



Research Summary

Safe and Special: An evaluation of bullying prevention methods involving pupils with special needs and disabilities

Original report written by Emma McManus and Adrienne Katz

Research Summary edited by Anna Riggall

Contents

1. Introduction	3
1.1 Bullying.....	3
1.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN).....	3
1.2.1 Emotional and behavioural disorders include:.....	3
1.2.2 Learning difficulties.....	4
1.2.3 Physical disabilities.....	4
1.2.4 Autistic spectrum disorders	4
1.2.5 Asperger’s Syndrome	4
2. Context and rationale	5
3. About the project.....	6
3.1 Overall research design	6
3.2 Schools.....	6
3.3 Interviews with pupils	8
3.4 Questionnaires for teachers	8
4. Findings: anti-bullying intervention stories from six schools	9
4.1 Social stories in School A: a residential school for boys with Autistic Spectrum Disorders	9
4.2 A peer support scheme in School B: a mainstream primary school with some pupils with SEN	11
4.3 Social Skills Training in School C: a mainstream secondary school with a high proportion of young people with SEN.....	12
4.4 Drama workshops in School D: a special school for pupils from 3 to 19 years predominately for children and young people with severe and profound learning difficulties.....	13
4.5 A curriculum approach in School E: a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and complex needs.....	14
4.6 Restorative Justice in School F: a school for pupils with moderate and complex learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural disorders	15
5. Conclusions.....	18
References.....	19

1. Introduction

This summary aims to provide an outline of research into the use of bullying prevention methods with pupils with special educational needs (SEN). What follows sets out in brief a context and rationale for the research, gives an account of the project and its methods, provides findings from the qualitative data collected from children, young people and teachers, and finally presents conclusions. The following definitions and terminology have been used in this report:

1.1 Bullying

Bullying is defined as behaviour that is deliberately hurtful (including aggression), repeated often over a period of time and difficult for victims to defend themselves against. This includes physical, verbal and indirect bullying (e.g. rumour spreading) and cyber bullying (e.g. abusive text messages).

1.2 Special Educational Needs (SEN)

This refers to Special Educational Needs (SEN) and disability. Four main types of difficulty all defined as a disability by the Council for Disabled Children. These are emotional and behavioural disorders, learning difficulties, physical disabilities or impairments and autism spectrum disorders. The following descriptions do not cover all SEN and disabilities but aim to give examples of disorders from each group.

1.2.1 Emotional and behavioural disorders include:

- adjustment disorders: sufferers are unable to cope with stressful events or changes in their lives and exhibit strong emotional and behavioural symptoms
- anxiety disorders: these include a number of disorders associated with anxiety such as panic attacks, obsessive compulsive disorder, school phobia and post-traumatic stress disorder
- selective mutism: a child who is physically capable of speaking does not do so in specific social situations such as school
- attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD): a child with ADHD has levels of inattention and hyperactivity that are not consistent with his/her developmental level
- oppositional defiant disorder (ODD): a child with ODD is frequently disobedient, disruptive and aggressive to authority figures
- conduct disorder: children with conduct disorder can be extremely aggressive and violate the rights of others, for example by bullying or threatening them
- anorexia nervosa: those who suffer from anorexia nervosa tend to have a distorted body image and become obsessed with their body weight and keeping themselves thin
- bipolar disorder (or Manic Depressive Disorder): the sufferer of bipolar disorder experiences extreme emotional highs (manic episodes) and lows (depression)
- schizophrenia: a severe emotional disorder; symptoms include hallucinations, paranoid behaviour and disorganised speech (Pacer Center, 2006).

1.2.2 Learning difficulties

Learning difficulties are problems that affect an individual's ability to learn – this might be a result of medical, emotional or speech or language problems (British Institute of Learning Disabilities 2007).

There are three criteria that must be met in order for a learning difficulty to be diagnosed. There must be:

- intellectual impairment, often measured through IQ tests, with an IQ of 50-70 indicating a mild learning difficulty, an IQ of 35-50 a moderate learning difficulty, an IQ of 20-30 a severe learning difficulty and an IQ below 20 a profound learning difficulty
- social or adaptive dysfunction, such as poor social skills that affect the individual's ability to function fully
- early onset, the disorder should be present from childhood and not as a result of an adult disease or illness (British Institute of Learning Disabilities 2007).

1.2.3 Physical disabilities

Physical disabilities are all physiological disorders, impairments and conditions relating to any part of the human anatomy.

1.2.4 Autistic spectrum disorders

There are a range of disorders which come under the heading of autistic spectrum disorders. These include:

- difficulties with non-verbal social behaviours such as keeping eye contact, using facial expressions and gestures appropriately
- inability to make social relationships which are appropriate to their developmental level
- speech and language difficulties and deficits
- an inability to initiate conversations
- obsessive and inflexible about routines and rituals
- an abnormal and intense obsession about a particular interest or object
- repetitive body movements such as hand flapping or rocking
- a lack of empathy
- an inability to understanding from other people's perspectives (National Dissemination Centre For Children With Disabilities, 2004).

1.2.5 Asperger's Syndrome

This disorder shares many of the characteristics as Autism but those with Asperger's have an average or above average IQ (unlike children with Autism who are usually developmentally delayed) and do not have difficulties with speech language, except that they struggle to understand sarcasm, irony and humour (National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disabilities, 2004).

2. Context and rationale

The research project was underpinned by two key ideas:

- that pupils with SEN are at greater risk of being bullied
- that the bullying of pupils with SEN in mainstream and special schools is a problem that potentially affects a large number of individuals.

Pupils with SEN are at greater risk of being bullied

Children and young people with SEN are at a greater risk of being bullied compared to children and young people without SEN (Naboska & Smith, 1993; Peik *et al.*, 2006; Mencap, 2007a). Factors that may increase the risk of an individual with SEN becoming a victim of bullying include physical appearance, lack of social skills, repeated absences from school, having few friends (Smith and Tippett, 2007; Brook *et al.*, 2005) and trouble recognising and reporting bullying incidents (DCSF, 2008). In addition to being at greater risk of being bullied, children and young people with SEN who are bullied are at a greater risk of psychosocial maladjustment compared to victimised children and young people who do not have SEN and/or a disability; this has been described as the 'double jeopardy' effect (Mishna, 2003).

The bullying of pupils with SEN in mainstream and special schools is a problem that potentially affects a large number of individuals

Almost one in five children (around 1.5 million) have SEN without statements and approximately 3 per cent of children and young people have statements of SEN (DfES, 2002 and 2003) and the UK has more than 770,000 disabled children (Contact a Family, 2010). According to Mencap (2007b) eight out of ten young people with learning difficulties who took part in the survey had been bullied. Bullies can be children and young people with or without SEN and bullying happens in special schools just as it does in mainstream schools.

Given the vulnerability of children and young people with SEN and the large numbers of individuals potentially at risk, the research set out to investigate a small number of different methods for tackling bullying of and bullying perpetrated by pupils with SEN in mainstream and special schools.

3. About the project

This small-scale research project conducted between September 2008 and July 2009 focused on six schools and sought to:

- audit the frequency and types of bullying incidents reported by pupils with SEN
- explore the effectiveness of a small number of anti-bullying interventions as reported by pupils and teachers.

The study investigated the prevalence of different forms of bullying, including physical, verbal, relational (such as exclusion and rumour spreading) and cyber bullying. It also sought to explore the frequency of victimization, how well pupils thought bullying was tackled, willingness of pupils to help a victim and pupils' feelings about safety at school. The study was also interested in investigating factors such as enjoyment of school, pupils' thoughts about confiding in peers and staff and pupils' feelings towards teachers.

3.1 Overall research design

In order to meet the aims of the study, the following research plan and methods were used:

- recruitment of six schools
- visits to the schools to gather data about bullying policies and discuss draft interview schedules
- design and pilot of interview questions for pupils
- administration of pre- and post-intervention interviews with pupils (pre-intervention interviews took place in September 2008 and post-intervention interviews took place in March 2009).
- administration of pre- and post-intervention questionnaires for teachers and practitioners (similarly, the pre-intervention questionnaires were administered in September 2008 and the post-intervention questionnaires were administered in March 2009. The study also included pre- and post-intervention questionnaires for parents of the pupils that took part but the findings from these have not been reported in this summary.)
- analysis of qualitative data.

3.2 Schools

Six schools took part in the research project, four of which were special schools and two were mainstream schools. A brief description of the school type and anti-bullying intervention used in each is given below in Table 1.

Table 1: School and anti-bullying intervention descriptions

School	School description	Type of intervention used
School A	Residential special school for boys with autistic spectrum disorders	<p>Social Stories</p> <p>Social stories were developed by Carol Gray in 1991, (The Gray Centre, 2010) specifically for children with ASD, although they are now more widely used with adults with autistic spectrum disorders, children with other social learning difficulties and children without special needs. They are generally used to explore options and potential consequences for social situations which may be challenging to an individual.</p>
School B	Mainstream primary school	<p>Peer Support Scheme: Buddying</p> <p>Peer support schemes involve training pupils to support victims of bullying, or pupils that are alone and/or distressed. Peer support interventions encourage children to act in similar ways to defenders; they are given specialist training on methods such as mediating disputes or counselling victims.</p>
School C	Mainstream secondary school	<p>Social Skills Training</p> <p>Social Skill Training involves teaching pupils about cooperation, friendships and relationship with others. It tries to encourage young people to empathise with their peers and treat others as they would like to be treated.</p>
School D	School for children with special needs, particularly for those with severe learning difficulties.	<p>Drama Workshops</p> <p>Drama has been widely used as a method of exploring bullying with young people. It can enable young people to explore the feelings of the victim, the bully, bystanders and teachers, by acting these roles. By discussing the feelings of each character, exploring their intentions, thoughts, motivations and behaviour choices they are able to explore ways of resolving the problems.</p>
School E	Special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties, and complex needs.	<p>Curriculum Work</p> <p>Integrating anti-bullying work into other curriculum activities, for example, including circle time discussions, art and drama workshops</p>
School F	Special school for children with moderate and complex learning difficulties, many of whom also have emotional and behavioural difficulties.	<p>Restorative Justice</p> <p>Restorative justice enables victims to talk to bullies about their behaviour in a safe and supported environment. A meeting is conducted which involves the bully/bullies, the victim and a support group made up of “people who respect and care” for these pupils.</p>

It was in essence an opportunity sample of schools. They were selected because they were about to start a new anti-bullying intervention, and in the case of the two mainstream schools, had a high proportion of pupils with SEN. The focus of the intervention would start or take place during anti-bullying week. This is run by the Anti-bullying Alliance (Anti-bullying Alliance, 2009) and supported by DCSF. The Anti-bullying Alliance was founded in 2002 by NSPCC and National Children's Bureau. Its aim is to 'develop a consensus around how to stop and prevent bullying, [...] influence policy, [...] and develop and disseminate best practice' (Anti-bullying Alliance, 2010).

3.3 Interviews with pupils

The pre- and post-intervention interviews with pupils focused on the types of bullying witnessed, perpetrated and experienced, reactions to bullying, how well young people thought the school dealt with bullying and the severity of incidents. There were some additional questions in the post-intervention interviews, which were more specific to the anti-bullying programme that had been used in each setting, so that the effectiveness of the intervention could be better discussed. The questions were piloted with a small group from Mencap and senior practitioners from the organisation also gave advice on the questions. A total of 67 children and young people took part in September 2008 and 55 were re-interviewed in March 2009. Due to the range and variation in types and severity of SEN represented in the sample, a number of methods were developed to assist in the interviewing of the children and young people that took part.

3.4 Questionnaires for teachers

Questionnaires for teachers included issues particularly pertinent to children and young people with SEN such as inclusion, pupils' understanding of bullying behaviours and the ability to report bullying. Questions specific to each school's intervention were included. A total of 55 teachers and practitioners responded to the first questionnaire administered in September 2008. A total of 35 responded to the second questionnaire in March 2009. For both questionnaires, the majority of responses came from School A which had the largest teaching and support staff, (38 in the pre-intervention questionnaire and 18 in post-intervention questionnaire).

4. Findings: anti-bullying intervention stories from six schools

This section aims to focus on the anti-bullying interventions explored in each school that took part in the study. It focuses on the particular bullying issues and challenges highlighted by the pupils and teachers of the school and how each anti-bullying intervention was thought to impact on the bullying problems.

4.1 Social stories in School A: a residential school for boys with Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Social Stories in School A

Social stories can be designed to depict a number of different social situations such as bullying incidents and in this school were developed with the teacher or practitioner and child on an individual basis. School A began to use this approach in order to encourage its pupils not to bully, to help them to understand if they were bullied and to learn how to tackle bullying and other forms of conflict in a constructive manner.

All the young people from School A were between 11 and 16 years old, male, and had a diagnosis of Autism or Asperger's syndrome. The main issues related to bullying as identified by pupils and teachers were as follows:

- young people lacked understanding about bullying and had trouble recognising when it was happening to them or others or when they might be bullying peers
- young people found it hard to tolerate the differences and behaviours of other boys
- low empathy, characteristic of autistic spectrum disorders meant that pupils might not fully understand or care about the impact bullying had upon others
- some of the boys expressed their dislike for new pupils and new pupils complained about being victimised: *'Tommy got bullied a lot when he first joined the school but not so much now. I think it was cos he was new and we didn't know much about him. New people usually get bullied.'* (10 year old boy)
- bullying was thought to be common amongst the group who took part in the study: a third said they had been bullied and nearly half said they had bullied others: *'[Verbal bullying] happens frequently, especially if [the victim is] obviously different, visually or verbally.'* (Teacher)
- nearly all the young people reported that physical and verbal bullying happened at the school and thought that indirect bullying (such as pupils being left out) was common. However, this was not thought to be intentional in all cases, some boys liked to *'stick with their own friends'* or stay on their own
- it was reported that young people tended to discriminate against those who had more extreme Autistic symptoms – their differences were cited as a

reason for their victimisation: *‘There’s one boy who can’t help shaking his hands – they call him “flapper boy”’* (10 year old boy).

A few of the young people were negative about the idea of Social Stories, and thought that they were either not suitable or unnecessary for them. They appeared to consider Social Stories as something that the more ‘needy’ and ‘autistic’ pupils used. However most of the boys admitted that it could help them to discuss things like friendship, bullying and behaviour:

‘I don’t personally use social stories but I have seen boys here who have them. They may not always understand social situations. Social stories help them with that. I have noticed some benefits for other boys who have had them. One boy hugely calmed down. I noticed a huge change in his behaviour. I’m not sure if it was because of social stories but it was after he had been doing them. However, I disagree with using them if they are not necessary.’ (13 year old boy).

When asked what kind of things were discussed in Social Stories one boy explained:

‘[It’s] about how to be a good friend. Sometimes I took something from a friend and they would talk about it to me with social stories – like saying “that’s not being a very good friend”. If a person is bullying then they would sit down and go over the problem with that individual person’ (10 year old boy).

Teachers thought that Social Stories were a good way of communicating positive behaviour with their pupils. In particular they reported that:

- social stories could be made visual which was helpful for children with autistic spectrum disorders
- what constitutes bullying could be explored as could positive solutions for conflict
- young people could explore what they should do if they are bullied
- young people could learn that bullying is unacceptable and understand how it affects others.

Some teachers commented that the older pupils were more resistant to this approach than younger pupils. In some cases they reported that the older pupils perhaps felt patronised by the materials used, particularly visual aids, which were cartoons: *‘the response can vary greatly. Some students will engage in social stories and others can find the concept difficult to grasp or patronising’* (Teacher). Some added that perhaps if these props were modified for an older audience the intervention would have more of an impact and resonance with the older age ranges: *‘older students tend to think it’s only for younger children’* (Teacher).

4.2 A peer support scheme in School B: a mainstream primary school with some pupils with SEN

Buddying in School B

School B chose a peer support scheme as their intervention, training older pupils as 'buddies'. Buddying is the simplest form of peer support, which encourages pupils to befriend children who are lonely, upset, distressed or bullied (Naylor and Cowie, 1999). Naylor and Cowie's research suggests that if peers 'hang out' with children with SEN (without necessarily developing a close friendship) this can help to prevent them from being bullied.

Participants in School B were aged between nine and ten. Most had statements for mild learning difficulties and a few had statements for emotional and behavioural difficulties.

Few incidents of bullying were reported by the pupils interviewed at this school. Those incidents that were reported tended to be indirect and verbal in nature. Children generally felt the school was 'friendly' and a place where people would try to help you if you were bullied or had a problem. The teachers were reportedly quick to react to bullying incidents, always tried to help and were always present on the playground: *'if someone is being bullied [the teachers] make them sort it out – they make them shake their hands and be friends'* (9 year old girl).

In September when the first visits to the school were undertaken the children had just made formal applications to take part as a buddy. They had to state their reasons for wanting to be a buddy, why they thought they would be a good buddy and state how much of their playtime they would be willing to commit. Buddies were given training shortly afterwards about the work which they had to do. Training was carried out by the deputy head teacher and consisted of five 30 minute sessions. The last session included an assessment role play where children demonstrated their learning.

The children who took part in this study had trained as buddies. They reported enjoying spending time and playing with young children, being a good role model and looking after the young children. They also all believed that having buddies helped to reduce bullying.

The teachers were also positive about the buddy scheme. They reported that it had resulted in:

- fewer bullying incidents to address
- more competent children in terms of dealing with their own and others' disputes
- an improved school ethos.

Teachers said the challenges included:

- the time involved to set up and run the buddying scheme
- dealing with occasional inappropriate behaviour.

4.3 Social Skills Training in School C: a mainstream secondary school with a high proportion of young people with SEN

Social Skills Training in School C

The school chose to implement a social skills training intervention. The aim of the approach was to improve the ways the girls related to one another through group work and discussions during PE. PE lessons were chosen to deliver the programme because of the social nature of the subject and the opportunities it gave to discuss relevant topics, for example group formation/choosing partners and teams. The programme continued for ten weeks with a discussion at the beginning of each PE lesson.

In School C, most of the young people interviewed had statements for learning difficulties and a few had statements for emotional and behavioural disorders. All were girls and 'girl bullying' was identified as a particular problem for this school.

Typical bullying behaviours reported by the young people included 'dirty looks', rumour spreading and verbal abuse. However, the pupils interviewed talked positively of the school's Personalised Learning Centre (the staff were reported to be individuals that young people would confide in if they were worried or bullied). Teachers were generally highly rated in terms of their approachability and way they dealt with bullying: *'teachers do try to do something about bullying and smoking and stuff like that'* (11 year old girl); *'I like the Personalised Learning Centre cos when you come in here people are friendly and you feel welcome'* (12 year old girl).

The young people who took part were generally very positive about the programme and felt that it had helped to reduce bullying at the school. According to those interviewed the work helped them to:

- reflect on their own behaviour and the effect this had upon others: *'others had to think about how I felt'* (12 year old girl)
- cooperate and work together
- learn how to make and maintain friends
- understand more about the differences of others
- talk about bullying and social exclusion
- reduce girl bullying.

Some of the young people interviewed said they did not remember the anti-bullying work. This does not necessarily mean they did not benefit from the intervention but it could also indicate that the effects are short term. Further research would be needed to explore this issue further.

According to the teachers involved in the programme Social Skills Training worked very well for the students in Year 7 who responded well. The teachers commented:

'The youngsters responded favourably and outcomes were positive.'

'The method is effective because it is innovative.'

'It showed them skills that they already have from getting on well in teams to friendship groups.'

The programme was also trialled with a Year 9 group who were much more resistant. After a few lessons it was decided that the programme did not appear to be appropriate with this group. Therefore it seems that such a project is better aimed at the younger secondary year groups.

4.4 Drama workshops in School D: a special school for pupils from 3 to 19 years predominately for children and young people with severe and profound learning difficulties

Drama workshops in School D

The school chose to do a series of Drama Workshops with the young people in the sixth form to talk about bullying and explore ways of responding to bullies. Some of the workshops were filmed and a DVD was created so the workshops could be used again as a PSHE tool and assist in reinforcing the lessons learned. This DVD had subsequently been used in other schools as a resource for supporting discussions about bullying.

All the pupils from School D who took part in the study had severe learning difficulties and over half also had physical disabilities.

Many pupils at this school had difficulty answering questions about the frequency and timing of bullying incidents, for example, how recently they had been the victim of bullying or whether bullying behaviour was repeated. In some cases pupils did not give a response to questions or their answer was not coherent to the researchers. However, from the information given by these pupils it was possible to discern that direct bullying such as physical and verbal forms were the most frequently experienced. Bullying outside school was reported by a few of the young people, for example name calling when getting on and off the bus.

Collecting data in School D posed some problems for the researchers. The severity of the learning difficulties of many pupils made interviewing and analysing data more challenging. When interviewed a second time, a number of the pupils said they did not remember doing the drama workshops or just did not understand or answer the questions. This lack of data in some areas of the interview schedule meant that the researchers did not have as much information regarding the enjoyment (or otherwise) of the intervention or the individual thoughts about the impacts the intervention may have had, as they would have liked. However, pupils who did comment on their involvement in the workshops were very positive. They commented that they had:

- enjoyed acting and pretending
- learnt about bullying and friendships including how to stay safe, to be kind to others and to tell bullies to stop.

When asked what they had learnt from the intervention two young people commented:

'Learn to be friends and not bully. Try to be friends with other people' (18 year old girl).

'Learn to say "stop" and tell the teacher' (18 year old boy).

Teachers were positive about the intervention and thought that the drama workshops had reduced bullying, made pupils more likely to intervene and raised awareness and understanding about bullying: *'students are aware of the range of forms of bullying and will stop others if they perceive them to be going down this route, using the word "bully"'* (teacher). They also commented that the DVD, flashcards and worksheets that were part of the workshops helped to reinforce the messages: *'bullying became a concrete issue and the drama reinforced the need to use the word and tell someone if they feel they have been bullied'* (teacher).

4.5 A curriculum approach in School E: a special school for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and complex needs

A Curriculum Approach in School E

School E focused much of its work during anti-bullying week on a Curriculum Approach. Bullying prevention work was conducted in art, drama, and PSHE lessons. A play on bullying was performed, filmed and shown to other students, posters were made and bullying was discussed in assemblies and circle time. Some of this work, such as the circle time discussions and role play continued throughout the year.

The participants from School E had statements of SEN for learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders or both. Staff and pupils identified the following issues related to bullying:

- physical forms of bullying were the most common
- bullying outside school was reported as a problem by some of the young people
- many of the young people said they responded to violence/conflict with violence.

There was a mixed reaction from pupils about the activities conducted during anti-bullying week. Some complained that the activities were boring and did not help to stop bullying: *'people are always going to pick on each other no matter what you do'* (13 year old girl). One young person who had been bullied commented that *'you learn about bullying when it happens to you'* (13 year old boy). However, others said that they enjoyed the anti-bullying work and felt that they could help to discourage bullying, raise awareness, encourage people to report incidents and support victims: *'It was good, it let people know if they were bullied they should tell their teacher or their mum'* (13 year old girl). Young people particularly seemed to enjoy the drama approaches. Those who were involved enjoyed acting and felt proud about their achievements. Pupils who watched the DVD liked seeing their peers in the film.

Teachers thought that the interventions had raised awareness about different forms of bullying and facilitated discussions about bullying behaviour with victims and

perpetrators. They also commented that the assembly at the end of anti-bullying week which had showcased the work the pupils had taken part in, was a particularly important aspect of the intervention.

Some staff raised concerns about the difficulties associated with changing the behaviours of some of the young people, particularly those who had Attention Deficit Disorder and emotional and behavioural disorders. Some individuals had difficulty regulating their own behaviour and reflecting on their actions and the actions of others. However, they had found the intervention adaptable and therefore were able to make it more accessible to all.

As in School D, the researchers found that some pupils were not able to remember the intervention work when re-interviewed in March 2009 and others were not clear as to what was, and was not, anti-bullying work.

4.6 Restorative Justice in School F: a school for pupils with moderate and complex learning difficulties and emotional and behavioural disorders

Restorative Justice in School F

School F chose to use a Restorative Justice approach to tackle bullying and aggressive and unwanted behaviour. The approach aims to show the bully that their behaviour is unacceptable and not condoned by peers and teachers whilst also respecting the bully as an individual and listening to their point of view. The ultimate goal is to democratically find a resolution to the problem by including the viewpoints of all those affected by the behaviour, victim included. The bully should make steps to repair the damage, such as apologise and make amends. A solution can be agreed by both parties.

The Restorative Justice programme ran alongside an incentive scheme to encourage good behaviour and other existing anti-bullying strategies. These however, were thought to be failing.

Many of the pupils at School F had been excluded from one or more schools. Half the pupils had learning difficulties and half had emotional and behavioural disorders. All were between 12 and 15 years of age.

The main issues related to bullying reported by pupils and teachers included:

- the verbal and physical nature of the bullying: *'sometimes when I try to play with other people I get told to go away. I get called names quite a lot. I try to ignore it but that doesn't help. Sometimes I call them names back. One boy pushes and attacks people. He chooses people weaker than him. He pushed and attacked me before'* (12 year old girl)
- many pupils indicating they would respond aggressively if they were bullied, for example by fighting back and/or swearing
- some young people reporting bullying outside school rather than in school – pupils felt less safe in their neighbourhood than in school and also reported more fighting and getting into trouble: *'physical and verbal bullying outside school normally happens at the park, the shops and the youth club – calling names and hitting'* (12 year old boy)

- some staff expressing concerns that positive anti-bullying work inside school was constantly being undermined by negative, aggressive behaviours modelled outside school.

Most of the young people were positive about the intervention. They particularly liked the ability it had to:

- allow both parties to calm down before the meeting
- allow both sides of the story to be heard: *'you sit down with the other girl and the teacher and talk about why there is a problem. Then you try to go over it and decide what to do. Sometimes you just agree to stay away from each other'* (14 year old girl)
- improve behaviour: *'it always helps people to get their behaviour right – they will take [children who misbehave] out of class and talk to them and then they be good'* (15 year old boy)
- resolve issues between pupils.

A small number of young people said the bullying incidents were not always fully resolved and effects could be short term: *'it does work; at least it works for a while. But everyone is still going to bully again sometimes. With me and this girl we were fine for about another two weeks and then we had a fight again and had to do it all again. But it does help a bit'* (14 year old girl). There were also complaints that sometimes pupils would say the right thing in the context of the restorative justice meeting but would not change their behaviour. Some had the attitude that there will always be some bullying regardless of the approach used: *'they deal with it (bullying) if they know about it, but they don't find out about everything, and sometimes they don't know who to believe as different people will say different things'* (12 year old boy).

The teachers were positive about the intervention commenting that it helped pupils to feel listened to and express their views in a safe environment: *'our students often think that no one cares or listens, this proves someone does'*. The teachers also reported some challenges associated with the intervention. These included:

- general resistance from some staff and pupils
- the intervention being considered by some too 'soft' an approach
- posing some difficulties for children and young people with communication and/or comprehension difficulties
- posing some challenges for pupils who found it hard to empathise with others.

Teachers suggested that many of these problems could be reduced and Restorative Justice could be improved if:

- good explanations are given about the approach so that parents, staff and pupils have a good understanding and recognise that it does not 'let bullies off'
- it is run in a consistent manner – training is important and visiting other schools to see the approach in practice was recommended
- pupils are given time to 'cool off' if necessary before the meeting

- staff are patient and persistent with the approach and realise that it can be time consuming
- the approach is adapted for children and young people with communication and more severe learning difficulties – for example language can be simplified and students can write down or use visual aids to describe feelings if necessary
- the goal for each meeting is carefully considered and the possible outcomes are thought about in advance.

5. Conclusions

The six schools that took part all faced quite different issues related to bullying. In many the types of bullying were similar (e.g. physical or verbal) but each setting had a unique set of factors, which shaped the intervention they adopted.

The interventions chosen by the six schools differed in style and nature. Overall pupils and teachers were positive about these interventions in terms of their enjoyment and their perceived impact on reducing bullying behaviour. However, there were some issues raised concerning the long term impact or practicality, for example the time taken to implement.

Overall, the comments made by young people in particular suggest that these anti-bullying interventions:

- could help children and young people with SEN recognise bullying when they see or experience it
- have the potential to give children and young people with SEN more tools to help them deal with bullying behaviour
- have the potential to give children and young people with SEN more tools to help prevent them from bullying others
- could help mainstream and special schools tackle bullying.

Finally, this study has highlighted some areas worthy of further research. In particular it would be useful to explore bullying and anti-bullying interventions in relation to more specific and narrower groupings of SEN with a much larger sample. This could allow for greater insights into which interventions are most suitable for and easily adapted for different special needs and disabilities. This was not possible in this study because of the small sample size. It would also be useful to explore in greater detail how anti-bullying interventions, such as those used in the schools involved in this study, are actually implemented in different settings. Such research would be of value to those concerned with or actively implementing such initiatives in their own settings.

References

- ANTI-BULLYING ALLIANCE (2009). *Anti-bullying Week 2009* [online]. Available: http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/get_involved/anti-bullying_week.aspx [23 February, 2010].
- ANTI-BULLYING ALLIANCE (2010). *About Us* [online]. Available: http://www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/section_1.aspx [26 February, 2010].
- BRITISH INSTITUTE OF LEARNING DISABILITIES (2007). *Fact sheet-learning disabilities*, [online]. Available: <http://www.bild.org.uk/docs/05faqs/Factsheet%20Learning%20Disabilities.pdf> [25 February, 2010].
- THE BRITISH PSYCHOLOGICAL SOCIETY (2009). *Ethical Principles for Conducting Research with Human Participants* [online]. Available: [http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download\\$.cfm?file_uid=F1C8E142-E935-EC00-75FD-519F1FDDEA5D&ext=pdf](http://www.bps.org.uk/document-download-area/document-download$.cfm?file_uid=F1C8E142-E935-EC00-75FD-519F1FDDEA5D&ext=pdf) [23 February, 2010].
- BROOK, L., KATZ, A. and STOCKDALE, D. (2005). 'A strategy for inclusion and Special Educational Needs: Towards enhanced educational provision for Coventry', *Young Voice*, [no longer available online].
- CONTACT A FAMILY (2010). *Statistics: Information about families with disabled children*, [online]. Available: <http://www.cafamily.org.uk/professionals/research/statistics.html> [23 February, 2010].
- DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES (2008). *Bullying involving Children with Special Needs and Disabilities (Safe to Learn: Embedding anti-bullying work in schools)* (DCSF-00372-2008) [online]. Available: <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/doc/12626/7655-dcsf-anti-bullying.pdf> [23 February, 2010].
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2002). *Special Educational Needs in England: January 2002 (Provisional)* (DFES: SFR11/2002) [online]. Available: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000332/sfr11-2002.pdf> [23 February, 2010].
- DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS (2003). *Pupil Characteristics and Class Sizes in Maintained Schools in England: January 2003 (Provisional)* (DFES: SFR09/2003) [online]. Available: <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000390/sfr09-2003v2.pdf> [23 February, 2010].
- FERGUSON, C.J., SAN MIGUEL, C., KILBURN, J.C. JR, SANCHEZ, P. (2007). 'The effectiveness of school-based anti-bullying programmes. A meta-analytic review', *Criminal Justice Review*, **32**, 401-414.
- THE GRAY CENTER FOR SOCIAL LEARNING AND UNDERSTANDING (2010). *Carol Gray*. [online] Available: <http://www.thegraycenter.org/social-stories/carol-gray> [23 February, 2010].
- MENCAP (2007a). *Disablist bullying is wrecking children's lives says Mencap* (Press Release) [online]. Available: <http://www.mencap.org.uk/news.asp?id=2355> [23 February, 2010].

MENCAP (2007b). *Bullying Wrecks Lives: the experiences of children and young people with a learning disability*, [online]. Available: <http://www.mencap.org.uk/document.asp?id=164> [23 February, 2010].

MISHNA, F. (2003). 'Learning Disabilities and Bullying: Double Jeopardy', *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, **36**, 336-347.

NATIONAL DISSEMINATION CENTRE FOR CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES (2004). *Autism and Pervasive Development Disorders*, (Factsheet 1 FS1), [online]. Available: <http://www.spiritlakeconsulting.com/SLC/sharedfiles/library/books/autismNICHY.pdf> [26 February, 2010].

NAYLOR, P. and COWIE, H. (1999). 'The effectiveness of peer support systems in challenging school bullying: the perspectives and experiences of teachers and pupils', *Journal of Adolescence*, **22**, 3, 467-479.

NABOSKA, D. and SMITH, P.K. (1993). 'Sociometric status and social behaviour of children with or without learning difficulties', *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, **34**, 1435-1448.

PACER CENTRE (2006). 'What is an Emotional or Behavioural Disorder?' *Action Information Sheets* [ACTION Sheet: PHP-c 81] [online]. Available: <http://www.pacer.org/parent/php/PHP-c81.pdf> [25 February, 2010].

PIEK, J.P., BAYNAM, G.B. and BARRETT, N.C. (2006). 'The relationship between fine and gross motor ability, self-perceptions and self worth in children and adolescents', *Human Movement Science*, **25**, 453-463.

RIGBY, K. (2002). 'How successful are anti-bullying programmes for schools?' Paper presented at The Role of Schools in Crime Prevention Conference convened by the Australian Institute of Criminology in conjunction with the Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria and Crime Prevention Victoria and held in Melbourne, 30 September-2 October, 2002 [online]. Available: http://www.aic.gov.au/events/aic%20upcoming%20events/2002/~/_media/conferences/schools/rigby.ashx [23 February, 2010].

SMITH, P.K., ANANIADOU, K. and COWIE, H. (2003). 'Interventions to reduce school bullying', *Canadian Journal of Psychiatry*, **48**, 591-599.

SMITH, P.K. and TIPPETT, N. (2007). *Bullying and Disability Research Briefing for Anti-bullying Alliance* [no longer available online].

SWEETING, H. and WEST, P. (2001). 'Being different: Correlates of teasing and bullying at age 11', *Research Papers in Education*, **16**, 225-245.