

Bullying



Mental Health and well-being provision in schools. A review of published policies and Information Research Report. October 2018. Rebecca Brown. Social Science in Government (UK)

Schools' approaches to promoting positive learning behaviours

The majority of schools present clear expectations of pupils' behaviour which are closely connected to their values and behavioural policies. All policies should include behavioural strategies that involve rewards for positive behaviours, and forms of sanctions for negative behaviours.

Rewards identified within the behaviour policies for primary schools included: some form of merits/points, class treats, recognition of positive behaviour in assemblies and through letters home, added responsibilities, and more informal and ad-hoc praise. In secondary schools rewards included: points, vouchers, entry to the prom, activities such as days out, added responsibilities, recognition in assemblies, school councils, informing parents, and being given a higher school status for continued positive behaviour.

Sanctions identified within the behaviour policies for primary schools included: reflection/time out, informing parents, and privileges being taken away, such as participating in class treats. Similarly, in secondary schools sanctions included: isolation time, detention, right to attend the prom, and other school activities removed and informing parents. Exclusions were always cited as a last resort, or for the most severe behaviour.

Overall extent schools' behaviour and anti-bullying approaches promoted respectful school and mental health

Behaviour policies that were rated highly for promoting mental health and well-being included the following elements:

- Disruptive behaviour was considered as a possible manifestation of social, emotional, and mental health needs.
- Schools focussed on work to promote self-esteem and self-discipline to address disruptive behaviour, rather than to sanction disruptive behaviour.
- Schools focussed on trying to understand the underlying causes of a pupils' disruptive behaviour, and provided one-to-one pastoral support to address the underlying causes of the behaviour.

For example:

The school places emphasis on understanding the emotional aspects of learning and ensuring that children build self-esteem. Targetted support is provided for pupils with social, emotional and mental health needs (SEMH).

Some pupils experience SEMH needs for a variety of reasons, e.g. early childhood experience, environmental factors, inconsistent parenting, bereavement, bullying/discrimination and disaffection.

Pupils are identified through different school systems, such as: pupil progress meetings, Special educational needs, and through concerns raised by staff and/or parent/carers. [The] academy investigates the concerns to gain an understanding of the cause and nature of the misbehaviour and consideration is given to how the underlying causes will be addressed through intervention and support.



Anti-bullying policies, that rate highly for promoting mental health and wellbeing focus on building resilience, reparation and understanding of bullying behaviour, both from the perspective of the bullied and the bully as possible indicators of mental health needs. For example:

- Strategies to work with pupils struggling to make friends to boost confidence and self-esteem.
- Establish support mechanisms to help children who are being bullied. This could be an assigned group of staff or a group of pupils formed through a peer support scheme.
- Peer support schemes such as buddying, peer listening, or peer mediation can create a happier, friendlier environment and offer much needed support to children who have problems.
- Bullying often takes place in groups. Children have a choice of watching from the margins, joining in, trying to remain uninvolved or trying to help those being bullied.
- Acknowledge and reward children who help prevent bullying.
- Using additional support to help those students that find making and keeping friends difficult.
- Having friends is one of the best defences against bullying, but not everyone has the right social skills to make friends easily.
- Teaching assertiveness skills and confidence-building to individuals, small groups, and classes may be a way to make more children make friends.
- Understanding the behaviour of the bully and understanding this behaviour in the context of possible traumatic life events.
- The victim may need support through sessions with the school counsellor, or if his/her academic progress has been affected.
- The bully may need to be punished but also, he or she may need to see the counsellor to help modify the behaviour. He or she may need to be encouraged to take part in positive activities.

Reference:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

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