CHANGE STARTS WITH



LOOKING AT THE EVIDENCE

WHAT WORKS TO TACKLE BULLYING BOTH ONLINE AND OFFLINE? A LITERATURE REVIEW

Peter K Smith – Goldsmiths, University of London, U.K September 2019







 O_2

ORGANISER

LITERATURE REVIEW - Evidence base for

interventions to reduce bullying online and offline



Preamble: the table below summarises the main kinds of intervention used to reduce bullying, either proactively (by making it less likely to happen in the first place) or reactively (by acting when incidents occur to make it less likely to happen in future). These interventions have been used in the U.K., or other western countries (e.g. USA, Canada, Australia, other European countries). Eastern countries (e.g. Japan, South Korea, China and Hong Kong) have different cultures, and are not so comparable so far as interventions are concerned.

The first column names the method or strategy. The number(s) in square brackets [n] indicate one or two primary sources for the method and evidence base, with the actual references listed below after the table.

The second column gives the main target groups (young people/schools/parents and carers/ government/social media industry/media).

The third column gives the strength of the evidence base for effectiveness of the method in actually reducing bullying/victimisation.

STRONG

very good evidence for a causal relationship via an experimental/ control group study, or very consistent correlational evidence

from a number of different studies.

MODERATE

evidence from studies with weaker experimental design, or correlational evidence from just one or two studies.

MIXED

good evidence from one or more studies, but also one or more studies which fail to replicate this.

MORE EVIDENCE NEEDED

no hard evidence of effects on reports of bullying/victimisation, but some 'soft' evidence, such as opinions that the intervention

is useful from those involved – impressions rather than actual measures of behaviour.

Methods for which there is no evidence whatsoever are not reported here.

Judgments about the strength of the evidence base inevitably involve some subjective element, so it is important to examine the primary sources as well. In addition there are useful secondary sources - reviews of the primary sources.

Some useful ones are:

- M. Campbell & S. Bauman (eds.) (2018). Reducing cyberbullying in schools. London: Elsevier.
- Gaffney, H., Ttofi, M. M., & Farrington, D. P. (2019). Evaluating the effectiveness of school bullying prevention programs: An updated meta-analytical review. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 45, 111-133.
- Gaffney, H., Farrington, D. P., Espelage, D. L., & Ttofi, M. M. (2019). Are cyberbullying intervention and prevention programs effective? A systematic and meta-analytical review. Aggression and Violent Behavior, 45, 134-153.
- Rigby, K. (2010). Bullying interventions in schools: Six basic approaches. Camberwell, Victoria: ACER.
- Smith, P.K. (ed.) (2019). Making an Impact on School Bullying: Interventions and Recommendations. London: Routledge.









PROACTIVE STRATEGIES



SHOULD MAKE SCHOOL BULLYING LESS LIKELY TO HAPPEN

| METHOD/STRATEGY | TARGET GROUP | EVIDENCE BASE | COMMENTS |
|---|---|----------------------------|--|
| Improve school climate how safe and happy pupils feel in school; quality of pupil-pupil relationships; quality of teacher- pupil relationships [1, 2] | Schools, Young people | Strong | Many studies support this from correlational evidence; may be especially important for vulnerable groups |
| Authoritative school climate high disciplinary and academic expectations for students, teachers and other school staff members interact with students in a respectful, caring, and helpful manner [3] | Schools, Young people | Strong | Good correlational evidence and support from intervention studies which embody this, e.g. PBIS (Positive Behavioral and Intervention Supports) |
| Anti-bullying policy having a policy, quality of policy [4] | Schools, Young people, Parents and carers | Mixed/ Weak | Rather little evidence for direct effect, but seen as important platform for other methods |
| Laws against bullying Country- or state-wide laws making (certain types of) bullying a criminal offence [5, 6] | Government | More evidence needed | Several studies suggest introduction of such laws can be associated with reductions in bullying rates |
| Reducing societal inequality Reducing levels of socioeconomic inequality – not actually tried as an intervention but predicted to have an effect [7, 8] | Government | More evidence needed | Correlational evidence that bullying rates are lower in societies with lower socioeconomic inequality (Gini coefficient) |
| Parent-school links Ease and quality of communication between school and parents on matters around bullying [9] | Schools, Parents and carers | More evidence needed | Mainly correlational or 'soft' evidence that this can be important |
| Parenting style | Parents and | Moderate | Consistent correlational |









| Family therapy Therapeutic work with parents/ carers and young people with problems, e.g. bullying behaviours, severe victimisation [11, 12] | Young people, Parents and carers | Strong | One study used randomised control trial, reduced bullying in adolescent girls; another reduced victimisation in 6-12 year olds |
|--|--|----------------------------|--|
| Work on sibling aggression Improving sibling relationships; not actually tried as an intervention but predicted to have an effect [13] | Young people Parents and carers | More evidence needed | Correlational evidence that sibling bullying carries over into the school |
| Personal & social education Curriculum work on rights and responsibilities, respect for others, good citizenship [14, 15] | Schools Young people | More evidence needed | Some positive findings but more often in primary than secondary school |
| Social skills training Training in emotion recognition, empathy, skills of getting on with others [16, 17] | Schools Young people | Moderate | A range of studies suggest this can be helpful, especially for victims of bullying |
| Assertiveness training Training victims or pupils generally to act assertively but not aggressively when provoked or bullied [18] | Young people | More evidence needed | A few studies suggest this can help self-esteem and that some skills used are put into effect |
| Cooperative Group Work Pupils do curriculum tasks in small working groups where cooperation is necessary to complete the task [19] | Schools Young people | More evidence needed | Has been found to help integrate some children who are victims, but no evidence for effects on bullies |
| Use of videos, VLEs Using video, film, virtual learning environments to raise awareness and change attitudes [20, 21] | Schools Young people | Moderate | Can raise awareness and affect attitudes, but short-term effects unless part of other methods |
| Bystander training Training young people in ways of helping or defending victims rather than ignoring or passively supporting [22] | Schools Young people | Moderate | A number of correlational studies support the use of this strategy |













| Peer support initiatives This covers a range of methods, including befriending, peer mentoring, peer counselling, peer mediation [23, 24] | Schools Young people | Mixed | Peer support schemes improve school climate, and those trained as peer supporters benefit. Little evidence that it affects rates of bullying, and there can be negative effects if not carefully planned and executed. |
|---|-------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Training lunchtime supervisors Especially if non-teaching staff, ensuring playground supervisors can recognise bullying and know what to do if it occurs [25] | Schools Young people | More evidence needed | Few studies, but lunchtime supervisors do report such training as helpful. |
| Improving playground design Much bullying happens in the playground, but this may be less likely if the playground is well designed [26] | Schools Young people | More evidence needed | Young people enjoy being involved in playground design and appreciate changes; very limited evidence for effects on bullying. |
| Meaningful roles Providing prosocial roles for bullying children (e.g. leading a sport activity) which preserves their status while channelling them away from bullying [27] | Schools Young people | More evidence needed | A relatively new method for which as yet there is very little evidence for effects on bullying |
| Training of teachers Ensuring that teachers are aware of the nature and effects of bullying, and are able and committed to respond effectively if incidents are reported to them or they see them happen [28, 29] | Schools | More evidence needed | Several studies suggest that bullying levels are correlated with teacher awareness and commitment to dealing with bullying, but there is a lack of specific intervention studies. |
| Liaison/training with school bus drivers Ensuring school bus drivers recognise bullying and know what to do if it happens on the school bus run [30] | Schools | More evidence needed | Only 'soft' evidence so far that a sample of school bus drivers think this would be useful. |









REACTIVE STRATEGIES



WAYS OF DEALING WITH BULLYING WHEN AN INCIDENT OCCURS

| METHOD/STRATEGY | TARGET GROUP | EVIDENCE BASE | COMMENTS |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------|---|
| Negative sanctions Some form of sanction or punishment for the bullying child, on a sliding scale from serious talk, through to suspension or expulsion [31,32] | Schools Young people | Moderate | Actions of this kind have been found to be effective in some 70-80% of cases |
| Restorative approaches Focus on restoring good relationships rather than punishment per se; may involve parents in serious cases [33, 34] | Schools Young people Parents | Moderate | Actions of this kind have been found to be effective in some 70-80% of cases. Some concerns about consistency with school policies. |
| Support Group Method (SGM) A 'no blame' method in which the bullying child(ren) are made aware of the victims suffering and (with others) encouraged to help him/her [35, 36] | Schools Young people | Moderate | Actions of this kind have been found to be effective in some 70-80% of cases. |







CYBERBULLYING - SOME PROGRAMS FOUND TO REDUCE CYBERBULLYING AS MUCH AS OFFLINE BULLYING; THERE ARE ALSO MORE SPECIFIC METHODS



| METHOD/STRATEGY | TARGET GROUP | EVIDENCE BASE | COMMENTS |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------|---|
| Laws against cyberbullying Specific laws making (certain types of) cyberbullying or cyber aggression a criminal offence [37, 38] | Government | More evidence needed | Some difficulties in defining cyberbullying in this context. Varies a lot by country. Limited evidence to date. |
| e-safety training programs/curricula that provide training/advice on safe internet use [39] | Schools Young people | Moderate | Effectiveness demonstrated in some programs, such as ConRed in Spain. |
| Traditional anti-bullying programs Some packages (see above) that target offline bullying may also reduce online bullying [40, 41, 42] | Schools Young people | Moderate | Equivalent reductions in online bullying found in KiVa, ViSC, and (Cyber)Friendly Schools |
| Media Heroes Specific program on cyberbullying prevention at secondary school, with emphasis on empathy, perspective taking, and moral engagement [43] | Schools Young people | Moderate | Developed in Germany. Evidence for effects from a few experimental studies. |
| Parenting and the internet Helping parents to monitor their children's ICT and social networking without being too intrusive [44, 45] | Parents | More evidence needed | Only 'soft' evidence so far that a balanced parental approach to this is associated with reduced risk of cyberbullying involvement. |
| Reducing violent media consumption Censoring or reducing violent content on television, internet, movies, video games [46, 47] | Media Parents Young people | More evidence needed | Only 'soft' evidence so far that a exposure to media violence is associated with risk of cyberbullying involvement. |







Safeguarding practices by social network providers

Encouraging social network providers to monitor for unacceptable/bullying behaviours, enable easy reporting of violations, and remove such material quickly [48, 49]

Social media industry

More evidence needed

Such actions have face validity, and programs are being developed to facilitate detection of aggressive and hateful content, but little evidence yet on effectiveness.







SOURCE REFERENCES

- 1. Astor, R. A., & Benbenishty, R. (2019). Bullying, school violence, and climate in evolving contexts: Culture, organization, and time. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- 2. Birkett, M., Espelage, D. L., & Koenig, B. (2009). LGB and questioning students in schools: The moderating effects of homophobic bullying and school climate on negative outcomes. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 38, 989–1000.
- 3. Cornell, D., Shukla, K., & Konold, T. (2015). Peer victimization and authoritative school climate: A multilevel approach. Journal of Educational Psychology, 107, 1186–1201.
- 4. Smith, P.K., Kupferberg, A., Mora-Merchan, J.A., Samara, M., Bosley, S. & Osborn, R. (2012). A content analysis of school anti-bullying policies: A follow-up after six years. Educational Psychology in Practice, 28, 47-70.
- 5. Hatzenbuehler, M. L., Schwab-Reese, L., Ranapurwala, S. I., Hertz, M. F., & Ramirez, M. R. (2015). Associations between antibullying policies and bullying in 25 states. JAMA Pediatrics, 169(10), e152411.
- 6. Ramirez, M., Ten Eyck, P., Peek-Asa, C., Onwuachi-Willig, A., & Cavanaugh, J. E. (2016). Evaluation of Iowa's anti-bullying law. Injury Epidemiology, 3(1), 15.
- 7. Chaux, E., Molano, A., & Podlesky, P. (2009). Socio-economic, socio-political and socio-emotional variables explaining school bullying: A country-wide multilevel analysis. Aggressive Behavior, 35, 520–529.
- 8. Elgar, F. J., Craig, W., Boyce, W., Morgan, A., & Vella-Zarb, R. (2009). Income inequality and school bullying: Multilevel study of adolescents in 37 countries. Journal of Adolescent Health, 45, 351–359.
- 9. Axford, N., Farrington, D. P., Clarkson, S., Bjornstad, G. J., Wrigley, Z., & Hutchings, J. (2015). Involving parents in school-based programmes to prevent and reduce bullying: What effect does it have? Journal of Children's Services, 10, 242–251.
- 10. Lereya, S. T., Samara, M., & Wolke, D. (2013). Parenting behavior and the risk of becoming a victim and a bully/victim: A meta-analysis study. Child Abuse & Neglect, 37, 1091–1108.
- 11. Nickel, M., Luley, J., Krawczyk, J., Nickel, C., Wildermann, C., Lahmann, C., Muehlbacher, M., Forthuber, P., Kettler, C., Leiberich, P., Tritt, K., Mitterlehner, F., Kaplan, P., Gil, F. P., Rother, W., & Loew, T. (2006). Bullying girls changes after brief strategic family therapy: A randomized, prospective, controlled trial with one-year follow-up. Psychotherapy and Psychosomatics, 75, 47–55.
- 12. Healy, K. L., & Sanders, M. R. (2014). Randomized controlled trial of a family intervention for children bullied by peers. Behavior Therapy, 45, 760–777.
- $13. \quad Wolke, D. \ Tippett, N., \& \ Dantchev, S. \ (2015). \ Bullying in the family: Sibling bullying. The Lancet Psychiatry, 2, 917–929.$
- 14. Hallam, S., Rhamie, J. & Shaw, J. (2006). Evaluation of the Primary Behaviour and Attendance Pilot. Institute of Education. DCSF. Ref: RR717
- 15. Humphrey, N., Lendrum, A. and Wigelsworth, M. (2010), Social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme in secondary schools: a national evaluation. DFE-RB049.
- 16. Smith, P., O'Donnell, L., Easton, C. & Rudd, P. (2007). Secondary social, emotional and behavioural skills (SEBS) pilot evaluation. DCSF-RR003. Nottingham: DfES.
- 17. Fox, C. & Boulton, M. (2003). Evaluating the effectiveness of a social skills training programme for victims of bullying. Educational Research, 45, 231-247.
- 18. Sharp, S. & Cowie, H. (1994). Empowering pupils to take positive action against bullying. In P.K. Smith & S. Sharp (eds), School Bullying Insights and Perspectives. London: Routledge, pp.108-131.
- 19. Cowie, H., Smith, P.K., Boulton, M.J. & Laver, R. (1994). Co-operative group work in the multi-ethnic classroom. London: David Fulton.
- 20. Boulton M. J. & Flemington I. (1996). The effects of a short video intervention on secondary school pupils' involvement in definitions of and attitudes towards bullying. School Psychology International 17, 331–345.
- 21. Sapouna, M., Wolke, D., Vannani, N., Watson, S., Woods, S., Schneider, W., Enz, S., Hall, L., Paiva, A., Andre, E., Dautenhahn, K., & Aylett, R. (2009). Virtual learning intervention to reduce bullying victimization in primary school: a controlled trial. Journal of Child Psychology & Psychiatry, 51, 104-112.









- 22. Polanin, J. R., Espelage, D. L., & Pigott, T. D. (2012). A meta-analysis of school-based bullying prevention programs' effects on bystander intervention behavior. School Psychology Review, 41, 47–65.
- 23. Houlston, C. & Smith, P.K. (2009). The impact of a peer counseling scheme to address bullying in an all-girl London secondary school: A short-term longitudinal study. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 79, 69-86.
- 24. Smith, P.K. & Watson, D. (2004). Evaluation of the CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) programme. Research report RR570, DfES.
- 25. Boulton, M.J. (1994). Understanding and preventing bullying in the junior school playground. In Smith, P. K. & Sharp, S. (Eds.), School bullying: Insights and perspectives (pp.132-159). London. Routledge.
- 26. Higgins, C. (1994). Improving the school ground environment as an anti-bullying intervention. In S. Sharp & P.K. Smith (eds), Tackling Bullying in Schools: A Practical Handbook for Teachers. London: Routledge, pp.7160-192.
- 27. Ellis, B. J., Volk, A. A., Gonzalez, J-M., & Embry, D. D. (2016). The meaningful roles intervention: An evolutionary approach to reducing bullying and increasing prosocial behavior. Journal of Research on Adolescence, 22, 622–637.
- 28. Nicolaides, S., Toda, Y. & Smith, P.K. (2002). Knowledge and attitudes about school bullying in trainee teachers. British Journal of Educational Psychology, 72, 105-118.
- 29. De Luca, L., Nocentini, A. & Menesini, E. (2019). The teacher's role in preventing bullying. Frontiers in Psychology, 10, article 1830.
- 30. The Vodden Report (2015). Coach drivers' perspectives of bullying on dedicated school buses. https://www.kidscape.org.uk/media/1152/the_vodden_report_final.pdf
- 31. Thompson, F. & Smith, P. K. (2011). The use and effectiveness of anti-bullying strategies in schools. DFE-RR098. London: DfE.
- 32. Garandeau, C.F., Poskiparta, E. & Salmivalli, C. (2014). Tackling acute cases of school bullying in the KiVa anti-bullying program: A comparison of two approaches. Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 40, 289-300.
- 33. Burssens, D. & Vettenburg, N. (2006). Restorative group conferencing at school: a constructive response to serious incidents. Journal of School Violence, 5, 5-17.
- 34. Cremin, H. (2013). Critical perspectives on Restorative Justice / Restorative Approaches to educational settings. In E. Sellman, H. Cremin & G. McCluskey (eds.), Restorative approaches to conflict in schools: Interdisciplinary perspectives on whole school approaches to managing relationships. London: Routledge.
- 35. Young, S. (1998). The Support Group approach to bullying in schools. Educational Psychology in Practice, 14, 32–39.
- 36. Smith, P.K., Howard, S., & Thompson, F. (2007). Use of the Support Group Method to tackle bullying, and evaluation from schools and local authorities in England. Pastoral Care in Education, 25, 4-13.
- 37. Yang, Y. T., & Grinshteyn, E. (2016). Safer cyberspace through legal intervention: A comparative review of cyberbullying legislation. World Medical and Health Policy, 8(4), 458–477.
- 38. Patterson, V.C. Closson, L.M. & Patry, M.W. ((2019). Legislation awareness, cyberbullying behaviours, and cyber-roles in emerging adults. Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science, 51, 12-26.
- 39. Del Rey, R., Casas, J. A., & Ortega, R. (2016). Impact of the ConRed program on different cyberbullying roles. Aggressive Behavior, 42, 123-135.
- Salmivalli, C. & Pöyhönen, V. (2011). Cyberbullying in Finland. In Li, Q., Cross, D. & Smith, P.K. (eds), Cyberbullying in the Global Playground: Research from International Perspectives. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, pp.57-72.
- 41. Gradinger, P., Yanagida, T., Strohmeier, D., & Spiel, C. (2016). Effectiveness and sustainability of the ViSC social competence program to prevent cyberbullying and cyber-victimization: Class and individual level moderators. Aggressive Behavior, 42, 181-193.
- 42. Cross, D., Shaw, T., Hadwen, K., Cardoso, P., Slee, P., Roberts, C., Thomas, L. & Barnes, A. (2016). Longitudinal impact of the Cyber Friendly Schools program on adolescents' cyberbullying behaviour. Aggressive Behavior, 42, 166-180.
- 43. Schultze-Krumbholz, A., Zagorsck, P., & Scheithauer, H. (2018). A school-based cyberbullying preventive intervention approach: The Media Heroes program. In M. Campbell & S. Bauman (Eds.), Reducing cyberbullying in schools: International evidenced-based best practices (pp. 145-158). London, UK: Academic Press.
- 44. Sasson, H., & Mesch, G. S. (2014). Parental mediation, peer norms and risky online behaviors among adolescents. Computers in Human Behavior, 33, 32–38.
- 45. Gómez-Ortiz, O., Romera, E. M., Ortega-Ruiz, R., & Del Rey, R. (2018). Parenting practices as risk or preventive factors for adolescent involvement in cyberbullying: Contribution of children and parent gender. International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 15. doi:10.3390/ijerph15122664.









- 46. Fanti, K.A., Demetriou, A.G., & Hawa, V.V. (2012). A longitudinal study of cyberbullying: Examining risk and protective factors. European Journal of Developmental Psychology, 9, 168-181.
- 47. Hamer, A. den, Konijn, E. A., & Keijer, M. G. (2014). Cyberbullying behavior and adolescents' use of medias with antisocial content: A cyclic process model. Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking, 17, 74–81.
- 48. Purdy, N., Hamilton, J., Rowan, A., Smith, P.K., Culbert, C., Brighi, A., Mameli, C., Guarini, A., Menin, D., Völlink, T., Willems, R.A., Scheithauer, H., & Fiedler, N. (2019). Summary recommendations for Social Networking Site Providers (Intellectual Output 4 of Blurred Lives Project: a cross-national co-participatory exploration of cyberbullying, young people and socio-economic disadvantage). Belfast: Stranmillis College. https://www.ou.nl/web/blurred-lives/resources
- 49. Gutierrez-Esparsa, G.O., Vallejo-Allende, M. & Hernandez-Torruco, J. (2019). Classification of cyber-aggression cases applying machine learning. Applied Sciences, 9, 1828. Doi:10.3390/app9091828.





