Experiences of bullying amongst school-aged children in the UK

A snapshot

Introduction

Bullying remains a consistent and worrying problem across the United Kingdom. Trends have shown that far from decreasing, bullying features prominently in schools, with TES [2017] reporting more than a fifth of children saying that bullying in their school was on the increase.

Research from the Department for Education [2018] shows that, of 10,000 young people taking part in their study, 30% reported being bullied in the last 12 months, with name calling being the most common form of bullying (15% in the last 12 months), followed by social exclusion (14% in the last 12 months) and cyberbullying (10% in the last 12 months). It was also reported that 10% of the young people in the study had experienced threats of violence and 6% said they had experienced actual physical violence.

The ever present nature of social media on people’s lives, particularly the young who are growing up with a dependency to developing their ‘online’ selves, means the distinction between online and offline is becoming increasingly blurred. The rapid development of, and widespread access to, technology has provided a new medium for ‘virtual’ bullying, which can occur in or outside school.

Technology based bullying, or ‘cyberbullying’ as it is commonly referred to, is different to other forms of bullying as it can happen at all times of the day, with a potentially bigger audience, who can forward on content at a click (Department for Education, 2017). The safety of the screen gives perpetrators the anonymity to send personal or widespread attacks on others online.

The Diana Award collects a wealth of data from young people of school-age (primary though to secondary school and sixth form) who tell us about their experiences with bullying on a day-to-day basis. With this in mind, we wanted to explore what young people are telling us is happening in schools across the UK.

This report highlights just some of the ways in which bullying is currently being experienced, providing a snapshot that can be used in conjunction with other research in this area.
Methodology

Results for this report are taken from the data collected as part of The Diana Award’s Anti-Bullying Ambassador Programme.

Anti-Bullying Ambassador Training targets students aged 8-18 years old in schools across the UK. Roughly 1,400 students responded to the survey between September and November 2018. A Survey Monkey link was sent to all schools prior to their participation on the Anti-Bullying Ambassador Programme. Data from these surveys act as a baseline for further analysis of impact and evaluation of the Programme. However, for the purpose of this report, only the pre-training data will be explored in more detail.

Surveys are designed to explore young people’s perceptions and experiences of bullying, relationship with peers, knowledge and confidence confronting bullying in school and ability to intervene/seek support safely.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Age breakdown
Sixth Form or College (16+ years old) - 13%
Secondary School (11-16 years old) - 59%
Primary School (7-11 years old) - 27%
Other - 1% (PRU/Alternative Provision)

Gender
Male - 35%
Female - 63%
Prefer not to say - 2%

GEOGRAPHY

There was a higher concentration of schools in London and its surrounding areas, Midlands and North England that responded to the survey, with slightly fewer based in South West England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
ANTI-BULLYING AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME

RESEARCH

The Diana Award defines bullying as “repeated negative behaviour that is intended to make others feel upset, uncomfortable or unsafe.”

I have been bullied in the last 12 months

More students who were of secondary school age reported to have been bullied on at least one occasion during the previous year. Almost 30% of secondary school students experienced bullying compared to 23% of primary students and 14% of sixth form/college students.

4% of those who say they have been bullied in the last 12 months also admit to bullying another person in the same time frame

How often did you experience the bullying?

People are bullied for trivial things like speaking a certain way or even sitting in a certain way.

Female, 16 years old
**ANTI-BULLYING AMBASSADOR PROGRAMME**

**RESEARCH**

In the last 12 months, where have you experienced or witnessed the bullying?

The type of bullying young people are experiencing is overwhelmingly happening in schools. However, 56% report to experiencing some form of tech-enabled bullying in the previous year (social media, online gaming, texting) making it the second most common place for bullying amongst young people.

- **63%** In School
  - Corridors,
  - Playground,
  - Lunch room

- **33%** On social media
  - Snapchat,
  - Instagram,
  - Whatsapp

- **15%** Hanging out with my friends outside school

- **12%** Online gaming

- **11%** Text message

- **9%** On my way to school

After school activities such as Beavers, Swimming, Sea Cadets and Football Clubs were also noted as key places in which bullying is both experienced and witnessed across all age groups. These are places that are often overlooked because they fall outside the formal educational sphere but should be key monitoring areas for anti-bullying measures.

“I’ve seen bullying happening at school like calling people names like ‘loser’ because they can’t do something
Female, 11 years old
**Anti-Bullying Ambassador Programme Research**

What type of bullying have you experienced in the last 12 months?

Verbal bullying was reported as the most common type of bullying experienced within the previous 12 months across all age groups. Almost 60% of students said they had experienced verbal bullying either ‘daily’ or on a ‘weekly’ basis. 42% reported experiencing indirect forms of bullying such as cyberbullying and 13% physical bullying.

Males are twice as likely to experience physical bullying than their female counterparts. In the last 12 months, 12% of boys experienced physical bullying every week compared to just 6% of girls.

How does gender impact on types of bullying experienced?

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 3 themes around bullying_boys</th>
<th>Top 3 themes around bullying_girls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td>Appearance</td>
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<td>Homophobia</td>
<td>Intelligence</td>
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<td>Appearance</td>
<td>Friendships</td>
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Of those who said they had been bullied in the last 12 months, 58% were female, 39% male and 3% preferred not to disclose their gender.

“Sometimes mean words are said about someone’s appearance”

Female, 10 years old
When asked who they told about the bullying they had experienced within the last year, over half of students were reported to have told a family member; a parent, a sibling, or cousin. Worryingly, around 1 in 10 said they hadn’t told anyone about the bullying.

Who did you tell about the bullying you’ve experienced in the last 12 months?

- A family member: 56%
- A teacher: 48%
- A friend: 29%
- Another trusted adult: 11%
- An organisation e.g. NSPCC, Childline: 2%
- I didn't tell anyone about the bullying: 9%

“I have been referred to as a “coon” and a “nigga”. Teachers are aware that racism goes on within our school.”

Male, 14 years old
There was a notable difference in attitude towards school between those who had experienced bullying and those who had not. For example, 40% of those who had been bullied felt safe at school compared to 56% of those who had not been bullied.

25% of those who have been bullied in the last 12 months say they get along with their fellow peers, compared to 41% who have not experienced any form of bullying.

While 37% of students feel their school implements their anti-bullying policy effectively, the majority believe their school is only ‘fairly effective’ when it comes to dealing with bullying, suggesting that improvements can be made to the ways in which bullying is reported and dealt with by teachers.

I think the term ‘banter’ is used often as an excuse for offending someone

Female, 16 years old
Top tips and tools for supporting a child who is being bullied

The Diana Award has created a wealth of resources aimed at supporting young people, parents, teachers and the wider community dealing with bullying both in schools and online.

DON’T SUFFER IN SILENCE

- Every school has a duty of care to look after their students. If you are being bullied at school it’s important that you talk to a teacher. If not a teacher, then talk to someone you trust.

SAVE THE EVIDENCE

- Keep a record of what’s been going on – remember the 4 W’s: What, Where, When and Who. This will help the person helping you to understand the situation and help you to resolve it.

SET DIGITAL BOUNDARIES

- Privacy is one of those things you might not think about until something goes wrong. Taking a few minutes to think through who you’re comfortable seeing your personal information can make a positive difference in the long run.

SURROUND YOURSELF WITH KINDNESS

- We are all affected by our surroundings. Try hanging out with people who make you feel good about yourself and are kind to you instead of putting you down.

TAKE CARE WHEN YOU SHARE

- Don’t post anything you wouldn’t want your Grandma to see. You should always think twice about what you post online and who you share it with.

BUILDING CRITICAL THINKING

- By thinking carefully about what is being said online, you can help sort the good information from the bad. Critical thinking can help you to avoid online pitfalls like falling victim to scams or fake accounts.

KNOW YOUR SCHOOL’S POLICY

- Knowing your school’s anti-bullying policy will help you identify your rights when it comes to bullying at school and inform you of the procedures the schools is legally obliged to take.

BE PROUD OF WHO YOU ARE

- It doesn’t matter what colour hair you have; what trainers you are wearing; how you speak; how you walk; how you talk – it is not your fault if you get bullied. We are all different in some way and that’s what makes us amazing.

For further information, please visit The Diana Awards’s Anti-Bullying Programme website: https://www.antibullyingpro.com/