

Meeting 10 of the Steering Committee to Review the Action Plan on Bullying 2013 Minutes

Thursday 29th September 2022, 10.30 am – 4pm

O’Connell Suite 1, RUI Plaza, Gresham Hotel, Dublin 1.

Attendees:

Aileen Hickie, CEO, Parentline
Aileen Walsh, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Bridget Wilson, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Caitlin Faye Maniti, President, Irish Second-Level Students’ Union
Catherine Cross, National Parents Council Primary
Deirdre Shanley, Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Education
Emer O’Neill, Anti-Racism Activist, Teacher, Presenter
Prof James O’Higgins Norman, Director, UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying and Cyberbullying
Director, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre.
Jane McGarrigle, Project Officer, Webwise
Judith Lyons, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Karen Ryan, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education
Maria Bracken, Digital, Teacher Supply, Teaching Council Section, Department of Education
Maria Joyce, Co-ordinator National Traveller Women’s Forum
Niamh Molloy, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Dr Noel Purdy, Director Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement, Stranmillis University
College
Paul Rolston, Communications Director, National Parents Council Post-Primary
Rebecca Galligan, Post-Primary Senior Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education
Ryan McKay, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Sarah Benson, CEO, Women’s Aid
Sharon Eustace, Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service, Department of
Education

Apologies:

Áine Lynch, CEO, National Parents Council Primary
Majella O’Dea, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education
Moninne Griffith, CEO, Belong To
Ronan Kielt, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education
Seónaid Ó’Murchadha, Board member, Independent Living Movement Ireland
Yvonne Keating, Deputy Chief Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education
Zak Moradi, Anti-racism Activist

Purpose of the Meeting:

The tenth meeting of the Steering Committee to review the Action plan on Bullying 2013.

1. Welcome, overview of agenda, minutes of previous meetings

Dr Purdy welcomed the attendees, thanked members for their work to date, read the apologies and introduced the Agenda. Dr Purdy advised that the findings of the consultation process would be categorised under the four key areas of the *Wellbeing Policy Statement and Framework for Practice 2019*. As each area is presented, a round table discussion and plenary feedback will follow.

2. Culture and Environment – Findings and proposed actions

Rebecca Galligan presented the key findings relating to the first key area for Wellbeing Promotion - Culture and Environment. She also advised that a mentimeter would be used to gather the feedback from Steering Committee members.

Key findings:

- A welcoming whole school climate that promotes inclusion, respect and diversity where everyone's opinion is respected and where there is zero tolerance for bullying
- A school charter that clearly outlines the schools culture and values and the key role of school leaders in creating this culture
- Access to safe places within the school, including the need to consider school design for both internal and external spaces to ensure the risk of the potential for bullying is reduced
- Psychological supports available for students when required
- Whole school community approach to anti-bullying and inclusion
- Preventing bullying instead of reacting to it and raising awareness of the impact of bullying
- Raising awareness, particularly of impact, among the school community and collaboration among schools
- The need for time and resources

Rebecca Galligan discussed the possible direction of key actions relating to the first area of Wellbeing Promotion. This included the possibility of creating a school culture and value statement; the possible role of Student Support Teams (provision, guidance at primary level, support from the Department); School Self-Evaluation and prioritisation of wellbeing; assessing and monitoring the implementation of Anti-bullying procedures and Wellbeing provision in inspections; reporting on views of children and young people on an annual basis.

3. Round Table Discussion and Plenary Feedback

Steering Committee members discussed the key findings and proposed actions, and provided the following feedback:

- We must ensure that the school culture is lived every day
- The school culture statement should include reference to those most at risk
- Schools should be enriched by diversity
- The code of conduct should be read and signed by all parents at the start of each year
- Resources have to be put in place for training for teachers and the whole school community
- Schools should have anti-racism policies
- Schools should be provided with best practice on developing a positive school culture
- Child friendly versions of code of conduct, ethos and school charter
- Leadership – commitment from School Principal is critical

- Inclusion, diversity and culture being within the veins of the school. Something being lived every day and not just during anti-bullying week/month
- Ensure all children know what supports are available and understand the process involved in accessing them
- Parental Voice
- Student voice is crucial
- Bullying is in every school. Every school must have a dedicated anti-bullying team who drives and monitors a whole school programme

4. Comfort Break

5. Relationships and Partnerships – Findings and proposed actions

Niamh Molloy presented the key findings relating to the second key area for Wellbeing Promotion - Relationships and Partnerships.

Key findings:

- The whole school community should build relationships that create empathy, understanding and respect
- The importance of a trusted adult in relation to disclosure of incidents of bullying
- Meaningful involvement of children and young people
- Parental involvement
- Diversity in student councils, school staff
- Teachers keeping a watchful eye
- Student mentors
- Zero tolerance for teacher bullying
- Wellbeing Student Support teams

Niamh Molloy discussed the possible direction of key actions relating to the key area of Wellbeing Promotion – Relationships and Partnerships. This included the possibility of creating school clusters that focus on wellbeing and preventing and tackling bullying; progression of the Charter Bill and development of associated guidelines; guidance for schools on promotion of anti-bullying and wellbeing initiatives; updating and promoting relevant websites to provide accessible information, updating and promoting the list of wellbeing resources available to the school community.

6. Round Table Discussion and Plenary Feedback

Steering Committee members discussed the key findings and proposed actions, and provided the following feedback:

- The benefits to the school are evident when you see everyone working together
- There should be guidelines from the Department around student mentors
- Policies should include the involvement of parents association and student council
- There should be mechanisms in place for asking “did you spot anything?” and whole school community should be mindful and vigilant
- Under-representation on student councils should be addressed, as it should not be seen as a popularity contest.
- Schools should have more engagement with Human Rights organisations
- It is crucial to name context in language re social/structural inequalities. Name sexism, racism, homophobia, ableism, transphobia

- There should be Clear guidance for schools on the role of the Parents Association
- There needs to be a Module in ITE on how to communicate and build relationships
- There should be proactive outreach to parents in minority communities, using appropriate means of communication
- There should be a requirement for schools to develop their anti-bullying policy in collaboration with parents, students and staff
- There should be community involvement and guests from minority groups to the school
- Find ways to celebrate good partnerships and make them visible to the whole school community

7. Lunch

8. Curriculum (Teaching and Learning) – Findings and proposed actions

Dr Purdy welcomed the members back and introduced Judith Lyons.

Judith Lyons presented the key findings relating to the third key area for Wellbeing Promotion - Curriculum (Teaching and Learning).

Key findings:

- An inclusive curriculum, education on diversity, respect for other cultures
- Increased focus on inclusion, anti-racism, diversity at Initial Teacher Education, Newly Qualified Teacher Education and continuous professional development
- Building teacher confidence and skills to tackle bullying
- Importance of anti-bullying programmes such as FUSE
- Inspections focused on school culture and student wellbeing
- Books and lessons, which reinforce the message of inclusion and reflect the evolving nature of society

Judith Lyons discussed the possible direction of key actions relating to the third key area of Wellbeing Promotion – Curriculum (Teaching and Learning). This included the possibility of ensuring the SPHE/RSE curriculum contains appropriate material on relevant topics; that staff teaching this subject are supported to be qualified in this area; the primary curriculum review and ensuring it considers the inclusion of material on relevant topics; the importance of Traveller Culture and History in the curriculum; the review of the Intercultural guidelines; expanding the Junior Cycle SPHE to include topics relating to online safety and navigating the online space; training for all members of the school community including teaching and non-teaching staff at all career stages, parents and boards of management; provision of Wellbeing CPD for staff; roll out of FUSE and it's possible future development, and ensuring schools have diverse literature in their libraries.

9. Round Table Discussion and Plenary Feedback

Steering Committee members discussed the key findings and proposed actions, and provided the following feedback:

- The teaching curriculum should be inclusive of all
- Intercultural guidelines should be available to all schools
- What CPD is currently being provided? Where are the gaps and how can we address the gaps?
- Stay Safe programme should be updated

- The benefits of the FUSE programme, and how to roll out this programme to all schools
- There are blocks to including the voice of children, litigation and parental consent inhibits research
- There is a responsibility of staff members to report other staff members where teacher – student bullying and staff room bias is evident
- The Inspectorate are engaging with students and they have greater access to children
- Highlight the wide range of National and International resources available to schools
- Schools in choosing anti-bullying programmes should adhere to the relevant Circulars
- Staff training needs to be competency based to support staff confidence to deal with bullying issues
- Anti-bullying champions in schools
- Ensure adequate training places are available to schools. Training can be hard to access as there are limited places available

10. Comfort break

11. Policy and Planning – Findings and proposed actions

Ryan McKay presented the key findings relating to the final key area for Wellbeing Promotion - Policy and Planning.

Key findings:

- Meaningful voice of children and young people in school policy development, accessibility of policies
- Collect disaggregated data on bullying to inform policy, Continuous Professional Development (CPD), provide templates
- Evidence informed policy include input from students at high risk of being bullied, Annual risk assessment to inform policy review
- Whole school community understands their roles and responsibilities
- Anonymous reporting
- Keep confidentiality; involve the child or young person who is being bullied in determining appropriate action
- School Self Evaluation process
- Importance of an Online Safety Commissioner

Ryan McKay discussed the possible direction of key actions relating to the key area of Wellbeing Promotion – Policy and Planning. This included the possibility of examining how incidents of bullying can be recorded, collated and reported upon at a national level; updating the anti-bullying procedures and templates to improve accessibility, oversight; how schools could consult with parents and students on the development of anti-bullying policies/procedures; and the importance of the progression of the Online Safety and Media Regulation Bill.

12. Round Table Discussion and Plenary Feedback

Steering Committee members discussed the key findings and proposed actions, and provided the following feedback:

- The whole school community acknowledging how everyone has a role to play
- Establish a listening culture and confidentiality for anonymous reporting
- More training on restorative practice

- Redefine bullying as it has evolved
- Board of management should be proactive
- There should be two components to data collection, a centralised place for schools to report bullying and a national repository to collect views from the school community
- Opportunities for regular engagement between the Department of Education and the online safety commissioner
- Accessibility and Visibility of data
- The Action plan needs to have an end and implementation phase
- Anonymous reporting and protected disclosure
- Consideration of which policies are mandatory
- Ethnic identifier in data – human rights
- Build a culture resilience among students to assist them in overcoming challenging behaviours/situations
- Using data to identify trends in schools where more targeted approach could be taken e.g. restorative practice with Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST)
- We do not have data for anti-racism in schools so the use of an anti-racism policy and data collection in terms of racist bullying would be very positive
- Anti-bullying policy links to wider relevant national policy such as the upcoming new national action plan against racism
- We need to provide schools with policies, resources and training in terms of racist bullying
- Training for school staff collecting the data
- Access to data by all relevant stakeholders is critical including all community groups/organisations

13. Summary and close

Dr Purdy thanked the presenters and the Steering Committee for their engagement in the meeting and for their valuable feedback. Dr Purdy advised that the Mentimeter would remain open for further additions and that the next Steering Committee meeting will be held in the Department of Education, Marlborough Street on 27th October.