

ACCS

Newsletter Nuachtiris

Cumann na Scoileanna Pobail is Cuimsitheacha Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools

No. 4 2012/2013

IN THIS ISSUE

- The Well Being of our Students
- The ISPCC Shield Campaign and Anti-Bullying Week from 4th – 10th March, 2013
- 'Well Being in Post-Primary Schools'
- Action Plan on Bullying
- Young Scientist Champions from Kinsale Community School
- Advertising Teaching Positions:

The Well Being of our Students

Over the past few weeks two substantial documents have been launched that relate to the well being of our students. The Minister for Education and Skills was involved in both reports, the new Action Plan on Bullying and the Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention titled 'Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools'. Both of these documents are very relevant for our schools, but with the Action Plan on Bullying running to 125 pages and the Guidelines on Mental Health Promotion (with a summary document) amounting to 100 pages, we felt that a summary of both would help our Principals and Boards of Management to understand the main elements contained in the reports and highlight what schools need to do in relation to the recommendations made therein.

The Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills was published on 29th January 2013. This report sets out the findings of the Working Group in regard to how bullying happens and how it is best prevented in our primary and second level schools. This Action Plan on Bullying is the first of its kind in Ireland and highlights the critical role of schools in dealing with bullying.

Following an Anti-Bullying Forum in May 2012, the Minister set up this working group to explore ways to tackle the serious problem of bullying in schools. Following submissions from various stakeholders and comprehensive consultations and research from other jurisdictions, including one from ACCS, the report was completed and is a very comprehensive, relevant and useful document. This document now forms the basis for the Implementation Group that is being set up to

develop new national anti-bullying procedures for primary and post-primary schools. At the launch of the Action Plan the Minister for Education and Skills said: 'I see this as a great opportunity to reinvigorate and strengthen our approach to preventing and tackling bullying in schools'.

'Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools', Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention were launched on 31 January 2013 as an important tool to support schools in addressing issues of mental health promotion and suicide prevention.

The Guidelines come in two parts. A very detailed 74 page document and a summary 30 page document. The Guidelines provide a clear framework of a whole-school model for student mental health which was informed by the completion of an extensive literature review and consultation process. ACCS was involved in the consultation process and endorses this document as a very worthwhile and comprehensive guideline for the promotion of well being in schools and a template for dealing with mental health issues for the students in our schools.

ACCS will hold a workshop at our upcoming Convention on 'Cyberbullying' to inform our Principals and Boards of Management of the specific concerns attached to this form of bullying and ways of dealing with it effectively.

While all of this documentation and resultant updated procedures could be viewed as yet more work for our schools, they are very well researched and practical guides that will enable schools in providing a safe and healthy environment for all students.

The ISPCC Shield Campaign and Anti-Bullying Week from 4th – 10th March, 2013

The ISPCC is well aware of both the impact of bullying and the challenges of dealing with it and as a result they are launching the ISPCC Shield Campaign to address this complex and multifaceted issue that the whole community has a role in dealing with.

The Campaign has a number of components:

- **Anti-Bullying Awareness Week from 4th – 10th March** with a nationwide media campaign to raise awareness.
- **The Development of the ISPCC 'Shield My School' Programme** – a self-evaluation tool to combat bullying. The ISPCC aim to offer a positive and proactive response to bullying which will reduce its incidence nationwide. They will do this through the development of a comprehensive toolkit for all schools. This will take the form of a self-assessment tool designed to assist schools to understand and reflect on how effective they currently are in tackling bullying.
- **A National Day of Action on Friday 8th March** – ISPCC staff and volunteers will be selling the ISPCC Bullying Shield (€2) nationwide to raise awareness and funds for their Anti-Bullying work.

- **The ISPCC are inviting schools to hold their own anti-bullying week** from 4th – 10th March (or whenever is convenient) and to support this the **ISPCC will provide the following to schools:**

- The ISPCC Shield My School Program self evaluation tool. There will also be one-to-one support available for schools from their Bullying Co-ordinator if required.
- Information leaflets for parents and teachers, students, bystanders and children who bully.
- Posters & Infographics to help combat bullying.

These resources are free to download at www.ispcc.ie from Monday, 4th March, 2013.



Visit our website at www.accs.ie



This newsletter is a private and confidential document for circulation only to Boards of Management and Principals.
Please circulate to Board Members.



ACCS: 10H Centrepoint Business Park,
Oak Drive, Dublin 12.
Tel: 01 460 1150 Fax: 01 460 1203
E-mail: office@accs.ie
Website: www.accs.ie

'Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools'

Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention.
Some observations from the Guidelines:

- The *My World Survey* (Headstrong 2012) found that the presence of one supportive adult in a young person's life is critically important to their well-being, sense of connectedness, self-confidence, and ability to cope with difficulties.
- Suicide and self-harm statistics among young people indicate that Ireland has the fourth highest rate of youth suicide in Europe.
- Young people can be exposed to many risk and protective factors which influence their mental health and well-being.
Protective factors in the school environment that help to build resilience in young people include:
 - Providing a positive school climate
 - Ensuring a sense of belonging and connectedness to school
 - Actively implementing school policies related to mental health
 - Having protocols and support systems in place that proactively support young people and their families, should mental health difficulties arise
 - Developing positive teacher student and teacher-parent relationships
 - Supporting the development of positive relationships with peers
 - Fostering expectations of high achievement and providing opportunities for success
 - Using positive classroom management strategies
 - Focusing on social and emotional learning and the development of problem solving skills through SPHE
 - Providing support for teachers, including CPD
 - Encouraging young people to participate in extra curricular activities
 - Working collaboratively to prevent young people from early school leaving
- The Guidelines propose a continuum of support at three levels:
 - School Support for ALL:
This is a whole-school approach. It is a process of prevention, effective mainstream teaching and identifying young people who show signs of mental difficulties.
 - School Support for Some:
This is a whole-school approach and focuses on identifying young people who are at risk of developing unhealthy patterns of behaviour or who are already showing early signs of mental health difficulties.
 - School Support for a Few:
This builds on a whole-school approach and focuses on putting in place interventions for young people with more complex and enduring needs. It may involve external agencies that support and complement the work of the school.
- The Health Promoting School (HPS) is a dynamic concept underpinned by a reflective planning and learning cycle that supports on-going development and growth. Schools need to contact their local Health Service Executive (HSE) Health Promotion Office if they wish to become involved in the process. See pages 16 – 20 of Guidelines for more detail.
- A good SPHE/ RSE programme is essential to support Mental Health in schools. The key factors necessary for successful implementation of SPHE include:
 - Proactive leadership
 - An experienced co-ordinator of SPHE
 - A core team of teachers of SPHE and RSE who are committed to accessing continuing professional development
 - Participative, active teaching and learning approaches and strategies
- The Whole-School Guidance Plan should detail roles, responsibilities and practices of school personnel in the student support structure. Parents and students must be seen as an essential part of the process.
- The Guidelines include some very useful tools and contact details concerning mental health supports including:
 - Details of the Support Pack from NEPS (Page 33 of Guidelines)
 - Details of the all the Support Services from the DES and their areas of support that can be accessed by schools (page 46 of Guidelines)
 - Questionnaires that can be used by management, staff, students and parents for self-evaluation of mental health promotion in the school.
 - Best practice guidelines for SPHE and RSE
 - External Agency Support advice

The Guidelines can be downloaded from:
www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/Well_Being_PP_Schools_Guidelines.pdf

Action Plan on Bullying

The Anti-Bullying Working Group was tasked with developing a plan to identify the priorities that need to be addressed to combat bullying in schools. The working group recognised that there is potential for bullying wherever children, young people and adults gather. They were also aware of the role of parents and the wider community in creating a climate that does not tolerate or foster bullying and which helps children and young people to build resilience. The working group made a number of recommendations for consideration which go further than the school environment.

The report is divided into sections as follows:

Section 1: What is Bullying?

Various definitions of bullying were considered while acknowledging that the 1993 definition in the DES Guidelines needed updating.

A very powerful definition was suggested by Sercombe and Donnelly which describes bullying as a relationship rather than a behaviour:

Bullying is a relationship of violence involving practices of domination that strip another person of the capacity for agency, using interventions carrying the sustained threat of harm.

They go on to describe this loss of agency as:

Bullying is not about just any kind of injury, nor just any negative impact. It involves a particular kind of harm. It is aimed at engendering a kind of helplessness, an inability to act, to do anything... Bullying involves the attempt to deny another any settled place, even a subordinate one. It goes beyond subjection. In bullying, the goal is abjection.

Whatever the definition of bullying, the report recommends that the new procedures for schools should include a specific reference to the following forms and methods of bullying:

- Deliberate exclusion, malicious gossip and other forms of relational bullying
- Cyber bullying
- Sexual bullying
- Identity based bullying (specifically including homophobic bullying, transphobic bullying, racist bullying and bullying of those with disabilities or special educational needs).

The report also states that, as part of their Code of Behaviour, schools need to be prepared to respond appropriately to once off incidents, including the misuse of social media.

Section 2: Impact of Bullying

Mary Keane, Head of the National Behaviour Support Service (NBSS), has described adolescents who are being bullied as being *'wiped out with tiredness because they are constantly in a state of high alert, waiting and watching for the next bullying action'*.

There is a big overlap between bullying and mental health problems, with homophobic bullying having particularly serious consequences:

- 50% of LGBT young people surveyed had experienced bullying in school and research by Maynock found a clear correlation between homophobic and transphobic bullying and serious mental health difficulties to the extent that:
 - 27% of LGBT people surveyed had self harmed at least once in their life
 - Over 50% of LGBT people under 25 surveyed had seriously thought of ending their lives
 - Just under 20% of LGBT people under 25 surveyed had attempted suicide.

There is reference to the situation of 'Bystanders' in this section with very interesting findings:

- According to one study, published in the Canadian Journal of School Psychology,
- 85% of bullying takes place with bystanders present
 - 60% of the time bullying will stop in less than 10 seconds when peers intervene
 - However, bystanders intervene less than 20% of the time!

A study conducted by Robert Thornberg came up with 7 reasons why children do not help when another classmate is in distress:

- Seeing an incident as insignificant or normal
- Feeling that it has nothing to do with them because they weren't involved in the incident or aren't friends with the victim
- Not wanting to add to the embarrassment of the victim or to incur personal embarrassment
- Not getting involved because no one else is doing anything
- Wanting to get on with their own work
- Compliance with existing routines or behaviours
- Because they feel it is someone else's responsibility

The key findings and recommendations in this section state that:

- Schools should provide educational experiences that seek to minimise all forms of bullying and, thereby, negate the potential impact of bullying behaviour.
- Specific prevention initiatives are required to address identity based bullying.
- Children and young people need to have confidence that their concerns will be addressed
- Interventions and supports need to be provided for children and young people directly involved and impacted by bullying.

Section 3: What are schools required to do?

- All schools are legally required to have an anti-bullying policy.
- There is space within the teaching of all subjects to:
 - Foster an attitude of respect for all
 - Promote value for diversity
 - Address prejudice and stereotyping
 - To highlight that bullying behaviour is unacceptable.
- CSPE, RSE, SPHE are particularly relevant to the prevention of bullying and the promotion of respect for diversity and inclusiveness
- Within the new Junior Cycle Framework it is important to recognise the importance of continuing to provide all students with SPHE, either as a stand alone subject or as a short course.

Section 4: Do we need more legislation?

- The Working group came to the conclusion that the focus should be on securing implementation of existing legislative requirements rather than seeking to introduce new legislation.
- The DES are currently reviewing Section 28 of the Education Act in relation to complaints procedures and

should incorporate the findings of this report into its review.

- The Minister for Justice has referred the Non-Fatal Offences Against the Person Act 1997 to the Law Reform Commission following difficulties in bringing successful prosecutions in the context of cyber bullying.

Section 5: What approach should schools take in their anti-bullying programme?

The Working Group recommends the following core principles that should underpin a schools approach to preventing and tackling bullying:

- A positive school culture and climate
- School-wide approach
- Effective Leadership
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- Anti-Bullying Policies
- Consistent recording of reported bullying behaviour
- Education & Training
- Prevention strategies including awareness raising
- Established evidence-based intervention strategies.

Schools should encourage and strengthen open dialogue between all school staff and students. There should be a comfortable environment for students to raise concerns.

Schools should ensure that students, parents / adults in children's lives and school staff at all levels are aware of the school policy, what is acceptable and unacceptable in the school environment and what actions will be taken if behaviour is deemed unacceptable.

The working group highlighted immediate actions that schools can take which will help to prevent and tackle bullying in schools:

- Model respectful behaviour to all members of the school community at all times.
- Explicitly teach students what respectful language and respectful behaviour looks like; acts like; sounds like; feels like in class and around the school.
- Display key respect messages in classrooms and around the school. Involve students in the development of these messages.
- 'Catch them being good'.
- Consistently tackle the use of discriminatory and derogatory language in the school.
- Give constructive feedback to students when respectful behaviour and respectful language are ignored.
- Have a system of encouragement and rewards to promote desired behaviour.
- Explicitly teach students about the appropriate use of social media and positively encourage students to comply with the school rules on mobile phones and internet use.
- Actively involve parents/Parents' Associations in awareness raising campaigns around social media.
- Actively promote the right of every member of the school community to be safe and secure in school.
- Actively watch out for signs of bullying behaviour.
- Ensure there is adequate supervision around meeting areas in the school

and identify bullying 'hot spots' and 'hot times'.

- Involve the Student Council in these actions.

Section 6: This is not a problem schools can solve alone:

The working group highlighted the fact that bullying is a complex social issue and can occur in many different settings including in the home, in wider family and social groups and during sporting and youth club activities.

- The role of parents and other adults and the attitudes that they need to have to help prevent and tackle bullying.
- The need for children to have positive early childhood experiences.
- The valuable impact that out of school activities such as sport, youth clubs and the arts can have in developing children and young people's life skills, self-esteem, confidence and resilience as well as providing opportunities to make new friends.
- The role of industry in relation to cyber bullying.
- The role of the media in relation to the reporting of bullying and suicide incidents involving children and young people.

The Twelve Actions proposed by the working group:

1. The establishment of an Anti-Bullying Implementation Group to develop procedures including an anti-bullying policy template and a template for recording incidents of bullying. These will replace existing 1993 guidelines and 2006 policy templates.
2. A review of Teacher Education Support Service provision to identify CPD needed in schools.
3. Training and resource development for Boards of Management and Parents.
4. Inspectorate to further develop questionnaires for SPHE and WSE around school climate and bullying.
5. A thematic Evaluation of Bullying in Schools to be carried out by the Schools Inspectorate.
6. As part of SSE, schools should be supported in evaluating their effectiveness in creating a positive school culture and in preventing and tackling bullying.
7. Establishment of a new national anti-bullying website.
8. DES to support the BeLong To Stand Up Awareness Week against homophobic bullying.
9. Support for a media campaign focused on cyber bullying and specifically targeted at young people as part of Safer Internet Day 2013.
10. Research on effective supports for children with special educational needs to be conducted by the National Disability Authority
11. Research on prevalence and impact of bullying linked to social media on the mental health and suicidal behaviour among young people to be facilitated by the National Suicide Prevention Office.
12. Awareness raising measures, including guidelines on all types and forms of bullying for policy makers and other staff in state agencies who work in the schools sector.



Winners from Kinsale C.S. Front Row: Emer Hickey, Ciara Judge, Sophie Healy-Thow, Winners 2013
Back Row: John D. O'Callaghan and Liam McCarthy, Winners 2009 and Ashling Judge, Winner 2006

Three 3rd Year students from Kinsale Community School fought off fierce competition to win the overall First Prize at the annual BT Young Scientist Competition for 2013. Sophie Healy-Thow, Emer Hickey and Ciara Judge took home the top prize for their project "A statistical investigation of the effects of Diazotroph bacteria on plant germination". This is the third time in 7 years that Kinsale Community School, described as "The Science School", has scooped the title.

President Michael D. Higgins congratulated the winners and their teachers for "their dedication to their students and encouragement of their ideas. These young people and their

teachers are examples of an Ireland of which we can be proud".

ACCS congratulates Kinsale Community School for their tremendous success in the Young Scientist competition over the last decade. We also acknowledge the great efforts that many of our schools make in participating in this competition.

The Kinsale Community School winners now have the opportunity to represent Ireland at the 25th European Union Young Scientist competition which will take place in Prague in September.

Advertising Teaching Positions:

EducationPosts.ie is the leading method for Irish schools to advertise all categories of teaching posts. Circular 0020/2012 states that since the 1st January 2013 second-level schools no longer need to advertise through newspapers and can use EducationPosts.ie for recruitment.

See www.EducationPosts.ie or email info@educationposts.ie for further details.

EducationPosts.ie is a free service owned and operated by IPPN (Irish Primary Principals' Network).

Publicjobs.ie can be used to advertise Principal and Deputy Principal's positions. Other web advertisers may be added at the discretion of the Department of Education and Skills.

