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development, or deprivation (WHO fi-006).

These and other definitions share some features but differ on others. Shared features are normally that violence is:

- harmful or damaging, or at least threatens such harm or damage; and
- is intended (accidental damage or hurt done by someone is not usually thought of as violent).

But let us look at the dimensions of variation or disagreement. There are at least five dimensions.

1. Is violence necessarily physical? It is, according to the first Encarta definition and Olweus, but not according to the second Encarta definition or WHO. This is probably the most crucial issue. Restricting violence to physical acts gives it a clear focus, and perhaps makes it easier to measure, in that physical acts of violence are probably easier to monitor than verbal or relational violence. It makes violence different from aggression. However, while some researchers and writers are happy with this restricted focus, others are not. It clearly excludes other intentional harmful behaviours, such as verbal abuse, social exclusion, nasty rumour spreading (Underwood 2002).

2. Is violence necessarily against a person? Not according to Encarta, but it is so according to Olweus, and possibly WHO. In other words, is vandalism (“the malicious or deliberate defacement or destruction of somebody else’s property”: Encarta 1999) included as violence? Does graffiti on the school walls, or intentional damage to school books or equipment, count as violence?

3. Does violence actually have to be manifested as behaviour that damages someone or something, or is just the threat of this sufficient, as stated in the second Encarta definition and that of WHO? An emphasis on threatened as well as actual violence can justify the inclusion of measures such as feelings of insecurity.

4. Is violence still violence if it is legal (see Encarta (2))? If so, a parent smacking a child is certainly violent. Perhaps staff disciplining a pupil, a policeman restraining a criminal, a judge sentencing an offender, is violent as well. But if not, then are we assuming an acceptance of societal-defined “legality”? Might this be challenged?

5. Does violence have to be done by somebody (Olweus), or can it be done more impersonally by a social group or an institution? The term “institutional violence” suggests the latter; and allows us to consider the possibility of a school inflicting violence on its pupils because of certain actions or policies.

Finally, when actually using a definition, whether for recording purposes, or instituting a responsive process, we need to decide at what level something becomes violence. How serious does the harm have to be? Every day most of us experience minor hurts. So, should violence be limited to quite serious blows, or insults or social provocations? Or can it include what French researchers have called “micro-violence” or “incivilities”, relatively minor impolitenesses and infringements of rules (Debarbieux et al. 2003)? These might not count as violence by most definitions, but they may still be vital in understanding the origins of more serious school violence, and tackling it.

## **Convivencia**

These differences cannot be resolved in any large, international professional group. There are too many personal, disciplinary, cultural and linguistic differences. However, we can each be clear about what we mean in any particular school, or if we are carrying out some piece of research, and that is important for clarity. It is feasible within a school, or a local area, to reach an agreed definition.

When seeking to agree a definition in school, a solution may be to use a concept opposite to violence – the Spanish term *convivencia*, or “living together in harmony”. Let us therefore try to improve *convivencia* in schools and discuss what kinds of violence act against *convivencia*.

*Convivencia* defined as “living together in harmony” is the word to describe non-violence used throughout this handbook.

### **Activity 1.2: Violent activities that cause concern and act against convivencia**

By reference to the definitions of violence above, make a list of the violent activities which cause you concern in school. It may be helpful to draw up a list with the following headings:

<b>Violence activity</b>	<b>Initiator</b>	<b>Effect on convivencia</b>

From this list you will have identified your definition of what is included under the term “violence”.

## **Information about violence in schools**

Obviously, how we define violence will have an effect on how we gather data about it at a macro level. An important point is to make clear what one's definition is, but there are other important issues to consider when gathering data. Although some relevant statistics can be found in most, perhaps all, European countries (Smith 2003), many are indirect or incomplete – for example, surveys of bullying (rather than violence); official statistics on accidents caused by violence; criminal statistics based on “legal” definitions such as anti-social behaviour, juvenile delinquency and vandalism; and data on school exclusions.

There is a general lack of systematic data gathered on a large scale over time. Statistics on school violence are based on a variety of instruments. Chapter 2, which deals with auditing, explores how schools can set about a review of violence in their situation.

Many available statistics focus on pupil to pupil violence. Other dyads are more rarely reported. This probably reflects common perceptions of the problem, and possibly resistance on the part of some schools or staff to open up issues regarding staff violence. Clearly, even disregarding violence to property, and disregarding institutional violence, violent acts could occur between any persons within a school community. Besides pupil to pupil, this could especially include pupil to staff, staff to pupil, and staff to staff.

## **Factors affecting levels of school violence**

Despite the various definitions and sources, we do know quite a lot about factors affecting levels of school violence. These include the type of school and school climate; peer group characteristics; pupil characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity, family background and special educational needs; and historical trends.

## **School characteristics**

There is little evidence that school size or class size are important factors in predicting levels of school violence (Olweus 1999; Smith 2003). However, measures of school climate, such as classroom management skills, have been found to be predictive in some studies (in Norway, Roland and Galloway 2002), although not in others (in Germany, Hanewinkel 2004). A study by Welsh et al. (1999) on schools in Philadelphia in the United States, found individual pupil factors to be more predictive than school or community factors. In contrast, Benbenishty and Astor (in press) looked at issues of community, school, class and family variables, in a large-scale study of Israeli schools. Interestingly, they found that the impact of these factors varies with type of violence. School-level characteristics such as school climate explained a substantial proportion of variance in being a victim of violence, especially for moderate victimisation (less so for low-level, verbal victimisation). The socio-economic status characteristics of schools affected levels of severe victimisation. It appears that many factors may influence the relative importance of community, school and individual factors, even though all probably play some part.

### **Activity 1.3: Factors affecting the school climate of convivencia**

An important early consideration for establishing or maintaining convivencia in a school is to consider factors that are influencing that climate. Through discussion, make a list of those factors and rank them in order of the influence they have on convivencia. It might be helpful to categorise each under one of four headings:

- pupil related;
- adult related;
- facilities/building related;
- outside school/community factors.

### **Peer group characteristics**

Pupils are influenced by the peer group they are in. There is some evidence about this influence from studies on juvenile delinquents. A strong strand in theorising on delinquency postulates that early onset delinquents exhibit anti-social behaviour and violence before adolescence (probably influenced by individual and personality factors), and may persist in this for some time. By contrast, many pupils may be late onset delinquents, engaging in anti-social behaviours only for a few years while around the peak ages of 13 to 16 years. At this age, the peer group has a strong influence. It appears to be strongest for moderately disruptive pupils but not strong for either highly disruptive boys (who may already lead such anti-social gangs), or for conforming pupils (who are motivated for academic success and avoid anti-social peer groups) (Patterson et al. 1989; Vitaro et al. 1997).

### **Pupil characteristics**

Most statistics show that being a victim of violence often decreases with age through the school years (Smith 2003). This may well be because potential victims become relatively stronger and more skilled at avoiding being attacked. However, being a perpetrator of violence shows some increase into mid- or late adolescence. Norm-breaking and risk-taking behaviours generally become more common and more frequently sanctioned by the peer group as pupils move into the adolescent years (Arnett 1992). Also some forms of violence, such as sexual harassment, and teasing or bullying related to sexual orientation, are relatively minor problems until secondary school.

Sex differences are evident in statistics from many countries (Smith 2003). Especially when we are considering physical forms of violence, boys have much higher levels than girls. Boys are generally physically stronger than girls of an equivalent age, and physical strength is an important status marker in boys' peer groups. However, if we use a broader definition of violence, we find that girls score higher, relatively, and sometimes absolutely, on measures of relational violence, such as social exclusion, rumour spreading and verbal violence.

In many European countries, there has been an increase in the number of young people in school from immigrant groups that has accelerated over the last decade. Racial tensions are prominent in many countries, and these can be

reflected in schools. Ethnic minority and immigrant pupils can experience racial harassment, and the young people themselves may bring different expectations and experiences of deprivation and frustration into the school. However, while the evidence is patchy and varied, there is little to associate rates of violence more with any particular ethnic group (Smith 2003; Benbenishty and Astor, in press).

Family background factors are usually found to be more important in the instigation of violence (Olweus 1993), with parents who are themselves violent, lacking warmth, and poor at monitoring their children's behaviour being more likely to have children who show violent, aggressive or bullying behaviour at school. There is some indication that over-protective parenting, in contrast, may predict risk of being a victim.

Pupils with special educational needs and disabilities may be at greater risk of being victims of violence (Nabuzoka 2000). They both display behaviours that can be a pretext for derogatory or violent acts, and they often lack the protection of friends in the peer group. Some pupils with special needs may also act out their problems aggressively (see Activity 1.4).

#### **Activity 1.4: What factors may influence pupils?**

You may wish to reconsider your list in Activity 1.3 by considering the direct effect of each factor which influences convivencia in terms of its effect on pupils. Does this result in any changes to the order of influence of each factor? This will be an important consideration if policy and action planning (Chapter 3) is to be pupil-centred.

### **Historical trends – is violence on the increase?**

There is a common perception that violence is increasing, including violence in schools. The truth, so far as we can tell, is more complex. Perceptions do not always match reality. Often, older people look back to a supposed “golden age” when things were better, and there was less violence or juvenile crime, one or two generations previously – even though, when we look at perceptions one or two generations earlier, the same expressions of concern were being reported (Pearson 1983).

In the country surveys reported in Smith (2003), not much data were available on trends over time. But of those countries that had data, some reported little change, or only a slight increase in school violence (Germany, Norway); others a curvilinear increase then decrease (Italy); others mixed findings depending on the type of violence (Austria).

### **Actions to reduce violence in schools**

#### ***National requirements, initiatives and programmes***

The surveys in Smith (2003) show that some actions have been tried in every country. Some are national initiatives, some regional or local, some in individual schools. The larger scale actions are often well-developed programmes that may include curriculum work, individual work with pupils at risk and other measures. For example, the Olweus Anti-bullying Programme is used widely in



Norway (together with other initiatives), has been used in Austria, Finland and Germany, and is being considered in Iceland; a Safe Schools Programme has been used widely in Portugal and in the United Kingdom; the Save Programme has been developed in the Andalusia/Seville region of Spain; and the Farsta Programme, amongst others, is often used in Sweden. These programmes are well described, with booklets and materials for staff and pupils, and have a somewhat standardised form. There is usually some level of evaluation of programme effectiveness available.

Most national education ministries do have some general requirement for schools to “have an environment of respect for others”. However, a survey two years ago found that, of the European Community countries at that time, less than half (Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Sweden and the United Kingdom) had specific and legal requirements to prevent violence, or bullying, in the school premises (Ananiadou and Smith 2002). This sometimes varies within states, as for example in different German *Länder*, or in different parts of the United Kingdom. Legal requirements may require schools to develop some whole-school approach or policy to deal with violence or bullying; and there may be some national materials to support this.

Many other initiatives reported to reduce violence are of a less standardised kind, or have been used only in a local area. These can be well worth supporting and may bring forth useful procedures. Oaks grow from acorns! However, it is important to consider both evaluation and dissemination, if time and resources are to be used effectively (see Activity 1.5).

### **Activity 1.5: National initiatives – how do they support school policies and rules?**

Schools who wish to start work on reducing violence, may wish to first identify local and national initiatives that will guide their policy development (see Chapter 3), in addition to visiting the websites listed in Activity 1.1.

#### ***School policies and class rules***

Whether as a result of legal requirements nationally, or as a consequence of following structured programmes (such as the Olweus Anti-bullying Programme), a common approach is to develop school policies or class rules to deal with violence and to foster helping behaviours. In some countries (such as the United Kingdom) the emphasis is more on whole-school policies, in others (Austria, Netherlands) it is more on the development of class rules. A positive feature of such procedures is that they give an opportunity for consultation between staff and pupils, and (for whole-school policies) with the school community. Developing class rules may maximise individual involvement but runs the risk of a fragmented approach compared to a whole-school policy. All school staff have a vital role in developing class rules or school policies by involving the pupils. A good whole-school approach will make the role of the staff, and parents, clear (see also Chapter 3).

#### ***General preventative measures***

Some of the initiatives do not focus very directly on violence, but attempt to improve preventative factors. For example, Denmark has a Parliament Day for

children, in which they can voice (and vote on) concerns regarding school and what should be improved, and how. These can encourage a general sense of participation and citizenship, and may include some practical proposals regarding school violence. Similar “parliament days” have been tried in France and Sweden.

Some programmes are designed to improve the climate of schools and classes through staff education, and enhanced personal and social education for pupils. The Life Skills Programme in Iceland is an example. Some trends in the Netherlands and Norway suggest that this is regarded as more promising than programmes that focus rather specifically on violence or bullying (such as Roland and Galloway 2004). Smaller class sizes, smaller schools and more (non-competitive) sports facilities, are other suggestions, although there is little research evidence that smaller schools or classes have an impact on levels of violence, as mentioned above. General curricular approaches such as co-operative group work (Cowie et al. 1994*a*) can enhance personal relationships among pupils (see also Chapters 5 and 6).

### ***Improving the school environment to reduce violence***

The physical environment of the school is an important factor for the likelihood of violent incidents occurring. One factor may simply be the risk of minor hassles – collisions in corridors, frustration while waiting in dinner queues and so forth. Playground areas can be made more varied and inviting, to reduce boredom and the likelihood of violent acts being carried out “for fun” when there is nothing better to do. However, probably the most important factor in the school physical environment, at least for pupil-pupil violence, is ease and extent of adult supervision. Good visibility of areas pupils use, as well as training for lunchtime supervisors if staff does not do this task, are likely to be helpful (see also Chapter 6).

### ***Teaching programmes and activities***

There is widespread use of materials designed to raise awareness about violence and bullying, to change attitudes and to suggest means of coping. They include quality circles, literature, drama activities and role play, films and videos. Recently, there are developments in multimedia materials and activities, such as CD-Roms, and interactions in virtual environments (Wolke et al. in prep.). There are several programmes for teaching social and emotional skills, for example the Pacific Primary Programme (available in French and English) and the SEBS Programme in England. Evidence suggests that these are useful in anti-violence work, but only as one component in a wider programme of intervention (see also Chapter 4).

### ***Helping individual pupils at risk of being violent***

Some preventative interventions focus more on individual pupils who are at risk. These can include a “positive report card” scheme (used in Belgium), training in social competence and social skills, or assertiveness training, and finding ways of raising pupils’ self-esteem (Pathways Programme in Ireland). Programmes such as the “No blame” approach (Maines and Robinson 1992) or the “Method of shared concern” (Pikas 2002) are structured ways in which aggressive or bullying pupils can be encouraged to change their behaviour (see also Chapter 5.)

### **Support for victims of violence**

There are a variety of ways of providing support for victims of violence. General curriculum work may help develop more supportive attitudes on the part of bystanders, or the general peer group; a specific example is the Nuutinen slide show (Finland), which aims to shock pupils into a change of attitude regarding the acceptability of violence. More broadly, there is a variety of peer support, befriending, mediation and conflict resolution, and counselling schemes (see Cowie and Wallace 1998; and chapters in this handbook). These have developed over the last decade, and existing evaluations of peer support (Cowie 2000; Cowie et al. 2002) indicate that they can improve the general climate in the school, empower bystanders to take action to help bullied peers and support some vulnerable pupils. A number of countries are developing these schemes (Italy, United Kingdom) (see also Chapter 5).

### **School safety and security arrangements**

Some initiatives focus more on dealing with violence when it happens, or providing less opportunity for it to happen. In several countries (Austria, Spain, United Kingdom) there are telephone helpline services for pupils as a way of seeking advice anonymously. A more security kind of focus can include issuing vulnerable pupils with an “alarm bracelet” so that they can call for help if threatened or attacked (Finland); having a rapid response system to deal with violent incidents when they occur; employing school guards (Safe Schools Programme in Portugal); and strengthening general security in the school regarding weapons and unauthorised entry, perhaps by video surveillance. Such “security” responses may be necessary in some situations but run the risk of being counter-productive in efforts to improve school climate and convivencia. The evidence from Portugal suggests that, in that country, an earlier reliance on a security-based, “safe school approach” is now giving way to one based more on pedagogical principles and encouraging pupil self-esteem and responsibility. Similarly, restorative approaches through restorative justice in some UK schools are showing positive outcomes for both the victims and perpetrators of violence (see also Chapter 6).

### **School staff training**

Support for teachers is an important theme in intervention work. Although all members of the school community share the problem of school violence, teachers are generally in the forefront of dealing with pupil-pupil violence when they see it happening or it is reported to them. They need to be adequately prepared for this. More can certainly be achieved in matters of helping non-teaching staff such as playground supervisors, janitors, cooks and school nurses who may witness violence but who are poorly prepared to know how best to react. More can also be done to train school staff in how to involve parents in work to reduce school violence. There are examples of specific teacher training in dealing with violence (Ireland, Spain), information and materials for teachers (anti-bullying pack in the United Kingdom); and provision of education assistants or *aide-éducateurs* (France), or learning mentors (United Kingdom) to assist teachers (see also Chapter 7).

### Activity 1.6: What is the school currently doing? – a checklist

As this chapter describes, violence reduction is a complex process. To improve the current situation schools will need a range of interlinking strategies designed to establish and maintain convivencia, and to respond to violence when it occurs.

What approaches, systems, staff skills do you have in the school to support the development of convivencia as described in this chapter? What could you develop further? A checklist such as the one below is a useful start to identify what is already in place, before starting an audit.

Activity/system area	Approaches/systems/skills
Response to national requirements, initiatives and programmes	
School policies and class rules	
General preventative measures	
Improving the school environment to reduce violence	
Teaching programmes and activities	
Support for individual pupils at risk of being violent	
Support for victims of violence	
Safety and security arrangements	
Staff training	

# Chapter 2

## Finding out more

### The role of a school audit in preventing and minimising violence

*Peter Galvin*

This chapter will help schools to:

- design an audit to find out about levels of violence;
- identify how well organised a school is to minimise and respond to violence;
- identify the characteristics of any violence in school by interpreting data;
- design an action plan based on evidence.

#### **What is a school audit?**

Recent research into the field of violence in schools highlights two key areas that future researchers/workers are advised to address. Both relate to the role of audits in school. They are: first, the need for research in the area of violence in schools specifically as to what works and what does not, and second, the importance of understanding and valuing the role of the school and its organisation in the prevention and minimisation of violence.

In relation to the first point, Schafer and Korn (2003) state: “There are numerous and creative suggestions, projects and programmes against violence in schools, but as long as nobody cares about their scientific evaluation, any success remains ‘miraculous’.”

This chapter sets out to describe the benefits of auditing. One of the benefits relates to this requirement for scientific evaluation. An audit makes efforts to measure or research the level or nature of difficulty in a school, produce an action plan based on this analysis and then monitor the implementation of that action plan. As such it attempts to bring a pre- and post-intervention focus to actions taken. Repeatable measures, through monitoring after action has been taken to address identified issues, begin to address the thorny problem of scientific evaluation of the actions schools take and the complex environment where causal correlation can be difficult to determine.

In addition, if audits across Europe have an appropriately similar format (with proper allowance for local factors) then sensible comparisons can be made between countries and synergistic solutions can be created. In this way audits begin to address another aspect of this issue – the need for what is described by Smith (2003) as “large scale and multi-level” research. Because an audit should look at the school as an organisation in the context of community and parental influence; as an organisation with an ethos, with policies and princi-

ples; at its groups of staff and pupils; and at its individuals; in this sense the perspective for measuring violence is multi-level.

In relation to the second introductory point, Cowie et al. (2003) referring to the conclusions of the Elton Report (DfES1989) conclude that “schools play an important part in reducing the risk of pupils becoming violent”. They go on to suggest that “violence is not a social inevitability in relation to socio-economic factors, and that the organisation of schools can in itself generate violence”.

Perhaps more importantly, in the context of this chapter, is the notion that the school, as an institution, can, through its organisation, prevent violence. The key point in this chapter is that a thoughtfully-constructed audit will enable a school to answer the question: How well organised is this school to prevent, minimise and respond to issues of violence?

### **Why is an audit necessary?**

It can be said that you are never as good or as bad as your reputation. In the context of this chapter, this cautionary comment might be rephrased to suggest that without good data it is all too easy for schools to underestimate the situation in relation to violence or, equally as unhelpful in terms of appropriate action, to overestimate the seriousness of the situation.

Audits are a process through which a school is able to understand better its relative position in relation to a particular area of school life. Based on a clearer understanding of the nature and/or extent of the problem (if one exists – and it may be that an audit indicates that a problem does not exist) a school is then in a better position to take both preventive and remedial action.

There are, however, two seemingly opposing views of the process of trying to take a complex area like human behaviour, and the specific aspect of it which is the subject of this handbook – violence in schools – and measure or quantify it.

View 1 states quite simply that if you can measure it you can manage it. View 2, sometimes called the McNamara principle, suggests that when an organisation such as a school decides to measure aspects of a complex area, there is a danger that it will measure only those aspects that are easily measurable and come to regard that which is difficult to manage as unimportant. As such, the data it obtains will be at best partial and at worst inaccurate and misleading.

If an audit is to give measures of the complex issue of violence in schools, our sympathy should lie very much with the first view while taking into account the limitations of time and research methodology in terms of what it is possible to measure. Consequently, a supportive and useful audit – one that has as its goal a clearer understanding of the nature of the problem, potential or actual, that is what happens, where and with whom and what are the consequences of these events – will be based on a position somewhere between the two views. It will be subject to neither the dangers of an over-simplistic view of the area, nor to the view that the area is simply too complicated to be audited and hence that actions must be tentative or even, at the most extreme, impossible.

## Audit characteristics

An effective audit will have a number of characteristics which will address the above-mentioned issues:

- it will take a broad and comprehensive view of the area of violence in schools;
- it will seek data from a number of sources and in a number of ways and attempt, wherever possible, to triangulate these data;
- it will retain a high level of practicability, that is it will not be so complex that the school finds it too onerous to complete;
- the results of the audit will be accessible and presented in a form that is easy to understand and recognise face validity;
- the results will support the development of quality action plans;
- the effectiveness of action plans can be easily determined by repeating aspects of the audit as ongoing monitoring.

### Activity 2.1: Making accurate judgements

If you have already completed Activities 1.2 and 1.3 in Chapter 1, you will find it useful to look at the results before moving on to this activity.

Working with a group of colleagues, you are invited to consider individually how you would rate your school on the following areas of violence on a scale where 1 = not a problem at all and 10 = a very serious problem.

Area of violence	Rating 1-10
Physical attacks on teachers by pupils	
Physical attacks on other pupils by pupils	
Bullying and intimidation between pupils	
Verbal aggression from teachers towards pupils	
Verbal aggression from pupils towards teachers	
Verbal aggression between pupils	

Compare the results from each person in the group.

- How similar were your judgements?
- Against what standards did you each decide on a rating?
- How did you make your judgement?
- How confident are you in your judgement?
- How confident would you be in sharing this judgement with others?
- Why is it possible to make such a clear judgement in this area?

## **Schools as organisations**

Schools are complex organisations because they serve a number of different functions. Primarily, of course, they have an academic educational function but alongside this schools are also expected to have a socialising function. They are required to balance co-operation with competition, support with challenge and individual achievement with group delivery. The school, in addition to fostering academic achievement, meets a variety of other pupil needs ranging from complex social and emotional needs to basic needs for warmth and shelter. In fact, schools are typically charged with meeting the whole of Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" (Maslow 1968) from the basics to the top of the hierarchy – the need to know, explore and understand and, at the summit, the need for self-actualisation. To complicate matters further, within these functions, people have widely differing interpretations of the terms used in Maslow's hierarchy. There will be differences between groups – between staff and pupils; support staff and teaching staff; senior managers and middle managers; and of course, within these groups, experiences and attitudes will vary widely.

Consequently, any audit of the effectiveness of the school's organisation to provide for the needs of the whole child and particularly, in this case, to prevent, minimise and deal with violence, is likely to be most useful if it is based upon a clear and coherent model of good organisation. This means a model that accepts the above complexity, but presents that complexity in an accessible way. Perhaps one of the most challenging tasks for those charged with developing and carrying out an audit will be to agree a model that provides for all the needs of pupils, the scaffolding, as it is sometimes called, on which the detail of the audit will be "hung".

### **A model of a secondary school organised to prevent and minimise violence**

The model on the following page presents just one view of the well-organised secondary school as it relates to the prevention and minimisation of violence. It is given only as an example of how an audit might be structured and the aspects of a school's operations that might be examined.

Secondary schools are often more complex organisations than primary schools. However, the same principles apply to constructing the model, thus primary schools should find this section useful to study.

The model has three main levels, represented by:

- row 1: the whole-school level;
- row 2: the group level;
- rows 3, 4, 5: the individual levels.

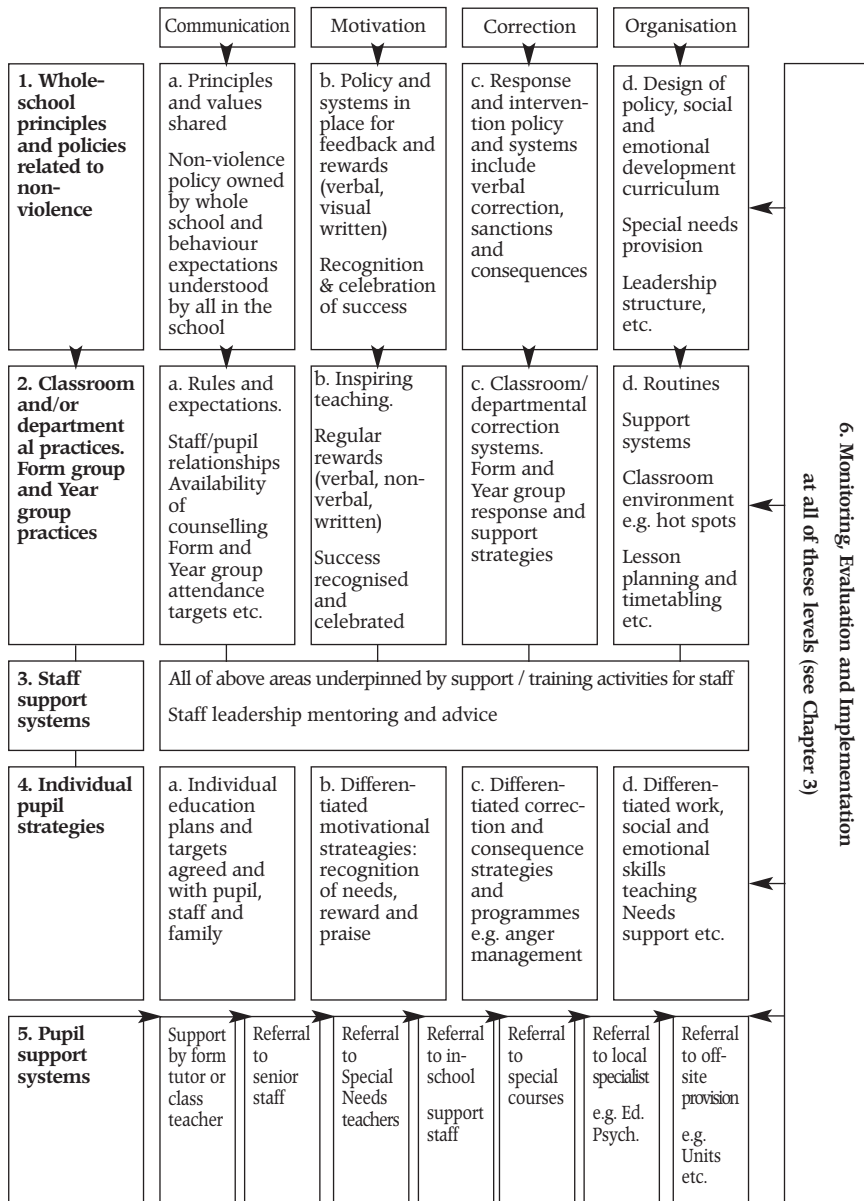
In addition to the three key levels, each of these levels has running through it four key constructs which underpin them. These are arranged in four columns:

- communication;
- motivation;
- correction;
- organisation.

This model suggests that all aspects are regularly monitored and reviewed and that the data generated are used to address problems by taking well-informed actions – as shown in the vertical box No. 6 on the right hand side.



### Diagram: Model of a well-organised school



While the model may seem organisationally complex, it leads to a number of perfectly straightforward questions about how the school is doing. These questions, in this model, form the basis of the audit. For example:

- Do staff and pupils know how they are supposed to behave?
- Is communication about these expectations clear and effective at all levels?

- Do staff and pupils feel motivated and supported to reduce violent behaviour and promote convivencia?
- Are their mistakes or misbehaviours corrected effectively and with dignity?
- Is the school and all aspects of it – classrooms for example – organised in such a way that convivencia is promoted and violence reduced?
- Does the school monitor what is happening and act upon this information?

### **Activity 2.2: Discussing the model of a well-organised school**

Answering the following question may help you explore the above model.

- How well does the model describe your school organisation?
- Are there aspects of your school organisation that are missing from this model?
- Are there aspects of this model that are missing from your school organisation?
- What does this tell you about areas of the school organisation that should be audited to find out how effective they are in reducing violence and promoting convivencia?

### **Audit values**

An alternative starting point, or a supplementary perspective, for those constructing an audit from scratch might be to discuss the kind of values that could underpin or be manifested in an audit. No audit, no matter how objective or truthful it aspires to be, can be value-free. While the design of any audit will attempt, through its construction, to build as objective a picture of the situation as possible, the structure of the audit will inevitably be based upon the areas that those designing the audit believe to be important. It is helpful if those constructing the audit can be clear, both to themselves and with those who will take part in the audit, about what the values are that underpin it. Chapters 1 and 3 have useful ideas about the values that underpin schools with an ethos of convivencia.

As preparation for constructing the audit, you might wish to carry out the following activity.

### **Activity 2.3: Identifying the values underpinning an audit**

Take a few moments to imagine a school where convivencia is established.

- If you closed your eyes, what would you visualise?
- What would members of the school community be doing and how would they be speaking or relating to each other?
- How would the school be organised in key areas like curriculum, support systems and environmental space – inside and outside?

From the detail of these descriptions, try to pull out key words or phrases which can be used in the audit and will help describe the values which underpin it.

The following is an example of how an audit might be structured. The key values underpinning this audit relate to the previously described model of the well-organised school. Consequently, the areas of focus described in the following section are the same. The values which underpin the construction of this audit are to create a climate of convivencia through:

- clarity;
- cohesion;
- good organisation;
- prevention and response;
- support for all;
- empowerment and achievement.

From these values the school could decide to audit the following areas:

- the ethos of the school as reflected in its mission statement and written policies. Does this documentation set an appropriate tone for a school seeking to prevent and minimise violent behaviour?;
- the impact of written policies on staff and pupil behaviour/relationships in classrooms, corridors, playgrounds and so on. Does this documentation inform, underpin what happens on a day to day basis in school?
- organisation of violence reduction. Are staff and pupils supported by clear, coherent systems to achieve the levels of behaviour that the documentation describes?;
- bullying. Where bullying or the threat of bullying occurs, does the school have systems in place to support both victim and bully towards more positive behaviour?;
- monitoring and feedback. Does the school consistently monitor a wide range of organisational factors such as: curriculum; parent/carer and community effects; timetable; supervision levels outside the school buildings; and take appropriate action to change those factors that are having a negative effect or build on those that are having a positive effect?;
- data. Does the school ensure that relevant data are collected, collated and acted upon in their efforts to become a well-organised school? The carrying out of audits such as this on a yearly basis would be one indicator of this. More regular monitoring of selected areas would be another indicator.

## **Types of audit data**

Additional to any consideration of what areas to audit will be a consideration of the kind of data to collect in each of these areas. Data can be divided broadly into two aspects – quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative data are those which can be relatively easily quantified or counted – exclusion rates, incidents of intimidation and violence, and attendance or attainment rates are examples in this area.

Qualitative data are those which are collected by asking people for their opinions or experience in an area. This can be quantified if questionnaires, interviews or observations have, for example, numerical rating scales as an aspect of their function.

The audit process has a place for both approaches to data collection. As Smith (2003) suggests, there is a need for research that combines the best features of quantitative pre- and post-evaluations supported by qualitative data which “may enable us to understand more of the ‘reality of violence’ as perceived by different actors in the situation.”

### **The people side of an auditing**

Before going any further, it is important to consider what might be called “the people side” of carrying out an audit. The impact of carrying out an audit on a school can be significant. It is important for the tone and structure of the audit to support the intention that the audit process will be a positive experience for all members of the school community. The intention of the audit is that, by using solid evidence to identify the strengths of the school and the areas where improvement can be made, all members of the school community will be motivated to carry out further improvements.

The importance of recognising strengths must be emphasised. Without this element in the audit, people will not have their successes recognised and celebrated. Motivation for further improvement is diminished because confidence is not encouraged. However, even with success fully recognised, the level and nature of scrutiny involved in carrying out an audit may be such that some members of the school community will find it stressful and threatening, particularly if they are concerned that they may be blamed if violence is exposed in areas of their responsibility. Consequently, it is important that those people carrying out the audit pay careful attention to developing the best possible positive emotional climate in the school before an audit begins.

It is important to communicate clearly to all staff, pupils, parents and any members of the local community who are involved that the audit has a positive purpose and will not result in blame or recrimination. Honesty and openness will be respected and in particular the audit will highlight achievements and identify successes in violence reduction. This message can be explained in assemblies and lessons for pupils, in staff meetings, departmental meetings, as well as informal discussions, for staff. The parents’ newsletter or similar may be used to keep parents informed and the wider community invited to participate in meetings.

The reaction of staff to the audit may be affected by the demands it makes on their time. Schools are busy places and staff may have other requests to fill in this questionnaire or complete that form. For most staff and pupils, the demand should be no more than the completion of the questionnaire. A number of lessons may be observed. For some staff this may prove to be the most stressful aspect of the audit and the staff chosen may need to be selected with care, and with an explanation that the data from observations will not identify individuals but will be aggregated to reflect a general situation. Staff in schools which have well-established procedures for classroom observations may find this part of the audit process less threatening.

Above all, everyone is likely to be much more willing to participate if they are involved from the start in agreeing the purpose and process of the audit and in understanding the benefits it will bring to everyone in the school as a stage in a violence reduction programme.

### Activity 2.4: Preparing people for the audit

Before a school starts to design an audit it is worth considering the following questions:

- What do you think will be the reaction of staff, pupils and parents to carrying out an audit?
- What are their probable concerns and how they will be addressed?

Considering the advice given in the chapter so far, how might the following groups be best encouraged to support an audit:

- the senior staff leaders?
- the staff (perhaps considered under different groupings – teaching staff, support staff, etc.)?
- pupils?
- parents?
- members of the wider community with an interest in the school?

### What to audit and who to involve

The goal of any audit is to give as accurate a picture as possible of the situation in a school at a given point in time. This approach is sometimes described as a “snapshot” of the situation. This means that all sources of data are collected and examined within a short space of time – usually a week – rather than spread out over the course of, say, a year. While it is perfectly possible (and under some circumstances reasonable) to collect data over a period of time, this method reduces the capacity of the audit to compare data from different sources. The suggestion in this audit model is that different data sources are compared within the same short time period.

Finding time to carry out an audit is always a problem for schools. Consequently, it may be necessary to select areas from the model of a well-organised school and limit the audit to these areas. If time is limited, it is far better to select the areas of school organisation to be audited than to limit the range of data and people involved.

Data should be derived from four main areas:

- an examination of written documentation relevant to the prevention and effective response to, in this case, violence in schools;
- observations in a variety of settings – classrooms, assemblies, corridors, lunch halls and social areas such as yard areas and schools grounds;
- questionnaires and interviews for representatives of all of the school community – teaching and support staff, pupils, parents/carers and governors;
- school-based data relating to areas such as verbal and physical violence, bullying and intimidation.

From the above list, it is clear that all groups in the school community are asked for their views. In some cases different groups – staff and pupils, for example, are asked the same questions so that comparisons can be made, any important differences detected and these differences explored in order to accurately target action plans. Alongside those questionnaires that all members

complete, other questionnaires and interviews are conducted with distinct groups who have a particular role to play, or other staff and pupils who have day to day experience of life in the school, including those pupils at the margins of inclusion and the staff who support them, both of whom may have a unique perspective to offer.

Those in the first group would be:

- members of the senior leadership team;
- the special needs staff;
- members of the pastoral support system such as heads of year, form tutors and so forth;
- class teachers.

Those in the second group might be support staff such as:

- teaching assistants;
- lunchtime organisers and supervisors;
- those pupils who may receive support from these adults. These pupils may be those at most risk of marginalisation (such as pupils with special needs, minority ethnic pupils, travellers, asylum seekers, etc.) and, because of this, more likely to be either the deliverers or receivers of various forms of violence;
- parents to whom pupils may report their concerns.

### **Activity 2.5: Deciding what and who to audit**

Drawing up and completing a table like the one below may offer a useful way of deciding what and who to audit. It will also help to determine the most appropriate way to audit each area and group. Even if not all areas of school organisation are selected, the completed grid will show whether all sections of the school population have been involved. It will start the process of deciding how they will be asked for their views and what they will be asked about.

<b>Focus area for audit (examples)</b>	<b>Audit method (examples)</b>	<b>Who or what to audit (examples)</b>
Relationships between pupils and pupils and pupils and adults in classrooms	Questionnaire	Random selection of staff and pupils
	Observations	
		10% of lessons in one week period
Curriculum impact on pupil self esteem	etc.	etc.
Parent-school relationships	etc.	etc.
etc.	etc.	etc.

## **How to audit – producing audit tools**

When it has been agreed what aspects of school life should be audited and which members of the school population are to be asked about what, the next stage is to design or choose audit tools such as questionnaires, observation and interview schedules and so on, which cover these aspects. It may be possible to use questionnaires, for example, that have been designed for other purposes, perhaps calling on the work of other professionals who have been engaged in measuring, say, attitudes to violence. However, it is suggested that time spent developing a questionnaire which has a good fit with the situation in a specific school, and which targets exactly what the school believes it needs to know, may be a better option. However, in order to increase the comparability of data from different schools and even different regions or countries, it will be helpful to have a degree of similarity in questionnaire content.

The guidance below will apply to both observation schedules and questionnaires but the following takes staff questionnaires as an example of the process of development.

### ***Stages in developing a questionnaire***

*Stage 1.* Consider the broad areas the questionnaire should cover: views of the quality of relationships between staff and pupils; pupils and pupils; staff and staff; their views on levels and types of violence; how supported they feel; when they feel most at risk and when they feel least at risk; their degree of clarity about where to go for support and so on.

*Stage 2.* Develop questions that give good quality information about the chosen areas. It is worth having a trial run of any questionnaire to ensure that the questions elicit the information a school really wants to obtain.

*Stage 3.* Unless questionnaires are to be analysed in terms of written responses, a rating system usually makes the process of analysis simpler. If this is the intention, then care must be taken to ensure that questions lead to a clarity of response. For example – “Do you think levels of bullying are greater or less than three years ago?”

A rating scale might have three responses to this question – greater, less, about the same. In terms of producing a profile of the school’s performance in all the audit areas, it is helpful if all quantitative data are rated using the same numerical scale. In order to produce a profile with a range of five scores, it is mathematically somewhat easier to make the questionnaire scale five points also. There is a view that a rating scale should not have an odd number of choices because if it does then people will tend to choose the middle number, an effect known as “centration”.

*Stage 4.* If questions are designed to elicit an open-ended response then space can be left after each rating to give people the opportunity to add any relevant comments to their score. Alternatively a limited number of open-ended questions such as – “What do you think would improve the situation in school?” “Where are the weak spots in our organisation?” – can be added at the end of the questionnaire. The responses to these questions can be very helpful when the process of action planning begins, but a school should beware of generat-

ing large amounts of this kind of qualitative data as analysing them can be extremely time-consuming.

*Stage 5.* It is worth asking, at the time of design, how the results will be analysed. There are four basic options:

- the questionnaires are designed to be completed “on line” using appropriate software which will automatically analyse the results;
- all data are completed in hard copy form and sent to a data capture company (a surprisingly inexpensive option in our experience in the UK);
- the questionnaires can be set up using an optical mark reading system, if the school has such a system or easy access to one;
- the data can be analysed in-house. In some cases (and where data are not of a sensitive nature – anonymous pupil returns, for example) pupils can be involved in the statistical analysis and production of graphs and so forth as a part of their curriculum work. An alternative approach to collating pupil data (usually the largest amount of generated data) is for the questionnaires to be completed as part of lesson time (say a citizenship lesson) and scored as each question is completed.

The above is just one example of the process of instrument design, the same care and consideration is needed in generating all the tools to be used. Those charged with this aspect of the audit will need to keep in mind:

- What do we really want to know?
- Will this question, in this form, tell us what we want to know? Is it clear?
- Might it lead to ambiguous results?
- How easy will the generated data be to analyse?

In audits carried out in schools, interview schedules may not need to be prescribed, rather the results of questionnaire or observational data can be used as a basis for discussion at any interviews. Any trends or ambiguity or general areas of interest/importance emerging from these sources can be examined in more detail through the interview process. Schools may, of course, develop a structured schedule should they think this would be more informative.

### **Activity 2.6: Designing questionnaires and observations**

Questionnaires and observations form important parts of any audit. It is worth considering the kind of questions you would want to ask people in the school and how these might be cross-referenced. The same questions asked of different groups or by different methods allow the audit data to be cross referenced in order to triangulate data and hence give the data greater reliability.

Based on the advice in the above section, a group could draft a questionnaire to audit an area of the school identified in Activity 2.4 and then test it out. This is likely to be of most lasting benefit, and produce results for comparison, if a number of schools combine to carry out this activity and develop an audit instrument together.



## **Examining written documentation**

As has been suggested earlier in this chapter, an examination of written documentation forms an important aspect of an audit. An added practical reason for including documents in an audit is that it helps to ensure that documents are kept in use and not forgotten. The audit should identify any documents that have little or no impact in the school because they are not turned into actions.

For example, in auditing an area such as “the ethos of the school for convivencia as reflected in its mission statement and written policies”, important questions could be:

- Is there sufficient documentation on important areas of violence reduction policy and practice?
- Does the documentation express the guiding values and principles of the school and support convivencia?
- Do the same principles and values link across all policy documentation in this area – is it consistent?
- Does it give appropriate guidance to all members of the school population and its wider community? – “appropriate”, in this context, means that the document sets standards without being overly prescriptive – too much detail can have the effect of increasing dependencies and stifling individuality.
- Was the documentation put together with involvement from representatives of all sections of the school population and its wider community? (staff, pupils, parents, governors, etc.)
- Is guidance appropriately detailed and unambiguous where it needs to be?
- Is guidance acted upon – does the documentation actually affect what happens on a day to day basis around the school?
- Is the documentation regularly reviewed and up-dated?
- Is the application and impact of any policy monitored?

## **Data analysis and monitoring**

In some ways, the whole of an audit is concerned with data analysis. However, an area worth examining specifically is how the school collects, collates and acts upon data related directly to violence reduction in the school. This is referred to as “monitoring”. There are a number of possible sources of data – exclusions (although these may be too few to give an accurate picture of the situation); behaviour incident data (see example below); detention data; pupil self-referrals; pupil-reported incidents; progress of pupils with additional needs and so on.

Analysis of monitoring data can give an accurate picture of what problems are occurring, where, when, with whom. Regular analysis of this monitoring data, perhaps as frequently as once a week, enables a school to detect any changes in pupil behaviour and take early, perhaps pre-emptive, action.

**Example: An incident report sheet**

<b>Name of pupil:</b>	<b>Year group and form:</b>	<b>Date:</b>
Referred by	Negative incident	Positive incident
Subject teacher	Assault on a member of staff	Helped staff resolve conflict
Form tutor	Assault on a pupil	Helped a pupil resolve conflict
Other staff (name)	Verbal bullying	Reported an incident
Location – class	Damage to property	Supported a pupil being bullied
Location – out of class	Temper/loss of control	Improved the environment
Time	Threatening behaviour	Showed compassion
Description of the incident		

The example above, as well as recording information about negative incidents, affords the school the opportunity to record data on positive incidents. This is a useful way of defining and reinforcing those behaviours that are desirable in the school. These data can be used in a similar fashion to negative data, indicating where and with whom positive behaviour is occurring, which members of staff are reinforcing appropriate behaviour, and what kind of follow-up action was taken.

**Producing an audit profile**

In the model of a well-organised school presented in the diagram on page 27, it has been suggested that violence in schools might be analysed under six main headings related to school organisation, for instance “Whole-school principles and policies related to non-violence”. On page 35 is an example, under this heading, of an audit of documentation to examine “the ethos of the school for convivencia as reflected in its mission statement and written policies”.

The nine questions offered as examples for auditing this area give an indication of the kind of subheadings that one heading might contain. Each of these subheadings provides judgements which could be rated on a 5-point scale. These data can be used to generate an audit profile as in the example below. This graphical representation allows for easy identification of strengths and areas in need of attention.

The scale of the graph should reflect confidence in the data. If the data are very extensive and triangulated then a finer analysis may be warranted without loss of validity. A difference in scores of 0.5 or even 0.1 may be significant. If such a distinction is valid then the scale could be multiplied by a factor of (say) 10 to help display an analysis of the results. The process of agreeing the scale is an important aspect of the audit because it raises awareness of the reliability that can be placed on audit outcomes – an important factor when it comes to considering the audit evidence for action planning.



### **Activity 2.7: Producing action plans**

In order to prepare for action planning, consider the two case study schools below and decide upon two sample actions in each case to follow the audit. Complete the example action plan form above for each of your four actions.

Remember that outcomes in action plans will be successful if they are:

- specific;
- measurable;
- achievable;
- realistic;
- time limited.

#### **School A**

The school scores highly in the area of documentation which aims to achieve a whole-school approach to preventing violence and establishing an atmosphere of convivencia. The documentation was produced by appropriate involvement of key groups: staff, pupils, parents, governors. However, the documentation is now three years old and has not been reviewed since its introduction. Evidence from staff, pupil and parent interviews and direct observations in classrooms suggests that the policy on violence reduction is not influencing the day to day behaviour and practice of staff and pupils.

#### **School B**

The school scores low in the area of documentation. There is very little written policy documentation to inform staff and pupil behaviour in this area and to explain the school's aims and values related to violence reduction. Despite this, questionnaire returns and observations suggest that, for the most part, behaviour in school is satisfactory and incidents of violence are rare. Some staff complain about a lack of guidance but most seem happy with the current situation.

# Chapter 3

## Agreeing and applying policy

### Creating a school climate of convivencia through whole-school policies

*Julie Shaughnessy*

This chapter will help schools to:

- develop or review a policy on violence reduction;
- apply that policy in the context of a school improvement plan for convivencia;
- create a climate in the school where violence will not flourish.

#### **The context for whole-school policy development**

In this chapter, we will focus on the creation of a whole-school climate and consider strategies that support schools in addressing the problem of violence. The approaches described focus on the creation of a community identity where the school ethos and practice underpin learning and teaching. The consideration of the whole-school climate for convivencia will be contextualised within local and national policy making as the school culture inevitably reflects the wider social context.

The consideration of whole-school policy making is littered with complexity. Schon (1982) describes the idea of reflection on whole-school issues as a swamp where it is difficult to find the hard ground on which to proceed. This image reflects the climate of rapid reform in schools, where the performance agenda can overtake the importance of process models of change. In reality, the quick fix to complex problems related to violence in schools has not always promoted lasting effects (Shaughnessy and Jennifer 2003). Although rational models of school change have been characteristic across Europe they have failed to represent the complexity and impact of violence within the organisation (Fullan 1999). Perhaps most importantly, schools need to develop the means to support change and remain flexible to adapting and developing practices that support pupil and staff well-being.

#### **Schools as learning organisations: developing whole-school approaches**

Whole-school issues include topics like behaviour (or violence) for which no single member of the school community is solely responsible. These are some of the most important issues facing schools. When they are tackled in an integrated and inclusive manner, they can bring valuable benefits. (DfES 2004)

Research on school effectiveness in the United Kingdom indicates that there are variables within the organisational structure of the school that are central to behaviour and the reduction of violence. Chapter 2 on auditing is based on this premise. This research has concentrated on a range of factors that are important for developing whole-school approaches and policies:

- the first factor supports the importance of leadership style in encouraging a team approach, ensuring that all staff are involved and take ownership over policy making;
- the second factor is related to the expectations that the school has of learning and behaviour and how these are communicated and made explicit.

As Maden and Hilman (1996) note, good schools set clear targets and invest in relationships with parents and the community. Rutter et al. (1979) focused on the importance of pupils' quality of experience. Features of school life which appeared to be important were:

- academic influences;
- classroom strategies of teachers;
- rewards and punishments;
- conditions of school life;
- opportunities for participation and responsibility;
- a consistent approach within the school.

For example, schools which had common policies on behaviour and standards of work had better outcomes which support convivencia (see Chapter 1) than those which were happy with a variety of approaches. The importance of pupil-centred outcomes and a process within the organisation to sustain and embed school improvement is stressed in the literature that spans the last five years.

The four key features that are important to school change and the concept of improvement are highlighted by Potter et al. (2002) from a wide range of studies:

- school ethos and vision – since, without a concept of where we are trying to get to, the verb “to improve” has no meaning;
- auditing – we must know where we are in relation to the vision;
- planning – how will we move from where we are towards where we want to be?;
- using performance indicators – to track progress over time in respect of the aspects we monitor.

Whilst the research findings consider the complexity of change within school, the common feature of success was the importance of a whole-school approach and a school ethos (for convivencia) that places a high value on social and emotional development as central to learning.

## Writing or reviewing a school policy on violence reduction

### ***What needs to be covered in a whole-school policy?***

Violence permeates many areas of school life, therefore the promotion of strategies and approaches to deal with violence must be integrated within a range of policies that promote social inclusion, peaceful resolution, respect, equal opportunity, emotional well-being and positive behaviour. In considering policy development, it is vital that the approach and strategies are processed. Auditing and review of practice are important in order to account for any future developments.

### ***Awareness-raising and consultation***

Organisational awareness begins with the review and sharing of the school's ethos (for convivencia) and approach to the promotion of non-violence. In the first instance, there must be a shared understanding of the school's purposes and aims as a learning community. This encompasses the wider educational vision that involves the school's identity and fostering of particular aspirations for its learning community. Central to this notion is the holistic view of the learner and the value and importance of promoting positive relationships that enhance self esteem, motivation and confidence.

The auditing of violence will be effective only if everyone in school has discussed and understood the problem, and considered the types of violence they have encountered. This kind of awareness-raising helps people understand the issues and agree a definition of violence (see Chapter 1). Consultation lets everyone say what they think and offers the opportunity for discussion with pupils, parents and the community about their concerns and perspectives. This informs work in progress and identifies the priorities for the school.

These issues are fully covered in Chapter 2. Discussion and awareness-raising are the starting point for turning an audit into a policy. The following activity can be used as a framework or checklist for a group which is writing or reviewing a school policy on violence reduction.

### **Activity 3.1: Writing or reviewing a school policy**

One way of constructing a policy is to write a paragraph which will answer each of a series of questions. How does your policy answer the following?:

- What is your definition of violence – what behaviours does this policy cover?
- What are the principles underlying the policy and how do they apply to the whole-school community?
- How do these principles relate to the school's overall aims and curriculum?
- How does the policy promote effective learning and teaching about violence avoidance and conflict resolution?
- What are the roles and responsibilities of governors, staff, pupils and parents/carers in promoting an ethos of violence reduction?
- How does the school set high standards of non-violent behaviour for pupils?
- How are rewards used to encourage violence reduction?
- How are sanctions used to discourage violence?

- What support is available for pupils whose violent behaviour reflects significant learning or personal problems?
- What support and training is available to help staff manage incidents of pupil violence?
- What support is available for parents/carers who wish to learn more about how to manage violent behaviour?
- How are staff, parents/carers and pupils involved and consulted when the policy is formulated or revised?
- What resources does the school invest in creating an atmosphere in the school so that violence will not occur?
- How is the policy monitored and reviewed? How will the school know that it is effective?

### **Implementation**

Senior leaders should take a strong lead so staff are clear about the framework of what is expected and are consistent in applying the policy through their practice and by setting a personal example to others. A launch to consider the theme of violence involving the whole school maybe useful in raising awareness across the community and making issues explicit such as the realisation that violence affects everyone and is everyone's responsibility. From this starting point, discussion of problems and solutions is open and clear with respect to the school community understanding the key issues.

### **Monitoring**

Monitoring differs from auditing in that it is a more frequent review of the specific elements in the policy. Monitoring practice across the school, and within the community, is important to reflect the whole-school view and judge whether the policies are effective. Regular monitoring allows schools to identify trends over time, for example any increase or decrease in bullying. It is important that there is clarity about what kind of monitoring will be used and how the views of pupils, parents/carers and the community will be reflected within this.

It is also important to ensure that monitoring picks up improvements, as well as lack of progress, so that schools can celebrate success and build on their strengths.

#### **Activity 3.2: Monitoring should be easy and simple to carry out**

When setting up a monitoring system, you can ask the following questions:

- What systems are in place to record violent incidents?
- What further relevant data can be simply and easily collected?
- Is there positive and negative information about progress?
- Will the data describe trends?
- Do the data separate opinion from fact?
- Do the data help the school to identify the causes of any changes?
- How is this information, analysed, shared and used to inform practice?
- Will the information help the school celebrate success?



## **Ongoing improvement**

The value of monitoring is not only to offer evidence for success but also to promote ongoing improvement. School inspectors recognise this, as demonstrated by the words of this English school inspector:

The same applies to policies on non-violence in schools. Monitoring and feedback leading to change and improvement in the policy are essential if it is to be kept alive and turned into actions that will be effective.

Data from monitoring and feedback from staff, families, children and governors help the school to review and update policies throughout the school year. Awareness-raising increases pupils' understanding of violence and makes them more likely to respond appropriately to, and report, incidents of violence within school.

The important point is that, no matter how well-written a policy is, or how well its effects are monitored, it will not be successful unless all involved are committed to its implementation. It is therefore essential to pay continual attention to gaining the commitment of pupils, parents, staff and the community to creating a climate of convivencia.

## **Involving everyone in creating and maintaining a climate of convivencia**

Robson and Smedley (1996) present a model for involving parents and the community in schools based on four levels. The first three levels of involvement are often initiated by schools themselves to encourage parents to be proactive. The fourth, the partnership level, places greater emphasis on parents and the community working as partners. These four levels are listed below with some activities that illustrate how they can be achieved.

### **Level 1: information**

Disseminated through:

- open evenings;
- newsletters;
- written reports;
- personal contacts;
- invitations to assemblies;
- parent-teacher association meetings;
- displays;
- information in letters, handbooks and so forth.

### **Level 2: involvement**

Achievable through:

- access to staff before and after school;
- organising book weeks;
- organising newsletters;
- parent helpers;

- social events;
- parent-teacher association membership.

### **Level 3: collaboration**

Achievable through:

- working together to tackle specific issues;
- parent-teacher workshops;
- joint activities;
- parents' room;
- helping with after-school clubs;
- community activities;
- running lunchtime clubs.

### **Level 4: partnership**

Achievable through:

- joint construction of policies;
- joint management;
- joint decision making.

To be most effective in formulating school policies, schools should be working at level 4 (partnership) with the whole-school community. Establishing partnership decision making takes time, commitment and care on the part of the school and is a challenging task for senior leaders.

It is not essential that the school be at level 4 before a policy can be formulated and implemented. However, the process will be more effective if a maximum number of features of levels 1-3 are in place. This means developing strategies that encourage team approaches.

### **Activity 3.3: How effective are we at promoting convivencia?**

You could use questions such as the following as a basis for discussion with staff, parents, pupils or the wider community on how effective the school is in promoting convivencia.

- What are the main strengths of the school?
- How do pupils gain a sense of belonging?
- How are pupils involved in school life?
- How are pupils actively involved in their own learning?
- How can the school support learning and development for pupils and adults?
- How can parents support the school?
- How are parents involved in decision making?
- In what ways does the community work together to secure a safe and secure learning environment?
- What levels of involvement do parents and the community have in school life?

### Activity 3.4: Rating your current situation

If a school seeks to foster involvement of everyone in its community in addressing issues of violence it needs to ensure that the requirements laid out in the following table are met. You may find it useful to summarise the current situation by discussing where your school lies on a scale of 1 to 10.

Situation in our school	Scale of 1 (low) to 10 (high)
The vision for the school is articulated clearly to all parties	1 – 10
Policies are reviewed to support the achievement of the wider aims of the school	1 – 10
There is shared awareness of the importance of auditing and reviewing current practice	1 – 10
There is an understanding of the importance of a safe and secure environment within which pupils, staff and parents can communicate what they think and feel	1 – 10
People in the school make space to listen to pupils, staff, parents and community views	1 – 10
The school takes positive steps to involve parents and the community	1 – 10

### Example: Creating convivencia – level 1: information

#### *An assembly calendar*

One of the ways of informing the whole-school community about policies and increasing their understanding is to organise events or assemblies that develop the climate of convivencia. As an example, the calendar below provides a range of ideas for celebrating days that are linked to global citizenship. Religious festivals are intentionally not included.

Month/year	Topic	Suggestions
January	Holocaust memorial day	Use a pupil's book or <i>The diary of Anne Frank</i> as an introduction to the issues Discussion of the reasons and consequences
February	Social justice day	Focus on people who have worked for equity in their lifetimes (Mother Theresa, the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela)
March	World book day	Share stories from different traditions

*cont.*

<b>Month/year</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Suggestions</b>
April	Disability-awareness day	Celebrate the achievements of a famous person with a disability  Raise issues of disability with the pupils
May	Self-esteem day	Celebrate the achievements and talents of parents, pupils and staff in the school
June	World environment day	Investigate a local or global environmental issue
July	Creativity day	Celebrate the visual and performance arts, drawing on a range of traditions
September	Sustainable development day	Study sustainable lifestyles – reducing waste and taking care of the world
October	Black history month	Celebration of Black history
November	International children's day	Study/discuss the rights of children
December	Human rights day	Discuss the legislation and its meaning for pupils and staff

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Within this cycle it is possible to set aside a week that focuses on the promotion of violence reduction in school. This could be linked to citizenship themes or the curriculum for promoting social, emotional and behavioural skills (see Chapter 4) through the consideration of values and attitudes:

- empathy – feelings, needs and lives of others, a common sense of humanity, compassion;
- a sense of identity – feeling one's own value and individuality (everyone is special);
- value and respect for diversity – appreciation that we can learn from each other;
- social justice and equity – interest and concern about global issues and fairness;
- concern for the environment – respect and concern for all life and for each other.

In order to develop level 4, or the partnership level, the school could consult parents on the nature of an open day promoting violence reduction and encourage pupils to show work and illustrate the theme through drama, music or dance. This could provide a link to children's literature and be the focus for involving other participants.

**Example: Creating convivencia – level 2: involvement**

*Displays*

In order to encourage involvement of the whole-school community in creating a climate of convivencia, a relevant theme could be introduced at a whole-school assembly and pupils could then share their perspectives within and outside the classroom and with pupils of different ages. Displays to promote the theme could be created around the school with the involvement of pupils, staff, parents and members of the wider community and opportunities created for people to come to see the display.

To work at level 4 (partnerships), pupils, parents or members of the community could be asked to plan and organise aspects of the display.

**Example: Creating convivencia – level 3: collaboration**

*A school pupil council*

The use of school councils has been identified as an effective way of supporting the social development of pupils (Shaughnessy and Jennifer 2003). A school council is elected by pupils with representatives from each class and is involved in making decisions that affect school life. This kind of participation supports children's active development and values their involvement in creating convivencia.

School councils promote democratic and inclusive processes and encourage pupils to reflect on real issues which influence their lives and the lives of others. The Schools Council UK (Davis 1998) stated that school councils can enable pupils to develop skills in:

... presenting reasoned arguments; listening and responding calmly to points of view that are critical of their own; contributing towards problem solving on issues of mutual concern; working effectively with others to create social harmony within the class; learning peer mediation skills; where necessary, having the courage and confidence to express a point of view that is not necessarily supported by others.

In this way the school council also becomes part of the school's evaluation process. Effective school councils move to level 4, as well as working at levels 1 to 3, by:

- raising issues that are of general concern;
- sharing views and reporting these back to pupils and teachers;
- suggesting possible action on a range of issues;
- organising activities/events;
- participating in the decision-making processes, for example on school policies or on how money will be spent.

**Example: Creating convivencia – level 4: partnership**

*Restorative justice*

Convivencia is about promoting harmony and also about repairing harm caused in relationships – between pupils, between pupils and adults in the school, between school and home adults. As an example, restorative

approaches are now extending beyond the justice system into some schools as a way of addressing breakdowns in relationships. These restorative approaches can take a wide variety of formal and informal forms. All involve the repairing of partnerships through joint decision making for the future of a relationship.

The following example describes how restorative justice techniques are used to rebuild partnerships.

A school establishes restorative justice conferencing in partnership with the local police service. The purpose is to avoid pupils becoming involved in the justice system. A pupil deliberately knocks a teacher out of the way in trying to enter a room, causing him or her to fall over and seriously hurt his or her arm. Police, school, parent and the teacher agree that a restorative justice conference is a better route than a direct punitive approach so that the pupil recognises the harm caused to the teacher, the teacher can explain his or her feelings and needs and an agreed reparation can be made

An alternative of filing a complaint would not achieve any of these outcomes. Indeed, it could have resulted in further argument and damage to parent, school, pupil relationships as each tries to protect their own interest.

The restorative justice conference is chaired by the police officer with the pupil, a parent, the teacher, the head teacher (acting as support for the teacher and representing the school). In turn each says what happened, what they felt about what had happened, what damage has been caused to whom, and what could happen now to resolve the problem.

At the end, the pupil is seen to apologise with genuine remorse and wants to make good the harm caused by giving some practical support to the teacher by helping after school with organising lesson materials. The teacher is content with this. The parent was fully engaged in reaching an agreed outcome and a partnership between the school and the family has actually been strengthened.

## **Enhancing convivencia through citizenship in the curriculum**

Chapter 4 deals in detail with the promotion of convivencia through the taught curriculum. However, the teaching of citizenship, which has become an important aspect of the curriculum in many countries, is of particular interest here because of its potential to engage the whole community in the efforts of the school to reduce violence.

In learning about active citizenship, pupils will:

- consider issues of social justice, human rights, diversity and equity;
- understand and develop empathy and respect in considering issues of diversity;
- challenge stereotypes and consider critical perspectives on important issues;
- recognise their responsibilities to others;
- consider the consequences of their actions and the importance of engaging in debate to determine the choices they make.

Young and Commins (2002) identify important areas for a school to consider within its policy on education for citizenship:

- empathy with others – sensitivity, compassion and listening skills;
- a sense of identity and self-esteem, and the ability to promote these feelings in others;
- an understanding of an active commitment to social justice and equity;
- an understanding of, and respect for, diversity;
- a belief that people can make a difference;
- an understanding of, and active commitment to, sustainable development;
- an understanding of peace and conflict, and the ability and willingness to behave co-operatively to resolve conflict;
- the ability to think critically, challenge injustice and argue effectively;
- an understanding of globalisation and interdependence, and an active commitment to learning more about such issues.

An effective citizenship curriculum will develop pupils' skills in:

- co-operation and conflict resolution – ability to share and work with others; to analyse conflicts effectively and objectively and find resolutions acceptable to all sides;
- critical thinking – ability to assess viewpoints and information in an open-minded and critical way and to change one's opinions, challenge one's own assumptions and make ethical judgements as a result;
- challenging injustice and inequalities – ability to recognise injustice and inequality and select appropriate action;
- respecting people and things – ability to recognise and respond to the needs of others; to make choices and recognise the consequences.

### **Activity 3.5: The value of teaching citizenship**

By looking again at the list of questions in Activity 3.1, you could consider which elements of the school policy on reducing violence could be implemented through the teaching of citizenship.

What adjustments could you make to the citizenship programme to further the promotion of convivencia?

# Chapter 4

## What should be taught?

### Using the school curriculum to support violence reduction

*Julie Casey*

This chapter will help schools to:

- consider what pupils should be taught about social, emotional and behavioural skills;
- examine what they are already doing to promote these skills;
- decide what more to do so that pupils learn self-control over violence.

The focus is on reducing aggression and violent incidents involving young people through proactive curriculum-based work to develop all pupils' social, emotional and behavioural skills (SEBS). To do this, the following questions should be answered:

- What knowledge skills and understandings underpin a non-violent approach to resolving conflict and difficulties?
- What are the most effective ways of fostering these skills, knowledge, and understandings in the educational setting?

This chapter is based on a case study of a curriculum resource designed to develop the SEBS of all primary aged pupils (ages 3-11), funded by the English Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Further information on this programme can be found at <<http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/primary>>.

From this case study, schools will be able to consider how the curriculum can be influential in improving the ethos of non-violence within a school setting. It should be noted that there are numerous similar developments in other countries in Europe and the experience in England is by no means unique. The National Curriculum in England states that schools must:

- provide opportunities for all pupils to learn and achieve;
- promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- prepare all pupils for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of life.

The strategy outlined in "Every child matters", the government policy published in September 2003, identifies key outcomes that are considered vital for pupils and young people's well-being, including being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, and making a positive contribution.

In 2003, the Department for Education and Skills invested £10 million (approximately €14.7 million) in a pilot programme that included the creation and



distribution of a curriculum resource for developing pupil's social, emotional and behavioural skills. The resource differs from many other such programmes in that it is the first to represent an entitlement curriculum for all primary pupils (3-11 years). Schools are also encouraged to include a further programme of support, put in place once pupils have been identified as having difficulties in an area such as "social skills" or "anger management".

The DfES has developed this resource against the backdrop of an accumulating body of evidence suggesting that a proactive focus on developing pupil's knowledge, skills and understanding in the broad area of SEBS not only helps pupils to develop personal and interpersonal skills that are important in their own right, but that such a focus has an impact on academic achievement, school attendance rates, improving behaviour and reducing incidents of violence and bullying, as well as making schools more inclusive. It is noteworthy that all of the above are identified as key government agendas in education.

In addition, the National Healthy Schools Programme, a joint initiative between the government departments of health and of education <<http://www.wiredforhealth.gov.uk>>, reports that focusing on SEBS in schools also improves teacher recruitment and retention – an area of concern in all phases of education, particularly in the schools perceived to be the most "challenging". There is little doubt that violence and aggression (peer-peer and pupil-teacher) is a primary source of stress and low-morale among teachers.

The resource does not focus solely on issues related to methods of resolving conflict and its aims are wider than reducing instances of violence and bullying. The rationale is that by developing the social, emotional and behavioural skills of pupils, these outcomes will be achieved, among others, and in the current climate, reducing violence and bullying must be seen as outcomes of crucial importance.

### **What knowledge, skills and understandings underlie a non-violent approach to resolving conflict and difficulties?**

The skills of managing conflict peaceably have generally been considered "something to do with SEBS", but within mainstream education, at least, there has been a lack of consensus on exactly what those skills might be. The position of SEBS in education is somewhat complicated, as indicated perhaps by the many different terms used to describe different (and often overlapping) aspects of the elements of education related to violence: emotional health and well-being; emotional literacy; emotional intelligence; emotional and social competence; interpersonal skills; life-skills; mental health; personal, social and health education and so forth. In equal measure, a focus on emotional literacy in schools has been welcomed and ridiculed – alternately hailed as the touchstone of a properly holistically focused education or derided as an unwelcome (even subversive) diversion from real educational aims, which should be confined only to academic achievement.

The renewed focus on education has led to its proponents seeking to overcome past criticisms, a process which has led to more clarity and precision about the knowledge, skills and understandings that we are trying to foster. Specifically, there has been, within the pilot programme, a will to ensure that the learning outcomes of work undertaken under the SEBS banner are as

rigorous as those of the National Curriculum for literacy or numeracy. This has had the welcome effects of offering some clarity of definition and parameters across the educational canvas, and of allowing practitioners to use a common vocabulary in relation to the previously rather slippery subject matter.

The pilot programme has a useful categorisation of the five key domains underlying SEBS, building on that originally proposed by Daniel Goleman (1996) to categorise key elements of “emotional intelligence”. These are:

- self-awareness;
- empathy;
- managing feelings;
- motivation;
- social skills (including communication).

Of these, self-awareness, managing feelings and motivation are primarily intrapersonal skills, while empathy and social skills are regarded primarily as interpersonal skills. Within each domain there are a number of individual skills, which generally speaking can be regarded as developmental with changes taking place over time. It is important of course to recognise that these are not “real” divisions – it is difficult to think of a human situation in which one domain would be used in isolation. In reality, the skills are interdependent, interacting in various ways to produce behaviours of varying degrees of sophistication.

#### **Activity 4.1: Skills, knowledge and understanding for conflict resolution**

First, reflect individually on a recent conflict situation in your own context. Then work in a group to discuss and agree a list of the skills, knowledge and understanding that an adult might use in resolving a conflict peaceably to achieve a win-win outcome. Try to match your list to the domains in the table in Activity 4.2.

Are the skills, knowledge and understanding involved in resolving conflicts peacefully drawn from all five SEBS domains?

Compare your responses with the model used within the DfES SEBS resource on page 54.

The list you have devised will represent some of the skills, knowledge areas and understanding which underpin a non-violent approach to conflict resolution. The crucial question to address is: How can we best foster them within the school setting?

#### **Activity 4.2: Pupils and conflict resolution**

You might now find it useful to consider and list on the table below the ways in which pupils in your school are currently supported in developing the understanding and knowledge, and practising the skills, for effective conflict resolution.

**Resolving a conflict peaceably**

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Knowledge, skills, understanding necessary for effective conflict resolution</b>	<b>Ways pupils are helped to develop</b>
Self-awareness		
Empathy		
Managing feelings		
Motivation		
Social skills		

Are the skills, knowledge and understanding involved in resolving conflicts peacefully drawn from all five SEBS domains and if not what could be improved to make this so?

**Skills involved in resolving conflict: the DfES model**

These are some of the skills taught in the UK SEBS Programme.

<b>Domain</b>	<b>Knowledge, skills, understanding necessary for effective conflict resolution</b>
Self-awareness	Recognising and identifying the feelings; Defining the problem (“I am feeling x because...”); Recognising and taking responsibility where appropriate (locus of control).
Empathy	Recognising and identifying of feelings other parties may be experiencing; Ability to understand why the other person may have acted as they did; Understanding the need for any agreed outcome to be of mutual benefit/fair to all parties.
Managing feelings	Being able to calm down when angry; Waiting your turn – not interrupting (deferring gratification).
Motivation	Wanting to solve the conflict (not have an excuse to make the other person feel bad, etc.); Identifying “what you want to happen” (goal-setting); Identifying a plan to achieve this with another person; Following the plan, overcoming obstacles, etc.
Social skills	Good listening skills; Assertiveness skills when needed; Knowing how to apologise and how to accept an apology.

### ***The importance of the environment***

There has been significant debate as to whether SEBS (including those that underlie conflict management) are “caught” or “taught”. It has long been agreed that the environment – encompassing physical aspects, the behaviours of significant others, the subtle messages we give about what is valued and respected – is of enormous consequence in determining the SEBS pupils develop. It is clearly the case that proactive taught programmes will not in isolation achieve very much. According to DfES (2002), such programmes:

will only work if they are congruent with what happens in the rest of the school and if the rest of the school experience is supportive ... so that what happens outside the classroom reinforces what happens in it. For example ... teachers themselves need to demonstrate the kind of respectful, tolerant, warm and supportive behaviour they want pupils to learn.

This research concludes that in addition to a generally supportive and positive environment, there is a growing evidence base that schools also need to implement an explicit, structured and progressive taught element if SEBS are to be fostered in the most effective way possible. (See also Chapter 6)

### **Features of a successful taught SEBS curriculum**

A taught SEBS curriculum makes social, emotional and behavioural skills the explicit and specific subject matter for sessions with an appropriate range of learning intentions shared with the pupils and worded so that they can know if they have been successful. Most effective programmes involve parents and feature some form of staff development.

The nature and depth of the knowledge and understanding that pupils have in the area of SEBS change over time and with experiences. In addition, effective behaviours (such as for managing conflict) vary according to age – what is accepted in a 7-year-old may not be appropriate in a 15-year-old. There is therefore an inbuilt need to revisit the subject matter regularly. It is for this reason that most taught SEBS or conflict management programmes use the model of the spiral curriculum in which the same area is regularly revisited, offering the opportunity to build on the skills that have been acquired previously using activities and resources for an age, or developmentally appropriate, level.

However good the programme or positive the environment, the learning that takes place in the SEBS session, for example about a new way of approaching a conflict, will remain at an abstract level unless it is regularly and consistently reinforced. The new knowledge will be quickly overridden, in the case of the conflict management protocol, by the “default” automatic responses that the individual has previously learnt for dealing with conflict. We are aiming for changed automatic responses which offer a range of options in real life situations and which will eventually override the previous learned responses which often have negative outcomes. Note that the aim is not seen as “eliminating” responses which may be extremely helpful and necessary in particular environments, but as increasing the range of options and strategies. DfES (2002) research shows that:

Without their concrete realisation in behaviour, competences remain potential rather than actual ... Programmes which attempt to build emotional and social competences must include extensive, routinised, regular and predictable work to develop specific skills across the curriculum, and reinforce these skills by pupils' real life experiences across the whole school.

The case study below illustrates how the pilot programme resource has been structured to try to provide "extensive, routinised, regular" opportunities to develop, build on and practise what is learnt in the SEBS sessions, and the use of the spiral curriculum with clear learning intentions.

### **Important aspects of the pilot programme resource**

As well as providing specific activities to develop pupil's SEBS in dedicated sessions, the resource suggests a range of opportunities across curriculum areas to reinforce the learning of the SEBS curriculum, and to promote the generalisation of the learning. For example, when the SEBS theme is "managing uncomfortable feelings", teachers are encouraged to focus on different aspects in different subject lessons. Possibilities for such a focus might be:

- How do pupils deal with their frustration when things go wrong in design and technology class?
- How do key characters in a story respond to obstacles and difficulties and manage their feelings of anger in English?
- How do pupils feel when they think they should have won or done better – how can they resolve disagreements and conflicts in sport?;
- How has conflict been dealt with over time in history class?

Sample lesson plans are provided to fit in with the theme.

Consistency and shared practice and language throughout the school is crucial to reinforce what is learnt in SEBS sessions. For example, the pilot programme resource provides an acrostic to help pupils remember the key elements of successful conflict resolution and it is suggested that all adults in the school (teachers, teaching assistants, lunch-time supervisors, caretaking staff, etc.) learn and use it.

A range of other resources are provided for use in the school as a whole. In addition to the "conflict resolution" acrostic and protocol, these include:

- a suggested protocol for solving problems;
- a suggested protocol for supporting pupils in identifying, labelling and understanding the feelings that they and others experience (including posters, games, photos, stories and so forth);
- a "problem-solving" strategy;
- ideas for "calming down".

The most successful interventions happen where teachers and parents/carers work as a team and give pupils consistent messages. The pilot programme resource offers materials and resources for pupils to take home to parents as well as a range of letters and information sheets that can help schools to keep parents informed and involved. Schools are encouraged to make arrangements to meet with parents regularly and to maximise their involvement.

Pupils need opportunities for the “safe” practice of new skills. We do not send learner drivers out to practise on the motorway. When learning to manage anger for example or sort out a problem with another, pupils will need encouragement, recognition, support, and maybe a prompt or reminder.

In the resource, adults are encouraged to be alert to the everyday opportunities for reinforcing and developing SEBS – for example using a peer disagreement in the dinner hall to “try-out” what they have learnt about conflict resolution. This builds competence and confidence in a safe environment with the teacher in the role of “coach”. In order to carry out this role, adults themselves will need opportunities to develop their expertise, knowledge and confidence.

The structure used in the pilot programme resource is a spiral curriculum model. The resource is divided into seven “themes”, each lasting two months and beginning and ending with a whole-school assembly. These are:

- new beginnings;
- getting on and falling out;
- going for goals;
- feels good;
- uncomfortable feelings;
- change;
- bullying.

All five key domains (self-awareness; empathy, managing feelings, motivation and social skills) are developed over the course of the year. Flexible lesson ideas and resources are included at each developmental level (as follow up work within the classroom) as well as the explicit links and ideas for the theme to be developed across the curriculum. The aim is that different year groups work on different aspects of the shared theme, and can return in a follow-up assembly to present their work and reflect together on their learning. A pupil entering the school at age 3 and leaving at age 11 would therefore have “revisited” each theme seven times.

### **A continuum of provision to meet all pupils’ needs**

The rationale behind a universal taught SEBS curriculum is that we all need support in developing and improving our skills in the area of emotional literacy, just as we do in more academic areas. This does not, however, preclude the possibility that there will be a number of pupils for whom this input will not be sufficient. Children who have not had appropriate experiences, or whose emotional development has been interrupted for whatever reason, are likely to need more focused and ongoing support in the area of SEBS.

This may take the form of a need for additional or differentiated learning opportunities to reflect, explore and develop understanding, and practise skills, for example in anger management, or developing assertiveness. Often this will take the form of work in small groups.

Where young people are using coping strategies that alienate them from their peers or adults, they have an even greater need for additional support, often on

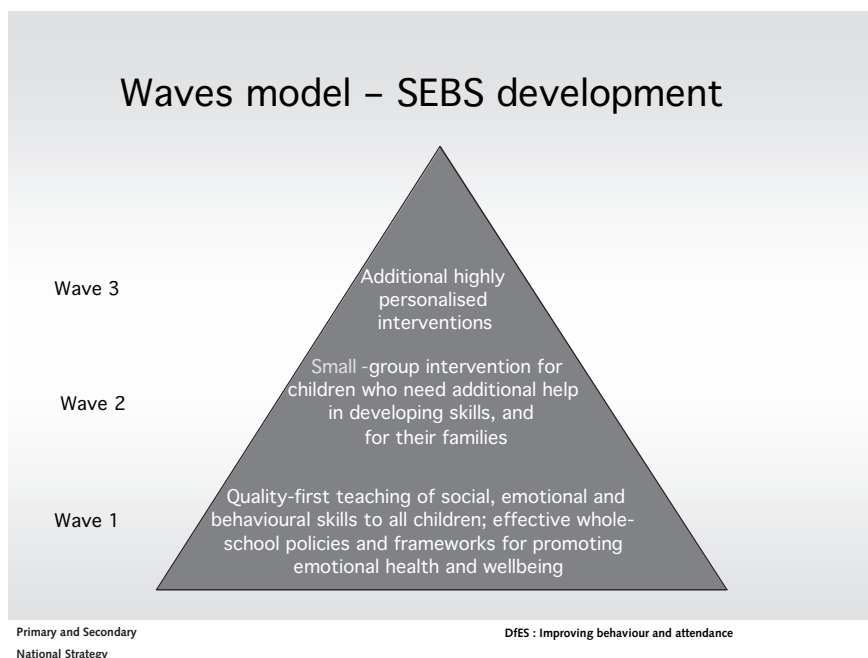
a one to one basis, and often involving a multi-professional approach. For the most vulnerable pupils, a stable relationship with an adult who matters to them is likely to be a prerequisite for progress. Ideally this will be a named individual, chosen by the young person if possible, who takes a real interest in that pupil and their progress. With a key person in place, and a specific support plan that matches their needs and learning style, it is likely that the pupil will make significant progress.

The answer to the question of how we can best foster SEBS in schools seems to lie in three factors:

- an environment in which the SEBS we wish to encourage can be “caught”;
- a taught SEBS curriculum with the features described above;
- a continuum of provision which begins with an entitlement for all pupils, and offers differentiated support to match need.

A model in common use by the pilot programme for mapping academic provision within a school or locality is that of the “wave triangle”. This is easily adapted for mapping provision for promoting and developing pupil’s SEBS in school.

### **The waves model of provision for promoting and developing a pupil’s SEBS**



Wave 1 support represents any intervention that all pupils benefit from. Examples might be whole-school staff in-service training on behaviour management or forming relationships; the development of staff support mechanisms, or whole-school policies. The overall SEBS curriculum would fit here, as a universal entitlement.

Wave 2 support represents any intervention that only some pupils benefit from. This might include small group support to help pupils develop their social skills or anger management skills, or peer mediation.

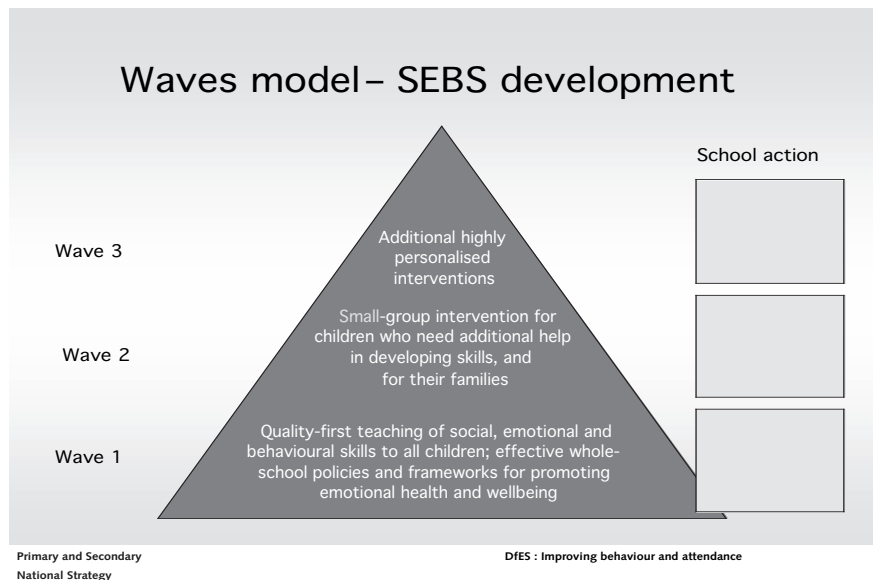
Wave 3 support represents one-to-one or intensive support for the most vulnerable individuals. Often these will be those with significant, ongoing and multi-faceted problems necessitating the involvement of multi-professional teams and so forth.

There is no doubt that there is much going on in schools already that fosters the development of pupil's SEBS. In England, the National Curriculum already contains elements of SEBS, for example in citizenship and religious education, as well as regular school assemblies. Many schools have a whole range of initiatives such as school councils and peer mediation which support pupils in developing SEBS and many use circle time and methods such as philosophy for children to develop pupil's ability to see others' points of view and explore their feelings and behaviour.

The pilot study has shown that, for many schools, the resource has offered a framework for bringing these elements together with a clear set of learning intentions, a shared language and a common understanding of the key concepts and values promoted by the school.

**Activity 4.3: A fuller consideration of your current practice**

Building on your earlier thoughts from Activity 4.2, you could use the waves model to record and write beside it what the school already does to promote development of pupils' SEBS at each wave.





You could then consider these additional issues:

- How far is the ethos and environment of the school congruent with the SEBS outcomes we are seeking for pupils?
- What key knowledge, skills and understanding will pupils develop through these activities?
- How effective are these interventions in achieving such development?
- How suitable are the teaching methods we use in developing pupil's SEBS?
- How will progress be measured?
- How will pupils be involved in the process of measuring progress?
- What do we do really well?
- Where are the gaps?
- What could we do differently?

## **Preparing for implementation**

The pilot programme experience has been that in order for a SEBS initiative to be successful, the ground must be prepared. There are two main tasks to be done: motivating the school community and gaining acceptance, and second, preparing and setting up support mechanisms for adults.

### ***Motivating the school community and gaining acceptance***

As with any initiative there will be factors which affect the enthusiasm with which the proposed change is greeted, and ultimately the motivation of stakeholders to support it. Experience has shown that, when the following conditions apply, the chances of success are increased:

- senior leaders have a comprehensive understanding and commitment to the principles and understand the support that will be needed to achieve successful implementation;
- the benefits and success criteria are clear to all stakeholders. This is not just about meeting the needs of the “violent or disruptive minority”. Convivencia benefits all. Stakeholder buy-in is essential and this will involve “selling” the benefits to school staff, parents, pupils and the community;
- beliefs about the importance of developing SEBS are shared by a critical mass of staff (this should not be assumed and preparatory work may be necessary);
- parents, governors and key community stakeholders are made aware of the initiative and its potential costs and benefits at an early stage;
- pupils understand what they will be doing and why, and have a voice in the planning and evaluation processes (for example involving them in the identification of criteria that demonstrate success).

The key to the success of an initiative is often (notwithstanding the above) whether “the time is right”. Whatever riches are promised, a programme is condemned to failure if it is simply the wrong time. The next activity offers readers the opportunity to consider this important issue using a simple rule of thumb suggested by Fullan (1991). This author suggests that when deciding whether to initiate any sort of change or intervention there are three factors to consider: relevance, readiness and resource.

#### Activity 4.4: Relevance, readiness and resource

You can consider the readiness of your school to implement a SEBS curriculum initiative with reference to relevance, readiness and resource. In pairs or small groups, you could discuss the questions below, reconvening as a whole group to decide on the next steps.

##### *Relevance*

How would implementing a SEBS curriculum initiative meet our needs? What would we want it to achieve?

##### *Readiness*

How ready are we to undertake this? What would need to happen to ensure success? Would things be different at another time?

##### *Resource*

What capacity have we got in terms of time, personnel and finance to launch, implement, monitor and evaluate such an initiative?

#### ***Preparing and supporting adults working in the school***

As the development of SEBS will be affected by every aspect of school life, it is important that all personnel (including lunchtime supervisors, caretakers, secretarial and administrative staff) have access to appropriate information and development opportunities. This means that there is likely to be a range of support and training needs for adults with different roles within the school. All staff will need:

- to be familiar with the philosophy and structure of the SEBS curriculum and their own role in delivering it;
- to be familiar with any whole-school elements of the programme – such as conflict-resolution protocols;
- to be aware of (and have input into) the key messages that each theme explores with the pupils and how each individual in the school can reinforce these, for example, by “catching” pupils in the act of kindness/ managing their anger etc. (NB: “catching” is one of the techniques used to reward pupils);
- opportunities to develop their own skills, knowledge and understanding of SEBS and conflict resolution at an affective as well as at a cognitive level.

In addition, systems need to be set up to ensure that opportunities for regular information-giving, feedback, discussion, decision making and evaluation are in place and are effective, and that practice within the school is consistent.

For a number of reasons, training and development opportunities that seek specifically to support teachers in developing pupil's SEBS may need to be different to those made available in supporting adults in delivering academically based subject-matter, for example in maths or literacy. The key differences, and the ways in which they were tackled in the pilot programme, are outlined in “Supporting teachers in delivering the SEBS curriculum: the Department for Education and Skills pilot”. (See also Chapter 6)

**Activity 4.5: What do we feel about our capacity to deliver the SEBS curriculum?**

To explore current levels of staff motivation, confidence and perceptions of expertise in delivering the SEBS curriculum, ask staff to complete the following questionnaire individually. To arrive at a common view, pairs or groups could then share their responses or the questionnaires could be completed anonymously and then handed in to be analysed.

Place your school at a point on the scales below, where 1 indicates poor performance and 10 indicates the best possible performance.

**Questionnaire**

- |  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| We put great emphasis on the quality of relationships in our school – between children, between adults and children, between adults and adults.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| We work well together as a staff; we have our bad days but morale is mostly good.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Staff work together on their planning, and to help each other find solutions to problems.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| We look after the well-being of staff, paying attention to working environments and providing support in combating and managing stress.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| We make sure that the school environment is welcoming and supports children's and adults' well-being – paying attention to such details as comfortable seating areas, space for all children to call their own and keep their belongings, water fountains, clean and pleasant toilets, varied playground spaces. | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Children are regularly asked to give their views on the school and the learning opportunities it offers: their ideas, even those that are challenging, are taken seriously.  | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Staff recognise the effect that their behaviour, body language and responses have on children. They model the behaviours they promote.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| Staff always try to maintain a relationship of respect even when responding to poor behaviour, for example, by labelling the behaviour not the child, and making time to follow up behaviour issues positively later on when the emotional temperature is lowered.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |
| We have many strategies in place to support children's well-being, for example, circle time across the school, peer mediation and buddying schemes, opportunities for all children to talk one-to-one with an adult when they need to.   | 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 |

## Delivering the programme

A taught SEBS curriculum will make SEBS the explicit subject matter of the teaching session. Learning intentions or objectives should be clear, both to the adult and to the pupils, and they should be discussed with the pupils, along with the success criteria.

A range of teaching strategies should be used, particularly those that are participative and experiential, to ensure that different learning styles and pupils with a range of personal, cultural and experiential histories are included and engaged. Story, role play and the expressive arts are all powerful ways to deliver SEBS work and, in many cases, less “threatening” for pupils who find it difficult to talk directly about personal experiences. However, pupils will also want to relate the subject matter of the classroom sessions to recent, concrete experience – an incident in the playground, for example, or a dispute in class – and this is clearly important in the generalising of the learning.

The structure of the SEBS sessions (the DfES resource) is as follows.

- Sessions are presented as a mixture of whole class, group, pair and individual activities.
- Often a warm- up activity is used at the beginning of the session, to create a climate where pupils feel free to share feelings and experiences. Circle games and activities are particularly helpful for this. There are many excellent circle time publications in the United Kingdom with ideas for this sort of activity.
- A stimulus is usually used to support the pupil’s thinking about the focus topic, sometimes verbally based such as a story, sometimes visually and sometimes kinaesthetically.
- There is usually a plenary at the end of the session, drawing out key learning points, checking understanding and asking the question – have the learning intentions been met?
- Many sessions end with a round asking pupils to make a personal statement about something positive they will/can do, as a result of achieving the learning intention.
- Children need to have established ground rules for this work, and it is suggested that these are revisited in most sessions.

Culture and gender based differences in pupil’s motivation and comfort levels with the activities presented in the resource may need to be considered by the teacher. These may vary as a result of cultural expectations and patterns of reinforcement. For example, certain cultures regard direct eye contact between a young person and a more senior member of society as extremely ill-mannered. When discussing appropriate models of conflict resolution, teachers will need to be sensitive to such issues. Pupils need to know that it is safe and appropriate (indeed valuable) to say, “in my home we do/did it this way...”, or “if I did that, my parents would think ...”. Within a safe environment that values and celebrates cultural diversity, it is important that teachers find ways of finding out where differences lie, and model interest and respect.

It is essential that what is learnt is not tied to specific situations but is generalised to different contexts. Little of value would be learnt if the focus on SEBS

within a school was limited to an occasional assembly and a couple of follow-up sessions. It has been clearly demonstrated that pupils need to practise newly acquired skills, firstly in a safe, managed environment with the teacher or adult in the role of coach and then increasingly independently.

### **Supporting generalisation – the DfES resource**

Some ideas for creating opportunities to provide support, reinforce learning, and give pupils time to explore and reflect upon their understanding and generalise it to real-life situations and contexts:

- ensure that all school staff make frequent reference to, for example, any calming down or problem-solving protocols, encouraging the use of these strategies and praising accordingly;
- as adults, model the SEB skills and the calming down/problem-solving strategies and so forth. Stating the process out loud can be particularly effective for modelling;
- be on the lookout for examples of pupils using SEBS and draw attention to them whenever they are found (as appropriate to the age of the pupils);
- use the key protocols and strategies that have been taught, to support pupils in dealing with “real” incidents in the classroom or playground throughout the day;
- post questions arising from an assembly around the school with opportunities for pupils/parents/staff to add their thoughts;
- set up a whole-school celebration focus for a period of time so that all school members, both adults and pupils, are on the lookout for the same behaviours (such as using calming down techniques well; solving a problem without shouting);
- display the focus of any whole-school reward system in the school’s reception area, dinner hall, and so forth;
- encourage all adults to make reference to SEBS throughout the day and encourage pupils to reflect upon how well they have worked and played together.

### **Key points**

There can be little doubt that, when used within a supportive environment and as part of a continuum of provision, curriculum-based taught SEBS programmes that feature the characteristics explored in this chapter, whether widely or more narrowly focused (for example on developing SEBS generally or on “single” issues such as conflict resolution), do make a difference to the use of violence and aggression among young people. By equipping pupils and young people with the tools for managing conflict, and by methodically developing the social, emotional and behavioural skills, knowledge and understanding that underlie them we offer them an alternative to violent and aggressive ways of meeting their needs.

This chapter has shared the learning of the DfES experience by focusing on what research and experience tell us are the factors that impact on the effectiveness of a programme. The factors explored include:

- the importance of “mapping” what the school is already doing to promote SEBS;
- the need to consider relevance, readiness and resource;
- the need to provide appropriate staff training and support opportunities;
- the involvement of parents;
- shared language and practice among adults;
- opportunities for the reinforcement of learning in all areas of the curriculum;
- the use of a spiral curriculum to enable regular revisiting and progression;
- the need to be clear about learning intentions;
- delivery – the structure and teaching and learning styles to be used;
- the consideration of culture and gender based issues and the ways in which the learning is generalised.

The DfES pilot resource has been used throughout the chapter as an illustrative case study, but it is by no means the only programme available – other sources of information and programmes are given in the reference section of this handbook. The chapter has aimed to alert readers to some of the issues involved in using a taught SEBS curriculum with the aim of reducing violence and aggression in schools. Of course the issues may not transfer to the context of other countries, settings, or cultures, or indeed across age-ranges, but it is hoped that it will at least offer some pointers and a starting point that enables colleagues to “make the learning travel”.

# Chapter 5

## Involving pupils

### Developing pupil-led strategies to reduce violence

*Helen Cowie*

This chapter will help schools to:

- learn about the range of pupil-led strategies in European schools;
- explore, through case studies, how schools involve pupils in violence reduction;
- consider the application to their own school situations;
- identify how pupil-led strategies can contribute to a reduction in bullying.

#### **Peer support systems**

In this chapter, we focus on peer support systems – strategies that are led by young people themselves to address the problem of violence in schools. The methods described here are designed to help create school communities where relationships are valued and where mutual respect and co-operation underpin the ways in which people in those schools behave towards one another.

Essentially, these approaches come within the broad category of peer support. Peer support systems give young people a framework within which they can develop the capacity to challenge aggression when they encounter it and through which they can develop experience in promoting the values of non-violence in the wider context of the school. It is important to distinguish among the different types of peer support that are available and to select the ones that are most suitable for the needs of the school. The main types of peer support that have been most successfully implemented in European schools are as follows.

#### ***Co-operative group work***

This is one of the most fundamental methods in peer support (Cowie et al. 1994b). For it to succeed, it is important that staff promote co-operative values in the classroom in order to encourage pro-social behaviour and increase co-operative relationships based on trust; staff should also know their pupils as individuals. Co-operative group work is one method that can promote pro-social values as part of the learning process. It takes a number of forms: working individually but in a group (for example where pupils share or evaluate their individual projects in a group); working individually on “jigsaw” elements for a joint outcome (for example where pupils research different aspects of a topic and then fit them together like pieces of a jigsaw for a group presentation or a group resource pack); working jointly for a shared outcome (for example where pupils collaboratively plan and design a role play around the theme of school violence).

### ***Befriending/buddying***

Befriending/buddying systems involve the assignment of a pupil or pupils to “buddy” or “befriend” a peer. The setting where this active listening takes place is often informal, such as in the playground during break time. Usually befrienders are volunteers, either same-age peers or older pupils, who are selected by staff on the basis of their personal qualities. In some systems, existing befrienders are also involved in the selection and interviewing of volunteers. Usually there is some training in interpersonal skills such as active listening, assertiveness and leadership.

### ***Peer mediation/conflict resolution/restorative approaches***

Here pupils are trained to defuse interpersonal disagreements through problem-solving between peers who are in dispute. This method results in substantial decreases in the incidence of aggressive behaviour (Cunningham et al. 1998). The method is “no blame” and the aim is that each disputant comes away from the mediation with a positive win-win experience and the sense that the outcome is fair on both sides. Mediation builds on listening skills by adding a step-by-step process that facilitates individuals in dispute to agree to a mutually acceptable solution.

Restorative approaches such as restorative justice (see Chapter 3) involve all parties in reaching an agreed outcome to conflict, to acknowledge any harm caused and identify routes to repairing damaged relationships.

### ***Advanced peer listening***

Through this method (sometimes called peer counselling) pupils are trained in basic counselling skills to deliver a more formal, structured listening service. Active listening methods extend the befriending and mediation approaches into interventions that are based more overtly on a counselling model (for a detailed guide, see Cowie and Wallace 2000). Pupil helpers are trained (usually by a qualified counsellor or psychologist) to use active listening skills to support peers in distress. The aims are: to give helpers skills to deal with peers’ interpersonal issues; to help the victims of violence and social exclusion; and to challenge pupils who act aggressively towards their peers. Regular supervision, whether by a qualified counsellor or by staff who manage the peer support scheme, is an essential feature.

## **Age groups that can most effectively be trained in different types of peer support**

In the table below, we indicate the ages at which different forms of peer support may be most appropriately introduced.

	<b>7-9 years</b>	<b>9-11 years</b>	<b>11-18+ years</b>
Co-operative group work	Yes	Yes	Yes
Befriending/buddying	Yes	Yes	Yes
Mediation/conflict resolution	No	Yes	Yes
Advanced peer listening	No	No	Yes



## **Advantages of using peer support**

There are a number of advantages that arise from mobilising the pupils to help their peers in this way:

- peers are able to detect violence at a much earlier stage than adults;
- young people are more likely to confide in their peers than in an adult;
- victims of violence have someone to turn to and see the school as taking action against the problem;
- staff often lack the time and resources to deal with all of the interpersonal problems that are brought to them in the course of a day;
- peer supporters gain valuable interpersonal skills and have a framework within which to learn about citizenship in action;
- over time, the school is perceived by parents and the local community as being an organisation that cares about the well-being of its pupils;
- peer support systems offer a useful link to other services and helping agencies.

In fact, peer supporters often include a substantial number of young people who have been the victims of violence. Not only do they have empathy for the experience but also, through the practice of peer support, they find themselves in a supportive and helpful peer group of similar young people.

## **Background knowledge and research from across Europe**

Legislation in England states that pupils should be educated for active citizenship and that schools should provide a balance between rights and expectations on the one hand and responsibilities on the other. Other European countries, including Spain (Fernandez et al. 2002; Ortega 1998) and Italy (Menesini et al. 2003) are taking action in terms of facilitating greater participation on the part of pupils and young people in the decisions that affect their lives and in resolving the problems of violence that many of them experience or observe daily in their lives. Increasingly, in line with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations 1991), Europe is acknowledging an obligation to establish a basic set of pupils' rights that it would be unacceptable or even illegal to contravene. To this end, 2003 saw the establishment of the UK Observatory for the Promotion of Non-violence, <<http://www.ukobservatory.com>>, an organisation committed to the development of policies and practices to counteract the problem of violence in schools and to promote ways of working that take account of the needs and voice of the pupil.

Research studies across Europe provide evidence that peer support is an effective type of intervention against violence in schools (Cowie et al. 2002; Naylor and Cowie 1999). While peer support systems do not always reduce the incidence of violence, they can be an effective preventative measure. In Spain, it has been noted that peer support systems contribute substantially to the development of *convivencia* – the ability to live and work harmoniously and co-operatively together (Ortega 1998). Above all, peer support systems reduce the negative impact of aggression and make it more acceptable for victims and witnesses to report violence when it occurs.

Research by Salmivalli et al. in Finland (1996) has given enormously useful insights into the role of bystanders or witnesses in taking action (or not) to counteract peer-on-peer violence. Salmivalli and colleagues found that it is possible to assign a participant role to 87% of pupils present at a bullying episode. In addition to bullies and victims, other participant roles include assistants, who physically help the bully; reinforcers, who incite and encourage the bully; outsiders, who remain neutral and inactive and pretend not to see what is happening; and defenders, who provide help for victims and confront the bully. However, in situations where systems of peer support are in place, it is more likely that attitudes in the peer group in general can shift to a more supportive stance. Defenders of victims and outsiders will often form networks with one another and reach out to victims who otherwise would be marginalised or rejected by the peer group.

Although peer support systems can be enormously beneficial to individual pupils and to the school as a whole, they need substantial initial planning and preparation as well as ongoing evaluation and monitoring if they are to be successful.

## **Developing pupil-led strategies**

Experience indicates that the pupils themselves are the most effective change agents, and often the single most underdeveloped resource in schools seeking to improve convivencia. Careful planning is essential if initiatives are to be sustained and extreme care must be taken that any peer-led strategies do not place demands or expectations on pupils that they cannot fulfil.

### **Activity 5.1: Asking pupils to review their current involvement in peer support**

Planning and development should start by consulting the pupils themselves. This activity helps to review what is already in place in the school. This could become part of a regular audit (see Chapter 2).

You could convene a meeting with a representative group – the school council perhaps. Questions for discussion could be:

- How aware are young people about existing pupil-led activities in the school?
- Which of the activities seem to be working well and helping the pupils?
- How could they be improved and how can this be sustained?
- In what other ways might pupils help each other?
- Are there local or national programmes of peer support that pupils have heard about or had experience of that could be introduced?
- What would be needed if pupils are to improve their skills in helping each other?

Peer supporters need to carry out their work in an environment that actively promotes listening, caring and mutual respect. The values of peer support must be understood and implemented at all levels of the school community; the head teacher and staff must actively support the scheme. Ideally two members of staff should be dedicated to the peer support system, be involved in the

initial training and provide regular supervision of the peer supporters. If at least two are committed to the scheme in this way, then, if one should leave or become ill, the peer support system will continue as before. They will need necessary resources, such as rooms for training and supervision, a safe place in which to store materials and records of the activity, suitable space (if appropriate) for the peer support work to be carried out. Thought should be given to the recruitment of the peer supporters (for example by considering the need for an even balance between boys and girls and an appropriate representation of all sectors of the school community) and the need for ongoing encouragement and support of their work through, for example, affirmation in local newspapers or media, prize-giving and presentations, special assemblies dedicated to appreciation of the peer support scheme.

Fuller details on how to establish and maintain peer support systems can be found in a number of publications. These include: Cowie and Wallace (2000); National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC 2004) Scherer-Thompson (2002); Stacey (2000). Useful websites include:

- Peer-Support Forum: <<http://www.ncb.org.uk>>;
- Peer Support Networker: <<http://www.peersupport.co.uk>>;
- UK Observatory for the Promotion of Non-Violence: <<http://www.ukobservatory.com>>.

### **Case studies of good practice from across Europe**

In this section we give examples of peer-support systems that have been successfully implemented in different European countries.

#### ***Case study 1: a befriending intervention in Italy (Menesini et al. 2003)***

This study illustrates the successful use of co-operative group work and befriending in order to enhance pupils' capacity to take responsibility for their own actions and those of others, in particular where those actions involved aggression. The researchers also took a systemic perspective by taking account of the range of participant roles (Salmivalli et al. 1996) adopted by the pupils at different stages in the project. The intervention took place in two Italian middle schools (age range of pupils 11-14 years) and the aims were to:

- reduce bullying episodes through developing an awareness in bullies of their own and others' behaviour;
- enhance pupils' capacity to offer support to the victims of bullying;
- enhance responsibility and involvement on the part of bystanders;
- improve the quality of interpersonal relationships in the classroom;
- analyse possible age and gender differences related to the effect of intervention.

The intervention was implemented during a school year from October until the following May. There were five phases:

- *class intervention*: activities gave the whole class heightened awareness of pro-social and helping behaviours. The goal of this phase was to develop attitudes and values towards peer support activities in the whole school;

- *selection of peer supporters:* peer supporters were selected through a mixture of self-nomination and peer nomination. Three or four peer supporters were selected for each class;
- *training:* the selected pupils were trained to enhance skills and attitudes facilitating interactions with other pupils. There were whole day retreats and in-school meetings. Children were trained in listening and communication skills following the guidelines in Cowie and Wallace 2000;
- *working in the class:* staff facilitated circle time class meetings in which the needs of particular pupils were identified; then contact was made in confidence with certain target pupils to ask for their agreement to work with the trained peer supporters in a range of helpful activities. During this period, the peer supporters met weekly with staff who gave them supervision on their work with the target pupil;
- *passing on the roles:* the first wave of peer supporters was involved in training other pupils in the class so that more could be involved in the programme.

### *Results of the study*

The outcomes of this study were very positive. The intervention seemed to prevent the escalation of the negative behaviours and attitudes that often develop in pupils of this age. It also broke the silent collusion of bystanders with violent behaviour and enhanced a sense of responsibility and empathy amongst the pupils. It is interesting to note that the largest effect was on bullies and outsiders, with bullies showing that they had developed greater insight into their own behaviour than they had before. This process was even more marked when pupils identified as bullies took part in the training. As one boy said:

I took the role of befriender although before I used to bully other pupils ... At the beginning I was not involved in the project but then ... with time, doing the training and working together with other supporters I became more and more aware of what I did. It was really useful for me. (14-year-old former bully)

However, victims were understandably rather wary of these bullies turned peer supporters and preferred to be helped by peer supporters who had done the original training. At the same time, they acknowledged that the class climate changed for the better during the year of this project. There was also evidence that pupils shifted in and out of the defender role over time in a process of “transmission” that resembled a form of “relay race”. Possibly pupils like to experiment with different participant roles and the rolling programme of training gave pupils opportunities to be helpful in a range of ways at different points in the school year. The effects of the intervention were much more pronounced with younger pupils than with older ones.

### **Activity 5.2: Discussion of issues arising from the befriending case study**

You might find it interesting to consider and discuss the case study above and its relevance to the situation in your school, particularly in relation to the following issues:

- the befriending approach seemed to be well suited to the Italian school system since the training can be done in a relatively short space of time and

since it builds on existing networks of friendship already established within each class;

- In Italy, new legislation has created roles for educational psychologists working directly in the school with the potential for developing new school initiatives like peer support. This means that a befriending system can be put in place quite easily without disrupting the timetable and with helpful collaboration between staff and psychologists trained in counselling-based skills;
- the results of the case study were very encouraging and confirm the view held by many practitioners in this field that violence and aggression can be successfully tackled through a systemic approach that takes account of different and shifting participant roles within the class group.

***Case study 2: advanced active listening in a Welsh secondary school (Cowie et al. 2004)***

This study describes a peer-led listening service in one secondary school which was developed in collaboration with ChildLine in Partnership with Schools (CHIPS) as part of a national peer-support scheme for Wales. Initially, the CHIPS team trained Year 12 and 13 in active listening skills over a period of two days. Then, in partnership with school staff, they established a daily drop-in service at lunch time for younger pupils. The drama department wrote and performed a musical called *Why me?* to raise awareness about the problem of bullying and violence in the school and the need to take action against it.

From the beginning, much of the responsibility for running the service and planning rotas to cover each lunchtime slot was in the hands of the peer supporters themselves. For example, peer supporters led a poster campaign to increase awareness throughout the school and ran sessions for younger pupils during registration once a week.

*Results of the project*

The younger pupils were enthusiastic about the presence of the peer-support system in the school:

I think that they feel that they know someone older in the school and if they did have a real problem they could collar us on the street. I think that it has been a really positive thing because it has provided an older figure in the school that they can look up to. (Peer supporter)

Parents were equally happy about the presence of the scheme.

It bonds the upper school with the lower school. When the scheme works it makes the younger ones realise that they will be able to take this sort of responsibility when they are older. (year 10 parent)

The peer supporters reported that they had gained in confidence and self-esteem through training in skills of communication, presentation and listening. Some appreciated the fact that they had been given the opportunity to present their work outside school at a CHIPS conference. Parents acknowledged the benefits and recommended this intervention to other schools.

### *Possible problems*

A recurring issue for potential users of the system concerned confidentiality, with older pupils concerned about how safe the information they shared with peer supporters would be. As a year 10 boy put it: “It could be embarrassing if someone found out. They would take the mick”.

One or two of the younger peer supporters reported anxiety about the possibility of being confronted by a major problem that was beyond their expertise. However, they were aware that the weekly meeting was there to provide support. One suggested solution was that leaflets or posters might be distributed throughout the school outlining the sort of issues (to include loneliness, issues with friends, relationship advice) that peer supporters would be most skilled to address and recommending other agencies, such as CHIPS, for more difficult issues beyond the expertise of a peer supporter.

Some peer supporters considered that the administration of the scheme was a significant burden, especially with national exams in years 12 and 13. A scheme could consider looking for a volunteer parent, or pay for a small amount of administrative support, to photocopy materials and to organise the peer supporter rotas and assemblies. It was also felt that there should be a definite time for handing over responsibilities by the older pupil supporters to new recruits, say at the beginning of the spring term, so that the more senior and committed pupils could feel positive about the work that they had achieved within the scheme, rather than being left with guilt at having devoted increasing time to studies.

Peer supporters and staff facilitators expressed a need for publicity so that awareness would remain high throughout the school. There was also an issue about keeping staff informed.

### **Activity 5.3: Discussion of issues arising from the advanced listening case study**

You might find it interesting to consider and discuss the case study above and its relevance to the situation in your school, particularly in relation to the following issues.

Training can be lengthy. It is usually recommended that peer supporters receive a minimum of 30 hours of training by a facilitator who is experienced as a counsellor or who has training in peer support. There are a number of good training courses in the UK, run by CHIPS and the counselling service Relate.

**Resources:** The peer supporters need a room in which to see pupils individually or in groups, and where they can have ongoing training and supervision meetings. They will also need a secure place in which to store confidential material.

Peer support enhances the emotional well-being of young people and is widely acknowledged to be an effective method for helping young people with peer group relationship difficulties such as bullying. It also benefits the peer supporters in terms of personal development, communication skills and confidence.

**Case study 3: conflict resolution through peer mediation in Spanish schools (Fernandez et al. 2002)**

As Spanish researchers have indicated for a number of years (Ortega 2001), not all interpersonal relational difficulties lead to victimisation. Some aggression is reciprocal and it can be difficult to distinguish between victims and perpetrators. Conflicts may be between individuals or between groups and can develop along very diverse lines. As a result, very complex situations are created in which it becomes necessary to clarify who is responsible and how to return to a fairer and more appropriate system of relationships. Conflict in itself may not damage relationships. Rather, it is the way in which conflict is resolved that is the crucial factor.

Fernandez et al. (2002) describe in detail how mediation methods have been successfully adapted for use in schools to tackle the problem of violence. As they indicate, peer supporters trained in conflict resolution methods must develop the following skills:

- capacity to listen actively to a peer's narrative of events;
- willingness to help in a problem-solving manner;
- skill to analyse the components of a dispute;
- sensitivity to the emotions engendered by a dispute on the part of those involved.

Fernandez and colleagues have adopted a series of steps that the peer mediators go through in sequence.

*Step 1 – analysis of the causes of the dispute.* The participants prepare themselves to identify the causes of the dispute. They are encouraged to stop acting on the emotional impulse of the moment and to begin to acknowledge that they are not in a dead-end without an exit. Solutions are possible.

*Step 2 – look for solutions.* The disputants orient themselves to the idea that they can begin tentatively to explore a range of solutions. They must first identify potential risks and benefits. At this point, the peer mediators emphasise that they will not tell the disputants what to do.

*Step 3 – generate and evaluate proposals.* The disputants generate some possible proposals for action and review their advantages and disadvantages as objectively as they can. It is helpful if the pros and cons of each line of proposed action are listed on a flip chart.

*Step 4 – choose the best option.* The peer mediators ask key questions that enable the disputants to consider the implications of each of the suggested lines of action. Their questions must be worded in a way that facilitates a process of reflection. The mediators must not judge or give advice.

*Step 5 – come to an agreement.* The disputants are encouraged to arrive at the solution that best meets the needs of both parties. Often this means some form of compromise for each party but the benefit is that the solution does not involve violence or the imposition of force on the part of one side towards the other. It is a “win-win” solution with which each side can feel at least comfortable if not actually (as quite often happens) pleased and proud.

*Step 6 – plan the practicalities.* At this point, the peer mediator facilitates the logistics of implementation. The actions must be realistic, concrete, clear and capable of being evaluated. The key questions here are: Who does what, how and when?

*Step 7 – monitor and evaluate.* The peer mediators must build into the agreement a time and place to evaluate the effectiveness of the agreement in practice. Questions to ask at this stage will include: Did the agreement work? and Do we need to build in some adjustments or modifications? There must be a follow-up meeting at which participants review the success or otherwise of the solution and acknowledge their willingness to make adjustments if necessary.

#### **Activity 5.4: Discussion of issues arising from the peer mediation case study**

You might find it interesting to consider and discuss the case study above and its relevance to the situation in your school, particularly in relation to the following issues.

At the heart of the process of mediation we find the quality of active listening and the ability to respond genuinely and authentically to the needs and feelings of the participants in the mediation. It is essential for the peer mediator not to deny or repress strong emotions usually present during and after a conflict but to have the strength to allow them to emerge and be shared in a sympathetic, supportive environment.

The way that the peer mediators ask questions is a key ingredient in the process. As Fernandez et al. indicate, the peer mediators, having been trained in active listening, learn to ask questions that demonstrate the sensitivity with which they have approached the situation, and empathy for the perceptions and the emotions of each party in the dispute.

At the same time, they need to go beyond empathy to a rational problem-solving stance so that the disputants can move through their conflict into a resolution. This is where good communication skills are also essential. The peer mediators must show through their choice of words, the tone of their voice, the rhythm of their speech and their confidence that they believe in the real possibility of a solution to the problem.

They must also be trained to encourage and facilitate “I” statements in the first person so that each participant recounts their own experience but does not pass judgement or express derision about the experience of another person in the group. Narratives expressed in the first person through such “I” statements create the opportunity for self-affirmation. Everyone begins with the process of learning that their experience is valid in its own right but that they must also show respect for the experience of others, however different it may initially appear.

Paradoxically, through this process of affirming distinctiveness, participants arrive at a deeper understanding of the commonalities that exist between and amongst us. As we have suggested earlier in this chapter, the circle creates an appropriate space in which these processes can be acted out.



## Key points

In this chapter, we have explored a range of peer support methods that have been tried and tested in countries throughout Europe. We end by summarising the key issues that have emerged and that are currently the subject of intense debate in the context of pupil's rights and responsibilities and of citizenship education. In essence, staff who facilitate peer-led methods encourage young people to show respect for others, to have empathy for their feelings, to act co-operatively and democratically in their groups. For example, in the co-operative classroom, pupils are taught the skills of collaboration through structured activities, including those that address the issue of conflict. An essential feature is the time and space that is given to the pupils for regular debriefing and reflection on the events and interpersonal interactions that take place in the classroom. Staff who facilitate the co-operative classroom are often amazed at the capacity that pupils have for acting responsibly and providing support for one another.

As we have suggested, it is extremely helpful to be aware of the range of participant roles that young people can adopt in the school setting. A peer support framework can also provide opportunities for pupils to try out different roles within the classroom, such as being a leader, a recorder of classroom discussions, a person who clarifies the goals of the group, a person who uses humour to lighten the atmosphere in a group, a problem-solver, or a person who does maintenance work like tidying up.

There are three essential features of peer-led strategies.

First, pupils are prepared to work together outside friendship groups. This type of interaction helps to reduce prejudice and fosters trust across gender and ethnic groups, as well as helping to integrate neglected or rejected young people into the peer group.

Second, pupils are given opportunities to learn good communication skills, to share information and to reflect on their achievements. Through the creation of peer support systems, educators can ensure that there are regular opportunities for pupils to engage in tasks that can only be carried out through a group effort, for example, brainstorming ways to improve the school ethos or pooling information that members of the group have gathered in order to produce a booklet or poster on a topic of shared concern such as how to counter-act violence.

Third, through peer support systems, conflicts are discussed and attempts are made to resolve them. Pupils are given the skills to deal with conflict and to understand the creative potential of conflict in helping individuals to relate to one another in a more authentic way. Peer support systems give a framework within which to reflect on the procedures (or lack of them) within the school for ensuring pupils' safety, both physical and psychological. These opportunities can lead pupils to greater insights into their capacity to take responsibility for managing their own relationships and for supporting peers who are experiencing difficulties at a particular time.

Studies of peer support indicate a number of advantages. For vulnerable pupils, the experience of being befriended can be a critical part of the process of feeling more positive about themselves. Through the process of being

helped, these pupils are given an opportunity to express their feelings about upsetting aspects of their lives. Peer supporters report that they too benefit from the helping process, that they feel more confident in themselves and that they learn to value other people more. Staff frequently report that the school environment becomes safer and more caring following the introduction of a peer support scheme, and that peer relationships in general improve (Cowie et al. 2002; Cowie and Sharp 1996).

Research findings are positive. In one large survey, 60% of peer supporters reported benefits arising directly from the interpersonal skills and teamwork acquired in the course of training. The majority (63%) believed that the peer support service was having an impact on the school as a whole and that it had become a place where it was more acceptable to talk about emotional and relationship issues. The adults in charge of the schemes were unanimous in confirming that the work of the peer support service went beyond the help offered to individuals in need – valuable as that was – and that it had affected the whole school (Naylor and Cowie 1999).

Peer support systems are now accepted and valued for their contribution to the quality of life in a growing number of schools (Cowie et al. 2002). In these schools, the pupils overwhelmingly state that they like the presence of a peer support system, they would use the system if they needed to and would recommend it to a friend in need. Staff in charge of systems report that their colleagues are, for the most part, extremely supportive. There are also external signs of acknowledgement from parent groups. There is a strong sense in these schools of confidence in their peer support systems and belief in their usefulness.

The research so far indicates that the key to success lies in a process of flexible monitoring and clear observation of the needs of the potential users. Staff running the schemes also need to take account of the social context in which they operate and to make appropriate use of the situated knowledge that the young peer supporters bring to their task. In this, there is a growing appreciation of the role that young people themselves might play in learning new skills and in reflectively adapting these skills to their particular context.

### **Activity 5.5: Peer support in your school**

In the light of the outcomes of Activity 5.1, how might you develop the use of peer support in your school?

Given the evidence in this chapter:

- What do you think the advantages of developing peer support would be?
- What major difficulties do you think would have to be overcome?

# Chapter 6

## Protecting children

### Making the school environment safe

*Mona O'Moore and Stephen James Minton*

This chapter will help schools to:

- consider what is meant by violent behaviour and what effect it has;
- consider how school climate affects behaviour;
- look at ways of promoting a safe(r) climate in school.

In the course of a year, the majority of young people spend between 25% and 30% of their waking hours in school. It seems reasonable to expect that the school environment should, as was stated in the White Paper on Education in Ireland (Department of Education and Science 1995), “be a caring one, in which each child’s right to a joyful and safe childhood is guaranteed at all times”.

Displays of violent behaviour or threats of violence in schools affect the very safety and sense of well-being of our pupils, creating instead a feeling of insecurity and fear. School violence is not a new phenomenon, and countries worldwide are reporting different levels of violence (Minton et al. 2005; Smith 2003). This is dealt with in Chapter 1.

### **Violence in schools and its effects on those involved**

An analysis of the type of pupil violence in schools in Europe indicates that verbal abuse is the most common. According to Vettenburg and Huybregts (2001), 90% of pupils admit to having committed acts of verbal abuse. This form of violence consists of offending or abusing others and, to a much smaller extent, spreading lies or gossip.

The second most common form of violence is disruptive classroom behaviour. Vettenburg and Huybregts (2001) state that between one-half and two-thirds of pupils engage in such behaviour at one time or another. They further report that vandalism is the third most frequent form of school violence. Apparently, only a small minority of European pupils report that they have been in possession of weapons or committed offences such as theft, blackmail, sexual intimidation or drug abuse. In respect of physical violence and intimidation, pupil fights are the most common. Fortunately, and in spite of what the media may lead us to believe, threats of physical violence involving the use of weapons are rare.

If it were not for the adverse effects of violence, in particular interpersonal violence, there would be no need for schools to implement preventative and intervention strategies. However, too many casualties of violent school

incidents have been recorded anecdotally, in the media, or in the scientific literature. Feelings of anger, frustration, humiliation, isolation, despair and physical injury or fear of it, are frequently suffered by victims of violence, in particular if it is systematic and repeated. It also places them at risk of educational apathy and failure as well as possible low self-esteem, depression, nervous breakdown and even suicide (Kaltiala-Heino et al. 1999; Lawlor 2002; O'Moore 2003; Rigby 1998).

Essentially, young people subjected to bullying and violence have significantly more mental health and somatic problems than those not exposed to such behaviour. There is also evidence that they absent themselves from school for fear of the reoccurrence of the abusive acts of aggression. Evidence is also available to indicate that exposure to violence in school can cause post-traumatic stress, a serious disorder that requires professional therapeutic intervention (Bemak and Keys 2000).

Also worth noting is that a review of 20 years of research on peer victimisation showed that psychosocial distress occurred as a result of all subtypes of aggression, among victims of both sexes and of all age groups (Hawker and Boulton 2000). Indeed, the authors reported that the conclusions drawn from the empirical studies “reveal a pattern of distress that can no longer be ignored”.

Whereas school violence may be perceived as a problem that affects only the victims of violence, there is a growing body of research which suggests that pupils who engage in bullying and violence are also at the risk of low self-esteem, depression and suicide ideation. Most at risk are pupils who are both perpetrators and victims (Kaltiala-Heino et al. 1999; O'Moore and Kirkham 2001; Rigby 2002). There are also research findings that have associated bullying behaviour and violence during childhood and adolescence with adult criminal behaviour (Olweus 1993).

Moreover, it is to be expected that onlookers, the passive bystanders to violent incidents, are adversely affected as there is scientific evidence to indicate that this is the case for adults in the workplace (O'Moore 2003). The observers of bullying incidents suffered more somatic symptoms, such as disturbed sleep, loss of energy, and headaches, than those who had not observed workplace bullying. The adults who were witnesses to abusive acts were also more prone to psychological symptoms and behavioural changes, such as becoming aggressive, irritable, emotionally drained and withdrawn.

Taking into account all these adverse effects of violence, it goes without saying that there is an onus on schools to take action to protect the pupils in their care. This is particularly the case if one considers that 63% of pupils are involved in school bullying, as perpetrators or their assistants, victims or their defenders (Salmivalli et al. 1996).

A growing body of research indicates the importance of a whole-school approach to affecting a long-term and positive influence on the school environment (Minton et al. 2005). Account therefore needs to be taken, as has been pointed out by Suckling and Temple (2002), of:

- the style and quality of leadership and management practices;
- the quality and delivery of curriculum;

- playground activities and the quality of the curriculum;
- the formalised and agreed procedures to deal with a bullying incident;
- building relationships with others and with the self.

### **School climate and violent behaviour**

A study by Vettenburg and Huybregts (2001) of Flemish schoolchildren brought into strong focus the connection between anti-social behaviour on the part of pupils and the quality of the pupils' relationship with the teachers. The authors found that pupils distinguish very clearly between "good teachers whom they like, respect and wish to co-operate with, and bad teachers who often have to pay for it". This, according to the pupils, very much depends upon:

- the teacher's personality and style;
- the way they teach;
- their attitude towards agreements and rules;
- their attitude towards pupils.

The pupils were very clear that much violence and bullying of staff and fellow pupils can be avoided if all school staff:

- show interest outside their subject matter;
- avoid being boring;
- share an occasional joke;
- relate to topical events, and/or pupil's interests and culture;
- set clear limits and standards;
- take consistent action if regulations are violated;
- give pupils a positive signal when they display pro-social behaviour;
- give pupils a warning before punishing anti-social behaviour;
- act consistently and treat pupils fairly;
- listen actively to pupils, taking their opinions seriously;
- are "modern" (even as far as clothing is concerned).

#### **Activity 6.1: Pupil opinion about the role of staff in making schools safe**

You may find it useful to discuss the list of pupils suggestions with pupils in your school, or to ask them to create their own list.

In addition to informing action plans, the information you gleaned could make a contribution to the design of an audit and supports activities in Chapter 2.

What questions would you include in an audit to determine how effective teachers in your school are in creating a climate that reduces violent behaviour?

A further explanation given by pupils in the Vettenburg and Huybregts' study for their violent behaviour was that school work put them under pressure.

They reported that they felt overburdened by the (excessively) high requirements imposed by the curriculum, by “working” days that were too long, by a lack of leisure facilities between and after classes, and by homework, tests and examinations.

Other school-related elements that were also seen to be responsible for inciting pupils to express themselves in violent ways while in school were:

- a multitude of unnecessary do’s and don’ts that curb the pupils’ freedom;
- the fact that many of the rules and agreements do not apply to the teachers or are not applied consistently;
- the lack of pupil participation in decision making;
- inadequate accommodation and infrastructure;
- un-met needs for elementary comfort.

The Vettenburg study, while it does not deny that factors external to the school may play a part in school violence, clearly demonstrates that pupils are certainly impelled to violence by social forces within a school. Findings from Israel also strongly support the view that the school climate may contribute more to levels of school violence than the characteristics of the school’s outside environment such as socio-economic status and crime rates in the neighbourhood (Benbenishty and Astor 2003).

These more recent European studies certainly confirm the earlier seminal study by Rutter et al. (1979), which demonstrated so clearly that schools have the capacity, in spite of adverse external forces, to make a difference in respect of shaping positive behaviour and promoting scholastic achievement.

## **Promoting safety in schools**

Safety in schools holds the same meaning as that taken by the conference, “Safe(r) at school” (February 1997), that formed part of the education programme of the Dutch Presidency of the European Union. In other words, safety at school means that pupils are not only protected but that they have a feeling of safety, can enter into dialogue with their teachers and have a place where they can build self-confidence.

So how can feelings of safety be promoted?

### ***Conflict resolution training***

In accepting that the school can make their environment safe(r) by addressing known risk factors associated with school bullying and violence (Varnava 2002), it needs to be recognised that there will undoubtedly always be the presence of conflict. However, it has been pointed out by Johnson and Johnson (1995) that it is not the presence of conflict that is to be feared but rather that it needs to be managed constructively.

They note that conflict can have positive outcomes such as increasing:

- motivation to learn;
- higher-level reasoning;
- long-term retention;

- healthy social cognitive development;
- pupil fun;

and that it can also:

- enrich relationships;
- provide clarity;
- strengthen personal identity;
- increase ego-strength;
- promote resilience in the face of adversity;
- clarify one's need to change.

Indeed, Johnson and Johnson claim that it is the attempt to deny, suppress, repress and ignore conflicts that may be a major contributor to the occurrence of violence in schools. For these reasons, training pupils in conflict resolution would seem to be most worthwhile. Results to date in relation to conflict resolution training have been very exciting (Cowie et al. 2002; Farrell et al. 1998; O'Moore and McGuire in Minton et al. 2005).

O'Moore and McGuire, for example, found that a programme of peer mediation, which involved every pupil in a year group being given the appropriate training, helped to reduce the level of bullying in schools. The training also resulted in a positive change in the way pupils understood and resolved conflicts that arose in the home and neighbourhood. The programme is now firmly embedded into the fabric of the school. All pupils who begin their first year of post-primary school are given the training (Godsil 2002).

In addition to helping pupils resolve conflicts, training in mediation fosters self-esteem and self-confidence. This is achieved by underpinning skills training in empathy, listening, affirmation and co-operation. With these skills, pupils can handle their emotions and acknowledge better the feelings of others (Farrell et al. 1998). As noted earlier, in building a safe(r) school, the role of self-esteem cannot be underestimated (Salmivalli et al. 1999; O'Moore and Kirkham 2001).

Chapter 4 describes how social, emotional and behaviour skills can be included in the curriculum. It is worth considering how the skills training for conflict resolution can be integrated into this. The Pacific Path Programme (ICCRM 2001) (see Activity 6.2 below) is an example of a Canadian programme that goes some way to achieving this.

### **Activity 6.2: Exploring resources for teaching conflict resolution**

Programmes for training pupils in conflict resolution and mediation are growing rapidly throughout Europe. You may already have such a programme in your school but may also find it useful to explore other resources such as the Pacific Path Programme mentioned above. It is available in both French and English at <<http://www.iccrm.com>>.

Training for staff in the use of restorative approaches is now becoming available in the United Kingdom through organisations such as Transforming Conflict <<http://www.transformingconflict.org>> and Realjustice <<http://www.realjustice.org>>.

***A case study: the Home/School/Environment Project at Gran School***

The importance of factors that have so far been highlighted as being key to promoting a safe and caring environment for pupils, and indeed for teachers, can be demonstrated by a case study of a school in Norway which ran into serious difficulties due to an escalation of violence.

Gran School is located in Furuset, a multi-cultural district of Oslo, catering for about 450 pupils aged 6-15. Around the time of the study, 62% of the pupils were from a non-Norwegian background (Soløy 1998), and 68.3% of the pupils spoke a heritage language other than Norwegian (O'Moore and Minton 2002). In January 1997, *Aftenposten*, a national newspaper, described:

how violence, the use of weapons, threats towards pupils and teachers, disruption and vandalism had become part of everyday life at Gran. Groups of pupils controlled the school with terror, and the leadership and staff were in desperate need of help ... the head teacher and staff had lost control. (Roland et al. 2001, pp. 24-5).

In August 1997, the Home/School/Environment Project (a joint effort between the school's management authorities and the Centre for Behavioural Research at Stavanger University College) was launched, with some economic support from the Ministry of Child and Family Affairs and the Oslo community. A variety of interventions was put in place over the next four years. These included:

- the provision of staff training by the Centre for Behavioural Research;
- improved parent-school and inter-professional co-operation;
- activities for pupils;
- improvements in the aesthetics of the physical environment;
- recruitment of specialist personnel, and non-Norwegian staff;
- the introduction of a pupil mediation service;
- the establishment of school traditions, and the school as a "culture house";
- a general focus on social competence.

An independent evaluation team in August 2001 (see O'Moore and Minton 2002 for complete details) found evidence of a number of concrete successes.

There were reductions in:

- violence against adult school personnel;
- pupil injuries caused by violence;
- gang-characterised violence in the school;
- cases of exclusion;
- vandalism;

and improvements in:

- collaboration with parents;
- staff recruitment and retention;
- pupils' evaluations of the school.

For example, the school, which had not been repainted for twenty-four years, was entirely redecorated, with colours chosen by the pupils. Deliberate use was made of pupils' work – arts, crafts and completed school projects were placed on display. Special decorations are now arranged for festivals and holidays.



The costs to the school of making reparations after acts of vandalism fell dramatically. In 1996, the cost of replacing broken windows and doors was 120000 Norwegian kroner (€15, 023), and repainting graffiti was 113000 Norwegian kroner (€14 147); by 2000, this had been reduced to 5990 (€750) and 20040 (€2509) Norwegian kroner respectively (O'Moore and Minton 2002).

Five underlying success factors were identified in the Gran project:

- the introduction of mediation services;
- the use of pupils' creative work;
- the use of specialist subject teachers;
- co-operative work with parents;
- training to work with pupils and parents from ethnic minority groups.

The breadth of the approach at Gran has been generally recognised as the key to the project's success; as the school's principal said "It was not one, single ingenious thing that made the great difference, but the sum of many small moves" (Roland et al. 2001).

Gran School, through the Home/School/Environment Project, has won a number of awards and prizes. In November 1998, after just 14 months of intervention efforts (less than half-way through the project), *Aftenposten*, the newspaper whose previous article had caused such concern reported that "Gran School has found the antidote to daily violence" (Soløy 1998).

### ***Taking steps to promote physical safety***

In Ireland, although the level of school violence is generally reported to be "reasonably low" (Department of Education and Science 1999), there is a "common perception in society that such problems are on the increase" (Glendenning 1999, p. 353). In 1999, as a response to this, the Department of Education and Science issued "Guidelines on violence in schools" to management authorities of second-level schools recommending that they should consider the following issues:

- their statutory obligation, under the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (1989), to provide a safe environment for school employees;
- procedures in regard to violence in schools, including adequate complaints procedures, and to agree to implement the same;
- the necessity of good general communication between home and school;
- raising awareness amongst staff of policies concerning violence, bullying, discipline, health and safety and related issues through discussion at staff meetings and at other times;
- restricting visitor access; use of signs in the playground; visitors to wear badges and report to a designated area;
- restricting access to teachers only, and structuring parent-teacher meetings according to the school plan;
- implementing security measures;
- drafting a code of discipline, in which violent behaviour towards a teacher is deemed serious or gross misbehaviour which may warrant suspension.

### **Identifying those most at risk of being involved in violence**

In Ireland, reports carried out by the Irish National Teachers' Organisation (INTO) in 1993 and the Department of Education and Science in 1997 indicated that, although the general level of classroom indiscipline remained low, in many schools (particularly urban, economically disadvantaged and second level) a small core of persistently disruptive pupils existed.

Of the 452 schools that contributed to the INTO's "Report on discipline in primary schools" (November, 1993): 91% said that physical bullying was a problem; 77% perceived the behaviour of 5% of the pupils as constituting a serious disciplinary problem; 70% perceived the behaviour of 10% of the pupils as constituting a minor disciplinary problem.

The INTO argued that disciplinary problems in school are predicated by a combination of psychological and domestic factors, as well as factors specific to the school environment. These included the home environment of the pupil (social and material deprivation, parental unemployment, poor housing), and the school environment (teachers' teaching methods and interpersonal skills).

Data from O'Moore's nationwide survey of bullying behaviour in Irish schools help to shed some light on how at-risk pupils could be identified. Bullying behaviour was significantly higher in secondary schools where there was a higher concentration of pupils from lower socio-economic backgrounds (O'Moore et al. 1997).

Additionally, and although Ireland's resident foreign national population is, as yet, small in numbers, ethnicity seems to be a factor: 7% of girls and 9% of boys at the primary level, and 4.8% of girls and 8.1% of boys at the post-primary level indicated that "I was called nasty names about my colour or race" (O'Moore et al. 1997), and one-third of the responding schools in INTO's study reported bullying along the lines of race/ethnicity.

Members of Ireland's Travelling community, are, according to Carlson and Casavant (1995), "frequently the victims of prejudice and discrimination", and it appears from their findings that this extends into the Traveller pupil's school life. Some schools have refused to enrol Traveller children; there also exists a low expectation of attainment amongst those teaching Travellers (Noonan 1994 in Carlson and Casavant 1995). Traveller children – boys in particular – have a reputation for fighting and classroom indiscipline; in understanding this, Carlson and Casavant refer to the cultural differences that exist between the settled and the Travelling communities in terms of their respective attitudes towards aggression: "aggression is part of Traveller culture and is frequently rewarded in boys because it is felt that life is brutal and pupils must learn to fight to survive".

Three early studies indicated a higher incidence of bullying behaviour amongst pupils with emotional, behavioural or learning disabilities. O'Moore and Hillery (1989) found that 35.8% of pupils in primary special needs classes bully others, compared with 26.5% of pupils in other classes. Byrne (1987) found that 9% of pupils in secondary special needs classes bully, compared with 5% of secondary pupils in other classes. In a study on bullying undertaken in four Dublin primary schools, Ní Ighile (1992) found that whereas 9.2% of mainstream class pupils were frequent bullies or victims 25.9% of

special class pupils could be thus categorised, and that whilst 33.3% of main-stream class pupils were occasional bullies, this extended to 61.1% of pupils in special needs classes. However, the issue of violence in special needs classes and special schools has, to our knowledge, remained unaddressed by contemporary large-scale empirical research projects in Europe.

### **Identifying danger spots**

In O'Moore's survey of bullying behaviour in Irish schools (O'Moore et al. 1997) school pupils who had been bullied were asked where the bullying had taken place. The responses of primary and post-primary pupils differed.

<b>Where did bullying occur?</b>	<b>Primary pupils</b>	<b>Post-primary pupils</b>
In the playground	74%	27%
In the classroom	31%	47%
In the corridors	7%	37%
In other places *	16%	15%

\* "Other places" included the toilets, changing rooms, locker areas and dormitories in boarding schools.

An interesting outcome of a further study, in terms of the current discussion, came when pupils were asked, "If you have any ideas to help stop bullying please write them down". Although 65% made no positive reply, 2.6% suggested that the school should "put more teachers on yard duty", and 1.3% suggested to "put up security cameras in the school" (O'Moore and Minton 2003a). In the Home/School/Environment Project at Gran School, one of the safety measures for pupils and adults that was implemented in the general tightening-up of procedures against bullying and violence included teachers on yard duty wearing high-visibility reflective vests (O'Moore and Minton 2002). This is also a feature of the Zero Programme, the current incarnation of the Centre for Behavioural Research's nationwide anti-bullying programme for Norwegian schools.

### **Activity 6.3: Improving danger spots**

A school may have data on incidents of violence, including bullying, accidents and injuries which could be analysed to identify times and places where there are problems.

If this information is not already available, Chapter 2 has an example of an incident report form and explains how to collect and analyse this kind of data in an audit. However, it should be remembered that incident report forms may not accurately reflect the pupil perception of personal safety. You may wish to carry out a short survey to include in a later, more comprehensive, audit asking pupils to identify the times and places where they feel most unsafe.

Different danger spots require different solutions. You could use some of the ideas in this chapter, and in Chapter 5, to devise improvements with the support of the pupils.

### ***Influencing an ethos of non-violence through the arts***

The following examples illustrate how the visual and performing arts in school can be developed to improve a physical environment for non-violence, as well as the convivencia in a school. In the process, pupils are engaged in influencing their own working environment and can learn a number of interpersonal and expressive skills relevant to the social, emotional and behavioural skills development.

*Posters and pictures.* Many young people like to draw and paint. Others have the computer skills to produce posters, flyers and documents of an extremely professional quality. The visual arts provide possibly the most simple and yet effective way of harnessing young people's creative abilities to construct their own anti-violence message. Even the youngest pupils can draw pictures that provide an often astonishingly profound insight into their understanding of the nature of bullying. Older pupils can use their experience of the world, in particular its popular media and advertising, to construct posters that convey an anti-bullying message.

*Sculpture.* Even emotionally sophisticated teenagers (and adult facilitators too) can re-experience the joys of more innocent years through messy sculpture. Not only does sculpture enrich the school environment, the creative process can also be used to develop some key messages about non-violence for the sculptors. An example could be making bottle sculptures. Pupils can make a bottle into anything they like, and they can decorate the bottle in any way they like, according to the first major rule: the sculpture must say something about the work they have done on stopping violent behaviour.

The second major rule of this session is that when the facilitator signals them to stop – which he or she will do so every 15 minutes or so – that they must come into the circle, and discuss how they are getting on with their sculptures. The facilitator should try to put interesting questions to the group, and thus foster a whole class discussion: Is the task an easy one? Is it harder than you thought? What is it like trying to express your thoughts and feelings through working with sculpture? Has doing this helped you to think about bullying behaviour and anti-bullying work in a different way at all? How do you feel about putting your work on display?

Finally, public display – bottle sculptures are often very attractive, and because of their size, can very easily be put on display. However, if a pupil really does not want this to happen, his or her feelings should be respected.

*Music.* Musical composition is immensely popular with some pupils and it does not require sophisticated equipment to make it effective. Writing lyrics, devising rhythms and simple vocal melodies and/or harmonies, is within the grasp of even the youngest and those who regard themselves as “not musical”.

*Drama, film and role play.* Role play can be helpful in consolidating pupils' awareness of various issues. However, one must be wary of its indiscriminate use as there is a possibility of re-traumatising pupils who have been victimised “for real”. It is perhaps better used in exploring key issues around violence and bullying behaviour, such as peer pressure, dynamics of friendships and “dealing with feelings”.

Drama is, or at least can be, a powerful instructive medium. Some plays with an anti-bullying content are available for classroom/school use; it may also be possible to stage an original play in school, providing that classroom staff have a good level of influence over at least the editing of the scripts. Developing a film script may also provide pupils with an exciting, rich and engaging means of identifying with and understanding the problems of bullying and victimisation.

### ***The development of key social skills: anger management***

Many young people get involved in violent behaviour because they do not control their own anger, or find it difficult to do so. In such cases pupils may typically either externalise their anger (get angry at something that has happened at home, such as parental conflict, or at school, for example a teacher who they think has treated them unfairly, and take this anger out on a “safe target”), which is typical in bullying, or internalise it (“bottle it up” inside themselves, resulting in strong feelings of frustration and hatred, or even self-harm and suicidal ideation). Because of this, it is important to encourage young people to share their feelings and the reasons for their strong emotions with others – in other words, to learn as much as they can about anger and how they can deal with it.

#### **Activity 6.4: Developing support for pupils in anger management**

Schools may wish to use the following to help identify ways of including pupil anger management training as part of a social, emotional and behavioural skills or similar programme.

There are several published programmes on anger management and it is an essential part of most programmes on conflict resolution. Schools who wish to develop an anger management programme may find this exercise a useful starting point.

Some typical questions, that could be used in a “circle time” class discussion, or perhaps developed into more formal exercises, include the following:

- What does anger feel like? When a person gets angry, his or her physiology changes – heart, breathing and circulation rates increase, muscles tense up, there are “butterflies” in the stomach and so forth. Young people can learn to recognise these physiological correlates as “warning signs” from their bodies – “if you begin to feel this way, and something is annoying you, then it’s time to try to calm yourself down!”
- How do we behave when we are angry? Discuss the fact that people behave in different ways when they are angry – one person might scream or shout, another might cry (tears of rage and frustration, not tears of sadness), and still another might go completely silent. Students should be encouraged to think about what they do – “what’s your anger style?”
- What makes us angry? Discuss the facts that people feel differently about different things, and that different things make different people angry. Students can think about what makes them angry, and perhaps make a list. “If your anger is getting you into trouble, can you avoid those things, or think about them in a different way?”

- What ways can we find to cope with feeling angry? Students should realise that there are many different ways to cope with this. Some people will do something as simple as counting to ten in their own heads. This stops them in their tracks, and gives them a chance to calm down and take control of themselves. Some people like to think about something else – something happy, peaceful, or something that they enjoy doing – in order to stop themselves thinking about whatever is making them angry. Other people will deliberately start a conversation, or join in another conversation, that is about a subject other than what is making them angry. Still other people find it helpful to talk to someone they trust about their angry feelings, in order to express these feelings in a safe way, without hurting anyone else. Finally, some people find that it is helpful to get the energy out of their system by playing a sport, or doing some exercise. If students have problems controlling their anger, and especially if this has got them into trouble in the past, they can be encouraged to try and find a set of ways to cope, remembering that different methods will help in different situations.

### ***The development of key social skills: assertiveness***

Assertiveness is an excellent skill for pupils who are at risk of, or are actually being, victimised to learn. However, this is a skill that should be used in order to deal with verbal aggression and bullying only. If pupils are being physically bullied, they should always tell someone and ask for help.

The rationale for assertiveness as a coping behaviour can be explained quite simply. Pupils should be told that aggressive people want an upset reaction from the people they victimise – they want the victim to cry, get angry, become upset or lose control. Hence, if one can avoid looking upset, then one is not giving the aggressor the response that he or she wants. The aggressor might try to get an upset reaction in other ways, but if the victim can stop himself or herself from looking upset, then the aggressor is likely to give up and go away, or at least go away and pick on someone else. Even if the victim is hurt on the inside, trying to look in control on the outside is still a good idea – the aggressor is sent the message that, “You can’t get to me!” The word “assertiveness” can be defined for young people as standing up for oneself without being aggressive or violent. When people tell one to stand up for oneself, then this is what they should mean – not physically fighting people.

#### **Activity 6.5: Encouraging assertiveness**

As with Activity 6.4, schools may wish to consider how to encourage assertiveness in their pupils (and staff) as part of a SEBS programme. The following assertive tactics techniques could be included in any programme and taught:

- stand up straight, look confident, speak clearly and firmly, look the aggressive person straight in the eyes (don’t blink!), and say that you want him or her to stop;
- tell the aggressive person that you don’t care what they think of you, and that calling you names isn’t going to get you upset;
- tell the aggressive person that what he or she thinks will upset you doesn’t bother you at all. For example, “So what if I’m short? I don’t mind it at all”; or, “So what if I wear glasses? I think they look great”;

- remember that it is the aggressive person, not the target, that has the problem and ask him or her in a confident and calm way, “What’s your problem?”

It is a good idea to practise these tactics before using them. Pupils can do this in their imagination or with friends or, best of all, with someone at home – parents can be enrolled as “coaches” in this sort of activity. Pupils should try to think of the worst thing that the aggressor could say – the thing that they are most afraid of hearing, and see if they could plan (or be helped to plan) an assertive response.

### ***Working with the school community on making the school environment safe(r)***

The desirability of involving the various groups within the school community in countering and preventing violence, and especially bullying, within schools is a long-established feature of anti-bullying research and intervention practice, and is known as the whole-school approach (see Olweus 1983; in Olweus 1997; O’Moore and Minton 2005; Smith and Sharp 1994). Chapter 3 covers this in detail. In this section, we provide an evidence-based focus on how safety in the school environment can be enhanced with reference to adults within school communities.

#### *A case study: working with families*

In 1990 in the Republic of Ireland, a home-school-community liaison pilot scheme was set up in designated disadvantaged areas. In 55 primary schools, 30 teachers were released from teaching duties from 1 to 3 years, to take up posts as liaison co-ordinators. By September 1993, some 86 liaison co-ordinators were involved, in 106 primary schools and 26 post-primary schools (Department of Education and Science 1993). The scheme’s initiatives centre upon: “the development of [a] parent teacher partnership to enhance the nurturing of the whole child. The initiatives focus directly on adults, parents and teachers, rather than on pupils, but impinge indirectly and over time on children’s lives” (Department of Education and Science 1993, pp. 149-50).

Practically, the work of a home-school-community liaison teacher involves:

- making home visits;
- planning and undertaking action with parents in response to their needs (personal development, parenting, leisure, homework supervision, school meetings, paired reading schemes);
- making and maintaining links with educational institutions and other centres in the wider community.

One of the stated objectives of the Home/ School/Environment Project at Gran School was to strengthen collaboration between the school and the home, and one of the defined “fields of effort” was to increase co-operation with parents. New innovations included the setting-up of a mothers’ group and parent-teacher meetings for parents of first grade pupils, for parents of pupils involved in gang activities, and for non-Norwegian/immigrant parents. In the last of these, non-Norwegian teachers (all of whom had a liaison role with the parents

of their own language group) translated the points of the meeting between the principal and the parents (O'Moore and Minton 2002).

### ***Involving the broader school community***

A fairly regular feature of whole-school approaches to bullying and violence has been the involvement of the broader school community; indeed, in an overview of his programme as applied to the first nationwide campaign against bully/victim problems in Norwegian schools (1983), Dan Olweus, stressed "awareness and involvement on the part of adults" and the holding of "school conference days" as being "core components" (Olweus 1999). This has been a fairly regular feature in whole-school approaches to the issue of bullying over the past two decades, and is a feature of the forthcoming nationwide intervention programme against bullying in schools in Ireland (O'Moore and Minton 2003b; O'Moore and Minton 2005).

For example, in the Netherlands, the National Education Protocol against Bullying originated in the co-operative efforts of four Dutch parents' associations which started to work together and aimed to tackle the problem of bullying in schools and members of the wider community working together (Bongers 2001). A brochure entitled "How to deal with bullying at school: recommendations, consequences and detailed information" was developed, providing seven-step guidelines for primary and secondary schools on developing anti-bullying policies that are inclusive of the co-operative efforts of parents' associations, community participation councils and school management teams (Bongers 2001; Bongers et al. 2003). The Government of Canada's National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention was launched in 1998, and publishes a fact sheet on bullying. The strategy is designed to work with communities and schools – pupils, parents, educators, practitioners, and others – "in developing, and sharing, grass-roots initiatives to combat bullying" (National Strategy on Community Safety and Crime Prevention 2004).

Two further objectives of the Home/School/Environment Project at Gran School were to develop the school into a power centre of the local environment and co-operate with local voluntary organisations.

Over the course of the project, a concrete effort was made towards the establishment of school traditions. These include theatre and art work, a winter dance, carnivals, Christmas and Easter breakfasts, transition ceremonies between fourth and fifth grade and seventh and eighth grade, and a graduation diploma awards ceremonies with parents at the end of the seventh and the tenth grades. The school established itself as a "culture house" – it has celebrated a United Nations Day, Vietnamese New Year, Ramadan, a Muslim wedding, and hosted theatre, dance and musical performances and concerts. There is also an Internet café, and an open house, the setting for active meetings between school personnel, pupils, and members of the local community (O'Moore and Minton 2002).

### ***Creating a network of professional support***

The second nationwide anti-bullying programme for Norwegian schools was launched in 1996. It was preventative and comprehensive in focus, considering organisational aspects of the school and general classroom management



and utilised a support network of 350 professionals, including researchers, educational psychologists and head teachers. (Roland 2000);

A further national programme, Samtak, which built on these principles, ran from 2000 to 2003. Samtak was broader still in focus, addressing not only bullying, but also social, behavioural and emotional difficulties, violence and anti-social behaviour (Roland 2000).

In Ireland, in addition to full-time staff allocations, support for teachers is provided by special class teachers, remedial teachers, resource teachers, visiting teachers, home-school-community liaison teachers and guidance counsellors. Support teachers, in this sense, constitute some 8% of the total number of teachers nationwide (Department of Education and Science 1993).

There is a support teacher project, a primary level initiative, currently in operation in 42 national schools facing particular problems with pupil disruption and indiscipline in educationally/socially disadvantaged areas of Dublin (Jordan 1999). The role of the support teachers is the enhancement of the holistic development of pupils, and a whole-school approach (working with other teachers, parents and school services) is emphasised.

In 1998, the French Minister for Education launched an anti-violence scheme with the innovative idea of establishing 21 to 29-year-old educational assistants (*aide-éducateurs*) acting as mediators, assisting with some tasks, assisting relationships between pupils and teachers, and gaining for themselves practical experience of the educational environment. However, Debarbieux and Montoya (1999 in Debarbieux et al. 2003) found that this worked well only when (1) the school culture was already strong; (2) the staff turnover was low, and (3) “*the aide-éducateurs* were welcomed by the whole school and used for the task for which their position was first created, and not as wardens”.

A further objective of the Home/School/Environment Project at Gran School was to increase inter-professional co-operation. Initially, the provision of staff training by the Centre for Behavioural Research included courses for all teaching staff regarding classroom management, peer-counselling for teachers, co-operative work with parents, breaking up deviant sub-groups and scheduling attractive activities (Roland et al. 2001). Regular liaison meetings between the school and child welfare authorities were introduced, as well as the setting up of the Furuset Inter-professional Forum, which facilitated co-operation in individual cases. Specialist personnel were recruited to contribute to and extend the activities of the project: on a part-time basis, a band conductor, dance pedagogue, musician, fairy-tale narrator, two play leaders, and a primary school librarian; on a more full-time basis, a secondary school librarian and a pupil mediator. There was an active effort to recruitment of non-Norwegian staff, from ethnic minorities, whose linguistic and cultural background matched that of the pupils and parents (O'Moore and Minton 2002).

Although additional specialist personnel were actively recruited at Gran, this is not necessarily an option for other schools who wish to actively counter and prevent violent behaviour. One of the key issues of the project's success that the school leadership identified was the formation of a united front of staff, with regard to the implementation of anti-violence policy strategies. When one has to make the best use of the personnel resources that one has, having one's

staff members “singing from the same hymn sheet” seems always to make eminent sense. This very basic factor cannot be ignored when whole-school efforts against violence – or indeed whole-school efforts of any kind – are being implemented.

# Chapter 7

## Supporting school staff

### A training framework: planting the peace virus – promoting convivencia

*George Robinson, Barbara Maines and Robyn Hromek*

This chapter will help schools:

- consider the range of topics for staff development and understanding about violence in schools;
- design a programme for whole-school training in violence reduction;
- use a series of activities designed to raise awareness of key issues and achieve a whole-school approach;
- develop a staff training and support programme.

This chapter has many more activities than other chapters as it is designed for practical use in staff training and support.

The peace virus is the name given to a process by which schools uphold standards against violence in all its forms through the use of democratic, respectful ways to work together. Through universal, targeted and clinical programmes, a social milieu is created where the norm is to use pro-social approaches to solve interpersonal difficulties. The approach put forward in this chapter encourages adults to model respect, act as emotional coaches for pupils lacking in socio-emotional skills and guide them through the problem-solving process. Universal programmes are broadcast across the classrooms and playground and when difficulties emerge, targeted programmes are put in place. Parents or carers and community agencies are involved when problems persist. This systematic approach becomes a diagnostic tool as young people with persistent behaviour difficulties are identified and referred for early intervention. The following facets make up the peace virus.

#### **Adult leadership**

Leadership is crucial to foster a high standard of interpersonal relations and to implement improvement programmes. A respectful and dignified attitude sets the tone for the school. Enthusiasm for ideas, provision of resources and support for staff are needed to address the needs of the school. Effective leaders hold open discussions about the priorities of the school and keep the community involved and informed. Ideally, leadership comes from the head teacher, but any inspired person or group can lead the way by raising issues in staff and parent meetings and by adopting non-violent, respectful attitudes.

### **Activity 7.1: The culture of the school**

Consider the following statement.

“Historically, pedagogy has relied on discipline and punishment. Competitive systems of learning and individual effort have been paramount when defining academic success. Most of us have experienced these practices to some extent and can, when faced with challenges, fall back on these approaches. Many schools operate on the questionable belief that ‘getting tough’ on violence or disruptive behaviour communicates to pupils that this behaviour will not be tolerated and punishment will teach them to behave in pro-social ways. Unfortunately, over-reliance on punishment and exclusion seems to create a negative, adversarial school environment and breed a cycle of resentment and revenge. Research shows that punishment based interventions usually lead to an increase in problem behaviours.” (Donnellan et al. 1988; Mayer and Sulzer-Azaroff 1990)

Educators and parents most likely agree with a philosophy of non-violence in our schools and homes. We might also agree that positive, organised, respectful, safe schools enhance teaching and learning. However, examination of some of our interactions and practices produces evidence of violence in words and actions. We need a change of culture.

Is your school safe for all members of the community?

Have you considered:

- the adults as models;
- the opportunities you provide for pupils to learn and acquire non-violent behaviours;
- your ways of dealing with inappropriate behaviours – Do you rely on punishments or do you teach new behaviours?

### **Activity 7.2: Teachers as learners**

Consider the following statement.

“Teachers are facing the most exciting time in the modern era for their profession. Again, the teacher’s role is changing. As technology increasingly takes over some of their more traditional roles, like ‘subject master’ and administrator, teachers will be left with the tasks of teaching pupils about critical thinking and providing empathic support. Critical thinking is arguably the most significant feature of development for future citizens and employees, while having a teacher who knows and understands their pupils and who is passionate about their learning will support the development of the whole person.” (Hromek (2004)

While information is increasing and changing, and teaching practice changes to meet this challenge, one role will remain the same: that of mentor. Teachers generally have an empathetic, personal understanding of their pupils, enabling them to guide the latter in subject choice, study skills, motivation, social and emotional development. While this is a traditional role for teachers, new ways of dealing with interpersonal difficulties are necessary.

In which of these areas do staff in the school need skills training:

- conflict resolution;
- mediation;
- emotional coaching;
- problem-solving approaches to bullying;
- pupil psychology – motivation, learning, developmental stages;
- emotional literacy;
- inter-agency collaboration?

## Commitment

When violence is an issue in a school, communities must prioritise immediate and careful attention to the situation and develop a planned response. Other programmes may have to give way until the school is deemed safe. Every adult has a part to play in what may seem to be a long, endless path. Without commitment, projects fail, people become discouraged and violence remains an accepted means of solving problems.

### Activity 7.3: The use of adult language

We need to be mindful of the words and body language we model to pupils. Carefully chosen language is vital to producing the kinds of understandings that help pupils make pro-social choices. Our language needs to reflect mutual respect, rights, responsibilities and choices. Through words, we create supportive environments that assume pupils can resolve conflict without violence and make restitution for their mistakes. Consider the following examples of language patterns and the underlying principles they reflect.

Pro-social language	Anti-social language
<p><b>Choice and responsibility:</b> “How come you decided to hit him?”</p> <p>This question implies there was an element of choice and responsibility and invites communication.</p>	<p><b>Accusatory:</b> “Why did you hit him?”</p> <p>This question may have an accusatory element that makes children resentful and possibly limits communication.</p>
<p><b>Supportive approach:</b> “You will need to go to the detention room and work out a way to solve this problem.”</p> <p>This implies the child is able to solve their problem and receive support if needed.</p>	<p><b>Punitive approaches:</b> “I’m putting you on detention.”</p> <p>This implies punishment and if over used may lead to revenge cycles in children.</p>
<p><b>Empathy:</b> “How do you think she felt when you said that to her?”</p>	<p><b>Emotional violence:</b> “Look what you have done, you’ve made her cry.”</p>

This statement invites the child to develop empathy for the other child and opens communication.

**Problem solving and restitution:** “What are some of the things you could try to meet this challenge?”

This statement implies confidence in the child’s ability to solve the problem and make restitution for their acts.

The accusatory nature of this statement may make the child feel guilty or defensive, leading to resentment and closed communication.

**Sarcasm:** “You had better think of something good to explain this.”

There is an element of sarcasm in this statement with the implication that the child is not able to solve the problem.

Would changes in adult language patterns affect the rest of the school population? Should we avoid accusatory sarcastic language? Violence appears in many ways and the tongue can be a subtle knife, cutting deep into the memory of a pupil.

#### **Activity 7.4: Adult Language**

Words are crucial to the development of the thought constructs required to solve problems and, combined with body language, can model emotional control to pupils. Consider what is modelled through the words and actions in the two following scenarios.

##### *Scenario 1 – Boys fighting*

Teacher A sees two boys fighting in the playground. The following interaction takes place.

**T. A:** (shouting) “Come here at once you two!! What do you think you are doing?”

**Boy 1:** (red faced and puffing) “He started it.”

**Boy 2:** (red faced and crying, tries to land another blow on Boy 1)

**T. A:** “That’s it!” (shouting at the boys). “Go to the head teacher’s office immediately!”

Superficially, the teacher has dealt with the violence.

The pupils may well have learnt some unintended lessons through this interaction:

- shouting at others is OK, especially if you are in the right;
- using tough language is OK, especially if you are in the right;
- gathering information and listening is not very important;
- children need adults to manage them;
- verbal violence is a valid way to solve problems.

Consider this alternative dialogue for dealing with the same situation:

*Scenario 2 – Boys fighting*

Teacher B sees two boys fighting in the playground. The following interaction occurs.

*T. B:* (moving towards the boys) “Hold on boys – calm down now – take it easy – what’s happening here?”

*Boy 1:* (red faced and puffing) “He started it.”

*Boy 2:* (red faced and crying, tries to land another blow on Boy 1)

*T. B:* “Hold on, hold on – take a deep breath, you’re both upset – let’s go get a drink of water and talk about what’s happening here.”

In this scenario, the language of emotional control and problem solving has defused the situation and set the expectation that both will have a chance to explain what the difficulty was and what helped them decide to solve the problem with violence.

From this encounter, the pupils may have learnt that:

- it is possible to manage emotions;
- adults want to help;
- adults believe pupils can solve problems;
- talking is an alternative to violence;
- drinking water and talking might help manage anger.

Which scenario would best describe the approach you would like your institution to follow?

## **Modelling**

Adults constantly model behaviour to pupils and, at times, inadvertently model authoritarian and “power based” stances. The words we use and the actions we take provide an ongoing example of behaviour for pupils to copy or reject. Language is fundamental to our understandings of the world and words can be used to scaffold a pupil’s socio-emotional development. Mindfulness and reflection on performance help to change old patterns. Scripts can also be used to develop co-operative, respectful language patterns until they become natural to our way of relating to others.

### **Activity 7.5: Staff as crucial role models**

Consider:

“We are always modelling; pupils watch and listen to everything we do and say. Children are more likely to use non-violent ways of resolving conflict when the social community in which they live models language and uses practices that are conducive to emotional control and problem solving. As we work with pupils in respectful ways, as we model emotional control and use words carefully, as we use approaches like mediation and conflict resolution, we demonstrate a range of skills for working and living together.” (Hromek 2004)

According to the social cognitive theories of Bandura (1986), pupil's learning depends on their social milieu as much as their internal, inherited characteristics. By observing and imitating the interactions of those around them, pupils integrate behaviour into a framework of internal meaning. He concluded that programmes based on modelling, coaching, behavioural rehearsal and social reinforcement yield significant results. L. S. Vygotsky (1976), a pupil development theorist, postulated the importance of language as a mediating factor between a pupil and an event. He suggested adults are in a position to help pupils develop higher-level thinking skills through a process called mediated learning, that is the process of guiding a pupil through learning experiences by using language to help create the thought concepts needed to meet challenges. Mediated learning experiences provide resources that a pupil might use to solve problems without explicitly telling them how to solve the problems. If one simply tells a pupil how to resolve problems, their chances of developing higher-level thinking skills diminish.

## **Mutual respect**

When asked about their favourite teachers, pupils frequently mention the quality of respect. In turn, teachers and parents often bemoan the lack of respect pupils hold for adults. Respect is manifest in the way people acknowledge each other's rights and responsibilities. It is reflected in the words, attitudes and actions used when interacting. By speaking to pupils with respect, we model behaviour that improves interpersonal relationships, increasing the chance that they will choose similar, respectful behaviour to resolve interpersonal conflict. In order to receive respect, we must give respect.

Do any of these need to improve in your school?:

- having clear behavioural expectations, displayed and discussed at a "calm" time;
- consistently applying natural and logical consequences that are moderate and consistent;
- using optimistic and supportive language;
- looking for strengths and values;
- allowing a "cool off" period before addressing issues – emotional first aid;
- assisting with problem solving;
- adopting a matter of fact, curious attitude;
- not engaging in arguments with pupils;
- ensuring opportunities for restitution are available.

## **Teamwork**

Working in teams shares the workload and sustains the energy required to change school cultures. Time, resources, professional development and support structures are required to support the work the team undertakes on behalf of the school community. Teamwork provides leadership opportunities and when democratic practices are instituted, team members have a chance to design and try innovative programmes (Chapter 3 explores this further).



### Activity 7.6: Open discussion and teamwork

At the basis of successful school improvement is a strong culture of teamwork and ongoing professional development. A sense of collegiality and mutual support creates a culture of trust and confidence among staff and new ideas are more readily accepted. Enthusiasm remains high when recognition is given for effort and where success is celebrated. A good sense of humour and fun goes a long way to uplift each other during times of great effort. Open discussion develops the shared understandings necessary for consistency of response to violence and data collection.

Would it be helpful to discuss the following questions in order to develop a shared understanding of the terms being used and the nature of violence in the school?

- What are the main problems at our school? Where do they happen?
- How are violence and rough play different?
- How is temper different to violence? Should they be managed and recorded differently?
- In what ways is violence different for boys and girls?
- Will teaching conflict resolution lead to the feminisation of boys?
- How can we be supportive of pupils with disabilities in our school, especially those with emotional difficulties?
- What is the difference between discipline and punishment and how do they affect behaviour?
- How should pupils make restitution for anti-social actions?
- What is the difference between assertion and aggression?
- What role should adults take in helping pupils solve problems?
- What is the role for pupils as leaders and mediators?
- What is meant by teasing, harassment and bullying?

### Parent involvement

Collaboration between the home, school and community is essential to meet the learning needs of pupils. Having a flexible range of procedures to involve parents or carers will foster an attitude of shared responsibility. Open communication and perspective taking by both the home and school helps create a climate that encourages a solution-focused approach to problems. Positive strategies such as creating a parent resource centre or sending home good-news letters develop trust between home and school (see also Chapter 3 for a range of strategies to promote a partnership with parents).

### **Activity 7.7: Reaching out to parents**

Positive climate building requires effort to reach out to parents through a range of strategies, for example, having welcome signs, slogans, family fun nights, breakfasts, multicultural lunches, regular parent-teacher meetings, head teacher time for parents, inductions for new parents, school handbooks, positive school assemblies. Parents are made to feel welcome and treated like VIPs. Conflict is resolved quickly and respectfully. The physical environment is attractive and reflects the pride that the community has in its school.

Often, it is not enough just to invite parents and communities to be involved with the school. Coming to the school is easier if either a teacher or another parent makes a personal invitation. Some parents and carers need extra support, for example, with transport, pupil care, translators and information presented in their primary language.

In what way could you reach out to parents, especially the ones who are hard to reach?

### **Effective teaching**

Intervention in response to violence is costly in effort, time and money, so proven school-wide teaching and learning targeted to local requirements are needed. The most critical learning is at the primary stage, for example, through universal socio-emotional skills taught in the classroom, positive playground programmes, parent resource centres. Targeted programmes are used with pupils who need more direct tuition and closer monitoring, for example, small group skill development, behaviour contracts, mediation, anger management and so forth. If violence continues after this focused attention, then tertiary level or clinical interventions are required (see waves model in Chapter 4). Parents, health professionals, educationalists, community and social workers have a role in determining the nature of the difficulties and developing individual response plans for these pupils (see Chapter 4 for a description of the United Kingdom programme for social, emotional and behaviour skills teaching).

### **Activity 7.8: Emotional intelligence**

The overall message from preventative research emphasised by writers such as Goleman 1996) is that schools can: prevent the onset and reduce the severity and duration of problematic substance abuse, bullying, criminal activities, mental health problems and violence, by developing young people's emotional intelligence.

Unfortunately, social and emotional development vies with literacy and numeracy for a place in the curriculum of most schools, as though they were separate enterprises. As most teachers could attest, pupils need social skills and emotional management to co-operate with their peers in learning environments. One of the most time-consuming tasks in some classrooms is helping pupils deal with interpersonal problems. It is possible for teachers to help develop pupils' social and emotional intelligences in formal lessons and by example.

Does your establishment try to teach as well as model the skills an emotionally intelligent person demonstrates?

**Activity 7.9: Direct instruction/teaching**

Does your establishment directly teach any of the following, either for all youngsters or those who do not seem to acquire skills in other ways?

	Yes/no	How and when?
Emotional literacy		
Conflict resolution		
Anger management		
Friendship skills		
Alternatives to aggression		
Problem-solving skills		
Listening skills		
Assertiveness skills		
Values and moral development.		

**Response plans**

A response plan sets out clearly the proactive and reactive programmes that are put in place when violence is an issue. Having a response plan ensures consistency of teacher response and fairness to pupils. When violence occurs, consistent and immediate steps are followed that are known to teachers, pupils, and parents. Children are immediately withdrawn from the conflict area, interviewed by a teacher and referred to targeted programmes. The professional development of teachers and the involvement of parents are crucial parts of the plan.

**Activity 7.10: When violence occurs**

Consider the following two statements.

**Statement 1**

Violence is not acceptable in the school community. There are many reasons for it, and it is widespread, but schools that focus on the issue and persist in working constructively will reduce the incidence and acceptability of violent and aggressive acts which destroy convivencia. The formula is simple: teach personal development skills including emotional literacy and social skills throughout the school; be firm on the bottom line of “no violence”; support the school’s violence response plan, including immediate withdrawal and referral to targeted, remedial programmes; and refer pupils for further intervention when they do not respond to these measures. Children who do not respond to universal and targeted programmes require intense support through a case management model which includes educational psychologists, specialist teachers, parents, other agency specialists and, where necessary, special education settings.

## **Statement 2**

Violence occurs within social contexts and teachers usually know the histories of pupils who act violently. These pupils will benefit from having a mentor who can act as an emotional coach (for example, executive teacher, counsellor, educational psychologist, helping professional, community volunteer) to help them gain the skills of emotional control, co-operation and problem solving. While a lack of emotional control is not behind every act of violence, an immediate withdrawal and interview, no matter what the cause, helps pupils realise that violence is not acceptable and that they will have to give account of their actions, explore alternatives to aggression and consider acts of restitution every time it occurs.

- Is the approach in your school consistent with these statements?
- Is anything missing?
- What response plans do you have in place?
- Do they deal with the cause of the violence, as well as the support for the victims/consequences of violence?

In general, an immediate response to violence includes:

- securing the safety of all pupils – summoning extra help as needed, separating aggressors, dispersing onlookers;
- applying both physical and emotional first aid where necessary;
- gathering the basic facts for an incident report;
- withdrawing violent pupils from the playground immediately – sending or escorting them to the pre-arranged “cool off” area to wait for a crisis interview;
- using pupil-safe methods of restraint but only as a last resort.

Schools could use this list as a check list to review the response plan.

### **Activity 7.11: Choosing a response – punishment or restorative approaches?**

Imagine the following situation which requires a response.

A 13-year-old pupil has, on a number of occasions, hit another pupil in class. The usual school interventions have not worked to limit this behaviour. The parents of the victim go to the police station and want to press charges against the other pupil. One of the school’s response plans is to use restorative justice (see Chapter 3) when situations like this occur. The police officer and school head meet to discuss whether a restorative approach should be used. If the victim’s parents agree then the criminal justice route could be stopped and the restorative justice route could be used.

Compare the two alternatives:

<b>Criminal justice approach</b>	<b>Restorative justice approach</b>
The pupil will be arrested.	A preparation meeting of all concerned agrees the restorative process.
Statements are taken at the police station.	A conference is held where the facts and emotions are clear.
The case is unlikely to be taken to court.	There are mutually agreed outcomes
The pupil is cautioned and a formal police record kept.	The agreement is binding on the pupils, families and school.
The time between the offence and the final outcome will be many weeks.	It is all completed within one week.

If a similar situation occurred in your school consider whether a restorative approach would be a suitable response. You could discuss:

- What would be the emotional reactions of the boys and their families to the two routes?
- What outcomes would your school community want and which route would achieve most?
- Which route would you use if:
  - the “hits” were single blows to the body;
  - the “hits” were punches and kicking when on the ground;
  - the “hits” were severe and prolonged enough to mean that the victim suffered serious injury.

## **Crisis intervention**

### ***Teacher values attitudes and skills***

When working with pupils who have been violent or aggressive, teachers guide them through a set of predictable and known consequences while ensuring opportunities for problem solving, goal setting, skills development and restitution are provided. This role of crisis intervention can be given to executive or nominated teachers or alternatively, every teacher in the school can learn these valuable strategies. The values, attitudes and skills needed when working with violent pupils include:

- respect – neutrality, concern for human dignity, respectful language;
- empathy through understanding of emotional disturbance, violence, pupil development and medical conditions like Asperger’s syndrome;
- optimism – confidence in pupil’s abilities to build up their social and emotional skills;
- modelling calmness, control and problem solving;
- consistency of response;

- emotional coaching and emotional first aid;
- conducting a crisis interview – emotional control, values clarification, problem solving, goal setting, skill development, consequences and restitution;
- mediation;
- no-blame approaches to bullying;
- restitution.

Would this model suit your school environment?

### **Activity 7.12: A response plan**

The needs of your school.

Answers to the following questions might help inform your response plan.

- Is violence or harassment an issue in the school? Where is it occurring? Who is involved? What do the data show? (refer to Chapter 2 for more information on data);
- Do head teachers, teachers and parents lead pupils in respectful ways?
- Is a school-wide discipline policy in place?
- Do teachers practise research-based, effective teaching strategies?
- Are preventative programmes like socio-emotional development and peer leadership part of the regular school programme?
- Are strategies for monitoring inappropriate behaviour in place? Are data collection and management procedures simple to use?
- Have staff, parents and pupils collaborated on the development of behaviour expectations, including rights, responsibilities and consequences?
- Are violence response plans clear and made known to all?
- Are targeted programmes available to pupils identified with socio-emotional skill deficits?
- Are parents involved early when difficulties persist and supported in seeking advice from outside agencies?

### **Auditing**

Systematic monitoring and evaluation of programmes through data collection and analysis is pivotal in focusing an ongoing response to violence. Simple and practical ways of collecting data make it easier for staff to carry out this vital step. Close monitoring of the playground allows clear procedures to be developed and is the basis of feedback to the wider community. Monitoring also acts as a deterrent, in that pupils who know they are being observed adjust and monitor their own behaviour. See Chapters 2 and 5 for a fuller description of how auditing and monitoring can inform school planning.

### **Words of encouragement**

The first few months and possibly years of implementing a violence response plan can be intense and busy times, depending on pre-existing levels of

violence. It helps to see this intense phase of close monitoring and immediate response as a temporary means to an end, a transitory phase to a more settled era. Also, do not expect to be able to do everything at once and be encouraged that every step taken works to reduce violence and harassment, especially in the first few years of a pupil's schooling. School communities need to believe that violence is neither inevitable, nor acceptable, and through appropriate culture and instruction, can be substantially eliminated from the school.

Your school response will, of course, be individual, but in developing your unique profile your training needs should be considered in two areas:

- proactive – What does the school need to develop in staff and pupils that will create an atmosphere where violence is less likely to happen?
- reactive – If violence does occur is your response proactive, problem-solving and non-violent? Do you teach pupils who might respond violently, more proactive skills?

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## Appendix – Children and violence

The Programme of Action “Children and violence” is part of a broader Council of Europe initiative, “Building a Europe for and with children”, whose aim is to streamline a child rights perspective into all of the Organisation’s activities.

In all Council of Europe member states, children are victims of the worst kinds of violence and violation of their human rights. For many good reasons, addressing the issue of respect for children’s rights and their right to protection against violence is a priority for governments in most of the member states. All have ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and are expected to develop national action plans to ensure its full implementation.

Violence affecting children is closely linked to broader forms of violence and organised crime. Violence affects children at school, in the street, in institutions where they are placed and within the family. Children are also victims of global problems such as trafficking in human beings, drug trafficking, terrorism, armed conflicts and cybercrime.

The complexity of the issues at stake calls for a comprehensive strategy likely to co-ordinate the efforts of all key actors and mobilise all resources available. Thus objectives of the programme are:

- promoting and ensuring the application of the rights of children and their protection against all forms of violence;
- directly involving children and young people in policies against violence;
- framing strategies for practical action relating to the various contexts and types of violence against children. Five areas of intervention have been identified: the family; the school; residential institutions; the community; sexual exploitation and abuse of children;
- framing national prevention strategies;
- making proposals for local integrated prevention strategies;
- building awareness and spreading information on children’s rights.

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