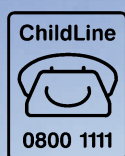# Tackling Bullying: Listening to the Views of Children and Young People

Christine Oliver and Mano Candappa

**Thomas Coram Research Unit**
**Institute of Education**
**University of London**

ChildLine
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**education and skills**
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Research Report RR400

# *Tackling Bullying: Listening to the Views of Children and Young People*

*Christine Oliver and Mano Candappa*

*Thomas Coram Research Unit
Institute of Education
University of London*

# CONTENTS

## Foreword

Bullying is a matter of concern to all of us. It can make children's experience of school miserable and at times frightening. It is extraordinary to remember that, until recently, bullying was dismissed as 'a natural part of growing up'. Many children believed that they should suffer in silence, that there was a code of honour that prevented them asking for help. From the day the helpline opened, ChildLine has encouraged bullied children to speak out, and ask for help. For six years bullying has been the biggest single reason for children to call ChildLine, with around 20,000 calls a year. If bullying is not tackled promptly and in the right way the consequences can be very destructive.

To tackle it effectively, it is vital that the voices of children and young people are heard. That is why we decided to conduct a research project that would seek out and listen to the experiences and views of children and young people.

Researchers at the Thomas Coram Research Unit conducted the research on our behalf. Children and young people from a variety of regions and schools were asked about their experiences of bullying and their schools' responses to it. They also gave their views on how best to tackle bullying, the different options that are available to those who have been bullied and the relative effectiveness of these options.

The research revealed that bullying is widespread, and affects children of different ages, boys and girls. However, bullying does not occur equally in every school. Certain schools seem particularly effective in preventing bullying from taking hold.

One of the researchers' conclusions is that schools should develop anti-bullying strategies by starting with pupils' experiences of bullying. Whole-school anti-bullying approaches, which involve staff and pupils actively, and stress the importance of listening to children, taking bullying seriously and taking appropriate action to tackle it, are important. This research, by asking children what they think, is a significant step in ensuring that anti-bullying strategies are truly child focused and effective.

We do not believe that we have done enough to tackle the problem of bullying in the past. Bullying not only scars the lives of too many children, it also reflects a serious weakness in our education system. The government is determined to ensure that a concerted attack on bullying is at the heart of its school standards agenda. Our joint work must be the springboard for a serious, effective and sustained programme of action. There is much to be done, and together we can do it.

ESTHER RANTZEN, OBE
*Chair of ChildLine*

IVAN LEWIS
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State*

## Acknowledgements

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## About this study

This study investigated the perspectives of children and young people concerning 'what works' in tackling bullying. The research, which was sponsored by ChildLine, a national children's charity, and funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), aims to explore why, despite the almost universal introduction of anti-bullying policies by schools, children continue to call ChildLine in large numbers to ask for help in dealing with bullying. What might be the reasons for the apparent gap between anti-bullying policies on paper and anti-bullying practice in schools? The Thomas Coram Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London, was commissioned to undertake a survey and a series of focus groups with children and young people in primary and secondary schools to explore this issue.

More specifically, the aims of the study were to:

❖ explore children's understanding and experience of bullying

❖ investigate children's own responses to bullying

❖ examine children's views concerning adult responses to bullying

❖ identify the support needs of children and young people who experience bullying

❖ explore the opinions of children and young people concerning anti-bullying strategies in the future, and young people's involvement in their development

In addressing these aims, the study focused on the views and experiences of primary (Year 5) and secondary (Year 8) pupils.

## Policy context

Bullying has become a key issue for public policy in recent decades, following widespread public and professional concern about the negative effects of bullying on students' academic attainment and emotional well-being (DfEE, 1999). Alongside policy developments, demand from teachers and parents for practical information and guidance on 'what works' in tackling bullying has grown apace. In 2000, the government revised and re-launched 'Bullying: Don't Suffer in Silence', which provides extensive evidence-based guidance to teachers, pupils and parents on effective anti-bullying initiatives (DfES, 2000). However, a review of the literature undertaken for ChildLine concluded that less attention has been paid to children's perceptions and views about what works in tackling bullying, and that this represented an important gap in our knowledge concerning the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies.

**Research sample and methods**

The views and experiences of pupils were investigated using both qualitative (focus group) and quantitative (questionnaire survey) methods. Twelve schools (six primary and six secondary) from different parts of the country took part in the research. In total, 230 pupils participated in the focus group stage of the research. 953 pupils participated in the questionnaire survey (a response rate of 78.5%). Of these, 82% (N=779) were secondary school pupils in Year 8, and 18% (N=174) were primary school pupils in Year 5.

The sample was ethnically mixed and gender balanced. The fieldwork was completed during the summer and winter terms of 2000. More detailed information on the study sample and research methods can be found in the full report.

**Key findings**

*Prevalence of bullying*

Over half of primary (51%) and secondary school pupils (54%) thought that bullying was *'a big problem' or 'quite a problem'* in their school.

Just over half (51%) of pupils in Year 5 *reported that they had been bullied* during the term, compared with just over a quarter (28%) of pupils in Year 8.

*School effectiveness*

Over 60% of pupils in both age groups thought that their *school was 'very good' or 'quite good'* at dealing with bullying. However, some schools were perceived by pupils to be more effective at dealing with bullying than others.

Within each school, *some teachers were identified as better at dealing with bullying than others*. Such teachers were reported to be better at listening to pupils, more prepared to take them seriously, and to take 'firm but fair' action.

*Pupils' responses to bullying*

When attempting to decide how best to respond to bullying, pupils engaged in a complex *process of risk assessment*. Each possible course of action was identified as having a number of potential risks and benefits attached. No tidy solutions or easy remedies were identified.

The *three most helpful factors* in preventing, or helping pupils to deal with bullying were friendships, avoidance strategies, and learning to 'stand up for yourself'.

*Telling teachers* about bullying was associated with a wide range of risks, particularly in relation to possible breaches of confidentiality, failure to act on reported incidents of bullying, and an inability to protect pupils from retaliatory action on the part of perpetrators. On the other hand, some pupils reported that telling teachers could help to stop the bullying.

*Parents* were valued for offering emotional support and advice, and for raising concerns about bullying with teachers if this was what their son or daughter wanted them to do. However, pupils also feared that parents might not believe them, or might over-react and make matters worse. Some pupils were concerned that by telling their parents about bullying they might start a family argument or cause their parents to feel worried and anxious on their behalf.

*Confidential sources of advice*, such as counselling services and voluntary organisations working with children and young people were identified as an important course of support. Such organisations were reported as enabling pupils to express their feelings, consider the options available to them, and to have some control over the pace of disclosure, should they decide to tell a teacher or parent about bullying.

The report concludes that anti-bullying strategies need to address the realities of children's experience of bullying and that *more direct work with children* is needed to develop and implement anti-bullying strategies.

## Recommendations

***Children's participation***

In recent years, government policy has made significant progress in recognising the importance of listening to children and young people, not only as a means of enhancing their participation as citizens, but also as a means of developing child-centred (and therefore more effective) services (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001). *We strongly recommend that:*

❖ schools develop more direct work with children and young people to enhance their participation in formulating and implementing anti-bullying strategies

- ❖ schools should develop a range of formal and informal approaches to working with children and young people that are age-appropriate, gender sensitive and culturally aware. More informal methods might be used to listen to primary school pupils' views about bullying. More formal approaches, such as consulting schools councils about bullying, should be considered a priority for secondary schools. Consulting with pupils about anti-bullying strategies might also be undertaken by young people themselves, for example, as part of PSHE project work

- ❖ in co-educational schools, and in ethnically diverse school populations, efforts should be made to discuss bullying and anti-bullying strategies in girls-only and Black and minority ethnic-only groups

- ❖ consulting with pupils on the development of anti-bullying strategies should be considered an on-going commitment on the part of schools, and not a one-off exercise

- ❖ LEAs should facilitate the sharing of good practice between schools, between different children's services, and with children's organisations in the voluntary sector, concerning participatory approaches to working with children and young people in schools

- ❖ teachers should be offered training in participative approaches to working with children and young people as part of their initial and in-service training

- ❖ in order to measure schools' progress in listening to pupils and to facilitate the sharing of good practice, the methods used by schools to consult with children and young people about bullying and in the development of anti-bullying strategies should be included as a topic for OFSTED inspections.

*A child-centred approach*

It is of key importance that anti-bullying strategies address the realities of children's experience of bullying, and how they commonly respond to it. *It is therefore recommended that:*

- ❖ more attention is given to the role of friendships in the development of anti-bullying strategies. A number of different approaches may be adopted in this regard (such as the 'buddy' system and the 'circle of friends' model). Other and more informal methods of supporting the development of friendships, such as activity-focused school clubs, might also be adopted

❖ schools address the importance of friendships in PSHE, particularly with regard to the development of emotional and social competence of pupils. The process of making friends, and how to cope when friendships break down might be usefully included. In primary schools, emphasis on the importance of friendships could be integrated in the schools' value base as a way of encouraging positive pupil relationships in a more informal way

❖ the role of friendships in promoting the social and emotional competence of pupils should be included in the development of guidance and training materials for teachers.

*Minimising risks, maximising support*

Strategies which seek to minimise the risks of 'telling' teachers about bullying, while also facilitating pupils' access to adult support are likely to be well received by pupils of all ages. *It is therefore recommended that:*

❖ urgent attention is given to making confidential sources of advice and support more widely available within school settings, and in local communities. This support could be provided in schools by independent youth organisations, or schools could form partnerships with external counselling organisations to provide confidential help and advice to pupils outside school hours.

*A whole school approach*

We suggest that listening to pupils about bullying should form part of an inclusive anti-bullying strategy, in which teachers also have their part to play. *It is therefore recommended that:*

❖ listening to pupils forms part of a whole-school approach to tackling bullying that also involves taking action at various levels, including: the development of a positive school ethos; regular reviews of anti-bullying policies and strategies (including the relationship of bullying to racial and sexual harassment, and homophobic abuse); curriculum development; support and training for teachers; environmental design; and working in partnership with parents.

# 1.    INTRODUCTION

This study investigates the perspectives of children and young people concerning 'what works' in tackling bullying.  The research, which was sponsored by ChildLine, a national children's charity, and funded by the Department for Education and Skills (DfES), aims to explore why, despite the almost universal introduction of anti-bullying policies by schools, children continue to call ChildLine in large numbers to ask for help in dealing with bullying.[1]  What are the reasons for the apparent gap between anti-bullying policies on paper, and anti-bullying practice in schools?  The Thomas Coram Research Unit at the Institute of Education, University of London, was commissioned to undertake a survey and a series of focus groups with children and young people in primary and secondary schools to explore this issue. More broadly, it is also intended that this study, by enabling children and young people to 'have a voice', will assist pupils, teachers and parents to work in partnership to reduce bullying in schools.

The report begins with information on the policy context of anti-bullying initiatives, and a summary of key issues and concerns in recent research on bullying, is provided.  This is followed by a brief outline of the aims and research methods of this research project.  The findings are then presented and analysed, and some conclusions are drawn. Finally, a series of recommendations are made as signposts for future action to improve current anti-bullying strategies.

A separate Summary Report has also been published[2]. It is envisaged that the Summary Report will be of most use to teachers, parents and pupils, in discussing and deciding how to progress anti-bullying work in their schools and local communities.

## Policy context

For almost two decades, bullying in schools has attracted the interest and concern of governments and policy makers.  In the late 1980s, for example, a public enquiry was launched into unruly behaviour in schools.  The resulting Elton Report (DES, 1989) highlighted the issue of bullying, and suggested that a positive school ethos provides the essential factor in facilitating academic success and positive pupil relations. A 'positive school ethos' has, however, proven a difficult concept to define or quantify. Instead, research has tended to focus on the relative merits of different approaches, or 'interventions'

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[1] Monitoring data provided by ChildLine shows that, between April 1999 and March 2000, the largest proportion of telephone calls (n=22,372) made to its helpline concerned bullying.
[2] The Research Summary (RB400) is available at http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research

designed to reduce or prevent bullying.  Extensive research funded by the DfEE in the 1990s (see Smith and Sharp, 1994), indicated that bullying was far more prevalent in some schools than others, and that the reasons for this pattern could not always be attributed to a single cause (such as social deprivation, or geographical location). Some schools were also shown to be more effective than others at introducing and sustaining anti-bullying work. Despite these complexities, the research provided much needed evidence on what had hitherto remained a largely hidden phenomenon, and provided the basis for the government's first major attempt to provide schools with evidence-based research on effective anti-bullying strategies (DfE, 1994; DfEE, 2000).

Almost a decade later, bullying continues to represent an important issue for public policy, not least because of the links between bullying, academic underachievement and mental health problems (DfEE, 1999).  Guidance issued to teachers and school governors highlights their duty to prevent all forms of bullying:

*'The emotional distress caused by bullying in whatever form – be it racial, or as a result of a child's appearance, behaviour or special educational needs, or related to sexual orientation, can prejudice school achievement, lead to lateness or truancy, and in extreme cases, end with suicide…Low report rates should not themselves be taken as proof that bullying is not occurring.'*
(DfEE, 1999: 24-25).

The National Healthy School Standard (DfEE, 1999) also recommended the development of anti-bullying initiatives as part of a whole-school approach to raising educational standards, improving the health of children and young people, and reducing social exclusion. The DfES has also recently announced that, as part of the government's national behaviour and attendance strategy, guidance and training will be offered to all secondary schools on tackling bullying from September 2003.  However, while the 'whole school approach' might be interpreted as echoing the notion of a 'school ethos', in other respects the issue of bullying appears to be beset by a number of tensions in policy.  Pupils who are excluded for fifteen days or more, now receive full-time education. Nevertheless, schools continue to be engaged in the difficult task of striking a balance between protecting the victims of bullying (through the use of permanent or temporary exclusions), and attending to the welfare of pupils who bully others.

# 2.  BACKGROUND

## Research on bullying: key issues

Prior to the empirical investigation, a focused literature review was undertaken to identify key issues and concerns, and to provide a context for exploring children's perspectives on future strategies for tackling bullying.  A summary of the key findings is presented here.

## What is bullying?

An appreciation of the diverse ways in which bullying is defined is important, because how bullying is understood necessarily influences the aims and content of anti-bullying initiatives. A psychological perspective on bullying, for example, might be expected to produce interventions designed to modify the behaviour of the individual or group, for example, through anger management.  On the other hand, a sociological perspective will give greater emphasis to the role of the institution in shaping, and giving meaning, to bullying behaviour, and to the role of the wider society in structuring power dynamics within educational institutions.

The definition of bullying has been the subject of considerable academic debate. It is important to remember that the pioneering work of Scandinavian researchers, such as Olweus (1991, 1993), began by listening to children and young people talk about their experiences of bullying, and by observing young people's behaviour in school.  Working from such a child-centred perspective helped to clarify what had hitherto remained a poorly defined phenomenon.

Olweus defined bullying as:

- ❖ the repeated or long term exposure of the victim, to
- ❖ verbal or physical attack, or social ostracism, perpetrated by
- ❖ a single student or group of students.

Tattum (1993) added extortion to these different categories of bullying behaviour.  Recent evidence, including this research project, suggests that bullying by e-mail and by text messaging should also now be included among the various mechanisms through which bullying may be perpetrated.

The power dynamics of bullying have also been highlighted. Stephenson and Smith (1989), for example, define bullying as 'an interaction in which a more dominant individual or group intentionally causes distress to a less dominant individual or group' (p133), and claim that an imbalance of power is a key feature of bullying. Bullying has also been defined as part of a continuum of anti-social and aggressive behaviour (Pearce, 1991). However, bullying in schools is rarely conceptualised as a criminal activity, despite the fact that serious physical assault, sexual assault and even rape have been included under the umbrella of bullying (Rivers, 1996). Indeed, Benn (1991) argues that there are parallels between bullying and domestic violence, in that neither have been treated as serious offences, and both tend to escalate over time, if not addressed at an early stage.

**Bullying, teasing and fighting**

Because bullying is often defined as part of a continuum of verbal or physical interaction between children, not always of an anti-social nature, attempts have been made to distinguish bullying from 'playing', 'teasing' and 'fighting'. These distinctions are considered important because teasing, for example, is generally regarded as acceptable, whereas bullying is not (Pearce, 1991). Furthermore, it is frequently reported that children respond to accusations of bullying by claiming that they were 'just playing'.

Some studies suggest a degree of overlap between 'bullying' and 'teasing'. Mooney et al (1991) for example, describe some teasing as 'playful' in intent between friends, but also includes behaviour 'designed to be hurtful' within the parameters of teasing. Indeed, a degree of fluidity between teasing and bullying might indeed be expected if, as it is argued, name-calling serves to establish the boundaries of what is considered acceptable behaviour between friends (Back, 1989). Kelly and Cohn (1988) also claim that name-calling among Celtic and African-Caribbean children can represent a form of joking between friends, which can be affectionate in nature.

However, it is more commonly argued that behaviour that is *intended* to be hurtful represents a defining characteristic of bullying (Tattum and Lane, 1989; Stephenson and Smith, 1989; Pearce, 1991). Besag (1989) comments on the cleverness of children in developing abusive names, and claims that name-calling often represents the initial stage of bullying. The targeting of a particular individual (or more rarely a group) for *persistently* negative treatment is also advanced as a distinguishing characteristic of bullying, compared with other forms of interaction between children (Besag, 1989).

**Nature of bullying**

Different forms of bullying behaviour have been identified, such as direct or indirect, as involving individuals or groups, and as verbal or physical. It is generally agreed that verbal abuse is the most common form of bullying, followed by various forms of physically aggressive behaviour (Smith, 1999). Within this broad pattern of behaviour, there are some important differences, based on age, gender, sexuality, and ethnicity.

*Age-related*

Primary school children are more likely to be bullied by others in their class whereas secondary pupils are more likely to be bullied by others in their year, or in higher years. Compared with bullying in primary school, bullying in secondary schools is often described as more organised and 'almost institutional'. (Elliott, 1991 p9).

*Gender*

Relatively few studies of bullying make explicit reference to its gendered nature. Indeed, generalisations are frequently made about bullying behaviour which are implicitly gendered, particularly in relation to analyses of aggressive or violent behaviour.

It is generally agreed that boys are more likely to be physically aggressive than girls, and that girls are more likely to engage in verbal abuse, social ostracism, and gossip (Siann 1994; Smith, 1999; Neary and Joseph, 1994; Roland, 1989; Stephenson and Smith, 1989; Besag, 1989). Olweus (1993) estimated that boys are four times more likely to engage in direct bullying, including physical assault, and name-calling, compared with girls, who are more likely to use more indirect methods.

Stein (1995) suggests that verbal bullying tends to cross gender boundaries, but that boys will rarely physically attack girls. In a retrospective study of adults' experience of bullying in childhood, Dale (1991) concludes that bullying is less prevalent in mixed-gender schools, compared with boys' schools, which she attributed to the restraining effect of the girls' presence. She describes mixed schools as more 'comradely' in atmosphere, and consequently as environments where arguments were more likely to be settled amicably.

*Sexist and sexualized bullying*

However, it is also argued that sexist bullying or harassment in schools is frequently dismissed as inoffensive or legitimised as part of the normal process of gender socialisation, and that it is a form of abuse engaged in by male teachers and male pupils alike (Stainton Rogers, 1991b). Furthermore, sexual harassment, of a physical as well as verbal kind, has been described as part of the 'hidden curriculum' of many co-educational schools (Herbert 1989, quoted in Drouet, 1993).

Indeed, Duncan (1999) presents a complex scenario in relation to what he terms 'gender abuse' in schools. He deconstructs bullying as a manifestation of gender conflict 'in the pursuit of a desired sexual identity'. He concludes that both boys and girls can adopt a variety of active and passive roles in relation to bullying, but that the sexualised nature of much gender abuse serves to remind girls that power is gendered. The threat of rape was identified as a potential sanction against girls who do not conform to male expectations: 'rape may be (comparatively) rare but physical and sexual assault are not, and the lower range of conflictual sexualised gender practices keeps that threat alive on a daily basis'. (p128). This research is of relevance to this project, since some girls have identified sexual assault and even rape within their understandings (and possibly experience) of bullying. The study also gives attention to the role of gender in the prevalence, and nature of bullying reported by pupils.

*Homophobic bullying*

The pervasive nature of homophobic abuse in schools has been widely commented upon, whether the intended target is known to be gay, or not (Douglas et al, 1997). There is evidence to suggest that homophobic abuse serves to 'police' gender identities, and establish norms of sexual behaviour and gender identity (Mac An Ghaill, 1989)

Rivers (1996) argues that a significant feature of homophobic bullying is the severity of the abuse. In a retrospective study of gay men and lesbians' experience of bullying, one gay man reported having been raped by a teacher, others reported having their clothes set alight, and being burnt with cigarettes while being held down. One lesbian reported having been raped by a male pupil, and another of having been dragged around the playing field by her hair.

*Racist bullying or racial harassment?*

There is an increasing, though relatively small, number of studies on the relationship between bullying and racism. However, there appears to be some ambivalence concerning the conceptualisation of racist

bullying. Often the terms 'racial teasing', 'racial bullying' and 'racial harassment' are used interchangeably. Tizard et al (1988), for example, report that name-calling relating to physical appearance, personal hygiene and race represented the three most frequent forms of 'teasing' reported among 7-year olds. Loach and Bloor (1994) and Siann (1994) argue that bullying can function as a 'cover' for racism. A report by the Commission for Racial Equality (1988), describes various case studies of what is defined as 'racial harassment' in schools. Regardless of the terminology used, Gillborn (1993) argues that racism in schools reflects a wider and racially structured society, and consequently, racist abuse carries extra weight.

In terms of prevalence, Kelly and Cohn's (1988) survey of first and fourth year pupils in schools in Manchester found that two-thirds of pupils said they had been bullied. Racist name-calling was recorded as the third most common form of bullying. In a recent survey of Black and ethnic minority pupils in mainly white schools, 26% said that they had experienced racially abusive name-calling during the previous week, while at school, or while travelling to and from school (Cline et al, 2002). However, in common with other surveys on bullying, it is likely that racist bullying or harassment is under-reported.

**Impact of bullying**

Research shows that bullying has a negative impact on students of all ages and backgrounds (Tattum and Lane, 1989; Besag, 1989), but that the severity of the impact can vary (Smith and Thompson, 1991; Elliott, 1991; Elliott and Killpatrick, 1994). Bullying has been identified as leading to loss of self-confidence, truancy, lower levels of academic attainment, increased anxiety, suicidal ideation, and attempted or actual suicide (Elliott and Kilpatrick, 1994). Some studies show that the negative effects of childhood bullying can persist into adulthood, causing depression, low self-esteem and social isolation (Olweus, 1991; Rivers, 1996; Elliott and Kilpatrick, 1994). Bullying has also been associated with a disproportionately higher rate of attempted and completed suicide among young lesbians and gay men, compared with other young people (see Warwick et al, 2000).

**Who are the bullies and the victims?**

There is some debate in the literature concerning both the value and validity of identifying typical 'victim' or 'bully' characteristics. Stainton Rogers (1991a) for example, argues that any child can be a bully or a victim, and that neither denotes an individual psychopathology: 'bullying is a reflective practice. Bullying creates victims; victims create bullies' (p8). On the other hand, Sharp et al (2002) claim that some

children are more likely to fall into a bully or victim role, and that how children learn to manage aggression and assertion in interpersonal life represents a key contributory factor.

Olweus (1993) described bullies as physically stronger, and victims as having characteristics that differed from the norm, for example in appearance, sporting or academic ability. Boulton and Underwood (1992) also found that children who perceived themselves to be different in some way, felt more vulnerable to bullying. Olweus (1984) found that approximately 20% of bullies were also victims, and that they represented a particularly disturbed group. Others have claimed that some children fall neither into the victim nor bully category and that they therefore provide a useful 'normative contrast' with which to analyse bullying and victim behaviour (Schwartz, 1993, quoted in Glover et al, 1998).

## Prevalence of bullying

### *How big a problem is bullying?*
It is widely acknowledged that there are considerable difficulties involved in accurately estimating the prevalence of bullying in schools. A number of methodological flaws or biases have been cited as influencing the research evidence. For example, studies vary in their definitions of bullying, timescales for measuring the incidence of bullying are not always made clear (for example, over the last week, or year), and often samples are not sufficiently representative (Thompson et al, 2002). Arora (1994) also identifies scope for bias if whole year populations are studied as representative of a school, as occasionally a single cohort may experience unusually high or low level of bullying. Cross-sectional analyses of bullying across several schools may give insufficient weight to differences in school populations based on age, gender, and ethnicity.

Stephenson and Smith (1989) stress the importance of school factors in understanding the prevalence of bullying. They conclude that bullying is more common in some schools than others, but is generally lower in small schools, and higher in schools in socially deprived areas. Disentangling the effects of these various factors has, however, proved challenging. For example, in their study of over 1,000 final year primary school pupils in 26 schools, a school in a very deprived area reported one of the lowest levels of bullying. Sharp et al (2002) concludes that, because of wide variations in levels of bullying between individual schools, and the 'de facto' definitions of bullying employed, statistics on bullying are only meaningful in the context of a particular school.

A further factor contributing to difficulties in estimating the size of the problem concerns under-reporting (Newson and Newson, 1984, O'Moore and Hillery, 1989). Despite the fact that children in schools are

subject to a high level of adult surveillance, teachers express difficulty in spotting bullying behaviour, particularly when it involves behaviour that is not overtly aggressive, or when it occurs in places and at times when children are left to their own devices. Research also shows that only a minority of pupils report bullying to teachers (Rigby and Slee, 1993).  Lack of confidence in adults' ability to help has been cited as a contributory factor to under-reporting by children (Besag 1989).

We are aware that, as a cross-sectional study focusing on two specific age groups, these caveats will need to be taken into account when discussing pupils' perceptions concerning the prevalence of bullying, and their reported experience of bullying.

**General trends**

Notwithstanding these caveats, a number of generalisations have been made about the prevalence of bullying.  The research evidence indicates that:

❖ bullying is more prevalent at primary school (Whitney and Smith, 1993), but easier to influence in this setting

❖ the prevalence of bullying varies widely between schools: Smith and Stephenson  (1991) found that up to 50% of children experienced bullying in some primary schools. Sharp et al  (2002) estimate that between 20-30% of primary school pupils and 10-20% of secondary school pupils have experienced bullying at some time in their school lives

❖ levels of bullying remain relatively stable over time within the same institution, and a minority of children (5-10%) will experience persistent bullying through a long period of their school lives (Sharp et al, 2002)

❖ in primary schools, bullying occurs most often in the playground, whereas in secondary schools, bullying is more widespread, and is as likely to include classrooms and corridor areas

❖ less than half of all bullying takes place to and from school (Smith, 1999)

❖ there is some evidence that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to suffer bullying than others (Glover et al 1998), and that bullying is more prevalent in socially and culturally disadvantaged areas (Cutright, 1995).

**Contributory factors**

There is evidence to support the argument that, after controlling for intake factors, *institutional factors* have a large, if not the largest, impact and on anti-social behaviour generally.  Rutter et al (1979), for example, found that behavioural difficulties had a stronger association with the quality of teacher-pupil relationships in school than with the pupils' social background.

Besag (1989) also found that bullying occurs more frequently in schools with the following characteristics:

- ❖ low staff morale
- ❖ high teacher turnover
- ❖ unclear standards of behaviour
- ❖ lack of consistent discipline
- ❖ inadequate supervision
- ❖ lack of awareness of children as individuals.

Stainton Rogers (1991b) also highlights teacher behaviour as providing the 'permitting' circumstances for bullying, for example, by indulging in intimidation of pupils, and by trivialising issues of racial and sexual harassment in school. These studies provide strong support for the development of a positive school ethos as having a preventive and restraining effect on bullying behaviour.

The study presented in this report will discuss pupils' awareness of the factors that influence schools' effectiveness in dealing with bullying, including teacher's behaviour and their responses to reports of bullying.

**The effectiveness of anti-bullying initiatives**

A number of evaluations have been undertaken of the impact of school policies on bullying, and of the relative effectiveness of different kinds of interventions (Smith and Sharp, 1994).  Some of these studies were prompted by the concerns raised by parents and pupils that anti-bullying policies and strategies were having a limited effect (Glover et al, 1998).  The evidence shows that adopting an anti-bullying policy is not enough: policies need to be effectively implemented and sustained over the long term (Glover et al, 1998). In particular, available research indicates that:

❖ school-wide policies decline in effectiveness over a 2-3 year period, after which time bullying increases (Sharp et al, 2002)

❖ reductions in bullying are easier to achieve in relation to its milder manifestations, but that more severe forms of bullying are harder to influence

❖ even with an effective anti-bullying policy in place, approximately 5% of children will suffer from severe bullying at secondary school.

Thus far, our overview of the research has shown that bullying has a range of antecedents and takes a variety of forms.  Consequently, it is widely acknowledged that anti-bullying strategies require a multi-dimensional response. The effectiveness of different anti-bullying initiatives are discussed in so far as they intervene at the following levels:

❖ schools
❖ parents and carers
❖ children and young people.

However, in practice, these categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive.  Indeed, a comprehensive anti-bullying strategy (otherwise known as a 'whole school' approach) might include the implementation of a number of initiatives at different levels.

**Schools**

*Ethos*
The research evidence presented thus far shows that school ethos has an important part to play in preventing or reducing bullying.  However, at first glance, the practical relevance of such a conclusion is not readily apparent. 'Ethos' represents a rather nebulous concept, and as such, it is difficult to define, or evaluate.  A school's ethos might be defined as its culture, or using Olweus' terminology (1991), its 'climate'.

As we might expect, interventions at this level tend not to be mechanistic, but rather aim gradually to:

❖ create or reinforce a set of values that inhibits bullying

❖ support for relationships based on mutual respect and care, rather than power and strength (Smith and Stephenson, 1991; Glover et al, 1998; Besag, 1989).

❖ provide adult models of positive behaviour as a means to provide children with a 'cultural resource' to guide their behaviour (Stainton Rogers 1991b).

Given the relationship between bullying and issues of social inequality, we might also add acceptance and appreciation of social diversity.

### *School anti-bullying policies*

The research evidence indicates that, in order to be effective, anti-bullying policies should be:

❖ developed *with* staff and pupils

❖ frequently revisited and evaluated in the light of changing circumstances (Smith and Sharp, 1994; Thompson and Smith, 1991).

It is also likely that anti-bullying policies will have limited effectiveness if they do not reflect and reinforce the value system (or ethos) of the school. However, notwithstanding these limitations, anti-bullying or behaviour policies are invaluable in defining bullying, setting out how schools intend to respond to reported incidents of bullying. The development of an anti-bullying policy should also:

❖ be accompanied by regular and comprehensive staff training

❖ include the induction of new staff

❖ incorporate a system of review.

❖ attract effective leadership, and management and administrative support (Sharp et al, 2002).

### *Curriculum development*

Including the topic of bullying within the school curriculum has won widespread support. Various aspects of the curriculum offer scope for addressing bullying, for example, as an element of personal, social and health education, or English, drama, history or religious education (Cowie and Sharp 1994; Herbert, 1993).

*Teachers*

In addition to addressing the topic of bullying as a part of the curriculum, teachers have been identified as needing advice and guidance for dealing with bullies, victims and their parents (Stephenson and Smith, 1989). It has also been recommended that the impact of name-calling is discussed with children, because this is most often dismissed by adults, despite the distress it is reported as causing (Besag 1989).

Teachers have also been identified as having an important role to play in:

❖ fostering positive pupil relations by treating all pupils with respect
❖ not indulging in sexist or other forms of discriminatory behaviour
❖ modelling pro-social behaviour and conflict resolution skills
❖ addressing the emotional needs of pupils, as well as their formal education

*Whole school approaches*

Whole-school approaches commonly involve the selection and development of anti-bullying initiatives from each of the categories mentioned in this section of the report. Indeed, it is widely acknowledged that the development of an anti-bullying policy should be viewed as a first step, but one that is likely to be more effective if combined with other initiatives, such as:

❖ behaviour management
❖ victim support
❖ curriculum development (Besag 1989; Roland, 1989).

It is also argued that whole school approaches to bullying benefit from the mutually reinforcing participation of parents, teachers and other support staff, and pupils (Elliott, 1991; Suckling and Temple, 2002; Sharp and Thompson, 1994).

There is also evidence to support the development of anti-sexist and anti-racist policies alongside anti-bullying policies, and also within a whole-school framework (Gillborn, 1993). The present study therefore explores the extent to which pupils express an interest in being involved in the development of anti-bullying initiatives, and also the extent to which action taken to address bullying takes gender, ethnicity and sexuality into account.

**Parents and carers**

There is some debate concerning the wisdom of working in partnership with parents to tackle bullying. Elliott (1991a) for example, suggests that the parents of victims can confront bullies, make contact with the parents of the bullying child, and support their own child by developing his or her social networks. According to Elliott, it is 'better to spend energy creating a positive situation than trying to pick up the pieces of a bullied child'. (p.13). Besag (1991) also underlines the value of schools working in partnership with parents in order to reinforce more positive behaviour on the part of the bully, and to provide more than one source of support to the victim. Besag (1989) also suggests that parents are included in school discussion groups, videos and workshops on bullying, because they have more contact with the child, but have less access to support for themselves.  Helping the parent to appear calm and confident has been identified as a way of modelling positive coping behaviour for the victim of bullying. Stephenson and Smith (1989) suggest that partnerships between teachers and parents could be extended more widely to include school governors, LEA support services, and other agencies.

However, it is argued that the effectiveness of home-school liaison often depends on attitudes of parents, for example, on whether they perceive bullying behaviour in their child as unacceptable (Besag 1989; Stephenson and Smith 1989). Other authors also warn of the potential risks involved in collaborating with parents on anti-bullying initiatives, citing children's widespread mistrust of parents' capacity to respond to bullying appropriately (Thompson and Arora, 1991).

**Children and young people**

A number of interventions have attempted to include children and young people in anti-bullying strategies, though with limited evidence of their involvement in their design or formulation. The lack of attention given to children's agency in tackling bullying may be partly attributed to the hierarchical structures of schools, where children have limited scope for participating in decision-making. However, while adult intervention and support may be welcomed by children, the active participation of children in tackling bullying should not be overlooked:

*'The best solution would be for the bullied children to reach a solution for themselves, with the support of concerned adults, so that they feel confident in their own ability to cope.  It must be stressed that research shows that victims left to struggle with the problem alone are unlikely to extricate themselves from the bullying, which can continue for years'.* (Besag, 1991:108).

*Friendships*

Anti-bullying strategies that acknowledge childhood, as well as the support needs of individual children, provide promising avenues for reducing bullying and supporting victims. The making and breaking of friendship*s* is identified as crucial in this regard. Accordingly, it has been argued that enhancing friendship skills can act as an important protective factor (Besag, 1989), and that programmes that incorporate this approach have a positive impact on childhood, and adult life (Ginsberg et al, 1986).

*Mentoring*

Mentoring schemes, in which older, more confident children are matched with younger, and more isolated pupils, have also been attempted. Such schemes appear to foster a sibling-type relationship, and are described by Besag (1991) as providing children with the 'quality of protection' that adults take for granted (p42). Peer counselling schemes have also been introduced with some success (Cowie and Sharp, 1994).

*Working with bullies and victims*

Other interventions tend towards a more *individualised* and *therapeutic* approach. The categorising of different types of bullies and victims comes into play here, as different strategies have been identified for different personality types. Besag (1989) identifies children who are 'watchers' rather than 'doers', and who need support to participate in group activities, as being at higher risk of bullying. She suggests that skill-based activities or sports, organised for example as part of an after-school club programme, provide a useful means to encourage group activity and making friends, as such activities require fewer social skills. In relation to bullying behaviour, Pearce (1991) argues that inappropriately aggressive behaviour demands an early response from teachers and parents. A twin-track approach is recommended, in which the bully learns to manage aggression more appropriately, and the victim is supported to learn more assertive behaviour. Above all, aggression must be perceived to have a 'cost' attached, such as an apology or reparation of some kind. Stephenson and Smith (1989) stress that it is important to label bullying behaviour and not the child, and that caring attitudes can be promoted through peer tutoring.

*Peer Group Initiatives*

Anti-bullying strategies that draw upon children's collective resources in a positive way have been highlighted. Frost (1991), for example, claims that peer group pressure offers the most effective deterrent to bullying behaviour. A number of interventions have attempted to support the development of positive peer group pressure. The Kidscape programme, for example, was widely implemented in schools and involved group discussions and role-play with 3-16 year olds. 'Bully courts' have also been introduced in

some schools with varying success. Elliott (1991b) described the latter as controversial and only really feasible if they have the support of parents and teachers, and when other elements of an anti-bullying policy are already in place. However, it is claimed that 'bully courts' have provided a useful mechanism for identifying children's ideas for dealing with bullying: 'Children see bullying from a different level - they're at eye-level with the others. Their insight can be fresher; they can offer more genuine ideas than adults' (Knuppe, 1990, quoted in Elliott, 1991b).

Less attention appears to have been paid to children's support needs during periods of transition, for example, between primary and secondary school. Children often fear bullying at points of transition in their lives, or at particular turning points, for example, during the move from primary to secondary school. Children in their last year of primary school may be seen as the 'leaders' of their school. Primary schools are generally smaller, both in the fabric of the building and in the size of the school population. Secondary schools are, by contrast, frequently viewed as fearfully large places, where newcomers represent the lowest rung of a long ladder. Children who change schools as a result of moving home may also feel vulnerable to bullying. It would therefore seem useful for more research to be conducted on the support needs of children as they learn the ropes of their new environment.

## Implications

What are the implications of the findings of this literature review for a contemporary study of children's perceptions of 'what works' in tackling bullying?

It is clear that, despite the existence of anti-bullying policies, children express a continuing reluctance to tell adults (parents or teachers) about their experiences. Children's reluctance to talk to adults about bullying has been attributed to their lack of faith in adult's ability to stop the bullying (La Fontaine, 1991; Macleod and Morris,1996). A study undertaken by Glover et al (1998) reported a number of different adult responses perceived by children as helpful or not so helpful. Staff who communicated that firm action would be taken against bullying were valued, particularly during the transition from primary to secondary school. Other helpful responses were identified as teachers getting to know who the trouble-makers were, keeping an eye on victims, providing information during assemblies, and demonstrating the difference between bullying and 'mucking about' during class. Adult responses were described as counter-productive if they were perceived by children to be inappropriately forceful. Moving victims to another class was also described as unhelpful because victims were then obliged to make new friends. 'Telling' adults about bullying entailed a number of risks, including loss of control over how the complaint was subsequently handled.

In part, children's reluctance to 'tell' may also be attributed to children's own code of behaviour, which eschews 'telling tales' to teachers or other adults in positions of authority. Children also express reluctance to confide in their parents, because they feel ashamed, rejected, obliged to show self-reliance, and do not want to worry their parents (Besag, 1989). They may also fear that their parents will over-react to bullying.

One factor that is likely to influence the effectiveness of anti-bullying policies concerns children's own perceptions of bullies and victims. In a study of children's attitudes to those who report incidents of bullying, comments in support of 'telling' outweighed negative comments, but the differential reduced over time (Rigby and Slee, 1993). A substantial proportion of children also demonstrated mixed feelings, with some showing strong condemnation of victims who complain to adults. This evidence suggests that it may not be sufficient for schools to make blanket statements that incidents of bullying should always be reported. Until there is a substantial culture shift in attitudes on the part of children *and* adults to 'telling', confidential helplines, such as that provided by ChildLine, clearly provide a much-needed resource for children and young people.

At least two hypotheses might be offered in relation to children's reluctance to disclose their experiences of bullying. First, it is possible that, while policies and procedures for responding to bullying are to be welcomed, an overly procedural or prescriptive approach may have an alienating effect on children and young people. Second, the provision of more confidential sources of support, while not the only answer, appears to allow children scope for having their feelings acknowledged as a first and important phase, prior to the consideration of possible solutions. This element of an anti-bullying strategy provides emotional support, while also allowing children some control over the timing of disclosure, and perhaps time to consider and prepare for the possible consequences.

Another theme concerns the way in which sexism, racism and other forms of socially constructed power relations can be integrated into mainstream definitions, and responses to, bullying. For example, insufficient attention has been paid in the literature to ways of developing gender-sensitive and culturally-sensitive models for tackling bullying, despite differences in experiences of, and engagement in, bullying, based on gender and race.

This study focuses on children's views on what can be done to tackle bullying. As such, it has much to offer in terms of contributing to what has become a complex field that has, however, tended to view children as passive recipients of 'interventions', rather than active agents in the creation of school cultures.

The contribution of this study concerns its exploration of pupils' agency in dealing with bullying, and their opinions of the range of possible options open to them to respond to bullying, and their views about the likely consequences of their choices.

The study also has relevance to debates concerning the impact of school cultures or 'ethos' on bullying behaviour. This study explores pupils' perceptions of teachers' behaviour, not just in responding to bullying incidents, but also more generally, in the extent to which they are perceived by pupils to 'set a good example' and thus model pro-social behaviour.

Each of the schools participating in this study has adopted an anti-bullying policy. This study investigates, from the perspective of pupils, why there is often such a gap between policy and practice.

## Summary and key findings

Bullying has become a key issue for public policy in recent decades following widespread public and professional concern about the negative effects of bullying on students' academic attainment and emotional well-being.

A review of the literature on bullying in schools highlighted a number of key points, namely:

### *Definitions of bullying*

*Definitions* of bullying vary, but the term is generally understood to involve verbal abuse, physical aggression, or social ostracism repeatedly and over a period of time. Bullying is also defined as intentionally hurtful.

### *Prevalence of bullying*

Due to methodological difficulties and biases, it is difficult to estimate the *prevalence* of bullying with any accuracy. Bullying is under-reported by pupils, parents and teachers. However, the available evidence suggests that:

- bullying is more common at primary school than secondary school, but easier to influence at primary school
- The extent of bullying varies widely between schools, but remains relatively stable over time within the same school

- 20-30% of primary school students and 10-20% of secondary school pupils have experienced bullying at some time in their school lives
- 5-10% of children will experience persistent bullying over the long term

It is probable that *institutional* factors, such as school ethos, the quality of pupil-teacher relationships, staff turnover, inconsistent discipline, or unclear standards of behaviour, have the most impact on the prevalence of bullying.

### Nature of Bullying

In terms of the *nature* of bullying, verbal abuse is more common than physical assault. Compared with girls, boys are more likely to be physically aggressive. Girls are more likely to engage in verbal abuse, social ostracism and gossip. Bullying frequently takes the form of racial or sexual harassment, and homophobic abuse. However, insufficient attention has been given to the development of genuinely inclusive anti-bullying strategies.

### Impact of bullying

Bullying can have a deleterious *effect* on the emotional well-being of pupils, and their academic attainment. Bullying can lead to loss of confidence, truancy, anxiety disorders, suicidal ideation, attempted and completed suicide among children and young people. In some cases, negative effects persist into adulthood.

### Effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies

Disentangling the effect of different *anti-bullying initiatives* can be difficult but, in general, the positive effects of school-wide policies diminish over time, as they fall into disuse. The effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies depends on how well they are implemented over the short and long term.

Specific anti-bullying interventions are more likely to be *effective* against 'milder' forms of bullying. The most serious forms of bullying are more resistant to intervention. It is estimated that, regardless of the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies, 5% of children can be expected to experience severe bullying at school.

Bullying is a complex social phenomenon, having a range of antecedents. *A multi-dimensional* (or 'whole-school') approach is therefore more likely to be effective in the long-term than one-off, or narrowly-focused initiatives.

A *whole-school approach* involves taking action at various levels, including: school ethos; policy development (including the relationship of bullying to racial and sexual harassment and homophobic abuse); curriculum development; support and training for teachers; environmental design; and working in partnership with parents, pupils and the broader community.

Insufficient attention has been paid to children's perceptions and views about what works in tackling bullying, and that more direct work with children and young people is needed to enhance their participation in formulating and implementing anti-bullying strategies.

# Research aims and methods of this study

## Aims

The overall objective of this study was to explore children's experiences of bullying, and to document their opinions concerning the relative effectiveness of a number of different approaches to tackling bullying.  More specifically, the aims of the study were to:

- ❖ explore children's understanding and experience of bullying
- ❖ investigate children's own responses to bullying
- ❖ examine children's views concerning adult responses to bullying
- ❖ identify the support needs of children and young people who experience bullying
- ❖ explore the opinions of children and young people concerning anti-bullying strategies in the future, and young people's involvement in their development

In addressing these aims, the study focused on the views and experiences of primary (Year 5) and secondary (Year 8) pupils.

## Methods

The views and experiences of pupils were investigated using both qualitative (focus group) and quantitative (questionnaire survey) methods.  The fieldwork was completed during the summer and winter terms of 2002.

## Sample

The sample was purposive in design, aiming to include a diverse range of school types and locations. Twelve schools were selected (six primary and six secondary) according to a limited number of key variables known to have an impact (or potential impact) on bullying: school size, geographical location (urban, non-metropolitan, and in the north and south of the country), status as co-educational or single sex, and religious affiliation. It was anticipated that, by including schools in urban areas, adequate representation of Black and minority ethnic pupils would be achieved.  The chosen variables were not intended to be mutually exclusive: for example, a selected secondary school might be both small in size, and single-sex.

Participating schools were located in Leeds (n=4), East Sussex (n=3) and in the inner London boroughs of Islington (n=2) and Lambeth (n=3). Two single sex schools were included (one girl's school, and one boy's school). Four schools were denominational (three Church of England and one Roman Catholic). On the basis of DfES data[3], three participating schools were small, five were medium size, and four were large.

**Focus groups**

Two focus groups of up to ten pupils were held in each of the twelve participating schools. This produced a total sample of twenty-four focus groups. Pupils were recruited from Years 5 and 8. Except in single sex schools, recruitment to focus groups was designed to achieve equal representation from boys and girls, and to reflect the ethnic profile of the school. Within these criteria, it was intended that focus group participants would be systematically selected from school registers. In the vast majority of focus groups, equal gender representation was achieved. Two focus groups were girls-only, and two focus groups were held with boys-only. Black and minority ethnic pupils represented just over a quarter of focus group participants. In total, 230 pupils participated in the focus group stage of the research.

In terms of the selection process, and within the specified criteria, the study was only partially successful in achieving a systematic selection of focus group participants from school registers by, for example, selecting every fifth pupil (depending on the size of the school). Despite the best efforts of researchers, some schools tended to select children according to the constraints on teachers' time, energy and understanding of the purpose of the research. For example, two teachers informed us that they had selected children to take part in focus group discussions because they were known to be involved in bullying, either as victims or perpetrators. Another school selected a focus group composed entirely of anti-bullying counsellors.

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[3] Using data obtained from the DfES, schools were banded into small, medium and large as follows:

|        | Primary Schools | Secondary Schools |
|--------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Small  | 26-200          | 201-600           |
| Medium | 201-400         | 601-1000          |
| Large  | 401-800         | 1001+             |

**Questionnaire survey**

Subsequently, a questionnaire survey was conducted of all pupils in Years 5 and 8 in the participating schools. In total, 953 pupils participated in the survey (a response rate of 78.5%). 779 pupils in Year 8 participated (82% of the total sample) compared with 174 primary school pupils (18% of the total sample). The average age of Year 5 and 8 pupils was 9 years and 12 years respectively.

**Consent**

As a means of obtaining children's consent to take part in the research, child-friendly and age-appropriate leaflets, giving information on the purpose of the research, were distributed to participating schools. Model parental consent letters were also sent to schools, although some schools preferred to send their own letters to parents. At the beginning of each focus group and prior to the questionnaire survey, researchers reminded pupils that their participation was voluntary and, in a small number of cases, children declined to participate.

**Research instruments**

A focus group topic guide was developed in consultation with the advisory group and piloted in a primary and secondary school. Initially, the research advisory group expressed their concern regarding the possible negative impact on pupils of discussing bullying in group settings. Consequently, a number of scenarios were selected from ChildLine and other research papers as a means of stimulating and focusing discussion on what could be done about bullying. Pupils were then asked to describe how they might respond to bullying and what action, in their experience, might be expected to work (or not). Finally, participants were asked to review the various options that had emerged in discussion, and to identify what action would be most effective.

The questionnaire survey was also developed in consultation with the advisory group and piloted in a secondary and primary school. The questionnaire was designed to explore quantitatively some of the issues and themes raised by the focus groups. The questionnaire survey investigated:

- ❖ children's definitions of bullying
- ❖ children's perceptions concerning the prevalence of bullying
- ❖ children's perceptions of how good their school is at dealing with bullying
- ❖ how children try to deal with bullying by themselves, and with the support of friends
- ❖ the advantages and disadvantages of asking for support and help from teachers, parents, siblings, and external agencies, such as the police and ChildLine
- ❖ children's involvement in decision-making

The survey was administered by researchers, with the support of teachers, in the twelve participating schools. All pupils in Years 5 and 8 were asked to take part. In order to support children of different abilities to take part, researchers and teachers offered assistance in cases where pupils were unclear about the meaning of a question, or if they needed help in completing the questionnaire. Pupils were also assured that the information given on the questionnaires would remain confidential to the research team. Except in small classes, where questionnaires were collected by the researcher immediately after completion, all pupils were given an envelope in which they could seal their questionnaire ready for collection by researchers.

**Analysis**

Following the focus group stage of the research, and focusing on the research objectives, a thematic analysis of each focus group was undertaken. In particular, pupils' understandings of bullying were investigated, and the concept of 'pathways' was used to explore different responses to bullying, and their associated risks and benefits. Subsequently, a comparison was made of findings across all the focus groups.

The data from the questionnaire survey was analysed using the SPSS data analysis programme. Numerical frequencies and cross-tabulations of questions according to age, gender, school and ethnicity were obtained. Focus group findings were compared with quantitative data from the survey in order to explore the extent to which the survey confirmed, contrasted with or illuminated key focus group findings.

# 3.    FINDINGS

In this section of the report, the findings from both the questionnaire survey and focus groups are presented. An analysis of the reported prevalence and nature of bullying is first provided. Subsequently, data concerning pupils' perceptions of action taken by schools to tackle bullying, and pupils' responses to bullying are investigated, with a particular focus on the perceived effectiveness of talking to friends, teachers, family members and external sources of help and advice.  The potential for pupils being involved in decision-making with regard to individual cases of bullying, and in relation to school-wide anti-bullying strategies is also discussed.

## Profile of respondents and schools

As noted earlier[4], 230 pupils participated in the focus group stage of the research.  A questionnaire survey was subsequently conducted of all pupils in Years 5 and 8 in the participating schools.  In total, 953 pupils participated in the survey (a response rate of 78.5%). 779 pupils in Year 8 participated (82% of the total sample) compared with 174 primary school pupils (18% of the total sample). The average age of Year 5 and 8 pupils was 9 years and 12 years respectively.

## Participating schools

To preserve anonymity, the six primary and six secondary schools that participated in the survey are referred to as schools P1-P6 (for primary schools), and S1-S6 (for secondary schools).  Each school in Year 5 and 8 represented a proportion of the school sample for that year as follows (see Charts 1.0 and 1.1):

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[4] See pp30-32 for a more detailed description of the study sample

**Chart 1.0 Participating schools in Year 5:**
**% of sample represented by each school**
*Year 5 Respondents: N=174*

| School | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| P1 | 14% |
| P2 | 13% |
| P3 | 18% |
| P4 | 16% |
| P5 | 24% |
| P6 | 15% |

**Year 5 schools**

**Chart 1.1 Participating schools in Year 8:**
**% of sample represented by each school**
*Year 8 Respondents: N=779*

| School | Percentage |
|--------|------------|
| S1 | 11% |
| S2 | 7% |
| S3 | 20% |
| S4 | 17% |
| S5 | 20% |
| S6 | 25% |

**Year 8 schools**
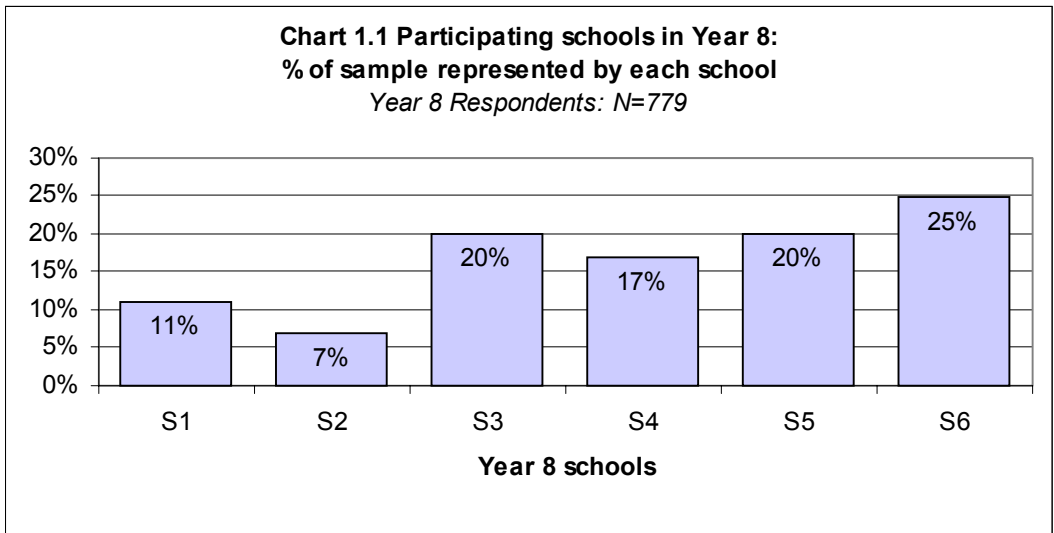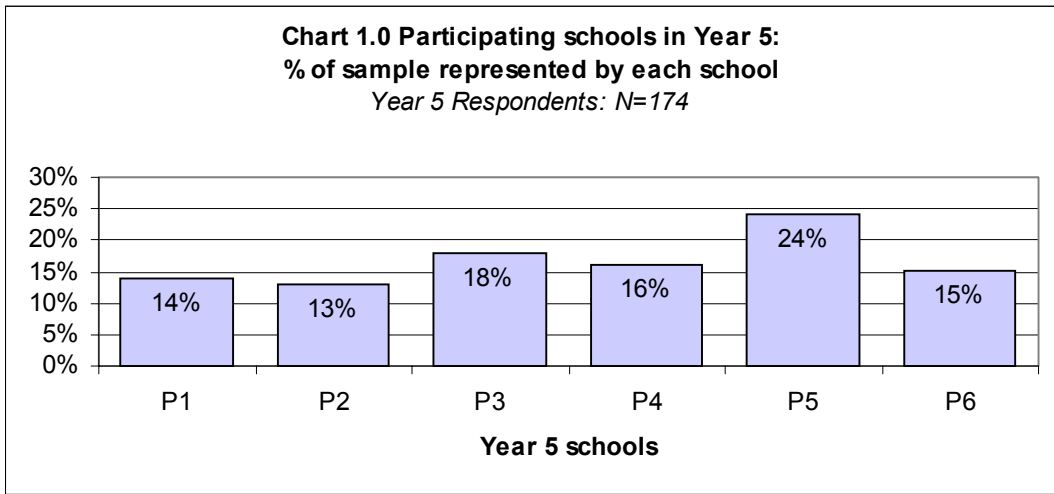
In relation to size, three secondary schools (S5, S4, and S1) and two primary schools (P6 and P4) were of medium size. Two secondary schools (S6 and S3) and two primary schools (P3 and P5) were categorised as large, and one secondary school (S2) and two primary schools were small (P1 and P2).

One secondary school (S4) was a girls' school, and one secondary school was a boy's school (S2). In terms of religious affiliation, three schools were Church of England (S1, S4 and P1), and one was Roman Catholic (P5). In relation to geographical location, two primary (P1 and P2) and two secondary schools (S1 and S2) were located in Leeds. Three schools (S4, P4 and P5) were located in the London borough of Lambeth, and two schools (P6 and S5) were in the London borough of Islington. Two secondary schools (S3 and S6) and one primary school (P3) were based in East Sussex.

Three secondary schools (S4, S3 and S6) had been designated by the DfES as specialist arts schools. Of these, one secondary school (S6) was also a Beacon school. One primary school (P2) was classified as a Beacon school.

## Ethnicity

The questionnaire aimed to obtain information on pupils' ethnic origin in a child-friendly way. Pupils were offered a range of different words: Black, white, British, Asian, Caribbean, African, Chinese, mixed race, Irish, Middle Eastern, Turkish, or other European, and were asked to circle those words that best described them. Pupils were also given the opportunity to describe themselves in other ways. The vast majority of pupils selected from among the categories provided. However, a small minority chose to describe themselves in other ways, such as 'half west Indian and half Mauritian', Malaysian, north African, Korean and Columbian. For the purpose of this report, three main groups have been identified: white, Black (including African Caribbean and African) and Asian, and other ethnic groups (see Chart 1.2 below). Black and Asian pupils have been grouped together as the numbers would otherwise be too small to allow for a separate analysis for each ethnic group.

**Chart 1.2 Profile of respondents: ethnic composition**
*Respondents: N = 953*

| Ethnic group | Percentage |
|---|---|
| White | 49% |
| Other ethnic groups | 23% |
| Black & Asian | 20% |
| Missing | 8% |
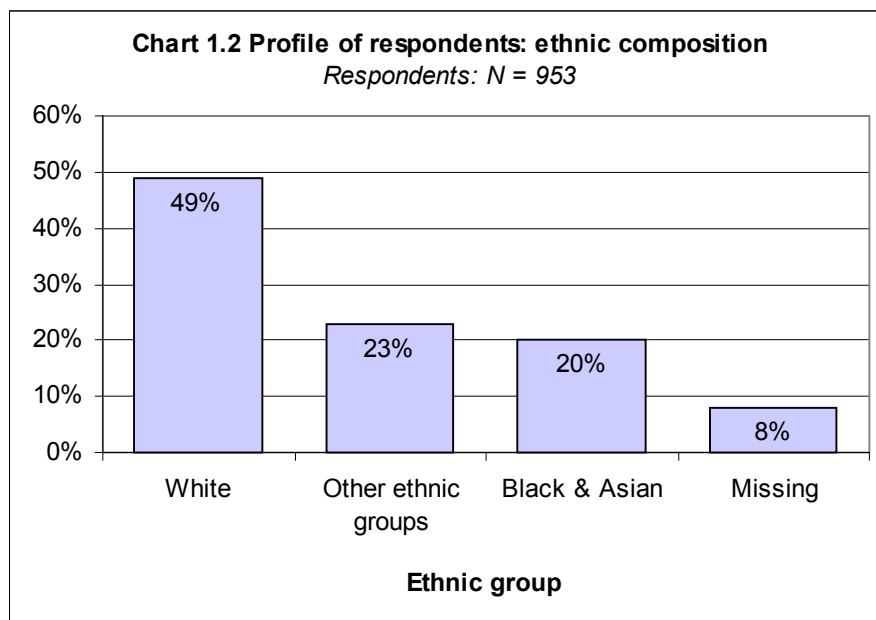
Just under half of the sample (49% N=469) was white, 23% (N=216) were of other ethnic groups, and 20% (N=190) were Black or Asian. In 8% (N=78) of cases, pupils did not record their ethnic identity.

There were some differences in the ethnic composition of the sample for Year 5 compared with Year 8. The proportion of white pupils was lower in Year 5 (43% N=67) compared with Year 8 (56% N=402) and there was also a higher proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups (37% N=57) in Year 5. There was little difference, however, in the representation of Black and Asian pupils in Year 5 compared with Year 8: in both years, Black and Asian pupils represented approximately one fifth of the pupil population (21% and 22% respectively).

## Gender

Girls represented just over half (52%) of the total sample (N=500), compared with boys (47%: N=444). In 1% of cases (N=9), the gender of the participant was not recorded. There was a gender difference in the level of participation between Years 5 and 8. In Year 5, more boys than girls were represented (54% and 46% respectively) compared with Year 8, where more girls (54%) than boys (46%) took part.

## Family structure

The survey sample reflected the diversity of contemporary family structures (see Chart 1.3). The majority of pupils (60%) lived in a two-parent household (N=576). A third (33%) lived with a lone mother (N=321). A very small minority (3% N=25) lived with a lone father. An equally small proportion (3% N=35) were looked after, or lived with other relatives. In 6 cases (1%), the respondent's household composition was not recorded.



Chart 1.3 Profile of respondents: family structure
Respondents: N=953
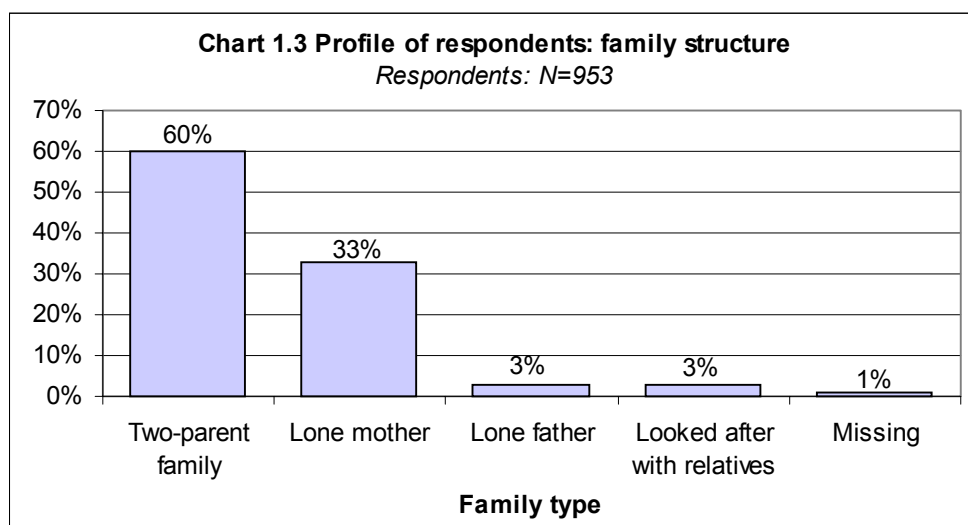
**Key findings**

The composition of the study sample took account of key factors thought to have an impact (or potential impact) on bullying: school size, geographical location, status as co-educational or single sex, and geographical location. Religiously affiliated schools were also included. Nevertheless, we are confident that the study sample is sufficiently robust to enable generalisations to be made about pupils' experiences of bullying, and their views concerning the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies, with some confidence.

The sample was ethnically mixed and gender balanced, although the ethnic and gender composition of the sample varied to some degree between Years 5 and 8. Respondents' home backgrounds also represented a diverse range of family structures.

# What is bullying?

## Pupils' understandings of bullying

Pupils' understandings of bullying were explored in focus groups. Subsequently, pupils were also asked to offer their definitions of bullying in the questionnaire survey. The survey findings largely confirmed the findings of focus group discussions.

## Physical and verbal abuse

In focus groups and in the questionnaire survey, pupils identified particular categories of behaviour, such as physical or verbal bullying. Typically, name-calling, pushing, 'getting beaten up', feeling threatened, or socially isolated were mentioned. Verbal abuse tended to focus on appearance (for example, being called fatty, spotty, four-eyes) but also included racist and sexist terms. Homophobic abuse (such as being called 'poof', and 'queer') was also described by focus group participants as pervasive, 'even if you're not gay', although homophobia featured less in definitions of bullying in the questionnaire survey. Abuse targeted at the victim's family (particularly mothers) was described as particularly upsetting.

However, within categories of verbal or physical abuse, a wide range of behaviour of varying severity was described. Physical bullying, for example, was identified as including hitting, kicking, punching, being pulled under water during swimming lessons, and being forced to perform humiliating acts (for example, 'making someone suck your foot'). In two focus groups, girls mentioned unwanted sexual touching and in one school, rape was mentioned. In one focus group, one boy said that other boys 'touched you where they shouldn't'. However, sexualised bullying featured less in the quantitative data on bullying.

## Intention to hurt

A definition offered by one pupil described a range of bullying behaviours and their effects:

*'Bullying is intentionally causing physical or mental damage to others, like attacking them for no reason frequently, teasing them frequently, or even sexually, such as rape'.*
(Girl, Year 8)

On the whole, pupils felt that verbal bullying could hurt as much as physical bullying because 'it hurts on the inside'.

**Coercion**

A wide range of other, largely coercive, behaviours were also described in focus groups and the questionnaire survey, including blackmail, theft of dinner money or other possessions, and putting pressure on pupils to do something they do not want to do, or might be likely to 'get them into trouble'. Bullying might also involve an attack on a valued achievement:

*'If you do a good piece of work, and you're really proud of it, and then they ruin it. And you get really upset'.*
(Girl, Year 5).

*'Bullying is...calling clever children 'geeks' and forcing them to do your homework'.*
(Boy, Year 5).

**Repeated victimisation**

In focus groups, most pupils were of the opinion that the abuse had to be repeated over a period of time to constitute bullying. This also emerged as a common feature of definitions offered by pupils in the questionnaire survey.  It was generally agreed that a child could be bullied by an individual or a group and that bullying happens in all schools.

From the qualitative data obtained from pupils, bullying emerges as part of a complex web of power relations and hierarchies between children. A plethora of characteristics - some individual, some social - were put forward as reasons why some children who 'do not fit in' were bullied.  A narrative of violence emerged, in which pupils referred to children perceived as 'soft', 'weak' or 'small' as more vulnerable to bullying than 'hard' children.

*'Some people, like the boy who got thrown against the gate, is in a really bad way.  He is very little and comes from a hopeless poor family. But they do get left alone when people realise they can't help it and are just hopeless'.*  (Boy, Year 8)

Points of transition, for example, between primary and secondary school, or when pupils changed schools midstream, were identified as times when pupils most feared being bullied.  Within the hierarchies of school life, new and younger pupils were perceived as at particular risk:

*'It happens when a group gang up on someone younger or someone new or weaker. They're not afraid of attacking them'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

A key theme to emerge in pupils' explanations for bullying was an intolerance of, or hostility towards, difference. Primary school children were more likely to mention being criticised for having unusual pets or hobbies than secondary school children. Wearing the 'wrong gear', such as less expensive brand-name trainers, was more frequently mentioned by Year 8 pupils as something that would not 'pass'. Clothes, physical appearance, religion, language, colour and obvious signs of poverty were all identified as possible 'weak spots' that a bully might 'home in on'.

*'Bullying is when someone picks on someone else because they are different - their race, height, weight, or looks..(it's about) prejudice and discrimination and when someone gets hurt physically or mentally, or when someone is not respected'.*
(Girl, Year 8)

**Vulnerability to bullying**

In the questionnaire survey, pupils were asked whether some pupils are more likely to be bullied than others.  On the whole, they were quite divided in their response to this question, although older pupils were more likely to respond in the affirmative.   Almost half of Year 5 pupils (49% N=84) compared with a majority (61% N=473) of pupils in Year 8 thought that some pupils were indeed more likely to be bullied than others.  However, in each age group, a large minority were 'not sure': 31% (N=53) in Year 5 and 28% (N=220) in Year 8 (see Chart 1.4).

**Chart 1.4 Are some pupils more likely to be bullied than others? The views of pupils in years 5 and 8**

*Year 5 Respondents N=172 Year 8 Respondents N=767*
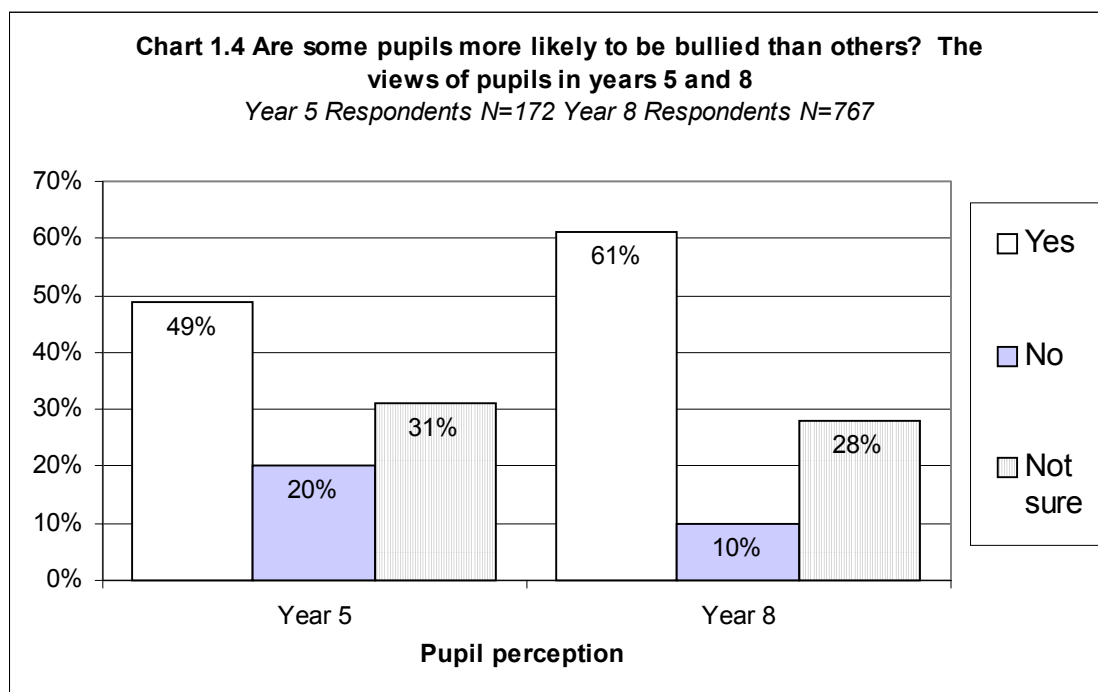


In Year 5, ethnic origin appeared to influence pupils' opinions. A majority of Black and Asian primary school pupils (63% N=20), for example, thought that some pupils were more likely to be bullied than others, compared with a minority of white (49% N=30) pupils and pupils from other ethnic groups (40% N=22). However, by Year 8, these differences in opinion were less apparent. A majority of pupils in Year 8, regardless of ethnicity, agreed that some pupils were more likely to be bullied than others (63% of white pupils, 67% of Black and Asian pupils, and 58% of other ethnic groups).

## Key findings

In focus groups and in the questionnaire survey, pupils provided clear and comprehensive definitions of bullying. Their understanding of bullying was that it could include verbal and physical abuse, theft, threatening behaviour, and coercion. Bullying was also understood as behaviour intending to cause distress or harm. Pupils identified a broad spectrum of behaviours of varying severity that could be encompassed within a definition of bullying and the negative impact bullying can have on pupils' sense of well-being and personal safety. Their descriptions of bullying represented a narrative of vulnerability, inequality and abuse within a complex web of power relations between pupils. Vulnerability to bullying may be the result of a personal and individual characteristic, such as physical size or appearance, or the result of more structured inequalities (such as racism, sexism or homophobia). Typically, definitions of bullying included some or all of the following elements:

*'Bullying is when someone picks on someone else because they are different - their race, height, weight, or looks..(it's about) prejudice and discrimination and when someone gets hurt physically or mentally, or when someone is not respected'.*
(Girl, Year 8)

## How big a problem Is bullying?

### Pupils' perceptions

In the questionnaire survey, pupils were asked how big a problem they perceived bullying to be in their school (see Chart 1.5). The findings indicated that bullying was a cause for concern for the majority of pupils. Half of primary (51% N=88) and just over half of secondary school pupils (54% N=419) thought that bullying was 'a big problem' or 'quite a problem' in their school. A substantial minority in both age groups thought that bullying was 'a big problem' in their school (28% of Year 5 pupils, and 21% of Year 8 pupils respectively).

**Chart 1.5 How big a problem is bullying in your school? The views of pupils in Years 5 and 8**

*Year 5 Respondents: N=174  Year 8 Respondents: N=759*

| Pupil perception | Year 5 | Year 8 |
|---|---|---|
| A big problem | 28% | 21% |
| Quite a problem | 23% | 33% |
| A bit of a problem | 30% | 39% |
| Not a problem | 19% | 7% |
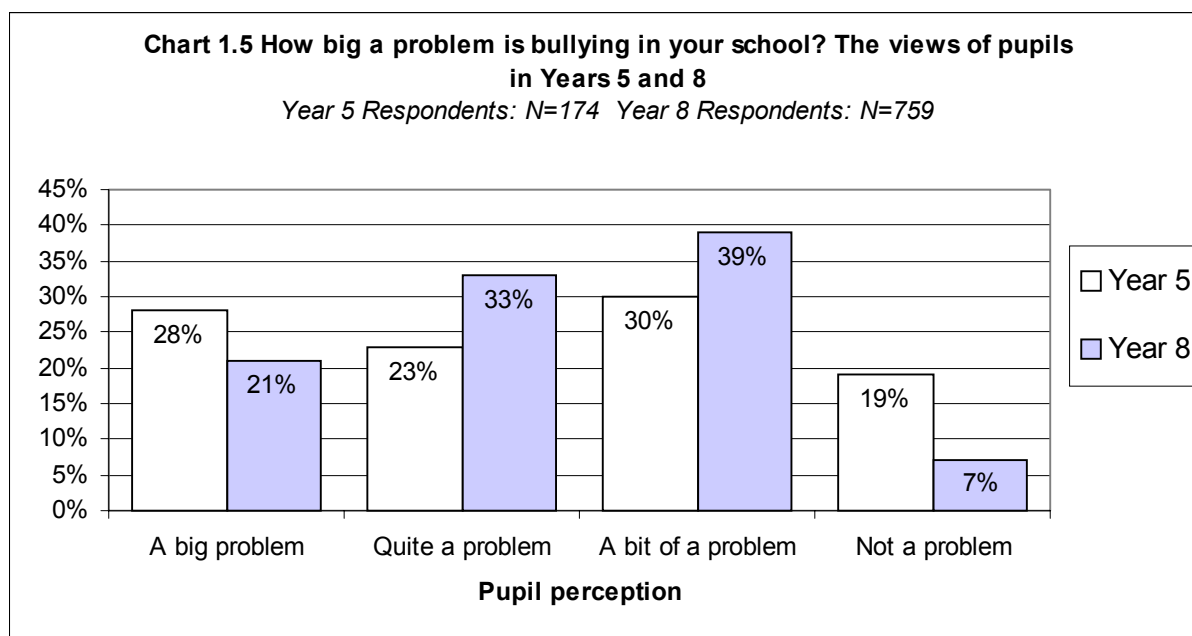
However, some differences were apparent in pupils' perceptions, which appeared to be linked to ethnic origin and gender, and school factors.

### Ethnicity

In Year 5, Black and Asian pupils appeared to be less concerned about bullying than white or pupils of other ethnic groups. In Year 5, half of Black and Asian pupils reported that bullying was only 'a bit of a problem' (50% N=16), compared with 21% of white pupils (N=14), and 30% of pupils of other ethnic groups (N=17).

This pattern changed among pupils in Year 8. A smaller proportion of Black and Asian pupils (32% N=47) in Year 8 thought that bullying was only a 'bit of a problem', compared with white (40% N=159) or other ethnic groups (42% N=66). In fact, Black and Asian pupils in this age group (29% N=43) were more likely than white (20% N=78) or other ethnic groups (20% N=31) to view bullying as 'a big problem'. However, caution should be exercised before generalising on the basis of such small numbers.

**Gender**

The findings indicated that girls in Year 5 were slightly less likely to see bullying as a serious problem than boys. Just over a fifth of girls (23% N=18) thought that bullying was 'a big problem', compared with a third (33% N=31) of boys. However, by Year 8, girls and boys expressed a similar level of concern: a fifth of boys and girls thought that bullying was a big problem (21% N=85 and 22% N=77 respectively).

## Prevalence: pupils' experiences

Pupils were asked whether they had been bullied this term[5]. The findings indicated that bullying was more prevalent among primary than secondary school pupils (see Chart 1.6). About one half (51% N=89) of Year 5 pupils reported that they had been bullied, compared with over a quarter (28% N=220) of Year 8 pupils. 8% of pupils in Year 5 and 14% of pupils in Year 8 were 'not sure'.

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[5] The survey was conducted towards the end of the winter term, 2002.

**Chart 1.6 % of Year 5 and Year 8 pupils who reported that they had been bullied this term**
*Year 5 Respondents: N=174  Year 8 Respondents: N=766*
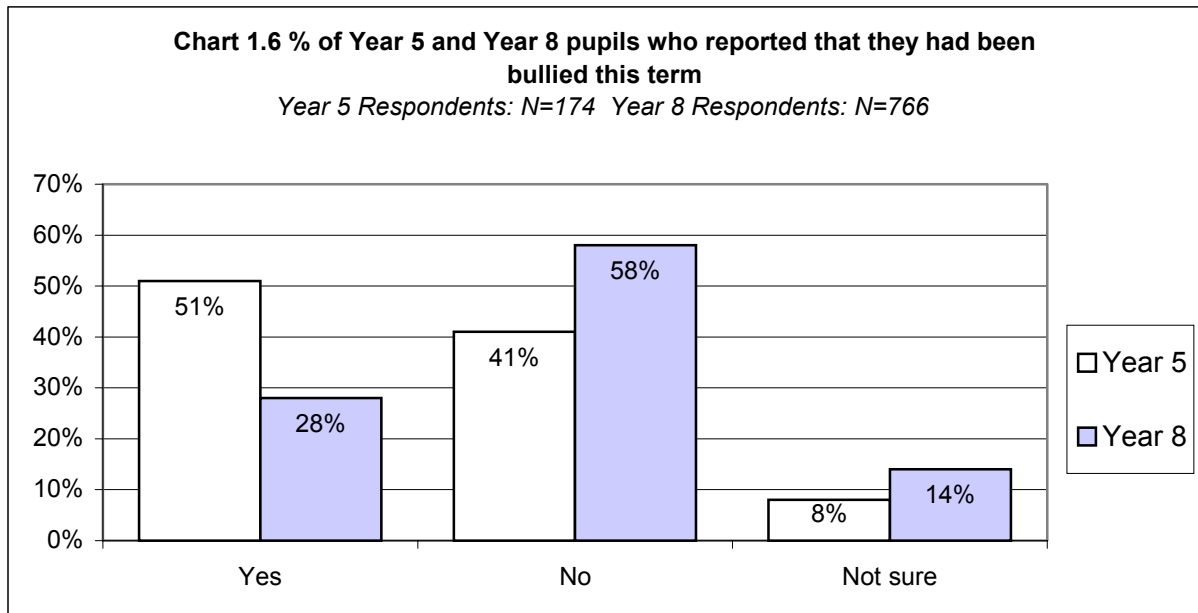


**Gender**

The findings indicated that girls were almost as likely as boys to be bullied. Approximately half of girls and boys (50% and 52% respectively) in Year 5 reported that they had been bullied. In Year 8, a similar proportion reported that they had been bullied: 28% of girls and 30% of boys in Year 8 reported that they had been bullied this term.

**Ethnicity**

In Years 5 and 8, pupils' experience of bullying largely matched their perception of the extent of bullying in their school. In Year 5, a higher proportion of pupils from other ethnic groups (38% N=30) and white pupils (37% N=29), reported that they had been bullied, compared with the proportion of Black or Asian pupils (25% N=20). In Year 8, a higher proportion of Black and Asian pupils (33% N=49) and pupils from other ethnic groups (30% N=47) reported that they had been bullied, compared with the proportion of white pupils (26% N=105).

**School factors**

The reported incidence of bullying varied widely by school.  In Year 8, the proportion of pupils who reported that they had been bullied this term varied by school from 17% to 52% of respondents (see Chart 1.7). The school with the highest level of reported bullying was a small boys' school, located in Leeds.

The school with the lowest level of reported bullying was a large, co-educational school based in a non-metropolitan area of East Sussex.

**Chart 1.7 % of pupils who reported they had been been bullied this term: Year 8 pupils by school**
*N=779 % of respondents in each school*

| School | % |
|--------|---|
| S1 | 34% |
| S2 | 52% |
| S3 | 30% |
| S4 | 39% |
| S5 | 23% |
| S6 | 17% |
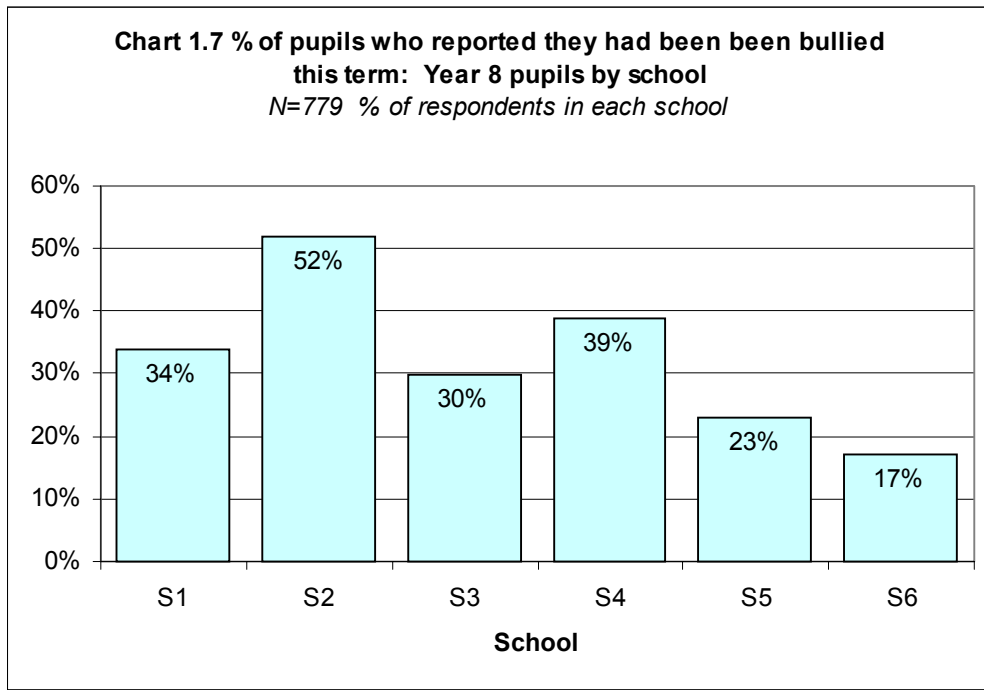
In Year 5, a majority of pupils (between 50% and 80%) in four schools reported that they had been bullied this term (see Chart 1.8). Two schools with the highest level of reported bullying (P1 and P5) were a small Church of England School based in Leeds, and a large Roman Catholic school in inner London. In two primary schools (one in Leeds and one in an inner London borough), only a minority reported that they had been bullied (18% and 22% respectively). The former was a small school based in Leeds, and the latter was a medium-sized school in inner London.

**Chart 1.8 % of pupils who reported they had been bullied this term:
Year 5 pupils by school**

*N=174  % of respondents in each school*

| School | Percentage |
|--------|-----------|
| P1 | 80% |
| P2 | 12% |
| P3 | 50% |
| P4 | 22% |
| P5 | 71% |
| P6 | 50% |
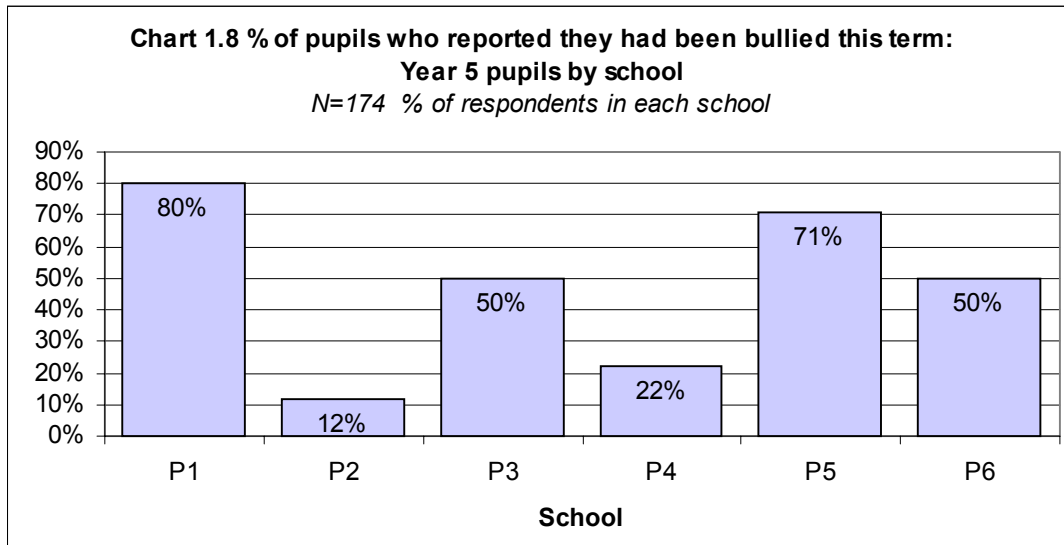
**Bullying others**

A small minority of pupils in Years 5 and 8 admitted to having bullied others during the term, although such behaviour was more commonly reported among primary school pupils (17% N=27) than secondary school students (10% N=80).

In secondary and primary schools, girls were almost as likely as boys to have bullied others. In Year 5, 19% (N=16) of boys reported that they had bullied others, compared with 15% of girls (N=11).  A similar gender balance prevailed among Year 8 pupils, where 12% of boys (N=40) report having bullied others, compared with 10% (N=39) of girls.

**The rights and wrongs of bullying**

In order to explore pupils' moral sense about bullying, pupils were asked if there were any circumstances in which it might be considered acceptable to bully others.  An overwhelming majority of each age group (95% of Year 5 pupils and 84% of Year 8 pupils) reported that it was never 'ok' to bully others, although the size of the majority declined between Years 5 and 8. The small minority (approximately 2% of each age group) thought that there might be circumstances in which it might be ok to bully someone else, typically in circumstances where they felt they had been bullied already, and that their behaviour was one of retaliation, rather than instigation.

**Key findings**

Approximately one fifth of primary school pupils and one quarter of pupils in Year 8 perceived bullying to be 'a big problem' in their school. In Year 5, Black and Asian pupils were less likely than other pupils to perceive bullying as a significant problem. However, in Year 8, Black and Asian pupils were more likely than white pupils, or pupils of other ethnic groups to perceive bullying to be 'a big problem'.

Just over half of Year 5 pupils and over a quarter of Year 8 pupils reported that they had been bullied this term. Girls were as likely as boys to have been bullied. In Year 8, a higher proportion of Black and Asian pupils reported that they had been bullied this term, compared with pupils of other ethnic groups, or white pupils.

Considerable variation was reported in the level of bullying between schools. While not conclusive, the findings suggest that no single factor (such as school size, location or religious affiliation) has a determining effect on the prevalence of bullying, and indeed, that there are considerable difficulties involved in disentangling their effects.

# Prevalence of different forms of bullying

Different categories of bullying behaviour had previously been identified in discussions with pupils in focus groups, and from key findings in the literature on bullying. In order to obtain more quantitative data on the nature of bullying, young people were asked in the questionnaire survey about the ways they had been bullied, and how often. Pupils in Year 5 and 8 were asked if they had been bullied by being:

- ❖ pushed
- ❖ kicked
- ❖ hit on purpose
- ❖ threatened
- ❖ called names
- ❖ called racist names
- ❖ called sexist names
- ❖ having nasty stories spread about them
- ❖ having money or things stolen
- ❖ by being ignored by others.

In addition, pupils in Year 8 were asked if they had been:

- ❖ called anti-gay names
- ❖ 'touched in a sexual way'
- ❖ sent 'nasty text messages'
- ❖ sent 'nasty e-mail messages'

Pupils were also asked how often such events had occurred. In order to assist Year 5 pupils to complete the questionnaire, the frequency categories were reduced to the following simple options: 'once or twice', 'occasionally', or 'several times' during this term. Year 8 pupils were asked how often they had been bullied this term in more detail: 'once or twice', 'occasionally', 'about once a week', or 'several times a week'. A 'no' column was also provided against each of the categories identified on the questionnaire.

Pupils were directed to respond to these questions if they had said they had been bullied, or were 'not sure' if they had been bullied. The proportion of pupils who said they had been bullied in any of the specific

ways identified in the questionnaire is expressed as a percentage of the total number of respondents in each age group.

**What ways have you been bullied this term?**

**Year 5 pupils**

Name-calling was by far the most common form of bullying (see Chart 1.9). This was followed by one of the less severe forms of physical bullying (being pushed) and socially isolating forms of behaviour (gossip and excluding others). Bullying involving more severe forms of physical violence (such as being hit on purpose or kicked) was less common. Threatening behaviour and theft represented the least common forms of bullying.

**Chart 1.9 Prevalence of different forms of bullying (in order): Year 5 pupils**
*N= 174*

| Forms of bullying | Percentage |
|---|---|
| Name calling | 51% |
| Pushed | 44% |
| The subject of nasty stories | 39% |
| Ignored or left out | 39% |
| Hit on purpose | 37% |
| Kicked | 35% |
| Threatened | 26% |
| Money or other possessions stolen | 22% |
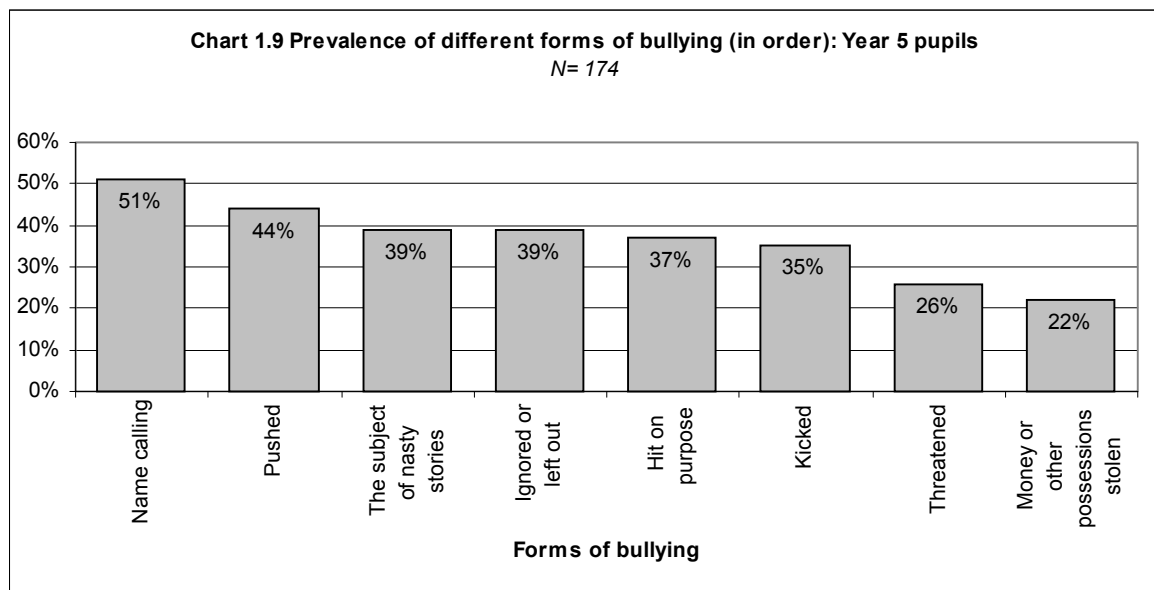
With the exception of name-calling, most pupils had experienced such bullying behaviour 'once or twice' during the term. By contrast, name-calling was far more frequent. A quarter (25% N=43) of pupils in Year 5 reported that it had happened 'several times' this term.

**Year 8 pupils**

As with pupils in Year 5, verbal abuse was the most prevalent form of bullying among pupils in Year 8 (see Chart 1.10). However, compared with Year 5 pupils, older pupils reported a higher level of physical bullying: being pushed and hit on purpose represented the second and third most common forms of bullying. A large proportion also reported being socially ostracised.

**Chart 1.10 Prevalence of different forms of bullying: Year 8 pupils**
*N=779*

| Form | Percentage |
|------|-----------|
| Called names | 35% |
| Pushed | 27% |
| Being ignored/left out | 20% |
| Hit on purpose | 21% |
| The subject of nasty rumours | 19% |
| Threatened | 15% |
| Kicked | 15% |

**Most common forms of bullying**
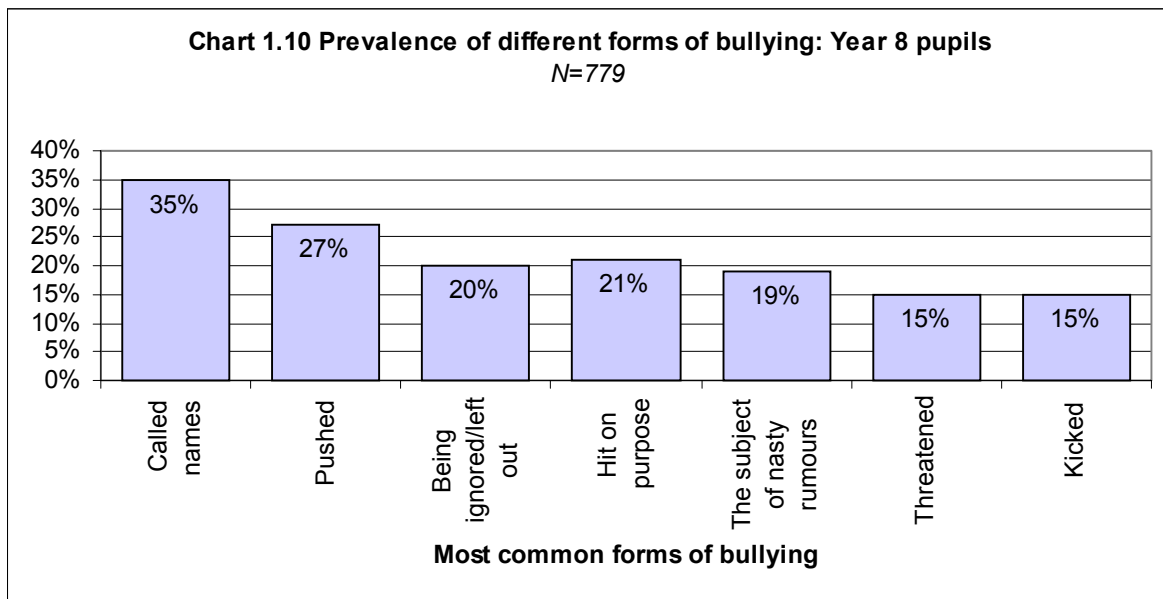
A minority of all pupils reported experiencing racist, sexist or homophobic name-calling, or sexualised bullying. Although the numbers were small, it would appear that bullying by electronic communication is emerging as a new form of bullying: 4% (N=33) reported that they had received nasty text messages and 2% (N=17) reported that they had received nasty e-mail messages (see Chart 1.11).

**Chart 1.11 Prevalence of different forms of bullying: Year 8 pupils**
*N=779*

**Least common forms of bullying**
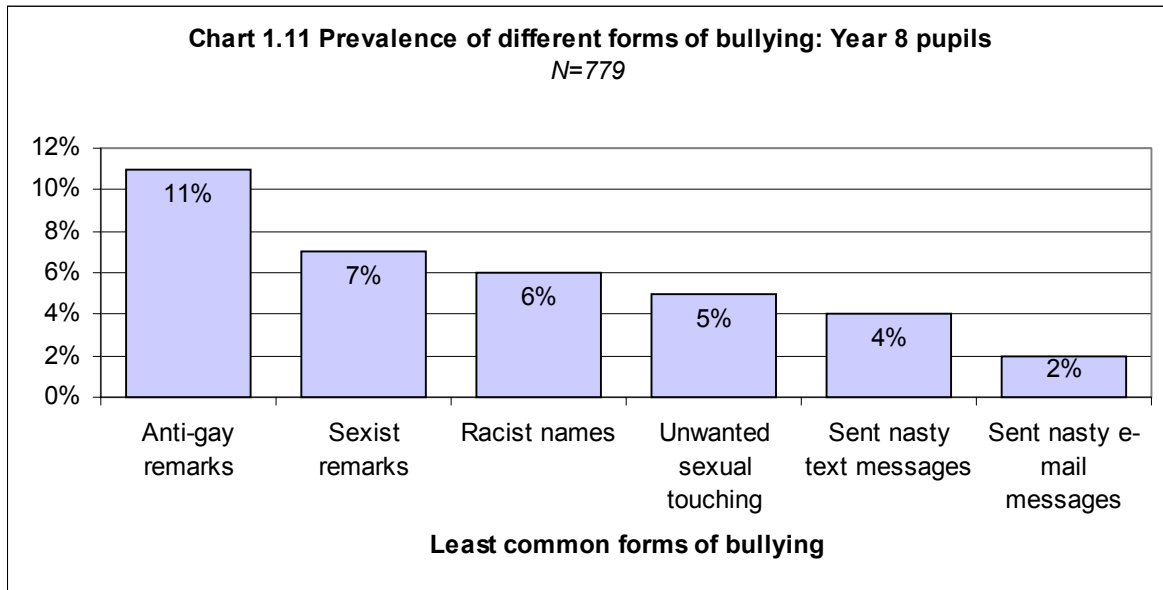
**Gender: year 5**

Much of the literature on bullying concludes that girls are more likely to experience name-calling, socially isolating and other non-physical forms of bullying, whereas boys are more likely to experience bullying involving physical contact. However, findings from this study indicated that both boys and girls in Year 5 experience physically aggressive bullying in roughly equal measure. For example, 44% of girls (N=34) and 46% of boys (N=42) said that they had been pushed. Similar proportions of boys (26% N=24) and girls (27% N=22) said they had been pushed once or twice, or occasionally (5% and 6% respectively). However, a higher proportion of boys (14% N=13) than girls (10% N=8) said they had been pushed several times. The figures also indicated that girls and boys were hit on purpose to a similar extent. 41% of girls (N=30) and 38% of boys (N=33) reported that they had been hit on purpose. 27% (N=20) of girls and 22% of boys (N=19) said they had been hit on purpose once or twice, 6% (N=4) of girls and 7% of boys (N=6) reported being hit occasionally, and 8% (N=6) of girls and 9% (N=8) of boys said they had been hit several times.

In relation to name-calling, the frequency of bullying was also similar for girls and boys. For example, 51% (N=45) of boys and 54% (N=42) of girls reported name-calling. 20% (N=18) of boys and 22% (N=17) of girls were called names once or twice. 7% (N=5) of girls and 5% (N=4) of boys reported occasional name-calling. At the other end of the scale, 26% of boys (N=23) and 26% of girls (N=20) reported that they were called names several times.

Neither was gossip a preserve of femininity. Almost equal proportions of boys and girls reported that they had had nasty stories spread about them (40% N=35 and 42% N=32 respectively). 7% (N=5) and 5% (N=4) of boys reported that this had happened occasionally during the term. 12% of boys and girls said they had experienced this form of bullying several times.

Boys and girls had also experienced similar levels of being ignored or left out: 45% of girls (N=34) compared with 37% (N=32) of boys reported that they had been isolated in this way.

**Gender: year 8**

In Year 8, boys were as likely as girls to have experienced generally abusive name-calling: 37% (N=128) of boys and 35% (N=141) of girls said they had been called names. However, in relation to specific forms of verbal abuse, a more complex gendered pattern emerged. 9% (N=33) of girls, and 6% of boys (N=19), reported that they had been called sexist names. In relation to anti-gay names, however, boys were more likely than girls to be the target: 17% (N=56) of boys reported homophobic verbal abuse, compared with 7% (N=28) of girls. Girls were slightly more likely than boys to have experienced indirect, and socially isolating forms of bullying: 21% of girls (N=81) compared with 19% of boys (N=64) reported that they had been the subject of nasty rumours.

In relation to the more physically aggressive forms of bullying, the gendered pattern of physical bullying appears to be complex. A higher proportion of boys (34% N=114) than girls (23% N=91) said that they had been pushed, and boys reported that this happened more frequently for them. For a minority of boys, pushing emerged as a relatively common experience: 6% (N=20) of boys compared with 3% of girls (N=11) reported being pushed several times a week. 3% (N=10) of girls compared with 9% (N=31) of boys said that this had happened occasionally.

In relation to the more aggressive forms of physical bullying, the findings indicated that a higher proportion of boys (29% N=96) reported having been hit on purpose, compared with 18% of girls (N=69). Boys were also more likely to be kicked: 23% of boys (N=78) reported that they had been kicked, compared with 10% (N=40) of girls. 18% (N=61) of boys and 14% (N=55) of girls said that they had experienced threatening behaviour. If sexual assault is included as a physically aggressive form of bullying behaviour, the findings show that being inappropriately touched in a sexual way was more common for girls: 7% of girls (N=27) reported this experience, compared with 3% (N=9) of boys. Sexualised bullying was also more frequent for girls. 4% of girls (N=14) compared with 2% (N=5) said that it had happened once or twice; 2% of girls (N=6) said that this had happened occasionally (no boys

reported occasional sexualised bullying).  Just one boy and one girl said that sexualised bullying happened about once a week and 2% (N=6) of girls compared with 1% (N=3) of boys said that this happened several times a week.

**Ethnicity**

Overall, the findings indicated that Black and Asian pupils were less likely to experience some physical forms of bullying, but as in the case of gender, the picture is complex. For example, in relation to the less severe physical forms of bullying, such as pushing, Black and Asian pupils were the least likely to experience this form of bullying: 24% (N=35) said that they had been pushed, compared with 27% (N=105) of white pupils, and 33% (N=50) of pupils from other ethnic groups. Black and Asian pupils were also the least likely to be kicked: 11% (N=16) reported this form of bullying, compared with 18% (N=68) of white pupils, and 17% (N=26) of other ethnic groups.  A smaller proportion of Black and Asian pupils were also hit on purpose (20% N=30) compared with white (22% N=86) or other ethnic groups (26% N=39). However, the figures are small and caution should be exercised before making generalisations based on these findings.

Taking into account the figures for sexual assault, it would appear that more Black and Asian girls than white girls are victimised in this way.  Previous findings have indicated that more girls than boys report being inappropriately touched in a sexual way. The findings also indicated that Black and Asian pupils (10% N=14) were bullied in this way more often than white pupils (3% N=11), or pupils of other ethnic groups (6% N=9).

These findings also suggested that pupils of other ethnic groups experienced a higher level of generalised verbal abuse (40% N=63) compared with Black and Asian (35% N=51) or white (34% N=133) pupils. However, 10% (N=15) of pupils from other ethnic groups and 9% (N=13) of Black and Asian pupils reported having experienced racist name-calling, compared with 4% (N=14) of white pupils. A minority of all groups had been called anti-gay names, but Black and Asian pupils (8% N=11) were less likely to experience this form of abuse compared with white (12% N=47) or pupils of other ethnic groups (13% N=20).

**School factors**

Although the reported prevalence of bullying varied widely by school, their impact on particular forms of bullying is less obvious.  The exception in this respect concerns those forms of bullying that are based on more structured forms of inequality, for example, in relation to gender, race or sexuality.

As we have seen, a minority of all pupils reported experiencing racist or homophobic name-calling, or sexualised bullying.  However, these were bigger problems in some schools than others.  For example, a boys' school in an inner city area (S2) reported the highest level of racist name-calling (25% N=13). This latter secondary school also reported the highest level of (26% N=14) homophobic abuse, followed by a co-educational school in East Sussex (14% N=27).

A small minority of pupils reported that they had been bullied by being touched in a sexual way.  A girl's school in an inner London borough (S4) reported the highest level of sexualised bullying (14% N=18).

**Key findings**

Name-calling was reported as the most prevalent form of bullying for pupils in Years 5 and 8: 51% of pupils in Year 5 and 35% of pupils in Year 8 said that they had been called names during the term. Bullying involving physical aggression was less common but nevertheless emerged as a substantial problem: over a third of pupils in Year 5 said they had been hit on purpose and kicked. Just over a fifth of pupils had been hit on purpose and 15% had been kicked. Behaviour resulting in social isolation (such as gossip, and the spreading of rumours) was also reported as affecting 39% of pupils in Year 5 and almost a fifth (19%) of pupils in Year 8.  A minority of pupils reported sexist, sexualised, racist and anti-gay abuse.  However, these latter forms of bullying were more prevalent in some schools than others.  The highest level of racist and homophobic abuse was reported by pupils in a boys' school in Leeds. A girl's school in an inner London borough (S4) reported the highest level of sexualised bullying (14% N=18).

Contrary to some of the key findings in the literature on gender and bullying, boys and girls in this study reported similar levels of physical bullying, name-calling, and social ostracism, but more so in Year 5 than in Year 8. Bullying among pupils in Year 8 conformed to gender norms of behaviour: boys were more likely to experience physical bullying and girls were more likely to experience socially isolating forms of behaviour. However, the survey findings also showed that girls reported a higher level of sexualised bullying than boys.  In focus groups, some girls identified rape as a form of bullying. The highest level of sexualised bullying was reported in a girls' school in inner London.  Although it is

possible that girls may have experienced unwanted sexual touching from other girls in the same school, focus group findings suggested that some sexual assaults reported by girls were likely to have been committed by men or boys outside of school (particularly in the case of rape).

The findings suggested that Black and Asian pupils were less likely than white pupils, or pupils of other ethnic groups, to experience some physical forms of bullying. However, some of the differences in the reported incidence of bullying between each ethnic group were small, and caution should therefore be exercised before generalising from such findings.

# Pupil perception of school effectiveness

In focus groups, pupils were asked for their opinions about how well their school responded to bullying. In general, pupils were quite divided in their responses. In order to obtain more quantitative data, pupils were asked how good their school was at dealing with bullying. They were also asked to identify anti-bullying activities undertaken by their school in the previous twelve months.

## How good is your school at dealing with bullying?

The survey findings showed that most pupils expressed positive views about their school's attempt to deal with bullying.  The majority of pupils in Years 5 and 8 thought that their school was 'very good' or 'quite good' at dealing with bullying (67% and 61% respectively). However, secondary school pupils were generally less positive in their opinions than primary school pupils: over a third of primary school pupils (36% N=63) thought that their school was 'very good' at dealing with bullying, compared with just over 1 in 10 of secondary school students (12% N=93).

Qualitative data obtained from focus groups showed that key elements in pupils' positive assessment of their school's attempts to deal with bullying, concerns the willingness of teachers to *listen* and, of equal importance, to *act* on the suggestions of pupils:

*'The children suggest ways the playground could be made better and teachers, the Head, listen. They take notice. They change things.'*
*(Girl, Year 5)*

*'At this school, it is OK. We talk about it at assembly and at the school council.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

By contrast, schools that had a poor reputation appeared to be less likely to listen to pupils, take their complaints seriously or take firm action:

*'I don't think the school handles it very well. They say leave it for now, but if it happens again come back. But when we do that and they say they are working on it. It never gets solved. '*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

**Variations between schools**

Opinions concerning the perceived effectiveness of schools varied widely, particularly between primary schools. For example, in one primary school in Leeds (P2), the vast majority of pupils (90% N=20) thought that their school was 'very good' or 'quite good' at dealing with bullying. By contrast, in a primary school in inner London (P6), only 50% of pupils assessed their school as 'very good' or 'quite good' at dealing with bullying.

Secondary school pupils tended to be less polarised in their views, but significant differences between schools were apparent. For example, in one school (S1) just under half (45% N=38) thought that their school was 'not very good' at dealing with bullying, whereas in a neighbouring school (S2), the overwhelming majority of pupils (79%) thought that their school was 'very good', or 'quite good' at dealing with bullying.

**Action taken by schools to combat bullying**

In the questionnaire survey, students were asked whether their school had done anything about bullying over the previous year. In particular, they were asked whether their school had addressed bullying by adopting some common anti-bullying strategies identified in focus groups, such as:

- ❖ talking about bullying during assembly
- ❖ talking about bullying during lesson time
- ❖ appointing anti-bullying counsellors (ABCs)[6]
- ❖ setting up a 'post box' to receive complaints about bullying
- ❖ appointing a 'special teacher' who pupils could speak to about bullying
- ❖ presenting school plays about bullying.

According to the memories and perceptions of pupils in Years 5 and 8, bullying was more commonly discussed during assembly in primary schools than in secondary schools. Secondary schools were reported as more likely to raise the issue of bullying during lesson times (see Chart 1.12).

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[6] ABCs represent a peer group initiative

**Chart 1.12 Strategies adopted by schools to tackle bullying during the previous year: the perceptions of pupils in Years 5 and 8**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

| Strategy | Year 5 | Year 8 |
|---|---|---|
| Talked about bullying during assembly | 78% | 66% |
| Talked about bullying during lessons | 56% | 71% |
| A special teacher to speak to about bullying | 32% | 45% |
| Anti-bullying counsellors (ABCs) Year 8 only | | 39% |
| A 'post-box' for complaints about bullying | 16% | 37% |
| School plays about bullying | 41% | 31% |

Strategies adopted to tackle bullying

☐ Year 5  ☐ Year 8

Only a minority of pupils reported that they had access to a designated teacher, although this form of support was more widely available to secondary school pupils (45% N=354) compared with primary schools, where approximately 1 in 3 said that they had a special teacher they could speak to about bullying (32% N=56). Over a third of secondary school students (39% N=301) reported that their school had anti-bullying counsellors (this question was not asked of primary school pupils). A 'post box' for complaints about bullying was the least common anti-bullying strategy reported by pupils in Year 5 (16% N=27), whereas the production of school plays was the least common activity reported by Year 8 pupils (31% N=243).
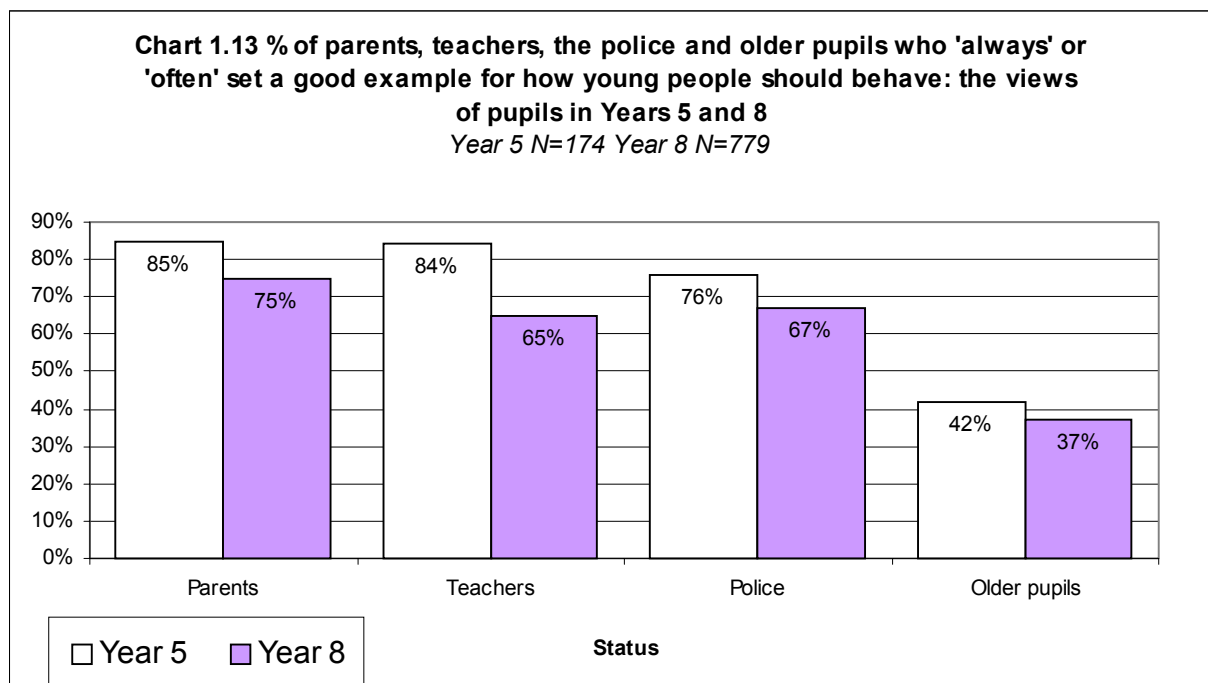
As far as the relationship between the comprehensiveness (defined as the range of anti-bullying initiatives implemented) and the perceived effectiveness of schools in dealing with bullying is concerned, the findings are inconclusive. For example, a primary school in Leeds (S2) which was perceived by over 90% of pupils to be 'very good' at dealing with bullying, was also shown to have introduced a number of different anti-bullying initiatives: the school had talked about bullying during assembly and lesson time, had introduced a 'post box' for complaints about bullying, and pupils had a special teacher they could speak to about bullying. However, a secondary school in an inner London borough (S4), was reported as having implemented four out of the six possible approaches listed in the survey: the school had discussed bullying during assembly and lesson time, anti-bullying counsellors had been introduced, and a teacher designated with specific anti-bullying responsibilities had been appointed. Yet this school was perceived

as one of the least effective schools at dealing with bullying (the school was ranked in fourth place, out of six).  It is unclear why this should be the case.  It is possible that the specified anti-bullying initiatives were not well implemented, or had fallen into disrepute.

**Setting a good example**

In the questionnaire survey, pupils were asked whether older pupils, and adults in positions of authority, such as teachers, the police and parents, set a good example for how children should behave. The purpose of this question was to explore the extent to which different school cultures might contribute to the prevalence of bullying and, possibly, represent a factor in limiting the effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies.

A majority of pupils in Year 5 and 8 thought that teachers, the police and parents, 'always' or 'often' set a good example for how young people should behave (see Chart 1.13).  Of these, parents were viewed in the most positive light (85% of pupils in Year 5 and 75% of pupils in Year 8).   However, in general, older pupils were generally less positive in their opinions, particularly in relation to their assessment of teachers' behaviour.

**Chart 1.13 % of parents, teachers, the police and older pupils who 'always' or 'often' set a good example for how young people should behave: the views of pupils in Years 5 and 8**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

| Status | Year 5 | Year 8 |
|---|---|---|
| Parents | 85% | 75% |
| Teachers | 84% | 65% |
| Police | 76% | 67% |
| Older pupils | 42% | 37% |

The behaviour of older pupils was viewed the least favourably. A minority of pupils in Year 5 and 8 thought that older pupils 'always' or 'often' set a good example (42% and 37% respectively). Indeed, qualitative data suggested that some pupils were more receptive to the role of Anti-Bullying Counsellors (ABCs) than others:

*'ABCs understand us because they're our age and understand how we feel'*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

*'ABCs bully people too'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

**Variation by school**

Pupils' perception of the behaviour of teachers and older pupils varied widely by school. It might be assumed that those schools that are perceived by pupils as the most effective at dealing with bullying might be expected to provide the most positive role models for pupil behaviour. In some instances, this would indeed appear to be the case. A primary school in Leeds, for example, ranked highest in terms of pupil perception of teacher behaviour: 86% (N=19) of pupils reported that teachers 'always' set a good example. The vast majority of pupils also reported that the school was very good at dealing with bullying. However, the school (P3) that received the least favourable assessment of teacher behaviour (48% N=14 reported that teacher always set a good example), was *not* reported by pupils as being particularly poor at dealing with bullying incidents.

Pupils' perceptions concerning the behaviour of older pupils also presented a complex picture. For example, a primary school in an inner London borough (P6), which was reported by pupils as having a particularly poor record in dealing with bullying, nevertheless received the most favourable assessment of older pupil behaviour: 71% (n=15) thought that older pupils 'always' or 'often' set a good example. Likewise, a secondary school in Sussex (S6) reported by pupils as having a relatively good reputation for dealing with bullying, received one of the least favourable assessments of older pupil behaviour: 47% (N=81) thought that pupils 'never' or 'not often' set a good example.

**Key findings**

According to pupils' perceptions, participating schools more commonly approached bullying by introducing one-off initiatives, such as discussing the topic during assembly or lesson time, rather than more targeted and on-going approaches, such as appointing anti-bullying counsellors or teachers designated with specific anti-bullying responsibilities.

Evidence for a relationship between the comprehensiveness (defined as the range of anti-bullying initiatives implemented) and the perceived effectiveness of schools in dealing with bullying was established.

If pupils' perceptions of the behaviour of teachers and older pupils is taken as a proxy for assessing a school's culture (and its relationship to schools' effectiveness at dealing with bullying), the findings are not conclusive. Although some evidence emerged to support such a relationship, schools that had a particularly good or poor reputation for dealing with bullying were not necessarily those that received the most or least favourable assessments of teacher or older pupil behaviour.
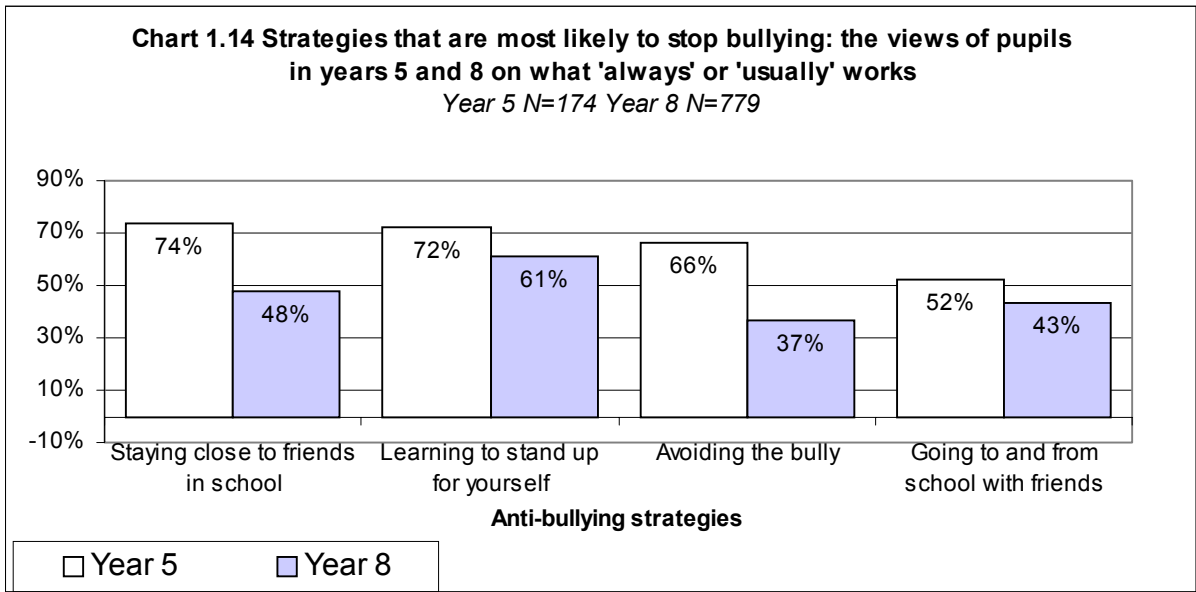
## Pupils' responses to bullying

This section of the report addresses the responses of children and young people to the problem of bullying, and the factors that influence their decisions to attempt to 'sort it out' for themselves or to 'tell' others, including their friends but particularly significant adults in their lives, such as teachers, and parents. In particular, the report examines the perceived risks and benefits associated with asking others for help. Factors influencing young people's decisions about whether or not to contact outside sources of help, such as telephone helplines, the police, or counsellors are also considered.

Focus group findings suggested that some pupils appeared to feel almost paralysed by the problem of bullying and confused about what might constitute the best course of action. The results of the survey were investigated in order to explore the extent to which focus group findings might be reflected, or refuted, by more quantitative sources of information.

### Dealing with bullying by yourself

In focus group discussions, most participants felt that it was preferable for pupils to 'sort things out' for themselves or to 'stand up for themselves'. Friends and peers were identified as an important source of support and advice in this respect.

These focus group findings were generally supported by data from the questionnaire survey. Pupils reported that the three most important factors that helped to stop bullying were: friendships, avoiding the bully, and 'standing up for yourself' (see Chart 1.14). However, an important difference emerged in the degree of optimism or confidence in the potential effectiveness of these behaviours between the two age groups. 'Learning to stand up for yourself' was the only strategy that a majority of Year 8 pupils thought will 'always' or 'usually' work.

**Chart 1.14 Strategies that are most likely to stop bullying: the views of pupils in years 5 and 8 on what 'always' or 'usually' works**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

| Anti-bullying strategies | Year 5 | Year 8 |
|---|---|---|
| Staying close to friends in school | 74% | 48% |
| Learning to stand up for yourself | 72% | 61% |
| Avoiding the bully | 66% | 37% |
| Going to and from school with friends | 52% | 43% |

*Retaliating verbally and physically*

In focus groups, some pupils felt that, notwithstanding adult disapproval of physical violence, fighting back was sometimes the only way to stop bullying and represented at least one way of 'standing up for yourself'. Survey findings also indicated that such a perspective has some support, but more for secondary school pupils, than for pupils in primary schools (see Chart 1.15).

**Chart 1.15 Retaliatory behaviour: the % of pupils in Years 5 and 8 who think that 'talking back' and 'hitting back' always or usually works**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

| Retaliatory behaviour | Year 5 | Year 8 |
|---|---|---|
| Talking back | 22% | 23% |
| Hitting back | 15% | 23% |
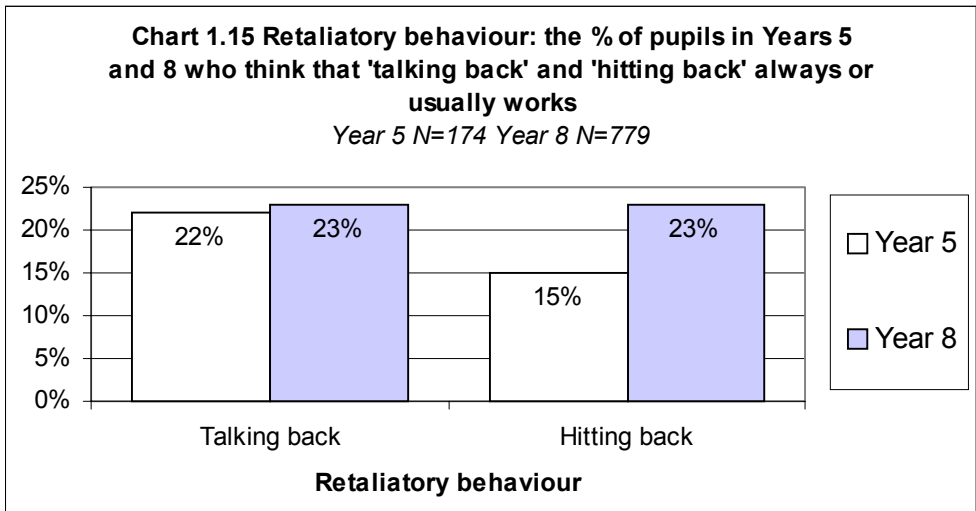
The risks and benefits associated with 'hitting back' were as follows:

*'I was getting bullied so bad that my step-Dad sent me to Karate. There they said you must hit back'.*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'My Mum says two wrongs don't make a right, but they bullied me so much my Mum said, just fight back'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'It might not work because the person doing the hitting back might get into trouble'*
*(Girl, Year 5)*

### *Learn a martial art or develop a skill*

In focus groups, some pupils expressed the view that it might be possible to stop bullying by learning a martial art, or by developing a skill or by getting involved in sporting activities. It was generally acknowledged that some pupils might need to build up their own self-confidence and self-esteem *before* taking action against the bully. It was also generally agreed that this strategy, although a long term solution, had a good chance of success in overturning the 'weak spot' that signalled a pupil's vulnerability to bullying.

Survey findings confirmed the views expressed by some children and young people in focus groups. Almost a third (31%) of pupils in Year 8 reported that learning a martial art might be expected to 'always' or 'often' stop bullying.[7] This finding would seem to underline the importance older pupils place in the potential effectiveness of physical strength in helping to stop bullying.

*'You could learn self-defence, or Karate, but that might take some time'*
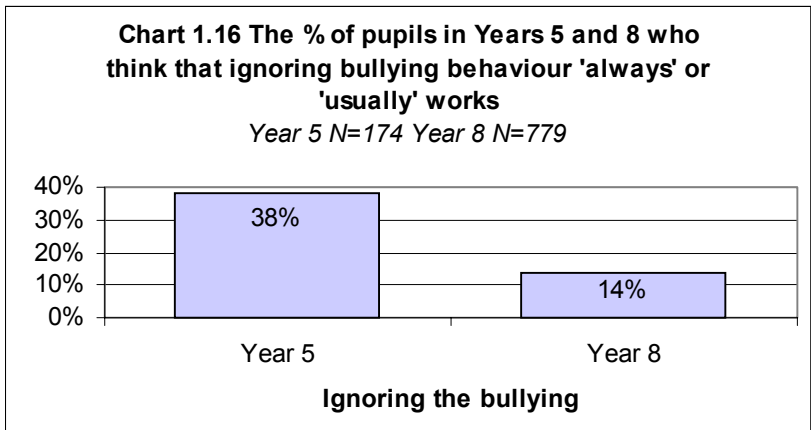(Boy, Year 8)

*'You could try to get really good at something, like a sport'.*
(Boy, Year 5)

### *Ignoring bullying*

The findings showed that, unlike pupils in Year 5, pupils in Year 8 had more confidence in the likely effectiveness of retaliatory action, whether verbal or physical, than in ignoring bullying. Only 14% of pupils in Year 8 thought that ignoring bullying 'always' or 'usually' works (see Chart 1.16).

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[7] This question was not asked of pupils in Year 5

**Chart 1.16 The % of pupils in Years 5 and 8 who think that ignoring bullying behaviour 'always' or 'usually' works**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

A bar chart titled "Ignoring the bullying" showing Year 5 at 38% and Year 8 at 14%.

In focus group discussions, pupils said that for this strategy to be effective, bullies needed to be persistently ignored over a considerable period of time. A number of potential risks and benefits were associated with this strategy:
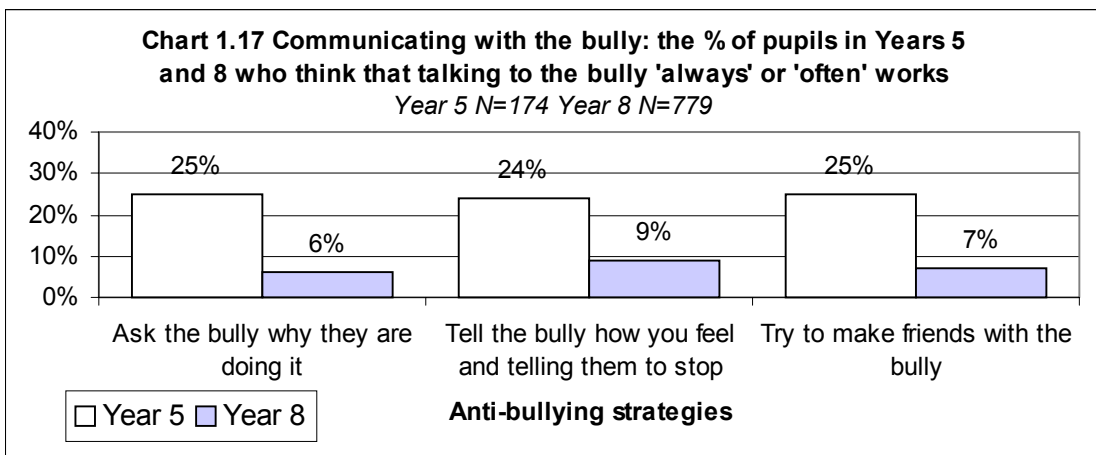
*'It might work if you keep on doing it and pretend it doesn't bother you'*
*(Girl, Year 5)*

*'They bully you to get you annoyed. So if you show you're not annoyed, it will stop.'*
*(Girl, Year 5)*

*'It might not work because if you ignore them, the bully might do something even worse'*
*(Boy, Year 5)*

### Communicating with the bully

In general, pupils in Year 5 were more confident than pupils in Year 8 about the likely effectiveness of speaking directly to the bully, or making friendly overtures to them (see Chart 1.17).

**Chart 1.17 Communicating with the bully: the % of pupils in Years 5 and 8 who think that talking to the bully 'always' or 'often' works**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

A bar chart titled "Anti-bullying strategies" with a legend for Year 5 and Year 8:
- Ask the bully why they are doing it: Year 5 25%, Year 8 6%
- Tell the bully how you feel and telling them to stop: Year 5 24%, Year 8 9%
- Try to make friends with the bully: Year 5 25%, Year 8 7%

Approximately one quarter of pupils in Year 5 thought that 'asking the bully why they are doing it', 'telling the bully how you feel and telling them to stop, and 'making friends with the bully' will 'always' or 'often' work. Less than 10% of pupils in Year 8 shared this view. Older pupils in particular, demonstrated little confidence in the power of assertive verbal communication, or in the potentially positive effect of making friends with the bully. However, in focus group discussions, some pupils' accounts of dealing with bullying showed that such a strategy could work:

*'I get bullied because of my (indicates size). I asked him why he was bullying and then he stopped it'.*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

In discussing the potential effectiveness of different ways of responding to bullying, a number of differences emerged on the basis of gender and ethnicity.

### *Gender*

The findings showed that girls were less likely than boys to believe in the effectiveness of hitting back. A far higher proportion of girls in Year 5 and 8 believed that 'hitting back' never works: more than three quarters of girls in Year 5 expressed this view (79% N=51), compared with just over half (54% N=47) of boys. Likewise, in Year 8, the proportion of girls who held such an opinion fell to less than half (46% N=178), and for boys to less than a third (31% N=103). Nevertheless, a statistically significant differential remained.

### *Ethnicity*

Black and Asian pupils reported a consistently higher degree of confidence in all of the strategies discussed, compared with white pupils, or pupils of other ethnic groups. Almost half (49%) of Black and Asian pupils in Year 8, for example, reported that 'learning to stand up for yourself' would 'always work'; compared with approximately a third of white pupils (32%) and pupils from other ethnic groups (35%). A greater degree of optimism was also expressed by Black and Asian pupils in the potential effectiveness of travelling to and from school with friends, staying close to friends in school, and in avoidance strategies. In all of these cases, a higher proportion of Black and Asian pupils thought that such action would 'always' work, compared with other minority ethnic groups, or white pupils.
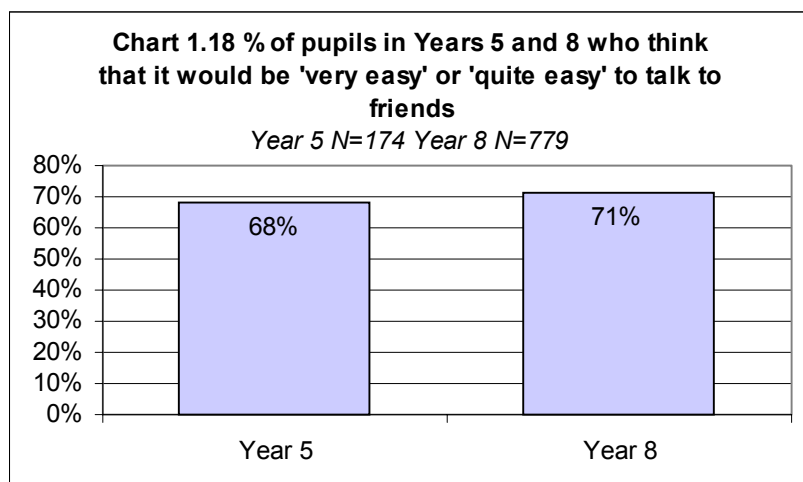
*Key findings*

In exploring pupils' own agency in dealing with bullying, the findings indicated that the three most helpful factors in preventing, or helping pupils to deal with bullying were friendships, avoidance strategies, and 'learning to stand up for yourself'. For pupils in Year 5, more confidence was expressed in the potential value of 'talking back' and other, more assertive forms of direct verbal communication with the bully, than pupils in Year 8. Older pupils were more likely to believe that physical retaliation had a better chance of success, and to this end almost a third of pupils in Year 8 thought that learning a martial art might help to reduce the risk of bullying, although this was identified as a more long term strategy.

However, in relation to gender, girls were less likely to support physical retaliation as an appropriate strategy. Black and Asian pupils expressed a higher degree of confidence in the positive potential of each of the strategies identified than white pupils, or pupils of other ethnic groups.

**Telling friends**

In focus group discussions, it was generally agreed that friends provide a crucial source of support and advice for pupils experiencing bullying. Although some disadvantages were cited, having a group of friends was identified as an important protective factor in preventing bullying, and helping pupils to cope with bullying. In order to investigate pupils' support networks at school more quantitatively, respondents were asked how easy it would be for them to tell a friend if they were being bullied (see Chart 1.18).

**Chart 1.18 % of pupils in Years 5 and 8 who think that it would be 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to talk to friends**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

| Year 5 | Year 8 |
|--------|--------|
| 68%    | 71%    |

The findings indicate that Year 8 pupils found their friends the easiest to talk to: 71% said that, if they were being bullied, they would find friends 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to talk to. For pupils in Year 5, talking to friends was second in importance to talking to mothers: 78% said that it would be 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to talk to their mothers.

In terms of friendship networks, Black and Asian pupils reported that they would be more likely to talk to friends than white pupils, or pupils from other ethnic groups. For example, over half of Black and Asian pupils (53% N=74) reported that they would find talking to friends 'very easy' compared with a minority of white (39% N=147) pupils, and pupils of other ethnic groups (45% N=65).

In relation to gender, a majority of girls and boys in Year 8 (79% and 74% respectively) felt that they could talk to friends very easily, or quite easily, about bullying.

In focus groups and in response to open-ended survey questions, pupils identified some of the benefits and risks of talking to friends. Unlike teachers and other adults, friends were felt to be in a position to

witness bullying before, during and after school hours, and to provide support when needed. Furthermore, friends did not need to be convinced that the victim was telling the truth:

*'It's more comfortable talking to them. They're with you when you get picked on, so they know about it.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'They might go up to them and say 'why are you picking on X...?' Because a friend is a friend. You want them to stick up for you, and they get involved'.*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

*'It's helpful to be with a friend who is confident, because then you feel more confident.' (Boy, Year 8)*
However, asking a friend for support for dealing with bullying was also identified as having some drawbacks:

*'Sometimes, if they know you're picked on, it might happen to them too.'*
*(Boy, Year 5)*

### *Key findings*

A large majority of pupils in Years 5 and 8 reported that they would tell a friend if they were being bullied, although younger pupils were more likely to talk to their mothers. The findings indicated that older pupils were most likely to tell a friend about bullying compared with any other potential source of help and advice. This suggests that anti-bullying initiatives that take friendship networks into account are likely to be of considerable value to pupils.
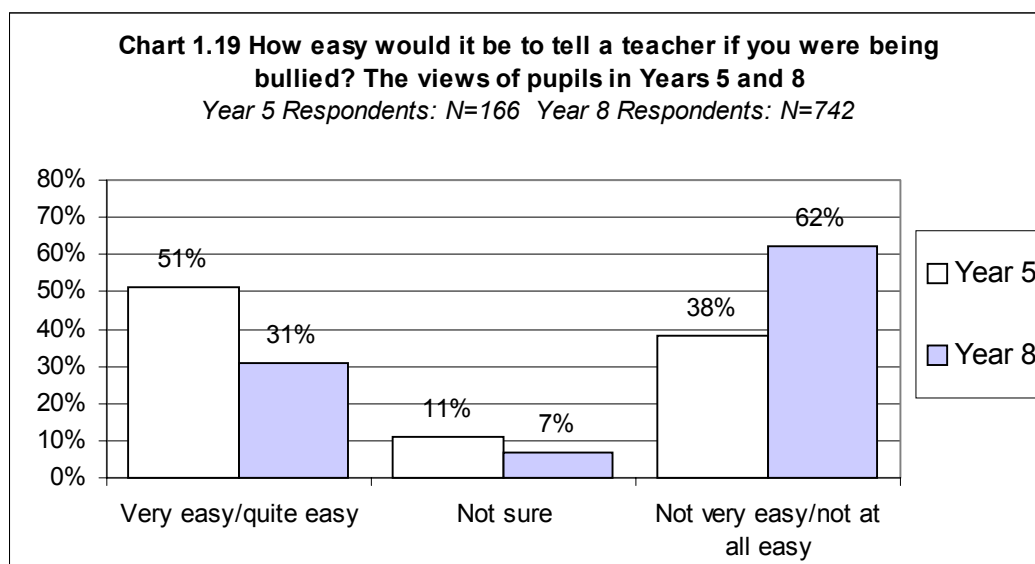
**Telling teachers**

In focus group discussions, the advantages and disadvantages of reporting bullying to teachers were considered at length. In general, this option precipitated loud protests from pupils concerning a perceived lack of confidence in teachers' willingness to believe pupils, or to take their complaints seriously. Some pupils felt that teachers were biased in their responses, or failed to thoroughly investigate incidents of bullying. Trust emerged as an important issue: as one pupil put it: *'you would have to trust them first. And tell them not to tell anyone else'.*

The survey findings were investigated to identify the extent to which they reflected a common perspective among pupils in Years 5 and 8.

*How easy would it be to tell a teacher?*

Survey findings indicated that Year 8 pupils find it harder to talk to a teacher about bullying than Year 5 pupils (see Chart 1.19). Just over half (51% N=84) of pupils in Year 5 said that they would find it 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to tell a teacher if they were being bullied, compared with just under a third (31% n=230) of pupils in Year 8.



Chart 1.19 How easy would it be to tell a teacher if you were being bullied? The views of pupils in Years 5 and 8
Year 5 Respondents: N=166  Year 8 Respondents: N=742

However, pupils' opinions varied widely between different schools. For example, only 7% of pupils in two secondary schools (S3 and S6) reported that they would find it 'very easy' to talk to a teacher, compared to over a fifth (22% N=28) of pupils in a third secondary school (S4).

Of all the possible options for responding to bullying, talking to teachers was associated with a wider range of risks, particularly in relation to the potential for retaliatory action from the perpetrator, and the school's inability to protect victims. Telling a teacher about bullying was described as placing pupils at risk of double jeopardy in two respects: first they may not be believed, and second, telling may result in reprisals.

In summary, some of the likely risks and benefits of telling teachers were identified as follows:

***Benefits***

*'If you hit someone, and the teacher knows you've been bullied, they take that into consideration. If you don't tell, they might think you've hit someone for no reason'.*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'If you tell a teacher, they can look out for you'.*
*(Girl, Year 5)*

*'They do take you seriously and believe you and try to do whatever they could (sic) to make the bullying stop.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

***Risks***
*'Verbal bullying isn't taken seriously by teachers. If you have some bruises, they might take some notice. '*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

*'I don't think the school can do anything to help because there are not enough teachers. They are all supply teachers.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'If you tell your tutor, they have to tell someone else, and then they tell someone else. It's like Chinese whispers.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'They can suspend them, but then they come back and it's even worse.'*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

*'You get called a grass and a dobber, and you get beaten up'.*
*(Boy, Year 5)*


*'I don't trust school. They bring the bully down into the (PSE) Unit and they will know you have told, seen you talking to the teachers, will know you have grassed. You are not safe.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*


### Are some teachers better at dealing with bullying than others?

Notwithstanding the existence of school-wide policies on bullying, the majority of pupils in Years 5 and 8 reported that some teachers were better at dealing with bullying than others (64% N=106 and 69% N=507 respectively). Such teachers were often reported by pupils to be 'firm but fair', and that they took the time to listen to pupils, and take them seriously.

*'She (the teacher) is strict. People say strict teachers are bad but really, strict teachers are better at sorting it out.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*


*'Our teacher is good…she bothers to find out what really happened. She takes you seriously. She sorts it out with the Head or she will tell the parents.'*
*(Girl, Year 8)*


A similar majority of pupils in Year 5 and 8 reported that, if they were being bullied, there was a particular teacher they would be most likely to talk to (67% N=112, and 67% N=403 respectively).


### Key findings


The findings indicate that approximately 50% of pupils in Year 5, but less than a third of pupils in Year 8 find it easy to speak to a teacher about bullying. Telling teachers is associated with a wide range of risks, particularly in relation to possible breaches of confidentiality, failure to act on reported incidents of bullying, and an inability to protect pupils from retaliatory behaviour on the part of perpetrators. On the other hand, some pupils reported that telling teachers could help to stop the bullying or that, armed with information, teachers might be less likely to punish a pupil should they decide to take matters into their own hands.
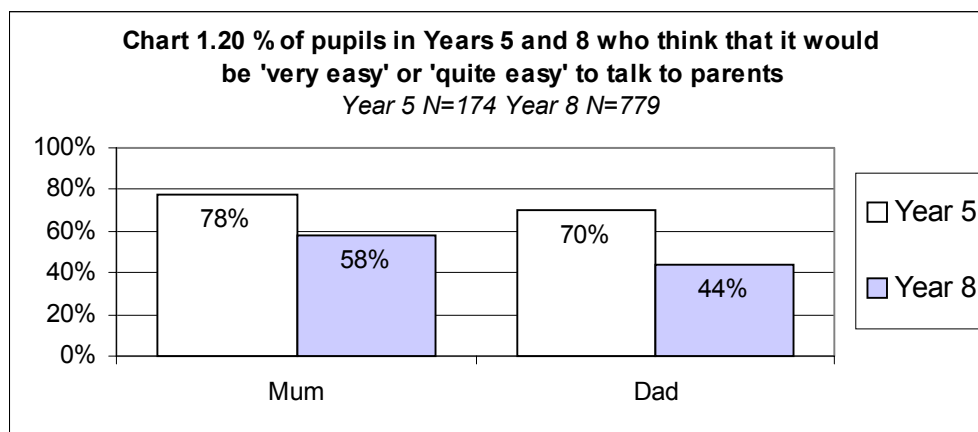
Most pupils could identify a teacher that they would be most likely to speak to if they were being bullied. Such teachers were reported by pupils to be demonstrably better at listening to pupils, more prepared to take pupils seriously, and ready to take appropriate action (but not without the consent of the victim).

**Telling family members**

*Telling parents*

In focus group discussions, most pupils were divided on the question of whether parents were helpful in dealing with bullying. Parents were valued for offering emotional support and for raising their concerns with teachers. On the other hand, pupils also feared that parents might over-react and make matters worse, particularly when pupils felt that they were not liked by their teachers.

The survey findings indicate that pupils' ambivalence about telling parents is far higher among Year 8 pupils, than pupils in primary school (see Chart 1.20).

**Chart 1.20 % of pupils in Years 5 and 8 who think that it would be 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to talk to parents**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

| | Mum | Dad |
|---|---|---|
| Year 5 | 78% | 70% |
| Year 8 | 58% | 44% |

A majority of pupils in both age groups reported that they could talk to their mothers. Fathers were considered less approachable than mothers for both age groups, particularly so for pupils in Year 8.

In focus group discussions, the risks and benefits of talking to parents were explored in some detail. Some pupils were quite sanguine in their assessment of parental responses to bullying:

*' All the Mums say you should tell an adult, and all the Dads say you should hit them back'*
(Boy, Year 5)

Others were more worried about being labelled negatively, or not believed. Some were concerned that talking about bullying might precipitate a family argument, or that parents might over-react and take inappropriate, unilateral action. A small minority reported that it would be preferable to keep their experiences of bullying to themselves in order to protect their parents from worry and concern:

*'You might get called a 'Daddy's boy' or a 'Mummy's boy'.'*
*(Boy, Year 5)*

*'I wouldn't tell my Mum because she'd skin them'.*
*(Girl, Year 5)*

*'I wouldn't want to tell my Mum because I wouldn't want to put her under pressure.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'Parents don't always believe you. They think you're just telling a lie.'*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

*'Your Mum and Dad might disagree about what to do, and then start arguing, and then they say it's your fault. Telling your parents is a serious step. They might take action you don't want.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

However, parents were also valued for their support and advice. With some chagrin, pupils also commented that parents were taken more seriously by schools than pupils:

*'School takes it more seriously if your parents talk to them - you know, an adult.'*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'It works if your parents are serious and tell them straight'*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

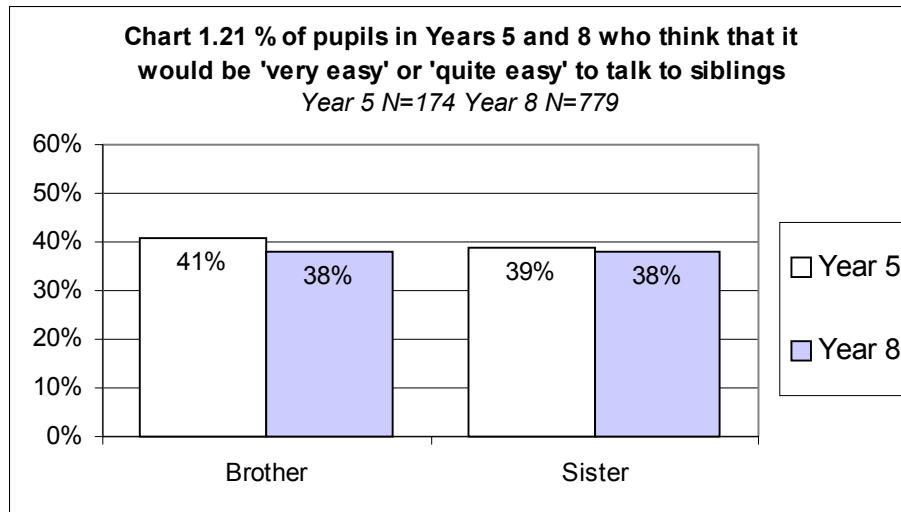*'Mums, Dads, mates can give advice'*
*(Boy, Year 5)*

*'I know that if I tell my parents, they'll believe me. There would be no question. And I know that if I wanted them to come to the school, they would'.*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*Telling siblings*

The findings indicate that siblings were perceived as less approachable than parents or friends by both age groups: less than 4 in 10 felt that they could talk to a brother or sister 'very easily' or 'quite easily' about bullying (see Chart 1.21).

**Chart 1.21 % of pupils in Years 5 and 8 who think that it would be 'very easy' or 'quite easy' to talk to siblings**
*Year 5 N=174 Year 8 N=779*

| | Year 5 | Year 8 |
|---|---|---|
| Brother | 41% | 38% |
| Sister | 39% | 38% |

However, Black and Asian pupils in Year 8 were more likely to say that they could talk to a sister or brother (46% N=55) 'very easily', compared with approximately a quarter of white pupils, and a quarter of pupils from other ethnic groups.
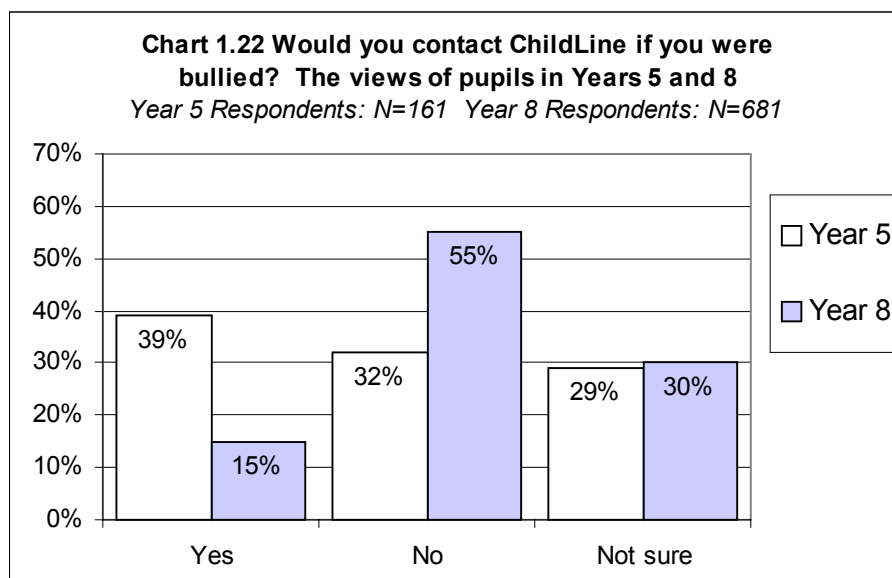
*Key findings*

Pupils in Year 5 were far more likely to talk to their parents, than pupils in Year 8. Pupils in both years found it easier to talk to their mother than their father, particularly in Year 8. In general, pupils expressed a high degree of ambivalence concerning the potential risks and benefits of telling parents about bullying. While parents offer a potentially valuable source of help, advice and moral support, pupils also reported that telling parents could make matters worse (for example, by taking inappropriate or unilateral action, or by disagreeing about the best course of action). In particular, pupils reported that parents who listened to them and took their experiences seriously, helped them to cope with bullying. Conversely, the risk of not being believed by a parent was identified as potentially very hurtful.

**Seeking outside help**

Pupils were asked if they would seek outside help to deal with bullying, such as talking to the police or a confidential telephone helpline. Pupils were also asked if there were any other sources of help that they had found useful.

*Contacting a Telephone Helpline*

A brief description of ChildLine was provided on the survey questionnaire. Pupils were informed that ChildLine was a telephone helpline for children who want to speak to an adult about a problem, such as bullying, and that the helpline is free and confidential. Pupils were asked whether they would contact ChildLine if they were being bullied (see Chart 1.22).



Chart 1.22 Would you contact ChildLine if you were bullied? The views of pupils in Years 5 and 8
Year 5 Respondents: N=161  Year 8 Respondents: N=681

Year 5 pupils were divided in their response. 39% (N=62) said that they would contact ChildLine, but almost a third said 'no' (32% N=52) and a similar proportion (29% N=47) said that they were not sure. By contrast, pupils in Year 8 were far less likely to contact ChildLine. Just over half (55% N=373) said that they would not, almost a third (30% N=203) were not sure, but only 15% (N=105) said that they would.

In focus group discussions, it was generally felt that contacting ChildLine might provide a pupil with emotional support, but that on the other hand, advisors would not be aware of the local context and might therefore not be in a position to give constructive advice. Some pupils believed that ChildLine supported children who were being abused by their parents, rather than children who were being bullied at school.

*Gender*

In Year 8, boys were more definite in saying that they would not (61% N=182) contact ChildLine than girls (50% N=186). Only a small minority of each gender said they would (19% of girls N=70, and 11% of boys N=34).

*School factors*

A wide variation between schools was reported concerning pupils' willingness to contact ChildLine. Pupils in two primary schools emerge as the most likely to contact ChildLine; approximately half of pupils in each school said that they would. The first school (P1) was reported by pupils to have one of the biggest problems with bullying, and was also perceived as one of the most ineffective at dealing with the problem. By contrast, the second school (P2) accounted for the lowest level of bullying, and the best reputation for dealing with bullying, as perceived by pupils. This finding is open to interpretation: it is possible, for example, that schools with a good reputation for dealing with bullying (according to pupils' perceptions), have fostered a culture where 'telling' is encouraged, and where action taken to combat bullying was perceived by pupils to be generally effective. In schools with a poorer reputation for tackling bullying, it is possible that pupils were more likely to feel forced to seek outside help.

*Talking to the police*

A third of pupils in Year 5 (33%) said that they would speak to the police if they were being bullied, compared with approximately 1 in 10 (11%) pupils in Year 8.

In focus group discussions, a minority of pupils thought that the police might be able to help. This was particularly the case where particular police officers were known to pupils as a result of school links with the local community police service. However, in one focus group, pupils reported that some teachers actively suggested that the police should be contacted because they felt unable to stop the bullying.

A number of risks and benefits were associated with contacting the police:

*'You might have to go to court'*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

*'I'd tell PC Smith. She would probably talk to them, and talk to their parents.*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

*'My Dad told the headmaster that he was going to contact the police. Then the school took it seriously'.*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

*'Teachers tell you to get the police because they can't handle it'.*
*(Boy, Year 8)*

### Telling a counsellor

In focus group discussions, pupils also identified other potential sources of help and support, which were primarily valued for the confidentiality they offered. In one focus group, pupils identified Child and Mental Health Services (CAMHS) as a proven and effective source of help, while others mentioned other counsellors and advice agencies targeted at children and young people.

Given pupil's lack of confidence in teachers' or parents' ability to listen to their problems, and a lack of trust in adults' capacity to protect confidentiality, some pupils identified external, independent and confidential services as valuable sources of help and advice. Speaking to a counsellor or therapist was described as a useful means of reducing emotional tension, and enhancing self-confidence and self-esteem. These benefits might be expected to assist in empowering pupils to respond to bullying, whether they decide to 'stand up for themselves' or to 'tell an adult'.

A minority of pupils in focus group discussions suggested talking to a counsellor, and in two cases, pupils reported that it had helped them to manage the emotional impact of bullying, and to think about ways of responding. Importantly, there were no disadvantages associated with this personal strategy for tackling bullying.

*'If you talk to a counsellor, it's someone you don't know. They don't know your life story and they don't tell no one nothing, unless you're going to harm yourself, or someone else. So it's completely confidential. They realise how you're feeling and it's a lot easier than talking to a parent or a teacher.'*
*(Girl, Year 8)*

### Telling the NSPCC

In one focus group, two pupils reported that they were aware that the NSPCC might be able to help them deal with bullying. However, other pupils expressed surprise at this suggestion, as they thought that the NSPCC only dealt with *adults* who are cruel to children.

*'A cousin of mine was being bullied and had a black eye and things. They told the NSPCC and it worked. I don't know what they did'.*

*Key findings*

Pupils were divided about whether they would contact a telephone helpline, such as ChildLine. In particular, older pupils were considerably less likely to consider such an option. Some pupils expressed the view that ChildLine might not know about the local context, and might therefore not be in a position to give constructive advice. Some pupils believed that ChildLine and other organisations, such as the NSPCC, helped children who are being abused by adults, rather than other children.

In relation to older pupils, it is also possible that the name 'ChildLine' might not in itself encourage older pupils to make contact. Pupils in Year 8 might be more likely to consider themselves 'young people' rather than 'children' and therefore be discouraged from seeking help. The findings would suggest that targeted publicity might assist in helping secondary school pupils to perceive ChildLine as a potential source of help. However, it might also be the case that older pupils feel more confident (or under pressure) to deal with bullying by themselves.

Only a small minority of pupils would consider talking to the police about bullying, although younger pupils were more likely than older pupils to consider such action. Nevertheless, in a small number of cases, pupils reported that they had been encouraged by their teachers to contact the police because they felt unable to have an effect on bullying behaviour.

A minority of pupils suggested that external and confidential sources of help might assist pupils to deal with bullying. The confidentiality offered by counselling and other agencies that work with children and young people was identified as an important benefit. Confidentiality was identified as helping pupils to manage their emotional responses to bullying, and to consider their options for tackling bullying. Confidential sources of support were also valued for enabling pupils to control the pace of disclosure. Equally important, no risks were associated with this course of action. Further, in the context of pupils' concerns about breaches of confidentiality on the part of teachers and parents, the wider availability of confidential sources of help and advice may prove a valuable anti-bullying strategy.

# Involving students in decision-making

In the questionnaire survey, pupils in Year 8 were asked about their interest in being involved in decision-making at two levels:
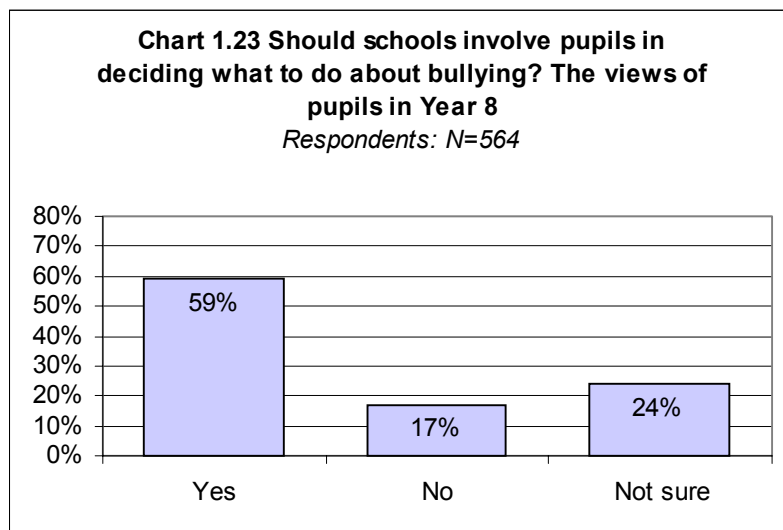
- ❖ in dealing with incidents of bullying that have involved them personally, and
- ❖ in relation to the development of school-wide policies on bullying.

## Involvement in dealing with individual cases of bullying

Year 8 pupils were asked whether they would want to be involved in deciding what to do about incidents of bullying that involved them personally. Overall, pupils were divided in their views. Of 711 pupils who responded, a similar proportion said ' yes' or are 'not sure' (36% and 34% respectively) and a further 30% said 'no'.

## Strategic policy developments

Pupils expressed a greater level of interest in being involved in developing school-wide anti-bullying initiatives than in negotiating with teachers how to deal with their particular experience of bullying (see Chart 1.23).

**Chart 1.23 Should schools involve pupils in deciding what to do about bullying? The views of pupils in Year 8**
*Respondents: N=564*

| Category | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|
| Yes | 59% |
| No | 17% |
| Not sure | 24% |

A majority of pupils (59% N=330) reported that they would like to be involved in deciding how their school might tackle bullying. Almost a quarter (24% N= 137) were not sure, which suggests that some

preparatory work might help to enhance pupil willingness to be involved in decision-making in some way. 17% (N=97) expressed a definite lack of interest in being involved.

In relation to gender, significantly more girls than boys expressed an interest in being involved in decision-making: 50% (N=134) of boys and 64% (N=216) of girls expressed a positive wish to be involved.

On the whole, schools reported by pupils to be the least effective at tackling bullying, were the least likely to attract pupil interest in developing anti-bullying initiatives.  For example, a school reported by pupils to be the least effective at dealing with bullying (S1), also recorded the lowest level of pupil interest in collaborative decision-making (47% N=37).

**Key findings**

Pupils were divided in their views concerning their possible involvement in deciding what to do about bullying in circumstances where they might be involved personally.  This suggests that teachers and pupils need to discuss the likely parameters and ramifications of joint decision-making in this respect.

Pupils were less ambivalent about their potential involvement in developing school-wide anti-bullying initiatives.  The majority of pupils in Year 8 expressed a willingness to be involved.  Nevertheless, almost a quarter were unsure about whether they wanted to be involved or not; this suggests that some preparatory work may be necessary before joint discussions between teachers and pupils can develop.

Girls expressed a higher degree of interest in helping to decide how their school should respond to bullying than boys.  This suggests that teachers should make extra effort to establish a dialogue with boys concerning their views about involvement in collaborative efforts to tackle bullying.

# 4.  CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research project indicated that, when thinking about how to respond to bullying, children and young people engaged in a complex process of risk assessment. Pupils identified a number of different ways of tackling bullying and explored the anticipated advantages and disadvantages of each option.  No tidy solutions or easy remedies were identified. Consequently, pupils' discussions about 'what works' in tackling bullying might more accurately be re-framed as 'what might work'.

Although it is common for adults to encourage pupils to report bullying, pupils of both age groups expressed a preference for 'sorting it out' and 'standing up for themselves'.  Alternative strategies necessarily involved pupils in the dilemmas and consequences associated with 'telling'.  It appears that, even if pupils decided to 'tell' an adult, they were very aware of the gap between how teachers and parents *should* respond to bullying, and how they *actually* respond.  A pupil in Year 5 had this insight to offer on 'telling' and its aftermath:

*'If the dinner ladies don't help you, tell your teacher.  If the teacher doesn't help you, tell your mum. Then your mum will tell the headmistress.  Then the headmistress will go and tell the parents of the bully. And the parents of the bully (pause)…well, some of the parents don't care and just say 'don't do it again'.'*
(Boy, Year 5).

In listening to children and young people talk about bullying, it is clear that they received a number of mixed messages from adults (teachers and parents).  These mixed messages might be summarised as follows:

- Adults (teachers and parents) *claimed* that bullying was a serious or  'bad' thing, but pupils' *experience* was that bullying was often dismissed as 'child's play'

- Pupils were *encouraged to report* incidents of bullying, but when they did, pupils frequently felt that they were *not listened to* or believed

- Schools encouraged pupils to *report bullying* but were also perceived by pupils as unable to *protect* them from retaliatory action, particularly after school hours

- Teaching involves working and *forming relationships with pupils*, yet often, teachers were perceived as taking complaints made by *parents more seriously* than complaints made by pupils

- Adults (teachers and parents) claimed that they could be *trusted*, but telling an adult about bullying was perceived as involving a risk that they would break promises of *confidentiality*

- Adults often told pupils *not to fight* back, but pupils (particularly in Year 8) found that fighting back *works sometimes.*

These findings suggest that anti-bullying policies might be expected to have limited effect if they fail to take into account the realities of the child's social world.  For older pupils, in particular, the risks of 'telling' an adult were identified as involving a risk to their self-esteem, and as increasing their vulnerability to bullying.  In these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that pupils expressed a desire to 'sort things out' for themselves and to take action according to their perceptions of the power dynamics in operation around them. Older pupils in particular identified a wish to have more control over how teachers responded to reported incidents of bullying that involved them personally.  For these reasons, it would seem appropriate for schools to consider more 'bottom up' (rather than 'top down') responses to bullying, that attempt to involve pupils in decision-making at an individual and school-wide level.

It is also clear that encouraging a child 'to tell' requires an adult willingness to listen. Often, pupils expressed a wish simply to speak to an adult in confidence, in order to unburden themselves, get advice and support, and to consider their options. Importantly, there were hardly any disadvantages and some considerable benefits associated with such a course of action, particularly in relation to pupils' emotional well-being.  Certainly, taking such action might provide a useful starting point for pupils to decide for themselves the likely costs and benefits of 'telling' a teacher or a parent.

Nevertheless, the findings indicated that anti-bullying policies provided a useful starting point for tackling bullying.  Indeed, some pupils highlighted different approaches that were described as working at least some of the time (e.g. Schools Councils, ABCs, discussing bullying regularly during assemblies, and during class time).  Pupils also recommended that anti-bullying initiatives should be sustained over the long term.

In summary, the findings highlighted the importance of:

❖ developing anti-bullying strategies that start with pupils' experiences of bullying, and which take into account the consequences of 'telling' for children and young people

❖ providing accessible sources of confidential advice and support

❖ adopting a sustained and multi-model approach to bullying in recognition of children's perceptions that some courses of action work some of the time, and that there are no sure or single solutions to the problem of bullying.

# 5.  RECOMMENDATIONS

**Children's participation**

In recent years, government policy has made significant progress in recognising the importance of listening to children and young people, not only as a means of enhancing their participation as citizens, but also as a means of developing child-centred (and therefore more effective) services (Children and Young People's Unit, 2001). In light of such developments, *we strongly recommend that:*

❖ schools develop more direct work with children and young people to enhance their participation in formulating and implementing anti-bullying strategies

❖ schools should develop a range of formal and informal approaches to working with children and young people that are age-appropriate, gender sensitive and culturally aware.  More informal methods might be used to listen to primary school pupils' views about bullying. More formal approaches, such as consulting schools councils about bullying, should be considered a priority for secondary schools.  Consulting with pupils about anti-bullying strategies might also be undertaken by young people themselves, for example, as part of PSHE project work

❖ in co-educational schools, and in ethnically diverse school populations, efforts should be made to discuss bullying and anti-bullying strategies in girls-only and Black and minority ethnic-only groups

❖ consulting with pupils on the development of anti-bullying strategies should be considered an on-going commitment on the part of schools, and not a one-off exercise

❖ LEAs should facilitate the sharing of good practice between schools, between different children's services, and with children's organisations in the voluntary sector, concerning participatory approaches to working with children and young people in schools

❖ teachers should be offered training in participative approaches to working with children and young people as part of their initial and in-service training

❖ in order to measure schools' progress in listening to pupils and to facilitate the sharing of good practice, the methods used by schools to consult with children and young people about bullying and in the development of anti-bullying strategies should be included as a topic for OFSTED inspection

**A child-centred approach**

It is of key importance that anti-bullying strategies address the realities of children's experience of bullying, and how they commonly respond to it. *It is therefore recommended that:*

❖ more attention is given to the role of friendships in the development of anti-bullying strategies. A number of different approaches may be adopted in this regard (such as the 'buddy' system and the 'circle of friends' model, or peer listening schemes). Other and more informal methods of supporting the development of friendships, such as activity-focused school clubs, might also be adopted

❖ schools address the importance of friendships in Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE), particularly with regard to the development of emotional and social competence of pupils. The process of making friends, and how to cope when friendships break down might be usefully included. In primary schools, emphasis on the importance of friendships could be integrated in the schools' value base as a way of encouraging positive pupil relationships in a more informal way

❖ the role of friendships in promoting the social and emotional competence of pupils should be included in the development of guidance and training materials for teachers.

**Minimising risks, maximising support**

Strategies which seek to minimise the risks of 'telling' teachers about bullying, while also facilitating pupils' access to adult support are likely to be well received by pupils of all ages. *It is therefore recommended that:*

❖ urgent attention is given to making confidential sources of advice and support more widely available within school settings, and in local communities. This support could be provided in

schools by independent youth organisations, or schools could form partnerships with external counselling organisations to provide confidential help and advice to pupils outside school hours

**A whole school approach**

We suggest that listening to pupils about bullying should form part of an inclusive anti-bullying strategy, in which teachers also have their part to play. *It is therefore recommended that:*

❖ listening to pupils forms part of a whole-school approach to tackling bullying that also involves taking action at various levels, including: the development of a positive school ethos; regular reviews of anti-bullying policies and strategies (including the relationship of bullying to racial and sexual harassment, and homophobic abuse); curriculum development; support and training for teachers; environmental design; and working in partnership with parents.

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