

United Against Bullying School Case Study: Responding to bullying on the playground by improving practice

How Vale School responded to bullying on the playground by improving practice

Context of our anti-bullying work

It was identified in the staff and pupil surveys that there were incidents of bullying behaviour occurring on the playground. Staff were not all clear on the definition of bullying or how to deal with incidents effectively. On observation of playtimes many children were being outsiders or reinforcers to bullying behaviour.

What we hoped to achieve

Improved break and lunchtimes with staff and pupils happier and working collaboratively to resolve conflict and tackle any bullying or unkind behaviour.

Following my training with the ABA I wanted to ensure that we all had a shared understanding of bullying as a group behaviour and that staff and pupils understood what we mean by bullying. This is also something that I want to work on with parents too so this will be my next step.

The action we took

Firstly I spent time out on the playground at break and lunchtimes to work out what the issues were. I had to work with the adults first to ensure they had a good level of understanding of what bullying is and how to support children with resolving conflict.

I then planned some staff training for those adults at break and lunchtimes. This focused on a shared, clear definition of bullying; talking through our behaviour and anti-bullying policy; the roles at play and seeing bullying as a group behaviour; the difference between relational conflict and bullying and then some work on restorative practice using the 5 tips for conflict resolution.

At the same time as working with the adults I planned and delivered a series of assemblies on anti-bullying to ensure that children understood the definition of bullying and the roles in bullying incidents as a group behaviour.

I also spoke to the school council about bullying and asked them to find out from their classes what they all felt could happen to ensure everyone is safe and happy at our school.

These ideas were then taken into consideration and some have already been implemented e.g. a worries box outside my office/ a digital worries box outside the computing room.

Impact and outcomes of the work

The positive outcomes were a clear improvement in a shared understanding of what bullying is. My observations on the playground over the last couple of weeks has shown evidence of this in the way staff are using a more restorative approach to conflict and children are more aware of the roles they are playing e.g. not ignoring unkind behaviour but telling an adult. One lovely example was hearing another child say " I'm going to be a Vale defender" and promptly coming up to me to tell me about some unkind behaviour. These positive outcomes were also evident in the pupil survey which identified.

In Part two of the survey about pupil relationships the responses showed a marked increase in the number of pupils choosing never or a little against the questions compared to January's survey. E.g. 'I am hit, pushed or kicked by other pupils' went from 174 to 214 pupils saying this never happens and 114 in January said this happened 'a little' compared to now only 94 saying this.

The number of children who selected always/alot that they 'feel safe at school' increased slightly from 79% to 81%. So staff and pupils appear to be happier now at break and lunchtimes. There are less incidents being referred into SLT or the pastoral lead at these times and more confidence amongst the staff in tackling unkind behaviour and being proactive in preventing it happening in the first place.

In the short time frame I have not had a chance to move on to the play leader's roles but I have identified those children ready to train for September and that is my next focus. I would like to see an increase from 81% into the 90s for children feeling safe at school. I feel the introduction of play leaders as ambassadors for anti-bullying will really support this and give children security when outside to know there are peers helping them as well as adults. This will also help to structure play more effectively thus reducing the level of incidents where playtime games have become to aggressive etc.

What we have learned

Getting other staff members on board before disseminating the training to all staff was a clear advantage. The computing lead and RSHE lead also completed the ABA training and this

helped as they were passionate about what we had learned and were keen to ensure that all staff had this knowledge.

The rest of the staff then received that training as I designed it around what I had learned to personalise it for our school.