

Governors have an important role to play in ensuring that their school has an effective policy, which is operated by all staff. Governors can expect to be kept up-to-date on the progress of their school's anti-bullying work including statistics of reported incidents and reactions to them. All members of the school community should be invited to discuss the related issues and agree on appropriate practice. Senior management should give a lead so that staff can deal with any incidents consistently and all incidents should be followed up to check the bullying has not started again. The DfES recommends that a key member of staff undertakes the monitoring.

Governors are expected to be able to:

- explain and communicate the policy to all interested parties including parents/carers
- deal with unresolved complaints about bullying through the schools-based complaints procedure
- feedback on the monitoring and evaluation of policy and practices.

The important role that governors play in consulting all interested parties when reviewing their school's anti-bullying policy, communicating it and gathering information to allow them to monitor its effectiveness and implementation is detailed in CSF's Guidance on Preventing and Responding to Bullying (2003). Advice to schools on promoting anti-bullying strategies is available from various CSF bodies as part of CSF's Behaviour and Achievement Strategy. This includes training sessions on PSHE and Citizenship, role playing, drama, counselling, peer mentoring and assertiveness skill building. Such training will focus on giving children and young people the enhanced expertise to listen, respect others' viewpoints and act in partnership. These are three principles that lie at the heart of Children, Schools and Families.

Communicating with parents/carers

Parental support is often a key to success or failure in anti-bullying initiatives. Involvement with parents/carers should be a continuing process and will enhance the effectiveness of the school's approaches. Parents of pupils who are new to the school should receive a copy of the policy. This may be particularly relevant when a pupil joins half way through a term. If bullying is reported, parents/carers need to be informed in a sensitive and responsible manner as soon as possible after the real or alleged incident.

Valuable information is provided in CSF's booklet for parents and carers: *Bullying, What you can do if you think a child is being bullied or is bullying others*. All schools should have copies of this document.

The DfES (2002) recommends the following whole school approaches:

- Regular consultation and communication
- Provision of information about the nature and effects of bullying
- Advice for parents/carers on possible consequences of their children bringing valuable items to school
- Putting on a drama to which parents/carers are invited.

If parents/carers are concerned that their child is being bullied or might be being bullied, it is essential that they make sure their child knows that it is safe for them to tell an adult. If a child does not use speech, the parent can try making up a sign, symbol or picture, which their child could use to show they are being bullied. If a child says s/he is being bullied, the parents/carers should let them know that they are believed and that it is not their fault. The parents/carers should contact their child's classteacher or form teacher as soon as possible to discuss ways to try and resolve the problem.

If this does not succeed, parents need to talk to the headteacher and if this does not bear fruit, they need to contact the chairman of governors. Again if this is not satisfactory, they should contact CSF's Conciliation Service based at County Hall. Under the Education Act 2002 there is a legal requirement for maintained schools to have a complaints procedures which is publicised.

Parents/carers can help their children to respond effectively by rehearsing assertiveness strategies at home with their them and by reinforcing anti-bullying messages and methods being taught at school. In its training and publications the anti-bullying charity Kidscape highlights the importance of this.

Appendix 1

Checklist about bullying issues for governors

- Does the ethos of the school encourage or discourage bullying?
- Does the school already have whole school policies and strategies which specifically identify and address bullying? If so, how are they being implemented and are they effective?
- How do pupils/parents/carers and others know what the school's policy on bullying is?
- Does the policy apply to staff and parents/carers?
- How are policies explicit about sanctions?
- Does the whole school community know that sanctions will be taken against bullying?
- Is there someone that a pupil who bullies or has been bullied can talk to in confidence?
- How do pupils complain about bullying, are complaints dealt with effectively and quickly and do they have confidence in the complaints procedures and how are they involved in them?
- How does the school support and work with those who bully or have been bullied?
- Does the school keep a record of bullying incidents to look for common themes and to pinpoint areas in which specific intervention would be useful?
- Are training needs kept under scrutiny?
- Do staffing policies take into account supervision of areas where pupils are more vulnerable to bullying?
- When did the school last look at how the playground is being used and whether it is a place which caters for the variety of play needs which pupils have?
- Does the school link with outside agencies such as the police and bus companies to minimise bullying on the way to and from school?
- How does the school involve parents/carers in its anti-bullying work?
- Does the school clearly set out its complaints procedure in the school prospectus or annual report? Do governors monitor parents' complaints on bullying? Could the governing body justify the school's response in court?
- How are pupils encouraged to take responsibility for themselves and others?
- Are there opportunities for pupils to discuss safely what is happening in their class or in the school in general?
- Does the school value individuality and nurture the emotional life of its pupils?

Based on: ACE Bulletin 99 February 2001
Published by the Advisory Centre
for Education

Appendix 2

Questions to stimulate reflections on policy and practices in governors' own schools

Questions	Space for comments
Do you have a policy and when was it last reviewed?	
When will the policy be reviewed again and who will be involved?	
Is there a planned teaching programme allowing pupils progressively to develop appropriate understanding and competencies?	
Do pupils find out about anti-bullying issues in assemblies?	
Do the School Council or Year Councils discuss it?	
Are there books or other information about bullying in the library?	
Has bullying been discussed at parent-teacher meetings?	
Have all staff including MSAs had training about dealing with bullying?	
Other issues	