

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Investigating reasons for pupil absence

How Coombe Girls School investigated reasons for pupil absence

Context of our anti-bullying work

We were concerned that our information relating to student absence was incomplete and the approach was inconsistent. We often did not have clarity on the reasons for this.

What we hoped to achieve

We wanted to ensure that we were fully aware of **why** students were absent and then be able to act on that effectively. We had a suspicion that absence was often related to how students thought they were perceived by other students and often described this as bullying.

The action we took

PA's (Persistent Absentees) have become a standing item on all HoY and Line Manager meetings. These meeting minutes are then shared with Deputy Heads to monitor the discussions. We discuss students in each meeting and update a spreadsheet with the likely reasons for absence so that we can track it. This is linked to conversations with the EWO in the most extreme cases. PA students are also mentored by their Tutor who is able to gain insight into why the students were absent and identify whether this was attributable to bullying. If the student perceived that the issue was bullying then it is escalated to the HoY for further discussion and necessary action.

Impact and outcomes of the work

We wanted to ensure that the barriers to students coming into school were removed and that students who felt that they were being targeted were assured that the situation was managed. In many cases this has involved part-time timetables and identifying 'hotspots' whether it is during the lesson or at lesson change over.

What we have learned

We found that sometimes the absence would stem from a single event but that students would conflate several issues together. We have found that restorative practice has proved

popular in these circumstances and also assured parents who in some cases, encouraged their daughters to stay off of school following an incident.