Thorndown Primary School

Thorndown Pre-School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Our aspiration is that Thorndown Primary will be an outstanding school.

We value and respect everyone in our community and work as a team to:

- Provide learning experiences which support and inspire high achievement for all;

- Ensure a caring, safe and welcoming environment;

- Promote co-operative and responsible attitudes to make a positive contribution;

- Actively encourage independence and confidence to thrive in a changing world.

Approved at L&D committee meeting

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

It is widely recognised that bullying**,** in its various manifestations, as well as making young people unhappy in school, can seriously affect their progress and well-being. Bullying can damage their physical and mental health, including their self-confidence and ability to build and sustain relationships and its impact can follow victims and perpetrators into adult life.

At Thorndown, we believe that all members of our school community have the right to work in a safe, inclusive and caring environment in which they feel valued and are treated with dignity. We are completely opposed to bullying and will not tolerate it. We take all incidents of bullying very seriously, do our best to safeguard children from it and promote positive behaviour.

This document presents our Anti-Bullying Strategy.

What is bullying?

"Bullying is behaviour by an individual or group, repeated over time, that intentionally hurts another individual or group either physically or emotionally." (DfE 2011)

At our school we define bullying as emotionally or physically harmful behaviour which is **a _persistent, deliberate attempt to hurt or humiliate someone._**

In child speak, this definition translates as: **when someone deliberately keeps on hurting you by what they do or say.**

There are various types of bullying, but most have three things in common:

1. It is deliberately hurtful behaviour, which may be carried out by an individual or a group.
2. It is repeated over time.
3. There is an imbalance of power, which makes it hard for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Types of bullying

Bullying may take various forms, including **physical, verbal, indirect** (eg, by being ignored or excluded from groups), or **electronic** (cyberbullying).

There may sometimes be misunderstanding about the meaning of the term 'bullying'. One-off incidents such as those described above, whilst they may be very serious and must always be dealt with, do not fall within the definition of 'bullying'.

We recognise that, although anyone can be bullied for almost any reason or difference, some children may be more vulnerable to bullying than others. This policy aims to ensure that all members of our school community who are vulnerable, or have a protected characteristic as outlined in the Equality Act 2011, are kept safe. These characteristics are as follows and exemplified in Appendix A.
- Bullying related to race, religion or culture
- Bullying related to special educational needs or disabilities
- Bullying related to those children who enjoy learning and/or perform at high academic levels
- Bullying related to appearance or health conditions
- Bullying related to sexual orientation
- Bullying of young carers or looked-after children
- Sexist, sexual or transphobic bullying
- Bullying related to different economic and social circumstances

Main Aims of the Policy

Whilst we cannot guarantee that bullying will never take place at Thorndown Primary School, we aim to encourage the development of an environment in which children feel safe and valued, and in which bullying

cannot flourish. The health, well-being and emotional welfare of all children are paramount and will be treated as such.

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that everyone at Thorndown has an understanding of bullying and the forms it can take.
- To take a zero tolerance approach to bullying and ensure that everyone within our school community is aware that bullying in any form is unacceptable.
- To encourage everyone, including pupils, to report all incidents of bullying.
- To respond quickly and effectively to incidents of bullying within the overall Positive Behaviour Policy.
- To offer comfort and support to the victims of bullying.
- To confront bullies with the seriousness of their actions and offer support to help change their behaviour.
- For all children and adults to demonstrate a caring approach in the way they treat each other.

Responsibilities of all Stakeholders
In order to achieve the above aims, all stakeholders have their part to play.

The Responsibilities of All
Everyone should:
- Work together to combat bullying.

The Responsibilities of Pupils
We expect our pupils to:
- Refrain from becoming involved in any kind of bullying, even at the risk of incurring temporary unpopularity.
- Intervene to protect a pupil who is being bullied, unless it is unsafe to do so.
- Report to a member of staff any witnessed or suspected instances of bullying, to dispel any climate of secrecy and help to prevent further instances.
Anyone who becomes the target of bullies should:
- Not suffer in silence, but have the courage to speak out.

The Responsibilities of Staff
Our staff will:
- Foster in our pupils self-esteem, self-respect and respect for others.
- Demonstrate, by example, the high standards of personal and social behaviour we expect of our pupils.
- Discuss bullying with all classes, so that every pupil learns about the damage it causes to both the child who is bullied and to the bully, and the importance of telling a teacher about bullying when it happens.
- Be alert to signs of distress and other possible indications of bullying.
- Intervene to protect a pupil who is being bullied.
- Listen to children who have been bullied, take what they say seriously and act to support and protect them.
- Report suspected cases of bullying to the child's class teacher, Team Leader or Deputy Head.
- Follow up any complaint by a parent about bullying, and report back promptly and fully on the action which has been taken.
- Deal with observed instances of bullying promptly and effectively, in accordance with agreed procedures.

The Responsibilities of Parents
We ask our parents to support their children and the school by:
- Watching for signs of distress or unusual behaviour in their children, which might be evidence of bullying.
- Advising their children to report any bullying to (name of a member of staff/specific post in school/their class teacher) and explain the implications of allowing the bullying to continue unchecked, for themselves and for other pupils.
- Advising their children not to retaliate violently to any forms of bullying.
- Being sympathetic and supportive towards their children, and reassuring them that appropriate action will be taken.
- Informing the school of any suspected bullying, even if their children are not involved.

- Co-operating with the school if their child is accused of bullying and try to ascertain the truth.
- Discussing the implications of bullying, both for the children who are bullied and for the bullies themselves.

Responding to Incidents of Bullying

The school has an agreed procedure for responding consistently to incidents or allegations of bullying. Direct action to respond to incidents of bullying occurs within a context that reminds all pupils that bullying behaviour is unacceptable within our school and will not be tolerated. At Thorndown, all pupils are encouraged to report incidents of bullying whether they have been bullied or have witnessed bullying. The school will investigate the incident including the context and the roles of the people involved, and will decide on an appropriate course of action.

The procedure and stages in responding effectively to bullying at our school are:

1. Monitoring and recording behaviour and relationship issues. The school follows a clear behaviour management system, which enables challenging behaviour and relationship problems to be identified, recorded and addressed. This process is part of the school's overall Positive Behaviour Policy, which supports the detection of bullying and allows for intervention at an early stage. This system includes use of class behaviour books, Peer Mediators' File and/ or Incident Records. The school then uses our definition of bullying to assess situations as they arise and judge whether or not bullying has occurred. We can also identify where a pattern of potential bullying behaviour may be developing.

2. Making sure the person being bullied is safe and feels safe. When a pupil (or parent) reports bullying the school will acknowledge their concerns and the incident will be taken seriously. Incidents will always lead to a conversation with the targeted child.

3. Establishing and recording what happened by listening to different perspectives, including those of the person bullied, the person doing the bullying and those that have witnessed the bullying ('bystanders'). Throughout this process, a written record and log will be kept of the initial incident and any subsequent incidents using either the system above or by completing the Bullying Incident Report Form (Appendix D). These records detail what happened and who was involved including the views and observations of any bystanders. Follow up action / strategies and the monitoring and impact of these strategies are also recorded.

4. Deciding upon a response. After listening to the account of the targeted child, the school will discuss an appropriate course of action with them. All incidents of bullying will be responded to seriously and the behaviour of those who have been bullying will be challenged. It will be made clear that such behaviour is unacceptable.

Next steps may include:
- The teacher sharing with a small group of peers (which may include the perpetrator) how the unhappy child is feeling and arrange peer support to promote the happiness and safety of the child.
- The child is given a named adult/s, which could include a midday supervisor, as key support.
- The child has automatic access to our Lunchtime Club.
- The situation will be monitored as the children put their suggestions into action.
- After an agreed period of time, the teacher will meet with the child to re-assess the situation and agree any further action.

A Restorative Approach

Where appropriate, the school will initially consider the use of a Restorative Approach to resolve the situation. The school believes that all bullying is unacceptable. However, many pupils who display anti-social behaviour and lack empathy for others can be helped to understand the consequences of their actions and change their behaviour. A restorative approach supports the person who is doing the bullying, through a process of mediation, to focus on their unacceptable behaviour in an emotionally intelligent way.

A **Restorative Meeting** may be held during which a facilitator (usually an adult) supports the targeted child to share their feelings and the impact of the perpetrator's behaviour. The facilitator supports the perpetrator to:

- Recognise the impact of their behaviour and accept responsibility for the harm caused to the individual being bullied;
- Recognise the need to take action to begin to repair the harm caused; and
- Agree a range of actions – in conjunction with all those involved which will be monitored over an agreed period of time.

It may be appropriate to hold a **Restorative Conference** with the children involved and their parents. This will be run by trained members of staff, following a set procedure. Contracts will be drawn up and evaluated after an agreed period of time.

The **Support Group Method** is another Restorative Approach which may be used when responding to incidents of bullying. (See Appendix G)

5. Monitoring and following up with all parties concerned, including parents/carers to ensure that the bullying has stopped.

The school does not assume that a situation requires no further attention simply because a pupil has made no further complaints. Part of the school's process of responding to an incident is to follow-up with parents at some point in the future, to see whether the situation has been resolved or whether further work needs to take place. This may take the form of a phone call or meeting. The effectiveness of the strategies that have been put in place to stop the bullying will be evaluated and where a problem has not been resolved to the satisfaction of all parties, the follow-up strategies will be reviewed and/or further advice sought. The timing of this monitoring will depend on the agreed responsive approach.

Responding to incidents of cyberbullying.

All incidents of cyber bullying will be recorded on the E-Safety Incident Report Form (See Appendix F) and will be stored and monitored by the ICT Coordinator. The school will seek guidance where appropriate on responding to different forms of cyberbullying via organisations which provide information on the safe and responsible use of technology, such as Digizen. http://www.digizen.org/resources/cyberbullying/full-guidance.aspx. Privileges, such as access to STARZ will be withdrawn for an agreed period of time if misused.

Prevention

The school believes that the whole school community should work together to reduce bullying as part of our efforts to promote a positive and inclusive whole school ethos and create a safe, healthy and stimulating environment. Alongside the school's responsive strategies for dealing with incidents of bullying, the school adopts as part of our pastoral support system, a whole school approach to implementing proactive and preventative interventions at a school, class and individual level to reduce bullying. Our approach includes:

- Implementing an effective school leadership that promotes an open and honest anti-bullying ethos
- Adopting positive behaviour management strategies as part of the school's Behaviour Policy
- Implementing a whole school approach to the teaching of PSHE and Citizenship.
- Providing opportunities to celebrate effective anti-bullying work.
- Providing training on behaviour management and anti-bullying for all relevant staff including playground staff.
- Providing a School Council, Peer Mediation service and regular circle time, enabling pupils to talk about their feelings and concerns in a safe environment and to enable them to share concerns about bullying.
- Providing peer support systems such as playground buddies and playground Friendship Benches.
- Supporting learning on bullying though whole school activities, projects and campaigns.
- Reviewing the development and supervision of the school, both inside and outside, to ensure provision is safe, inclusive and supports pupils' emotional wellbeing.
- Working with all pupils to identify key individuals with whom they can confide.
- Raising awareness of bullying and support those who are being bullied or have witnessed bullying to report incidents and seek help.

- Providing social skills groups for vulnerable individuals and groups
- Providing social inclusion support and a lunchtime club.
- Ensuring smooth transition between year groups and key stage groups.
- Providing information on support agencies such as ChildLine.

Delivering the Curriculum for Positive Relationships and Anti-Bullying in our school

The school acknowledges the role of the PSHE and Citizenship curriculum in preventative work on bullying. The PSHE and Citizenship curriculum supports the development of pupils' self-esteem and their emotional resilience, and their ability to empathise with others. The curriculum provides opportunities for pupils to learn and develop the skills to identify manage and challenge incidents of bullying as well as providing opportunities to learn about bullying in relation to the wider context of diversity and inclusion.

Bullying related to race, religion or culture

Racist or faith-based bullying is bullying based on a person's background, colour, religion or heritage. Some surveys and focus groups have found that a high proportion of bullied pupils have experienced racist or faith-based bullying. Recent political and social issues also appear to have been a factor in bullying and harassment. There is research to support the suggestion that where black and minority ethnic (BME) children experience bullying, it is more likely to be severe bullying. Moreover, bullying incidents can be a subset of the indirect and direct racist hostility which BME children, children of different faiths and Traveller children can experience in a number of situations.

When racist or faith-based bullying takes place, the characteristics singled out not only apply to the individual child but also make reference to their family and more broadly their ethnic or faith community as a whole. Racial and cultural elements in bullying can be seen to heighten the negative impact on a child's sense of identity, self worth and self esteem.

Schools have a statutory duty to log all incidents of racist or faith- based bullying and submit them on a regular basis (termly) to the local authority. This allows local authorities to monitor the occurrence of incidents and identify underlying trends in racist bullying so that appropriate and relevant training and support can be provided to schools. It is important to note that all incidents that are identified as potentially racist must be recorded, reported and investigated as such. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (1999) defines racism as 'conduct or words which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form, it is as damaging as in its more overt form'.

Bullying related to special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities

Research shows that children and young people with SEN and disabilities are more at risk of bullying than their peers. Public bodies have new responsibilities to actively promote equality of opportunity for all disabled people and eliminate disability-related harassment.

Children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities, whether in mainstream or special schools, do not always have the levels of social confidence and competence and the robust friendship bonds that can protect against bullying. Where children with SEN and disabilities are themselves found to be bullying, in most cases (except those related to specific conditions) schools should expect the same standards of behaviour as apply to the rest of the school community, having made the reasonable adjustments necessary.

Bullying related to gifted and talented children and young people

Children and young people who are gifted and talented can be vulnerable to bullying. Their achievements, different interests and advanced abilities can set them apart from their peers and can lead to a sense of not 'fitting in' and feelings of isolation. Their talents and abilities may cause feelings of resentment and jealousy among their peers which may make them targets for bullying behaviour.

Bullying related to appearance or health conditions

Those with health or visible medical conditions, such as eczema, may be more likely than their peers to become targets for bullying behaviour. Perceived physical limitations, such as size and weight, and other body image issues can result in bullying, and obvious signs of affluence (or lack of it), can also be exploited.

Bullying related to sexual orientation

Homophobic bullying involves the targeting of individuals on the basis of their perceived or actual sexual orientation. Evidence of homophobic bullying suggests that children and young people who are gay or lesbian (or perceived to be) face a higher risk of victimization than their peers. Homophobic bullying is perhaps the form of bullying least likely to be self-reported, since disclosure carries risks not associated with other forms of bullying. The young person may not want to report bullying if it means "coming out" to teachers and parents before they are ready to.

Homophobic bullying includes all forms of bullying but in particular it can include:

- Verbal abuse - the regular use, consciously or unconsciously, of offensive and discriminatory language, particularly the widespread use of the term 'gay' in a negative context. Also spreading rumours that cause an individual's perceived sexual orientation to be ridiculed, questioned or insulted
- Physical abuse – including hitting, punching, kicking, sexual assault and threatening behaviour
- Cyberbullying – using on-line spaces to spread rumours about someone or exclude them. Can also include text messaging, including video and picture messaging

Bullying of young carers or looked after children or otherwise linked to home circumstances

Children and young people may be made vulnerable to bullying by the fact that they provide care to someone in their family with an illness, disability, mental health or substance misuse problem. Young carers may be taking on practical and emotional caring responsibilities that would normally be expected of an adult. Research has highlighted the difficulties young carers face, including risks of ill-health, stress and tiredness, especially when they care through the night. Many feel bullied or isolated. Children in care may also be vulnerable to bullying for a variety of reasons, such as their not living with their birth parents or because they have fallen behind in their studies. Some children and young people are heavily influenced by their communities or homes where bullying and abuse may be common. Some bullying at school may arise from trauma or instability at home related to issues of domestic violence or bereavement or from the experience of being part of a refugee family. Siblings of vulnerable children may themselves be the subject of bullying by association.

Sexist or sexual Bullying

Sexist and sexual bullying affects both genders. Boys may be victims as well as girls, and both sexes may be victims of their own sex. Sexual bullying may be characterised by name calling, comments and overt "looks" about appearance, attractiveness and emerging puberty. In addition, uninvited touching, innuendos and propositions, pornographic imagery or graffiti may be used. Children and young people identifying as transgender or experiencing gender dysphoria (feeling that they belong to another gender or do not conform with the gender role prescribed to them) can also be targeted by bullies.

Appendix B – Forms of Bullying

Bullying may take various forms, including:

Physical
Examples of such bullying may include:
- kicking or hitting
- prodding, pushing or spitting
- other physical assault
- intimidating behaviour
- interference with personal property

Verbal/Psychological
Examples of such bullying may include:
- threats or taunts
- shunning/ostracism
- name-calling/verbal abuse
- spreading of rumours
- making inappropriate comments in relation to appearance
- extortion

Racist
Examples of such bullying may include:
- physical, verbal, written, on-line or text abuse or ridicule based on differences of race, colour, ethnicity, nationality, culture or language
- refusal to co-operate with others on the basis of any of the above differences
- stereotyping on the basis of colour, race, ethnicity etc

Faith-based
Examples of such bullying may include negative stereotyping, name-calling or ridiculing based on religion

Sexist
Examples of such bullying may include use of sexist language or negative stereotyping based on gender

Sexual
Examples of such bullying may include:
- unwanted/inappropriate physical contact
- suggestive propositioning

Homophobic
Examples of such bullying may include:
- name-calling, innuendo or negative stereotyping based on sexual orientation
- use of homophobic language

SEN / Disability
Examples of such bullying may include:
- name-calling, innuendo or negative stereotyping based on disability or learning difficulties
- exclusion from activity on the basis of disability or learning difficulty

Gifted/Talented
Examples of such bullying may include:
- name-calling, innuendo or negative peer pressure based on high levels of ability or effort
- ostracism resulting from perceptions of high levels of ability

Cyber
Examples of such bullying may include:
- abuse on-line or via text message
- inappropriate sharing of images from webcams/mobile phones, etc
- interfering with e-mail accounts

The above categories of bullying are not mutually exclusive

Appendix C – Recognising Signs and Symptoms of Bullying

Children and young people may indicate by signs or behaviour that they are being bullied. The following signs and behaviours could indicate other problems but bullying should be considered as a possibility. Possible signs and behaviour include:

- Being frightened of walking to or from school
- Losing self confidence and self-esteem
- Being frightened to say what's wrong
- Developing cuts, bruises and other injuries
- Unwilling to go to school, development of school phobia and unusual patterns of non-attendance
- Failing to achieve potential in school work
- Becoming withdrawn, nervous and losing concentration
- Becoming isolated and disengaged from other CYP
- Developing changes in physical behaviour such as stammering and nervous ticks
- Regularly having books or clothes destroyed
- Having possession go 'missing' and money 'lost'
- Starting to steal money (to pay bully)
- Becoming easily distressed, disruptive or aggressive
- Developing problems with eating and food
- Running away
- Developing sleep problems and having nightmares
- Developing suicidal thoughts or attempting suicide (extreme cases)

Appendix D – Bullying Incident Report Form

Logging and Filing information

This form should be completed within 24 hours of the incident being reported. Due consideration should be given to issues of confidentiality, including third party information. It should be filed in the Serious Incident File in the Staffroom and a copy should be kept by the child's class teacher.

ALLEGED BULLYING INCIDENT
Pupil allegedly bullied Name(s)   Year Group: Ethnicity: Gender: M / F   SEN Stage: Home language: Looked-after child? Y / N
Person/s reporting alleged bullying:
Member of staff to whom the incident was reported: Member of staff dealing with incident (if different):
Alleged perpetrator/s: Year Group
Description of incident/bullying behaviour (Include as much information as possible: time frame for which 'bullying' has been occurring, dates, location, details of any injury or damage to property, information provided by any bystanders etc. Please continue on another sheet if needed.)
Circle any elements that apply: Racist   Sexual/Sexist   Homophobic   SEN/Disability

Agreed action if necessary: 12
Date discussed with parent of child: Details of discussion with parent:
Parents/carers of alleged perpetrators informed: Y/ N Date: Time:
Follow-up including date/s:
If actions initially agreed are not effective in ensuring that the bullying behaviour ceases, please complete an additional form detailing new actions.

Appendix E – Bullying Incident Report Form

The school submits termly reports of racist incidents electronically on the RaID website
http://www.ccc-raid.co.uk/ (Schools can access their ID number and password by contacting Judith Evans at CREDS on 01480 372327 or Judith.evans@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or Health Lawrence at CREDS on 01223 568841 or heather.Lawrence@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

RACIST INCIDENT REPORT FORM

School/Establishment ……………………………………………………………………………

Date & time of Incident………………………………………………………………………..

Victim's name……………………….

Year Group/Age ☐

Outside Person(s) inc. Parents/Carers ☐

Teaching Staff ☐

Support Staff ☐

Unknown ☐

Perpetrator's name…………………………

Year Group/Age ☐

Outside Person(s) inc. Parents/Carers ☐

Teaching Staff ☐

Support Staff ☐

Unknown ☐

Nature of incident *(tick any that apply):*

Racist comments and language	Ridicule and ostracism	Provocative behaviour
Verbal abuse and threats	Racist graffiti	Possession/distribution of racist material
Physical assault	Written abuse	Other
	Damage to property	

Details of incident:………………………………………………………………………..

………………………………………………………… *To be completed by designated member of staff*

Action taken…………………………………………………………………………..

....*(continue on separate sheet if necessary)*

Have parent(s)/carer(s) of victim been informed?   YES   NO

Have parent(s)/carer(s) of perpetrator been informed?   YES   NO

Perpetrator's ethnic origin (including Traveller or Refugee) ………………………………………………

Victim's ethnic origin (including Traveller or Refugee)………………………………………………………

Outcome recorded in victim's/perpetrator's files *(please circle)*

Record completed by:…………………………………………………………………......................

Signature of designated Member of SMT:……………………………………………………………..

Date:………………………………………………………..…………………….………….

Appendix F – E-Safety Incident Report Form

Name and class(es) of people involved:	Date: Name of person reporting:

How did you become aware of the incident?

Details of incident:

Follow up of incident:

Return your form to the ICT Subject Leader, along with any copies/print-outs of evidence.

Appendix G - Responding to and Following-Up Incidents of Bullying

This appendix outlines the reconciliation processes and approaches the school will take when responding to incidents of bullying. This appendix includes guidance on the:

- Support Group Approach (previously called No Blame Approach),
- Method of Shared Concern
- Anti Bullying Council and contract of promises
- Peer Mediation Service using the 'My Turn, Your Turn' approach.

The Support Group Method (No Blame Approach) – How It Works

The Support Group Method, developed by Barbara Maines and George Robinson, was first outlined in Educational Psychology in Practice (1991). The approach addresses bullying by forming a support group of children and young people who have been bullying and/or have been involved as bystanders. It uses a problem-solving approach, without apportioning blame, giving responsibility to the group to solve the problem and to report back at a subsequent review meeting.

When bullying has been observed or reported, then The Support Group Method offers a simple seven-step procedure, which can be used by a teacher or other facilitator. It should be noted that each step has been carefully planned as a single part of the whole and variations may undermine the success of the method. The steps are summarised below:

Step one – talk with the victim

When the facilitator finds out that bullying has happened, they start by talking to the person who has been bullied. During this conversation the listener encourages them to describe how they feel with reflective comments such as, "That must be very hard for you … So you have felt really upset".

The purpose is not to discover factual evidence about this or other events; if the person wants to include evidence in the account this is always reframed to establish the resulting distress. For example a comment like, "They have all been ignoring me, nobody will talk to me," might be replied to with a response like, "So, you felt really lonely and you were upset that you had nobody to talk to."

It is important that the person being bullied understands and gives consent to the process. Sometimes there may be a fear that it could lead to further victimisation but when the non-punitive aspect is fully explained they usually feels safe, and relieved that something is being done. They may want the perpetrators to understand how much distress has been caused. Talking to someone else who has been through the experience might give further reassurance.

The facilitator should end the meeting by:

• Checking that nothing confidential has been discussed which should not be disclosed to the group.
• Asking the person to suggest the names of those involved, some colluders or observers and some friends who will make up the group.
• Inviting the person to produce a piece of writing or a picture which will illustrate their unhappiness.
• Offering the person an opportunity to talk again at any time during the procedure if things are not going well.

The person who is being bullied is not invited to join the group to present their own account, as it is possible that they will make accusations, provoke denial or justification and undermine the problem-solving approach.

Step two – convene a meeting with the people involved

The facilitator arranges to meet with the group of pupils who have been involved and suggested by the person who has been bullied. A group of six to eight works well. This is an opportunity for the facilitator to use their judgement to balance the group so that helpful and reliable young people are included alongside those whose behaviour has been causing distress. The aim is to use the strengths of group members to bring about the best outcome.

Step three – explain the problem

The facilitator starts by telling the group that they, the facilitator have a problem – they are worried about 'John' who is having a very hard time at the moment. The facilitator recounts the story of 'John's' unhappiness and uses the piece of writing or a drawing to emphasise their distress. At no time does the facilitator discuss the details of the incidents or allocate blame to the group.

Step four – share responsibility

When the account is finished, the listeners may look downcast or uncomfortable and be uncertain about the reason for the meeting. Some may be anxious about possible punishment. The facilitator makes a change in the mood here by stating explicitly that:

• No-one is in trouble or going to be punished.
• There is a joint responsibility to help 'John' to be happy and safe.
• The group has been convened to help solve the problem.

Step five – ask the group members for their ideas

Group members are usually genuinely moved by the account of their peer's distress and relieved that they are not in trouble. No-one has been pushed into a defensive corner by accusations and the power of the group has shifted from the "bully leader" to the group as a whole, whose members withdraw consent for the behaviour to continue.

Each member of the group is then encouraged to suggest a way in which 'John' could be helped to feel happier. These ideas are stated in the "I" language of intention. "I will walk to school with him." "I will ask him to sit with me at dinner." Ideas are owned by the group members and not imposed by the facilitator. The facilitator makes positive responses but does not go on to extract a promise of improved behaviour.

Step six – leave it up to them

The facilitator ends the meeting by passing over the responsibility to the group to solve the problem. No written record is made - it is left as a matter of trust. The facilitator thanks the group members, expresses confidence in a positive outcome and arranges to meet with them again to see how things are going.

Step seven – meet them again

About a week later, the teacher/ facilitator discusses with each pupil, including the person who has been bullied, how things have been going. This allows the teacher to monitor the bullying and keeps the young people involved in the process.

These meetings are with one group member at a time so that each can give a statement about their contribution without creating a competitive atmosphere. It does not matter if everyone has not kept to his or her intention, as long as the bullying has stopped. The person who has been bullied does not have to become the most popular person in school, just to be safe and happy.

The above description of the Support Group Method is taken from Lucky Duck Publishing website. www.luckyduck.co.uk.

The entire process showing the seven steps is available as a training video (Michael's Story - The No Blame Approach. Maines and Robinson, 1992). A fuller account of the development of the work is published in a book "Crying for Help." Robinson and Maines 1997 Lucky Duck Publishing Ltd.

The Support Group Method is a well recognised approach used in many schools and local authorities across the country. The approach was originally called 'The No Blame Approach' but has recently had a change of name due to misconceptions regarding the process because of the use of the words 'no blame'. The process does in fact enable those that bully to acknowledge the damage caused to others by their behaviour and supports those that are bullying to develop empathy for others and take responsibility for changing their behaviour. It is suggested that schools keep as closely as possible to the steps outlined in the process as this is a proven process and alterations to the protocol may jeopardize the positive effects of the process. However, having trailed this process, schools may feel that adjustments are required to ensure that the programme suits the needs of their school and individual children and young people. Schools may feel, for example, that where it is suggested that no notes are required in step 6, they may wish to make discrete notes after the meeting, for their own reference.