

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Coming up with a school definition

How Broomhill Junior School came up with a school definition

Context of our anti-bullying work

We felt that the word bullying was being too easily thrown out amongst much of the school community; pupils, parents and staff. Children were often associating one incident, if they felt it unjust, as a bullying incident. At times, staff would bring a child to my office and say 'they have just been bullied, or he/she has just bullied X'. It became clear that our communities understanding of the term Bullying was not understood entirely, despite us doing lots of work about bullying in PSHE. We considered where children lacked understanding in the language being used.

What we hoped to achieve

Our community to have a firm understanding of bullying, and that the three key elements need to be involved: Repeated, Intentional and Imbalance of Power.

Children, staff and parents would be reporting incidents of bullying that either fit into that category, or could fall into it if it continued to be repeated.

Staff to recognise the difference between Bullying and generally fallings out between peers.

The action we took

Year 6 were given the task to come up with a Broomhill Definition of bullying that would be signposted all around the school. We felt the definition needed to come from the pupils so they could feel ownership of it, and it would require them to do some work around the understanding of the terminology used, remembering young children needed to understand it also.

The United Against Bullying definition was shared with the children. The children felt that, although they understood the term intentional, the younger children might not, so they explored different options of the terms being used (Repetitive, Imbalance of power). Year 6 came up with a final definition which was then shared with the rest of the school and pupils through school council, who had the opportunity to edit or alter it.

Once the definition was agreed, the signposting was made and this definition is now posted across the school, regularly included in the news letters, and regularly referred to during reporting of bullying, or incidents of peer-to-peer.

Impact and outcomes of the work

Since this definition, we have had less adults and children reporting stand alone incidents as bullying. They will use language like 'I don't think it's bullying yet because it hasn't been repeated over and over, but if it does continue, I will report it'. Adults have also only reported incidents when they have seen all three elements of bullying, and are more careful about the language they use.

When children speak to adults around incidents, the signposting posters are referred to, with the specific language used to discuss with the children, helping them to decide if they believe it's bullying or not.

Classes have also included an additional PSHE lesson around our definition of bullying. Speaking about the language, what it means. 'Imbalance of Power', was the term many of the children explored to gain understanding. Without this Broomhill definition, the children didn't relate to the term as well as they do now, as they feel it is something special to the school, despite it being a national term.

What we have learned

Our learning has been around the exploration of words used and they meaning. Often we share definitions with children, expecting them understand what we mean, never giving them the chance to understand what it looks like in practise, or what it means in a simpler term for them.