

# Reducing bullying amongst the worst affected

## About this report

### What is this report about?

- A collation and synthesis of research findings in the field of school age bullying.
- This report was commissioned by the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF), under the previous administration, in order to provide an evidence base for the development of policy, communications and implementation plans to address the prevalence of bullying amongst those worse affected.

### Who is this report for?

- Policy and Communications teams within the DfE working in the areas of bullying, safeguarding and schools.
- Other stakeholders in and outside of government who deal with schools and/or bullying.

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# Executive Summary

## Bullying Affects the Majority of School Children in the UK

1. Bullying affects most school children at some point, either as a victim, a bully or as a bystander.
2. The worst-affected groups, such as those with SEN, experience bullying more frequently, intensively and persistently.
3. The causes of bullying are usually similar; it comes from a drive to demonstrate or experiment with social power and often focuses on the perceived 'difference' of a victim.
4. The research suggests that the likelihood of participating in bullying behaviour is strongly correlated with what a potential bully sees as 'normal' behaviour in that particular context.
5. The importance of social context suggests that 'whole school approaches' that work to make bullying less acceptable and empower bystanders to act may be effective in tackling all forms of bullying. The effectiveness of this sort of approach is supported by significant weight of academic research and case studies (Olweus 1991,1993; Farrington, 2008).
6. The increased frequency and severity with which some victims experience bullying suggests those most at risk might need specific support. Where bullying involves prejudice, support should be sensitive to the specific types of bullying that is being experienced.
7. There is a misperception that bullying is more frequent and is undertaken by more people than in reality.
8. Research suggests that work that corrects misperceptions of bullying frequency, where it exists, may have a significant effect on an individual's propensity to bully.

## Section 1: Project Methodology

This review was carried out between November 2009 and June 2010.

It originated as a project to develop an evidence-based communication strategy to combat school age bullying. The project was then extended to cover the scoping of a strategy to reduce the incidence of bullying amongst those worst affected.

It comprised desk research and discussions with experts on bullying within government departments and in bullying-related charities, discussions with four 16-18yr old Diana Award anti-bullying ambassadors and one interview with an academic working in the field of bullying.

Desk research covered:

- Frequently cited UK academic papers on school bullying. Original data sources were suggested by the then Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF). Further academic papers were sourced based on citations within these sources, plus Google Scholar searches on terms relevant to that point on the investigation (e.g. Characteristics of Bullying Victim);
- Selected non-UK academic studies that were cited in the above UK papers;
- Bullying-specific reports or guidance issued by Ofsted and the Department for Education (DfE) (in its previous incarnation as the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF)); and
- Reports, research, case notes and guidance of major stakeholders in the anti-bullying field, notably the Anti-Bullying Alliance (ABA), Beatbullying, National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) and Stonewall.

As the key findings and recommendations from the project emerged, the results were shared and debated in two workshops. These were used to challenge thinking and identify knowledge gaps or areas for further work.

Workshop 1 – December 2009

Representatives from Partners Andrews Aldridge, DfE, Beatbullying, ABA and NSPCC

Workshop 2 – May 2010

Representatives from Partners Andrews Aldridge, DfE and Beatbullying

This report contains the evidence base component of the project only.

## Section 2: What is Bullying?

There are many variations on the precise definition of bullying, but the various literatures agree on its key features. A succinct definition of bullying was outlined in a paper for the Office of the Children's Commissioner (2006):

'Four key characteristics of bullying:

- Repetitive and persistent
- Intentionally harmful
- Involving an imbalance of power
- Causing feelings of distress, fear, loneliness or lack of confidence

This explores the motivations, outcomes, social dynamic and persistency of bullying but fails to define the specific behaviours that can be considered bullying behaviour.

Another commonly used definition is one largely created by Olweus (1989, 1993, 1999) and extended by Whitney and Smith (1993, p.7).

'We say a child or young person is being bullied or picked on when another child or young person, or a group of children or young people, say nasty and unpleasant things to him or her. It is also bullying when a child or a young person is hit, kicked, threatened, locked inside a room, sent nasty notes, when no-one ever talks to them and things like that. These things can happen frequently and it is difficult for the child or the young person being bullied to defend himself or herself. It is also bullying when a child or young person is teased repeatedly in a nasty way. But it is not bullying when two children or young people of about the same strength have the odd fight or quarrel'.

This, more evocative, definition conjures a generally recognisable picture of how bullying behaviour manifests itself. This description can be added to the four characteristics outlined by the DfES in 2006 to produce a useable definition. This five-point definition mirrors a definition produced by James in a research review produced for the NSPCC (James, 2010). For the sake of coherence in this report, the James definition, reproduced in full below, is the working definition used throughout this report:

The five essential components of bullying:

- Intention to harm: bullying is deliberate, with the intention to cause harm. For example, friends teasing each other in a 'good-natured' way is not bullying, but a person teasing another with the intention to deliberately upset them is bullying.
- Harmful outcome: one or more persons are hurt physically or emotionally
- Direct or indirect acts: bullying can involve direct aggression, such as hitting someone, as well as indirect acts, such as spreading rumours.
- Repetition: bullying involves repeated acts of aggression. An isolated aggressive act, like a fight, is not bullying.
- Unequal power: bullying involves the abuse of power by one or several persons who are (perceived as) more powerful, often due to their age, physical strength, or psychological resilience.

## Section 3: Who is Affected?

### Many Children are Affected

There is much evidence to suggest that there are certain sections of the population likely to experience bullying more frequently than is typical.

But it is also true that bullying is a regular experience for the majority of English children, either as the victims of it or as bystanders. A survey of 253,755 children and young people in England in years 6, 8 and 10 (ages 10-11, 12-13, 14-15 respectively) found bullying to be widespread. (TellUs4, Ofsted, 2010):

- 25% of children and young people said they worried about bullying
- 46% of children and young people said they had been bullied at some point whilst at school
- Of those who have been bullied at some point, 29% had been bullied in the last year
- A majority of school age children and young people in England are bystanders at some point. 66% claimed to have seen bullying at their school (Smith and Shu, 2000)

### Bullying Prevalence by Age

- A longitudinal study of young people in England (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DCSF, 2010) demonstrates that reporting of bullying decreases substantially with age:
- 47% of 14 year olds reported being bullied at 14
- Dropping to 41% at age 15 and 29% by age 16

There are some exceptions, however, to this pattern:

- Bullying prevalence and concern decreases with age, except in the case of SEN pupils
- Changing school (in LSYPE this is measured at age 15) is a significant predictor of bullying

The findings from the longitudinal study show a similar pattern uncovered by 16 years earlier (Whitney, Smith & Thompson, 1994) which showed that, for pupils with Special Educational Needs, levels of victimisation were similar for both primary and secondary school age pupils (63% and 59% respectively).

The longitudinal nature of LSYPE showed that, as bullying prevalence decreases with age, many individuals experiencing bullying tended to escape bullying over the three-year period:

- 19% of victims 'escaped' bullying
- 16% continued to be bullied
- 18% were bullied sporadically, that is they experienced bullying at age 14 and 16 but not at age 15
- Only 7% became new bullying victims at age 15 or 16 having not been bullied at age 14

There is little research on bullying prevalence of young people below the age of 14. Further longitudinal research that explored the relationship between being bullied in primary and secondary schools would be useful to help direct the focus of policy.

## Gender

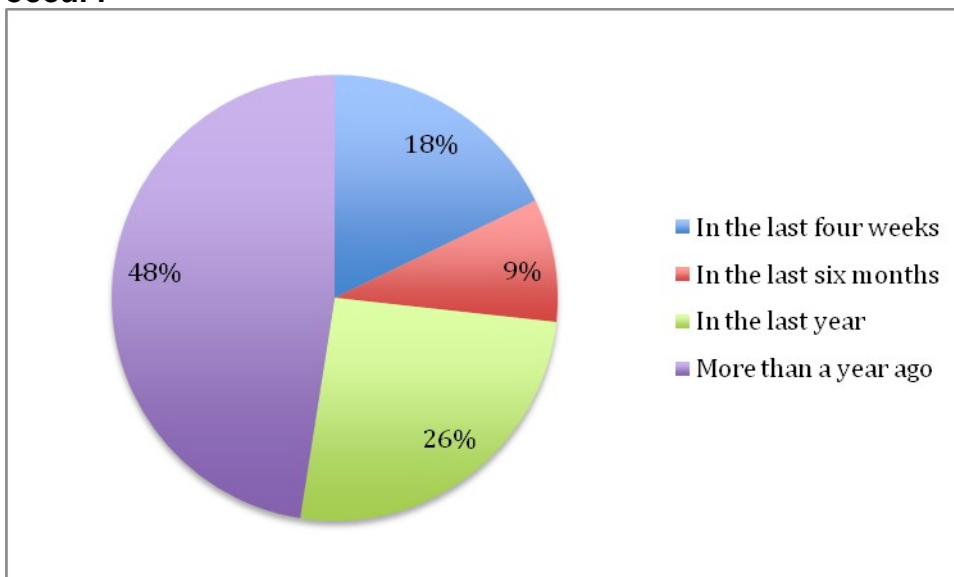
A number of studies show the type of bullying experienced by boys and girls is of a different kind; their reaction to bullying is also different (LSYPE, 2010; Staying Safe Research Presentation, DCSF, 2009; Smith and others 1999; Craig and Pepler, 1997). Boys are more likely to be victims of violence-based bullying and girls are more likely to be subjected to bullying of a verbal and social nature. StayingSafe, a research project based on 834 interviews with children and young people in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (StayingSafe Research Presentation, DCSF, 2009), explored these dynamics:

- Girls are more likely to feel at risk from bullying than boys – nearly a quarter of girls reported feeling at risk compared to 16% boys
- Girls are less likely than boys to report being victims of violence at all ages
- Exclusion is a common form of bullying reported amongst girls
- Girls are more than twice as likely as boys to report being victims of name calling
- Boys are more likely to see bullying as part of growing up and something that would need to get quite bad before they did anything about it
- Girls tend to agree that they would like more help and advice
- 62% of children agree that being physically bullied is worse than being called names

## Frequency

A small majority of those who reported having experienced bullying in schools had experienced it in the previous year. A significant proportion, however, reported it occurring in the last four weeks. (TellUs4, Ofsted, 2010).

**Figure 3.1 Of those who reported being bullied at school (46% of pupils), when did it last occur?**



N=112,346;

Percentages based on those who reported that they had been bullied. They do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Source: TellUs4, Ofsted, 2010



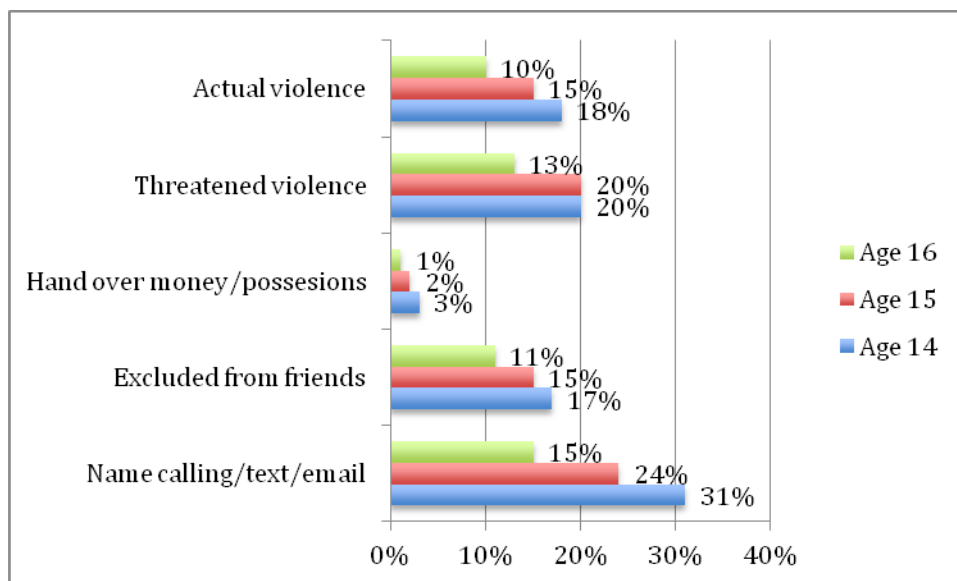
## Type of Bullying

The prevalence of bullying types experienced were broadly consistent across research (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010; Oliver and Candappa, 2010, StayingSafe, 2009). StayingSafe (Statyingsafe Research Presentation, 2009) explored this relationship quantitatively, based on a survey of 833 children and young people. It found that:

- While non-violence based bullying (eg teasing, name calling, being ignored or excluded) was slightly more common than physical violence based bullying amongst girls, the reverse is true amongst boys
- 62% of all surveyed children and young people agreed that being physically bullied is worse than being called names
  - The StayingSafe researchers suggested that the “distress caused by a physical injury is maybe more obvious to them than psychological damage caused by ‘teasing’”

Analysis of the LSYPE data shows the frequency of different bullying types at different age groups (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010). This shows that both physical and non-physical bullying are comparably common. The least common form of bullying investigated in this study was extortion (the handing over of money and possessions).

**Figure 3.2 Proportion of young people reporting bullying by type of bullying and age**



As this was a longitudinal study the sample sized decreased across the years of the study. At Age 14 n=15,500. By age Age 16 n = 12,500 (remaining from the original 15,500)  
 Source: LSYPE (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010)

## Ethnicity and Religion

Analysis of LSYPE data, both in 2009 (Evidence on Pupil Behaviour in School, DCSF, 2009) and 2010 (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010) does not suggest that being a member of a minority ethnic group is a predictor of bullying. In fact, children and young people from ethnic minority groups were less likely to report bullying. White young people “consistently reported the highest levels of bullying across all age groups” (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010). The research suggested that children are no more likely to be bullied in schools, due to their ethnicity, where the proportion of their ethnic group is lower or higher than the national average (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010).

The authors of the study note that “it is difficult to speculate on the reasons for this difference between ethnic groups. They may range from different social norms or conceptions of what constitutes bullying, to pupils’ potential awareness of the more serious consequences involved with racist bullying” (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010).

Ethnicity can, however, change the type of bullying. A report on 37,694 calls to Childline by children and young people about bullying in 2007 and 2008 showed that racist bullying is a very real problem for some. Of the 8,042 children who mentioned the type of bullying, 238 boys and 168 girls specified racist bullying (Childline Casenotes, 2009). The degree of openness to specifying different bullying types is unknown. These figures are therefore not necessarily representative, but they demonstrate the sorts of issues that young people experience.

Similarly, religion type does not predict likelihood of bullying, though young people who consider their religion very important to them are more likely to experience name calling (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010).

## Sexual Orientation

This group does not report in sufficient numbers to appear in LSYPE, StayingSafe or TellUs4. However, Stonewall’s School Report, a survey of 1145 LGB young people provides a compelling picture of the experiences of LGB pupils in schools (Stonewall, 2007).

- 65% of young lesbian, gay and bisexual people report experiencing homophobic bullying in Britain’s schools at some point. It is difficult to draw direct comparisons between the figures from LYSPE and Stonewall given the very different surveying methods, questions and context. However the LSYPE figure of 46% experiencing bullying in schools provides some context for the 65% figure reported by Stonewall above (Stonewall, 2007; Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010).
- 95% of gay pupils hear derogatory phrases such as “dyke” or “poof” used in school.
- 98% of gay pupils hear “that’s so gay” or “you’re so gay” at school. (Stonewall, 2007).
- Seventy five per cent of young gay people in faith schools experience homophobic bullying and are less likely than pupils in other schools to report it (Stonewall, 2007). It is worth noting that this group consisted of only 110 pupils and therefore only differences greater than 9.3% are significant at the 95% confidence level.

Childline Casenotes also showed homophobic bullying was a problem. Of the 8,042 children who mentioned the type of bullying, 120 boys and 42 girls specified homophobic bullying (Childline Casenotes, 2009). The numbers are small and the degree of openness to specifying

different bullying types is unknown. These figures are therefore not necessarily representative, but they demonstrate the sorts of issues that young people experience.

## **Special Educational Needs (SEN)**

Whilst there are no available figures that give a total proportion of SEN pupils bullied, it is clear that bullying is more prevalent amongst these groups. LSYPE shows, that SEN pupils are significantly more likely to be bullied at all age groups (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DCSF, 2010).

In addition, research from Mencap carried out with 507 children and young people shows that bullying tends to be more persistent and intense amongst these groups (Bullying Wrecks Lives, Mencap, 2007):

- 66% of learning-disabled children and young people who are bullied experience it on a regular basis.
- 60% of those who were bullied had been subjected to physical attack, 77% verbally abused and 40% stolen from or left out. 80% of them are scared to leave their homes.

These findings are mirrored by LSYPE data (Characteristics of Bullying Schools, 2010):

- “Young people with SEN...have nearly twice the odds of reporting being continually being bullied across the three years of the study”.
- The higher proportion SEN pupils in a school, the higher the risk of being called names amongst all groups.
- SEN pupils are twice as likely to be made victims of social exclusion by their peers.
- They are more likely to have their money or possessions taken and be victims of actual or threatened violence.

## **Summary: Victims of Bullying**

Bullying pervasiveness and frequency is heightened amongst certain groups. But bullying is a significant problem for children and young people amongst all groups.

In 2010 Beatbullying carried out analysis of two research data sets to explore the characteristics of persistent bullying. The data were collected during Sports and CyberMentors programmes, the first consisted of 1,482 pupils, of whom 857 had been bullied, the second consisted of 1,478, of whom 857 were bullied. Persistent bullying was defined as “bullying that is happening day in, day out” (Persistency, Duration and Vulnerable Groups, Beatbullying, 2010). The study suggests that the characteristics that drive persistent bullying are less likely to be members of a particularly vulnerable group and more likely to be about ‘any difference’ (Persistency, Duration and Vulnerable Groups, Beatbullying, 2010).

What are the drivers of persistent bullying?

- 40% ‘looks’
- 25% ‘because good at something’
- 10% race
- 8% SEN/Health,
- 5% religion,

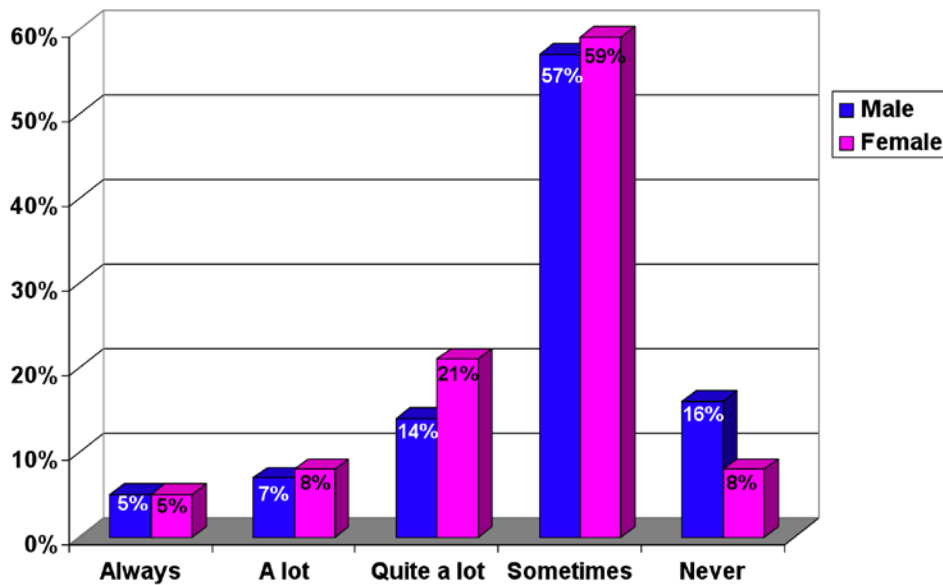
- 3% sexuality

## Where Does Bullying Occur? Schools as the 'Epicentre' of Bullying

Schools appear to be at the epicentre of bullying behaviour. One longitudinal study in an inner-city New York School (Mateu-Gelabert & Lune, 2003) followed 25 young people over a 3 year period starting in grade 7 (age 12). 3,323 interview summaries over the period were used in the study. It suggested least 80% of individual bullying cases take place in school. It should be noted that, as this is a US study in an inner-city area, there may be cultural differences in bullying definition, attitudes and behaviours when compared to England. However, in terms of the frequency with which bullying occurs in a school context, results appear consistent with UK evidence (TellUs4, Ofsted, 2010; Children on Bullying, Ofsted, 2008).

- Ofsted found that the majority of bullying took place at school. This research was carried out as a group discussion of peer to peer bullying with 319 children and young people with a median age of 15. When asked 'Where does bullying happen'? (Children on Bullying, Ofsted, 2008), responses were as follows:
  - 55% at school
  - 24% at home
  - 18% around where children live
  - 12% around where children go to school
  - 11% travelling from one place to another
- A similar pattern has been found through a number of other studies (Community Stats, Beatbullying, 2008; Bullying and Community Briefing, ABA, 2007).
- Mateu-Gelabert & Lune, 2003 found that:
  - 48% of bullying started and ended at school
  - 21% started in the neighbourhood but took place at school
  - 18% started at school and took place in the neighbourhood
  - 13% started and ended within the neighbourhood
- It appears that the types of bullying that occur (extortion, name calling, intimidation) are similar to bullying within schools (Bullying & Community Briefing, ABA, 2007).
- There is a strong relationship between cyberbullying and school bullying. Less than 16% of cyberbullying exists only on the internet without a face-to-face component at schools (Dubit, 2007), again supporting the idea that school acts as an epicentre of bullying.

**Figure 3.3 does bullying by mobile phone and the internet often carry on face-to-face with people at school?**



English study N = 1000 (500 male, 500 female) aged 12-15, of whom 34% had experienced cyberbullying

Source: Dubit, 2007

## Characteristics of Bullying Victims

Regular victims of bullying tend to have common characteristics; there are two categories of bullying victim:

- The first is 'passive' or 'submissive', characterised by (Olweus,1991)
  - Tendency to be anxious and insecure
  - Low self-esteem, with a negative valuation of themselves
  - Few friends; with the friends they are likely to have being low social status themselves
  - An aversion to using violence, meaning they are unlikely to retaliate
  - Amongst boys, they are also characterised by a relative physical weakness
  - Many of the above characteristics likely to be both a cause and effect of bullying
  
- The second, far less common, category is 'provocative victims'. Olweus reported that fewer than one in five victims are 'provocative' (Olweus, 1984). Provocative victims have:
  - A mix of anxious and aggressive behaviour patterns, coupled with poor concentration
  - Behaviour can provoke groups of people, rather than just individuals
  - Mencap suggest that learning difficulties leading to poor social skills could result in 'provocative victim' behaviour (Mencap, 2007)

## Section 4: What is the Impact of Bullying?

There is much evidence of bullying causing long-term psychological damage.

In broad terms, we know that children worry about bullying:

- 25% percent of young people on Tellus 4 say they ‘most worry about bullying’ (TellUs 4, Ofsted, 2010).
- 20% of children on StayingSafe say they worry about bullying (StayingSafe, DCSF, 2009).

Many children are not concerned about bullying, and 38% of children think that bullying is a ‘part of growing up’. However, concern about bullying is, much higher amongst those who have or are experiencing it (StayingSafe, DCSF, 2009).

### Impact on Achievement

LSYPE findings at a total surveyed level suggest that bullying is “associated” with lowered Key Stage 4 achievement. (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010)

Whilst these findings do not demonstrate that bullying causes lowered achievement, the authors of the report note that “the bullying has been shown to occur earlier in time than the educational outcome. It is entirely possible that both bullying and educational outcomes have common antecedents, but we have tested for this as far as possible in our analyses” (Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010). The results were adjusted to remove the effect of other characteristics that could lead to lowered achievement such as SEN, social position, gender.

- Young people who had been bullied had a significantly lower Key Stage 4 score than those who hadn’t been bullied.
- On average, young people who had been bullied had a Key Stage 4 score 13 points lower than those who hadn’t been bullied. This is the equivalent of two GCSE grades.
- The type of bullying that affected school attainment the most was taking money or possessions, followed by exclusion and violence.

### Impact on Wellbeing

Beatbullying research into persistency and impact gives a personally reported perspective on the impact of bullying. The study was based on two separate data sets from surveys in English secondary schools. The first survey was of 1,482 school pupils, of whom 857 were bullied. The second data set encompasses 1,478 pupils, of whom 1,053 were bullied. This also draws conclusions about the much more serious effect of persistent bullying compared to isolated bullying (Persistency, Duration and Vulnerable Groups, Beatbullying, 2010):

- 15% of those children who were persistently bullied said they thought about killing themselves.
- 22% of children persistently bullied said bullying made them give up their interests compared to 7% who experienced isolated bullying.
- 25% of persistently bullied children said they changed their personality compared to just 17% who were bullied in isolation.
- 15% of persistently bullied children said they self-harmed – a figure five times higher than that recorded for children bullied who stated they were bullied occasionally in the same research.

## Section 5: Why Does Bullying Occur?

There are a number of insights emerging from the research that demonstrate the essentially social nature of bullying. Bullying behaviour draws from a desire to improve one's status in a social situation. This suggests that education and interventions that take away the possibility of status-gain from bullying are likely to undermine the reason for doing it.

### Bullying is Fuelled by Social Power

- O'Connell and others (1999) assert that "peers may actively or passively reinforce the aggressive behaviours of bullies through their attention and engagement. Peer presence is positively related to the persistence of bullying episodes".
- Bystanders are involved in 85% of bullying incidences (Craig and Pepler, 1997) – this supports the idea that bystander presence makes bullying 'worthwhile' from a social power perspective

### There Are a Number of Predictive Characteristics of Bullies

The ring-leader, the person who, through their social power, can direct bullying activity (Smith & Shu, 2004; Olweus, 1991):

- Tend to be more aggressive, both to other children and adults
- Tend to be popular
- Have relationships with parents that are characterised by poor communication and the threat of violence
- Tend to be academic low-achievers
- Have a strong need to dominate others
- Have sufficient cognitive empathy – the ability to understand the effect of their actions to others, to understand that they are bullying, and to help them do it efficiently
- Have a lack of affective empathy – the tendency for cognitive empathy to arouse emotions or sympathy towards the victim

### Bullying Behaviour is Perceived as 'Normal' Behaviour

A study of 17 schools in the Greater London area in 2006 found an exaggerated perception that the majority engage in and support bullying behaviour. This pattern of misperception is found "across school settings with varying sizes, age distributions, and ethnic composition" (Perkins and Craig, 2008). A misperception that bullying is carried out by more people than in reality was proven to be the strongest correlate of an individual's likelihood to engage in bullying behaviour. The correlation between an individual's bullying behaviour and this perceived 'norm' is stronger than its correlations with the actual bullying frequency in the local school setting (Perkins and Craig, 2008).

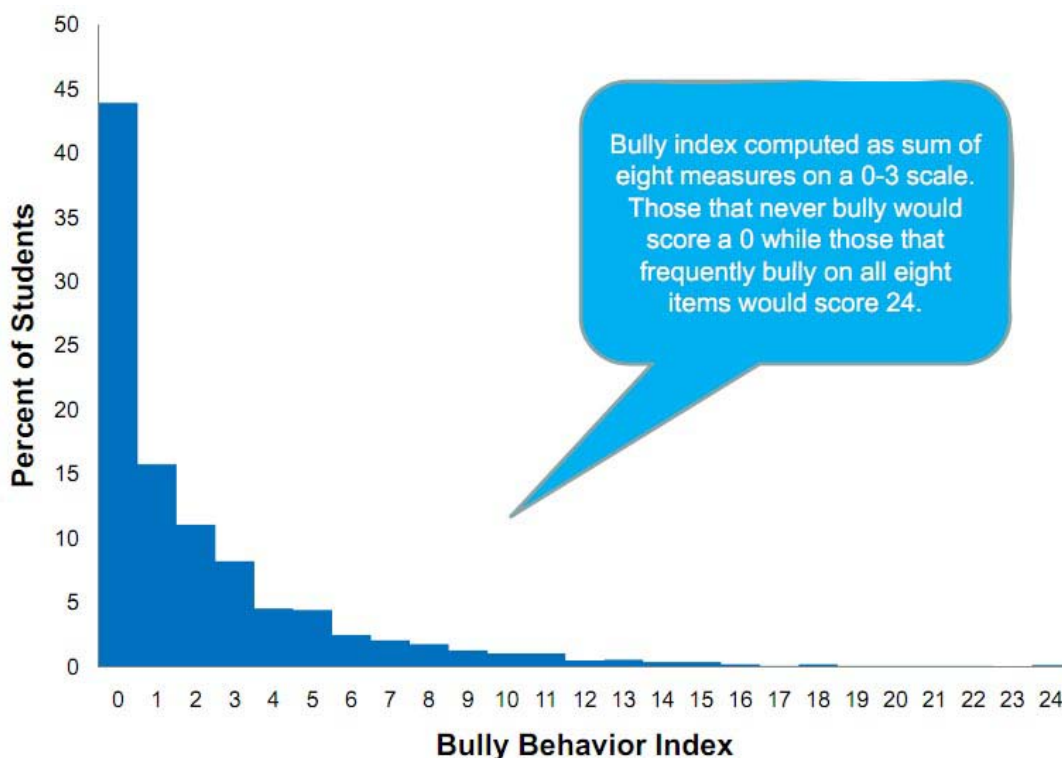
The surveying was carried as an anonymous, self-completed survey online with 1,656 pupils. The pupils were aged 6-18, with the majority being of secondary school age (Perkins and Craig, 2008). It is a standardised survey design by Perkins and Craig that allows results across multiple schools and studies to be compared (Perkins and Craig, 2006 Perkins and Craig, 2008; Perkins and Craig, 2011).

Pupils are asked “a series of questions about what are commonly identified as bullying behaviors in schools”. These are suggested to include (a) pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, or tripping; (b) teasing in an unfriendly way; (c) calling hurtful names; (d) excluding someone from a group to make them feel bad; (e) taking or damaging someone else’s belongings; (f) spreading unkind stories or rumors about someone else; (g) threatening to hurt someone; and (h) making someone do something they did not want to do.

They are then asked how often they participate in each of these 8 activities, using the response categories “Not in the last 30 days” (coded 0), “Once” (coded 1), “2–3 times” (coded 2), and “4 or more times” (coded 3), (Perkins and Craig, 2008, Perkins and Craig, 2011).

An index of “personal bullying perpetration” was then computed by adding these codes. The same exercise of rating frequency of bullying participation was then carried out to understand how “often they thought most other students had done these things at their school.” These responses were coded and summed in the same way to create an index for “perceived peer norms for bullying behaviour” (Perkins and Craig, 2008, Perkins and Craig, 2011).

**Figure 5.1 Distribution of bullying index shows few people bully frequently**

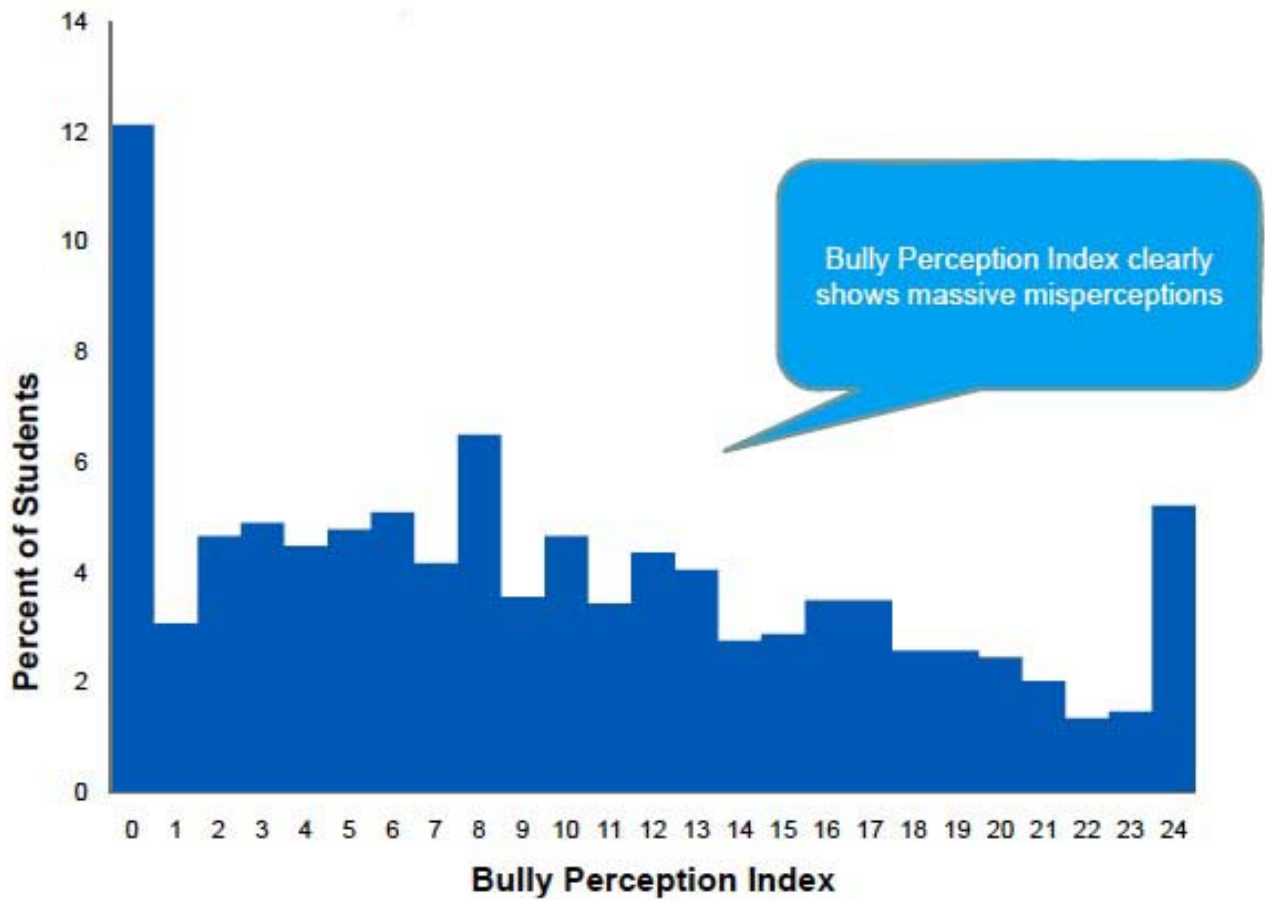


N = 1,656 pupils in 17 UK schools  
 Source: Perkins and Craig, 2008

This chart shows that whilst nearly 45% of children surveyed do not bully, nearly 5% of children bully at level 5 on the index. The distribution then decays sharply, with very few bullying in lots of different ways very frequently.



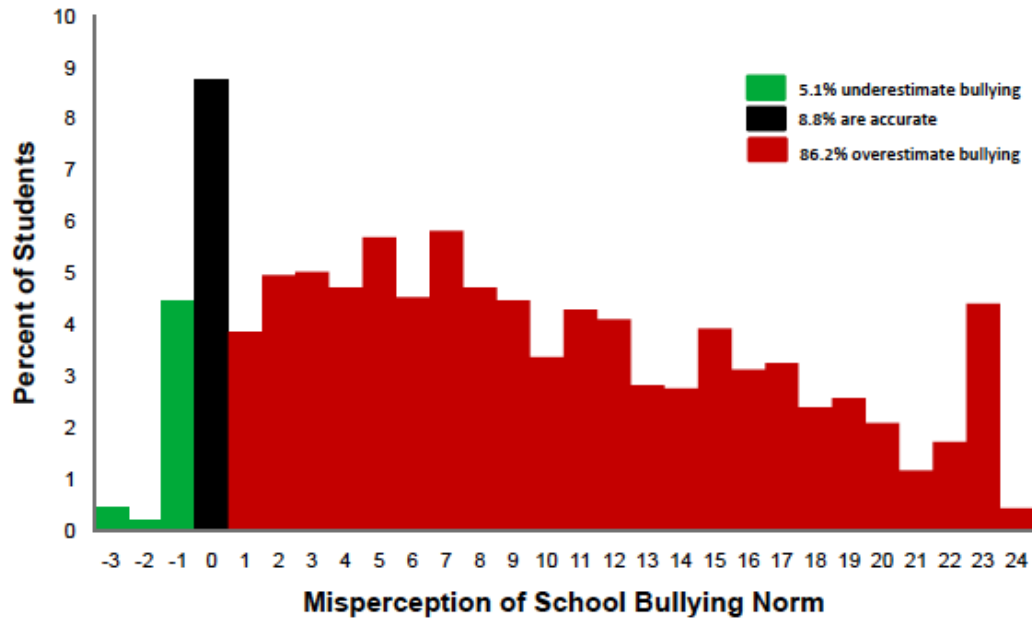
**Figure 5.2 Distribution of perceived peer norms shows young people believe bullying is perpetrated more frequently by more people than in actuality**



N = 1,656 pupils in 17 Greater London Schools  
Source: Perkins and Craig, 2008

This chart, based on the same survey, shows assumptions about other people's bullying behaviour. When asked to estimate the number of people involved in bullying, the average pupil assumed more peers bullied more frequently than in actuality.

Figure 5.3 Shows the difference between the perception and reality of bullying.



\*Includes only schools where at least 79% of students responded overall from the grades surveyed.

N = 1,656 pupils in 17 Greater London Schools  
Source: Perkins and Craig, 2008

**Table 5.1 Shows standardised regression coefficients predicting individuals' bullying behaviour in the last 30 days**

Independent Variables	Standardised Coefficient (Beta)
Perception of bullying (index)	.36**
Actual bullying norm (index media)	.07*
Gender (male vs. female)	.14**
Age	.03
Race (Asian/Chinese vs white)	.3
Race (Black vs. white)	.06
Race (Other/mixed vs. white)	.03
School population size	.05
Socioeconomic status of school	.02

N = 1,656 pupils in 17 Greater London Schools  
 Standardised regression coefficients  
 Coefficient is significant at  $p < .05$ : \*\*  $p < .001$ .  
 Source: Perkins and Craig, 2008 study

This chart clearly shows a strong correlation between an individual's perceived peer norms and their own bullying (coefficient of 0.36). That is if you think lots of people bully frequently, you are much more likely to bully frequently yourself.

This misperception of the bullying norm was the most predictive characteristic of those surveyed. The predictive power of the actual bullying norm – an index of the number of people who actually bully – is far less (coefficient of 0.07).

The findings of these studies are supported by many other studies in the field of problem behaviours. Research on adolescents and young adults has found that perceptions of social norms and peer expectations can have a larger impact on individual behaviours than other influences such as personality and home environment (Berkowitz & Perkins, 1986; Borsari & Carey, 2001).

## Section 6: Bullying Behaviour and Bystanders

### Breaking the 'Apathy of Crowds'

As a phenomenon fed by social power and underpinned by the social norm, an important part of tackling bullying will be changes the responses of bullying bystanders. "Global ratings of peer behaviours indicated that peers reinforce the bullies' behaviours, in some way, in 81% of bullying episodes" (Craig and Pepler, 1995). 85% of children and young people will be bystanders to bullying (Craig and Pepler, 1997)

There are considered to be four classes of peer bystanders. These are (Salmivalli and others, 1996, 1999):

- Assistants - who actively join in the attack
- Reinforcers - who give positive feedback to the bully, perhaps by smiling or laughing
- Outsiders - who stay back, stay silent and thereby condone the bullying behaviour
- Defenders – who take action to stop bullying when they see it occurring

Research into bystander behaviour in UK schools from a quantitative perspective has not been extensive. TellUs 4, LYPSE and StayingSafe does not cover the action of bystanders though StayingSafe does explore bystander intention.(TellUs4, Ofsted, 2010; Characteristics of Bullying Victims in Schools, DfE, 2010; StayingSafe, DCSF, 2009).

The roles played within bullying can be fluid. Bystander groups tend to be mixed and include some who are made anxious about watching bullying and their role as an onlooker (Olweus, 1989,1991,1993).

Staying safe tells us that 87% of children feel like they would take action if someone was bullied (Statyingsafe, 2009), however this does not fit research exploring actual bystander behaviour (O'Connell and others 1999), based on in-school filmed observation of 57 incidences of bullying:

- On average, four peers viewed school-yard bullying, with an age range of 2–14
- 54 per cent of peers' time was reinforcing bullies by passively watching
- 21 per cent of peers' time was actively supporting bullies
- 25 per cent of peers' time was intervening on behalf of victims
- Peer interventions were equally likely to be made by boys or girls
- Interventions were equally divided between aggressive and non-aggressive interventions
- 75% cent of peer interventions were successful in stopping bullying.

The pattern of bystander action was similar in another:

- 47% tried not to be involved
- 11% didn't join in but enjoyed watching
- 3% were forced to join in
- 4% actively joined in

- 34% told bullies to stop
- 18% told an adult to stop  
(Smith and Shu, 2000)

### **What are the barriers preventing bystanders from taking action?**

- Children know that adults expect them to support each other but find it difficult to do so in the reality of playground life.
- They are concerned for their own safety and self-preservation (afraid that they may become the next victims. This is particularly the case with those who themselves are anxious and unsure.
- They don't fully understand the process of bullying and don't have the knowledge or skills to intervene effectively, worrying that they may make matters worse for the victim  
(O' Connell et al 1999; StayingSafe, 2009).
- One factor is a "diffusion of responsibility" where peers are less likely to intervene to help a victim in an emergency situation when other onlookers are present due to diffusion of responsibility and potential blame, as well as a sense that someone else may have initiated an intervention, unseen (Darley and Latane, 1968).

### **Success of in-school anti-bullying programmes**

Structured and coordinated programmes to deal with bullying are a relatively new arrival two examples are: the pioneering academic-led bullying studies by Dan Olweus Norway commenced in 1983; and intervention project commenced in the UK in 1991 (Samara and Smith, 2008; Farrington, 2008).

Most interventions tend to operate in a multidimensional way, addressing people in different bullying roles and different audience groups. Many also work to address both prevention and appropriate reaction (Farrington, 2008).

In the UK, there has not been a consistent and centrally-coordinated effort to map the effectiveness of anti-bullying interventions. Much of the ABA/Goldsmith work looks at success of implementation and views of teachers on how successful it is; it does not look at objective measures of reduction in bullying, due to the technical difficulties inherent in understanding the links between anti-bullying activity and outcomes in complex school environments.

There has been robust meta-analysis of 59 studies on the effectiveness of anti-bullying studies by an international team headed by Farrington. It found an average reduction in bullying and victimisation of 17-23% in experimental schools versus control schools (Farrington, 2008).

Farrington found that "the most important programme elements that were associated with a decrease in bullying were parent training, improved playground supervision, disciplinary methods, school conferences, information for parents, classroom rules, classroom management, and videos. In addition, the total number of elements, and the duration and intensity of the programme for children and teachers, were significantly associated with a decrease in bullying". In addition, the 'whole school' approaches inspired by Dan Olweus were found to be most effective.

## Section 7: Communications Programmes

Given the evidence presented in this report that bullying is, at least in part, fuelled by social power, is it interesting to look at a campaign run in the US to address misperception of the frequency and pervasiveness of bullying behaviour.

The study was of five New Jersey Schools, and carried out as an anonymous, self-completed survey online with 10,668 pupils. The pupils were aged 9-16 with a mean age of 12.6. It is a standardised survey designed by Perkins and Craig that allows results across multiple schools and studies to be compared. Schools were surveyed, a communication campaign was run and then a further survey was undertaken one to one and a half years later after this campaign (Perkins and Craig, 2006; Perkins and Craig, 2008; Perkins and Craig, 2011).

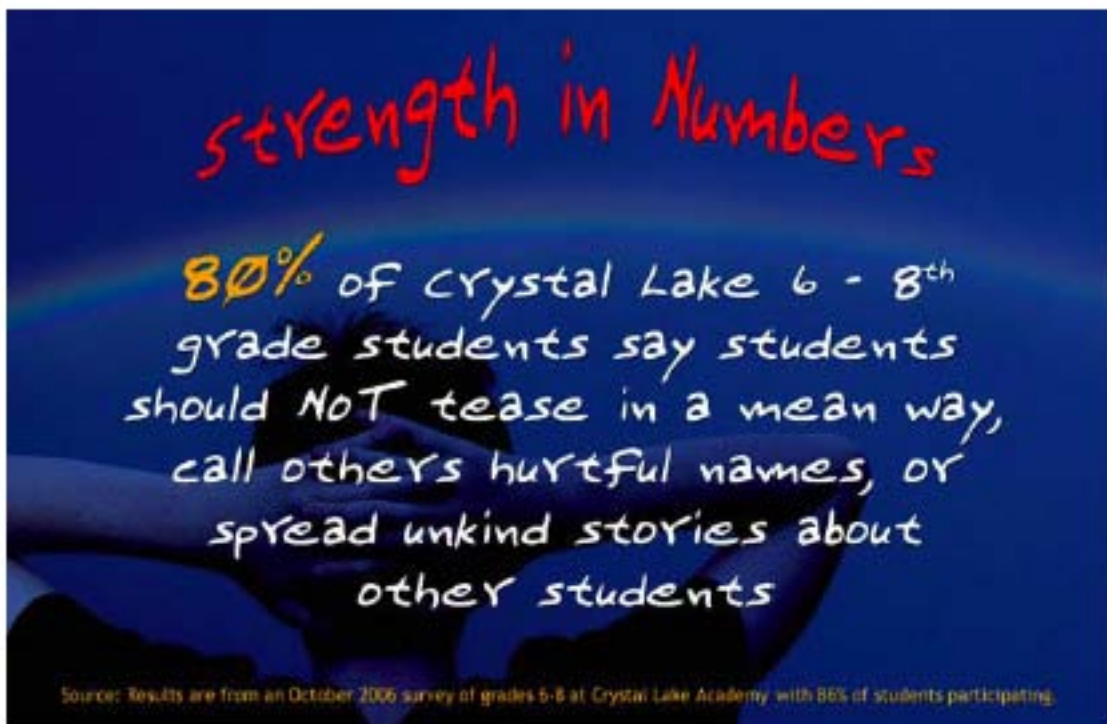
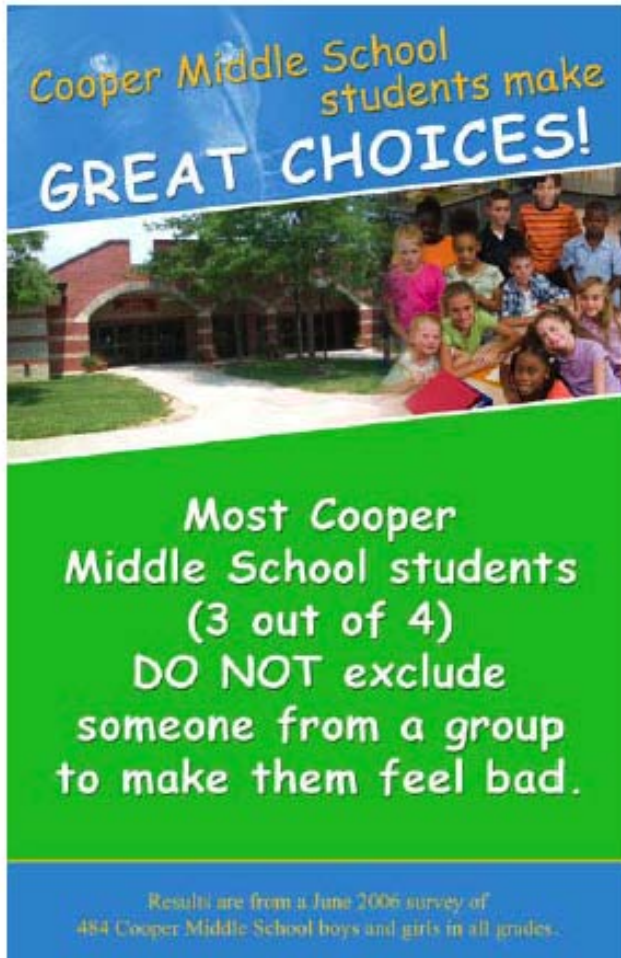
Pupils are asked a “series of questions about what are commonly identified as bullying behaviors in schools”. These are suggested to include (a) pushing, shoving, hitting, kicking, hair pulling, or tripping; (b) teasing in an unfriendly way; (c) calling hurtful names; (d) excluding someone from a group to make them feel bad; (e) taking or damaging someone else’s belongings; (f) spreading unkind stories or rumors about someone else; (g) threatening to hurt someone; and (h) making someone do something they did not want to do.

They are then asked how often they participate in each of these 8 activities, using the response categories “Not in the last 30 days” (coded 0), “Once” (coded 1), “2–3 times” (coded 2), and “4 or more times” (coded 3) (Perkins and Craig, 2008; Perkins and Craig, 2011).

An index of “personal bullying perpetration” was then computed by adding these codes. The same exercise of rating frequency of bullying participation was then carried out to understand how “often they thought most other students had done these things at their school”. These responses were coded and summed in the same way to create an index for “perceived peer norms for bullying behaviour”. In addition to understanding behaviour and perceived behaviour, the surveys also gained an understanding of pupils’ attitudes about acceptability and appropriate reactions to bullying (Perkins and Craig, 2008; Perkins and Craig, 2011).

Communications programmes were designed around the online survey of pupil behaviours and attitudes. These were then played back to students on posters throughout the school with the aim of correcting the misperceived norms discussed previously in this report. The posters were up for around one year in prominent places in school halls and corridors.

Figure 7.1 Samples of the posters are below. Names of schools have been changed:



# Did You Know That...

**Most Cooper Middle School students (8 out of 10) think that students should tell a teacher or counselor if they or someone else are being bullied at school.**

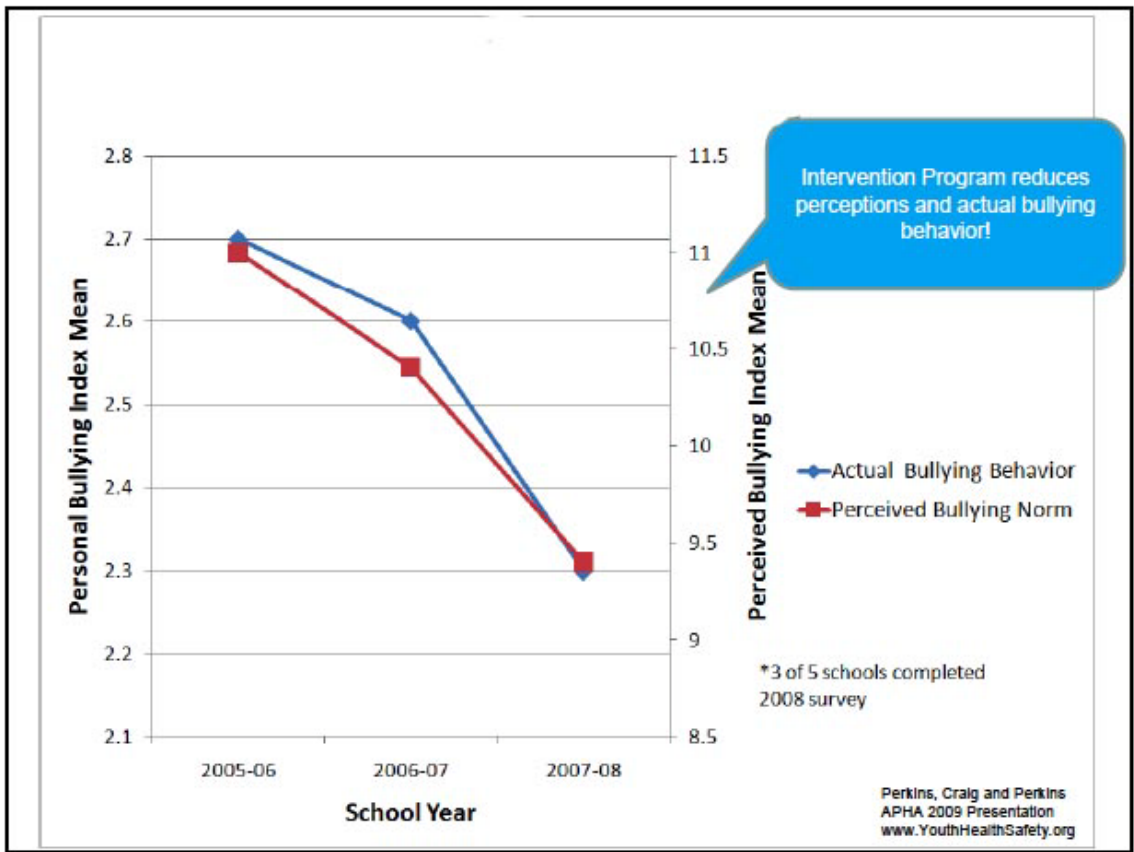


**Results are from a June 2006 survey of 484 Cooper Middle School boys and girls in all grades.**

The impact of these posters is outlined show in the figures 7.2, below.



Figure 7.2 Impact of Social Norms Intervention at Five New Jersey Schools:



Survey of New Jersey Schools N =10,668 pupils

This chart shows a reduction in the actual bullying behaviour in the school and the perceived bullying norm. As discussed previously in the case of the UK Perkins study (Perkins, 2008), these two figures are strongly correlated. Whilst it cannot be proven that the communication campaign was directly responsible for the change in perceptions and behaviour, the authors reported that the “extent of reductions across school sites was associated with the prevalence and extent of recall of seeing poster messages”.

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