A content analysis of school anti-bullying policies in Northern Ireland

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Educational Psychology in Practice* (2016), available online: https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02667363.2016.1161599?journalCode=cepp20

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Abstract

This original study presents a content analysis of 100 primary and post-primary school anti-bullying policies in Northern Ireland using a 36-item scoring scheme. Overall schools had 52 per cent of the items in their policies. Most schools included reference to physical, verbal, relational, material and cyberbullying but a minority mentioned racist, homophobic, sexual, adult/teacher-pupil bullying or bullying related to disability or religion. There was considerable variation in the source and quality of the definitions of bullying. Overall the policy scores compared favourably with earlier studies carried out in England, however a low percentage of Northern Ireland policies gave detailed information about how incidents of bullying would be recorded, who would coordinate this, and how the data would be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the policy. Findings are discussed in relation to the proposed new anti-bullying legislation currently being brought before the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Key Words *Bullying, Schools, Northern Ireland, Policy, Content-Analysis*

Introduction

School bullying is a continuing problem that has received increasing attention in recent years. Olweus (1999, pp.10-11) defined bullying as "A student is being bullied or victimized when he or she is exposed, repeatedly and over time, to negative actions on the part of one or more other students" and "In order to use the term bullying, there should also be an imbalance of strength (an asymmetric power relationship); the student who is exposed to negative actions has difficulty in defending himself or herself and is somewhat helpless against the student or students who harass." Thus, bullying is intentional aggressive behaviour which is also characterised by repetition, and imbalance of power. This definition is now widely accepted in the research community internationally (Rigby, 2002; Smith, 2014).

Anti-bullying policies set a framework for the actions of the school as regards bullying, and the policy should be readily available in a user-friendly form for parents, pupils, and all members of the school community. In England and Wales, the School Standards and Framework Act (SSFA) 1998 Section 61(4), required headteachers to "determine measures... to be taken with a view to... preventing all forms of bullying among pupils. The measures... shall be publicised... in a written document... and [be made] generally known within the school and to parents... at least once in every school year". This was reiterated in the Education and Inspections Act (EIA) 2006 Section 89(1)(b), which recommended that the anti-bullying policy should form part of the overall school behaviour policy, although a school may decide to issue a separate and specific anti-bullying policy. The current Department for Education (DfE) guidance, *Preventing and Tackling Bullying: Advice for Head Teachers, Staff and Governing Bodies* (2014a), again reiterates this, and *Cyberbullying: Advice for Head Teachers and School Staff* (2014b) states that such policies should cover cyberbullying.

In England and Wales it is largely left to schools to devise their own policies, and they vary in scope and quality. There has recently been some web-based guidance available, from a website for school governors (The Key for School Governors, 2015) and an internet safety training and anti-bullying

training site (EyePat, 2015). In Northern Ireland, the Western Region of the new Education Authority (WELB, 2015) provides some further guidance.

Smith, Smith, Osborn and Samara (2008) devised a 31-item scoring scheme for the coverage provided by school anti-bullying policies, and applied it to 142 school policies, gathered in 2002 from one county in England. Overall schools had about 40 per cent of the items in their policies. Smith, Kupferberg, Mora-Merchan, Samara, Bosley and Osborn (2012) reported a follow-up in the same county, in 2008, six years later; they analysed 217 policies, from 169 primary schools and 48 secondary schools. A slightly expanded 34-item scoring scheme was used. Overall schools had about 49 per cent of the items in their policies, a modest increase. Most included a definition of bullying including reference to physical, verbal, material and relational forms, and clarifying the difference from other kinds of aggressive behaviour; and statements about improving school climate; how sanctions will depend on type or severity of incident; and contact with parents when bullying incidents occurred. However there was low coverage of cyberbullying, homophobic bullying, bullying based on disabilities, or faith; teacher-pupil bullying; responsibilities beyond those of teaching staff; following up of incidents; and specific preventative measures such as playground work, peer support, inclusiveness issues, and bullying to and from school.

There is only modest evidence so far that having a good policy translates into lower rates of school bullying or violence. In Welsh schools, a significant association was reported between lower levels of bullying, and pupils reporting that the school had clear rules on bullying (Lambert, Scourfield, Smalley & Jones, 2006). Woods and Wolke (2003) found few associations of policy scores with measures of bullying in 34 English primary schools, but the criteria used for scoring policy quality in this study are debatable (see Smith et al., 2008). Smith et al. (2012) related policy scores to pupil self-report survey data on perceptions of and experiences of bullying, available for 78 schools. Most were not significant, although schools with high scores for the section on strategies for preventing bullying did have significantly fewer pupils reporting bullying others (and also fewer being bullied, though non-significantly).

The Northern Ireland context

Article 124 of the Education Reform (NI) Order 1989 required schools in Northern Ireland for the first time to develop and implement discipline policies. By 1998 the Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI, 1998, p.7) had noted however that while many of the resulting policies did reflect current best practice, some did not cover "important issues such as bullying behaviour". Five years later this omission was addressed when Article 19 of the Education and Libraries (NI) Order 2003 amended Article 3 of the Education (NI) Order 1998 and required schools for the first time to address bullying specifically within their policies, either as part of their existing discipline policy or as a stand-alone anti-bullying policy. The 2003 Order made it a statutory requirement for the Board of Governors to consult with pupils on the general principles to be reflected in the school's discipline policy; required the school principal (headteacher), when deciding on measures to encourage good behaviour, to specifically include measures to prevent bullying among pupils; and insisted that the principal, before deciding on measures to encourage good behaviour, must consult with registered pupils and their parents. For further detail of the 2003 legislation, see McGuckin and Lewis (2008). A copy of the policy must also be made available to pupils and parents. In a subsequent circular sent from the Department of Education to all schools in Northern Ireland the implications of the legislation are made clear:

> All schools will need to be satisfied that their current discipline policy deals with the
> prevention of bullying among pupils in a sufficiently clear and robust way to satisfy the

new legal requirement. Any changes which school authorities make to their current discipline policies must be the subject of consultation with registered pupils and their parents. (DENI, 2003, §15)

However the 2003 legislation is not prescriptive in relation to the content of a school's discipline or anti-bullying policy, leaving schools to determine the policy best suited to their individual circumstances. In the same correspondence, schools are invited to consult material on promoting positive behaviour published by the Education and Library Boards and also the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools (CCMS) as well as the Department's own guidance on *Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour* (DENI, 2001). While the legislation does not require schools to have a separate anti-bullying and discipline policy, many schools have since created two separate policies.

In 1999 the Department of Education defined bullying as "deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for the victim to defend him or herself" (DENI, 1999,§84). In terms of the actual content of the anti-bullying policy, some guidance is included in *Pastoral Care in Schools: Promoting Positive Behaviour* (DENI, 2001) and further support has been provided directly to schools by advisors from each of the five Education and Library Boards (now referred to as regions of the newly created Education Authority).

Additional guidance is available to schools from the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF), currently hosted by the National Children's Bureau, and bringing together 25 regional statutory and voluntary sector organisations. The NIABF was established in 2004 and has been funded by the Department of Education since 2006 as part of its support to schools and pupils in the development and implementation of anti-bullying policies and positive pupil behaviour. In 2005 the NIABF produced a new "shared" definition of bullying as "the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others" (NIABF, 2005). In 2013 the Forum published a resource entitled *Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour* which did not include specific guidance on the content of anti-bullying policies but did provide schools with a new framework for dealing with bullying using a continuum of interventions with a particular focus on restorative, non-punitive responses.

In September 2013 the Minister of Education in Northern Ireland, John O'Dowd, invited the NIABF to undertake a review of existing legislation, guidance and practice in schools. In answer to an oral question in the Northern Ireland Assembly on 23 June 2014, Minister O'Dowd summarised the review outcomes and outlined his proposed way forward as follows:

> "The review identified these four priority issues: wide variations in the quality of current school anti-bullying policies; inconsistent recording of incidents of bullying; a need for additional resources to address particularly complex issues such as cyberbullying; and the need for research to identify the true scale and nature of the problem. As I said, I intend to consider all these areas to see what actions can be taken forward in the short and long term. My officials are in discussion with the forum to agree a joint work programme for the 2014-15 year and beyond, which will include bringing legislation to the House to tighten up our anti-bullying legislation."" (NI Assembly Hansard, 2014)

Consequently, the Department of Education launched a public consultation *Addressing Bullying in Schools* (DENI, 2015) on new proposed legislation. The consultation proposes three legislative changes. First, a new common definition of bullying with the aim of ensuring "greater consistency in the application of school discipline policies to address complaints of bullying" (§55). Bullying is defined as "the repeated and intentional use of physical, verbal, electronic, written or psychological acts or omissions, or any combination thereof, by one or more pupils against another pupil or group

of pupils with the intention of causing hurt, harm, fear, distress or adversely affecting the rights or needs of that pupil or group of pupils" (§58). This includes the repetition criterion, but not the imbalance of power criterion usually used to distinguish bullying from more general aggression. Second, it is proposed that schools would be required to record, retain and submit to the Education Authority details of any incidents of reported bullying, to include the motivation and outcomes. Third, it is proposed that legislation will require the Board of Governors to designate one or more governors to be responsible for the anti-bullying policies and processes within its school. Although outside the legislative proposals, the consultation document refers briefly to the content of anti-bullying policies, citing a very small-scale, unpublished and non-representative study of 46 policies carried out by the National Children's Bureau in Northern Ireland which found "very wide ranging discrepancies in the schools' approaches" (NCB NI, 2013). Of the 46 policies examined in the study, 36 included a clear definition (though no further detail is given), 26 referred to specific types of bullying, and 14 gave details of the consultation process with parents and/or pupils.

Aims

We aimed to analyse anti-bullying policies from a wide sample of schools in Northern Ireland, to see how satisfactory their coverage was. We used a slightly adapted version of the scoring scheme from Smith et al. (2012).

Methodology

Anti-bullying policies were obtained in November 2014 from 100 schools across Northern Ireland, 50 mainstream primary schools and 50 mainstream post-primary schools. This represents 6 per cent of the 836 primary schools, and 24 per cent of the 208 post-primary schools in the province. The schools represented a range of size, management type and region within the Education Authority (Belfast: 18 per cent; North East: 28 per cent; South East: 19 per cent; South: 25 per cent; West: 10 per cent).

A content analysis was used and adapted from Smith et al. (2012). As well as determining which region of Northern Ireland the schools were located in, two new categories were added to record whether the policies mentioned consultation with registered pupils and/or their parents, resulting in a total of 36 categories as shown in Table 1. The categories were divided into four sections as before: (A) 13 categories concerning the definition of bullying; (B) 11 categories concerning reporting and responding to bullying; (C) 6 categories concerning recording, evaluating and consulting on the policy; and (D) 6 categories on strategies for preventing bullying. For each category the school scored either one for meeting the criterion or zero for not meeting it. The total overall anti-bullying content score was generated ranging from zero to 36. The number of pages of the policy was also counted and recorded, which included cover pages but not extraneous or duplicate material such as letters to parents. Finally, an additional unscored category was added to record whose definition of bullying (if any) had been used in each school policy.

Statistical analyses were carried out using SPSS version 22. Analyses of variances (ANOVAs) were carried out to compare differences between school levels (primary versus post-primary) for total policy scores and subsection scores. Chi square was used to examine the differences for individual items. Pearson correlations were calculated between anti-bullying policy content and the number of pages in each policy.

Results

Analysis of specific criteria

Table 1 shows for each criterion the percentage of schools (and the number in brackets) that scored for the presence of this criterion in their policy. As in Smith et al. (2008) and Smith et al. (2012), the response rate is described as "high" when at least two thirds (67 or more of the 100 Northern Irish schools) have satisfied a criterion, "moderate" when the response is between one-third and two-thirds (34-66 schools), and "low" when less than one-third of schools (33 or less) have satisfied it.

In Section A, on the definition of bullying behaviour, responses were high for having a definition (98%), making it clear that bullying is different from other forms of aggression (74%), and for mentioning physical (94%), verbal (90%), relational (91%), material (76%), and cyberbullying (71%). Responses were moderate for mentioning racist bullying (47%), and low for homophobic (28%), sexual (22%), adult/teacher-pupil (7%), and bullying due to disability (16%) or religion (28%).

When the definitions were analysed, it was found that just 20% of the schools chose to use the Department of Education definition of bullying (DENI, 1999), while 11% used the definition of the Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF, 2005). A further 3% of schools used definitions taken from other referenced sources such as Olweus (1999). A majority of schools (57%) used an unreferenced definition, and when analysed further it was found that this was even more common among primary schools (68%) than post-primary schools (46%). Many of these definitions were written in child-friendly language but some failed to include the widely accepted essential criteria of repetition and imbalance of power (Smith, 2014). The following examples illustrate the weakness of some of the definitions used, since they do not mention either of the defining criteria of repetition and power imbalance (and the final one does not even specify actual behaviour):

> "Bullying is behaviour intended to hurt another person resulting in pain and distress to the victim."

> "Bullying is any behaviour which is deliberately intended to hurt, intimidate, frighten, harm or exclude."

> "Bullying is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt another and put him/her under stress."

In Section B, on reporting and responding to incidents of bullying, there were high responses for five of the eleven categories: 90 per cent of the policies stated what victims of bullying should do, 96 per cent said how teaching staff should respond to a report of bullying, 85 per cent clearly mentioned the responsibility of parents if they know of bullying, 78 per cent clearly mentioned the responsibilities of other pupils if they know of bullying, and 79 per cent discussed if, when or how parents would be informed. There were moderate levels of response for stating whether sanctions applied for bullying can vary (63%); for mentioning follow-up to see whether the sanctions were effective (52%); for discussing what action will be taken if the bullying persists (43%); and for suggesting how to support the victim (50%) and how to help the pupil(s) doing the bullying to change their behaviour (45%). The response was however very low (13%) in relation to clearly mentioning the responsibilities of non-teaching staff if they know of bullying.

In Section C, which focused on recording, evaluating and consulting on the policy, responses were very mixed. A high percentage (81%) of policies said that reports of bullying would be recorded, though it was noted that very few of these gave any further details as to how or where they would be recorded. Responses were moderate in terms of mentioning the periodic review and updating of the policy (61%), and in mentioning the (statutory) consultation with registered pupils (40%) and their parents (38%). Responses were low for saying who was responsible for co-ordinating the recording system (26%) and lower still for showing how records or survey data would be used to know whether the policy is working or not (8%).

Section D considered strategies for preventing bullying in schools. A high percentage of policies (73%) mentioned strategies to encourage co-operative behaviour, reward good behaviour, improve school climate or create a safe environment, while there was a moderate response (48%) in terms of providing additional advice for parents about bullying (beyond simply encouraging them to report it); and also for mentioning the preventative role of playground activities or lunchtime supervisors (34%). The other three items all received low responses: discussion of general issues of peer support (33%); discussion of issues of inclusiveness (25%); and mention of the issue of bullying on the way to school or happening outside school (25%).

Length of policies

The mean number of pages was 7.3 (SD 4.1) and the range was from one to 24 pages. There was little difference between the average length of primary policies (number of pages = 7.4, SD 3.3) and post-primary policies (number of pages = 7.3, SD 4.8). However there was a much greater range in page length among the post-primary policies (from 1 to 24 pages) than among the primary policies (from 3-16 pages).

A one-tailed Pearson correlation was carried out to test the hypothesis that there was a positive correlation between the number of pages in a policy and the total content score. There was found to be a strong positive correlation across the entire sample of policies ($r=+.51$, $p<0.001$). The correlation was found to be even stronger at post-primary level ($r=+.59$, $p<0.001$) than at primary level ($r=+.39$, $p<0.01$).

Comparing primary and post-primary schools

The analyses of variances showed that there was a significant difference between the primary and post-primary total scores, using the 36 item analysis ($F= 4.27$, $p<0.05$). For the subsections, significant differences were found between primary and post-primary scores in section A ($F= 7.21$, $p<0.01$) and section B ($F= 9.01$, $p<0.01$), but not in sections C or D.

For individual criteria, compared to primary schools, post-primary school policies were significantly more likely to mention material bullying (A6), cyberbullying (A7), sexual bullying (A10) and bullying because of faith or religious beliefs (A13). Post-primary schools were also significantly more likely to mention follow-up to see if sanctions were effective (B7); to suggest how they would support the victim (B9) and help the pupil(s) doing the bullying to change their behaviour (B10); to show how records or survey data would be used to know whether the policy is working or not (C3); and to discuss issues of inclusiveness (D5). However primary schools were significantly more likely than post-primary schools to mention preventative strategies such as encouraging co-operative behaviour, rewarding good behaviour, improving school climate or creating a safe environment (D1).

Overall scores of Northern Ireland policies and comparison with England sample (Smith et al., 2012)

The range of the total anti-bullying policy content scores was 2-32 (out of 36), with a mean score of 18.9, or 52%. Using the 34 item scale (as in Smith et al., 2012) the range was 2-30 with a mean score of 17.9, or 53%. For Section A, the range of scores was 0-13 (out of 13), with a mean of 7.3, or 56%. For section B, the range of scores was 0-11 (out of 11), with a mean of 6.8, or 62%. For section C, the range of scores was 0-6 (out of 6), with a mean of 2.5, or 42%. Using the original scale without the addition of the two questions around pupil and parent consultation, the range of scores for section C was 0-4 (out of 4), with a mean of 1.7, or 43%. For the final section D, the range of scores was 0-6 (out of 6), with a mean of 2.2, or 37%.

Scores for the Northern Ireland anti-bullying policies (using the 34 point scale) were compared with those used by Smith et al. (2012) from one Local Authority in England. In making such comparisons, we need to bear in mind that the English sample was not so representative nationally (being from one county) and the policies were gathered six years earlier than for the Northern Ireland sample. The comparisons may still be of interest, but bearing these qualifications in mind we did not feel it appropriate to carry out tests of statistical significance on them.

Comparing the results, schools in Northern Ireland scored slightly higher in total anti-bullying policies scores (17.9 out of 34, or 53%) than the schools in the English sample (16.7 out of 34, or 49%). When the scores were compared by individual section, the Northern Irish school policies scored higher in section A (Definition of bullying behaviour), section B (Reporting and responding to bullying behaviour) and section D (Strategies for preventing bullying), but lower in section C which focused on recording bullying, communicating and evaluating the policy: the Northern Ireland score here was 43% (mean = 1.7 out of 4) compared to 55% (mean = 2.2 out of 4) in England.

Comparing individual criteria, there were several important differences. Compared to the English school sample reported in Smith et al. (2012), the Northern Irish schools were much more likely to mention cyberbullying (A7: 71% vs 32%) and bullying due to faith or religious beliefs (A13: 28% vs 7%), and were much more likely to state what victims of bullying should do (B1: 90% vs 64%), say how teaching staff should respond to a report of bullying (B2: 96% vs 65%), clearly mention the responsibilities of parents if they know of bullying (B4: 85% vs 56%), clearly mention the responsibilities of other pupils (B5: 78% vs 60%), mention follow-up to see whether the sanctions were effective (B7: 52% vs34%), discuss what action would be taken if the bullying persists (B8: 43% vs 23%), and discuss issues of inclusiveness (D5: 11% vs 3.7%). However Northern Irish schools were much less likely to mention racist bullying (A9: 47% vs 63%) and sexual bullying (A10: 22% vs 48%), and were much less likely to say who was responsible for co-ordinating the recording system (C2: 26% vs 42%), and to show how records or survey data would be used to know whether the policy is working or not (C3: 8% vs 35%).

Discussion

While the overall scores in this study were higher than those found by Smith et al. (2012) in one English Local Authority, the results highlight a number of significant issues which require urgent consideration by schools and policy makers in Northern Ireland, especially at this crucial time as new anti-bullying legislation is being proposed by the Department of Education which will lead to new guidance for schools.

For the first time this study presents clear evidence of the wide range of definitions of bullying used across primary and post-primary schools in Northern Ireland. While some of these are robust definitions and meet the three generally accepted criteria of intent to harm, repetition and an imbalance of power (Smith, 2014), over half were unreferenced definitions, which often appeared to be original to the individual schools. Many schools also appeared to have made an effort to write child-friendly definitions of bullying, but in the process irrevocably diluted the definitions, often leaving out any mention of repetition or imbalance of power. As a result, some schools are found to be using definitions which would encompass a very wide range of aggressive behaviours including one-off incidents or any aggressive behaviour among equals. This situation is one which is certain to lead to considerable confusion not just among pupils and parents, but also among teachers and school leaders who, if the proposed new legislation is enacted, will be required to record and report to the Education Authority every incident of bullying in their school. For those schools who currently use a very broad definition, it seems inevitable that their recorded incidence of bullying will be much

higher than for schools who adopt an accepted definition with its insistence on intent, repetition and an imbalance of power. This further strengthens the argument in favour of the adoption of one single definition of bullying across all schools in Northern Ireland, and while it is welcomed that the new proposals do include such a definition of bullying, it is regrettable that this new definition appears not to include any reference to an imbalance of power (DENI, 2015, §58 – see above). This is a very serious omission and represents a missed opportunity for the Department of Education to correct the current confused picture with a robust definition. A similar definition, omitting imbalance of power, was initially adopted in England by the DfE when the coalition government produced new guidance on bullying (DfE, 2012). However following representations by organisations and researchers engaged in anti-bullying work, a revised document (DfE, 2014a), now the current guidance, includes an extra paragraph statement stating that "Many experts say that bullying involves an imbalance of power" (p.6) and giving examples of the forms (physical, psychological, etc.) that this imbalance can take.

Second, while it is encouraging that a high percentage of the policies made specific reference to physical, verbal, relational, material and cyberbullying, concern must be raised at the moderate or low percentage of policies which referred to racist, homophobic, sexual, adult/teacher-pupil bullying or bullying related to disability or religion. The results of this study lend support and perhaps help to explain the *Draft Statement* published by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI, 2015, §1.8) which reported on recent research in Northern Ireland showing higher incidence of "prejudice-based" bullying among pupils from a number of equality groups including trans pupils, minority ethnic pupils, students with special educational needs or a disability, and students with same sex attraction. It is also worthy of note that even when schools did refer to a range of forms of bullying, this was often in the form of a list, and they rarely gave any detail of how they might actually address them either through preventative education or in terms of responding effectively to them. It would therefore be essential that any forthcoming guidance makes it explicit that schools should refer to a much wider range of methods and motivations for bullying behaviour, and should ideally provide details of how each might be effectively addressed. The policies should also provide detail not just of how teachers, pupils and parents should respond, but of how non-teaching staff (who are often present during break and lunchtimes) should respond to bullying behaviour. Further detail is also required by most schools of how they would support the victim but also the perpetrator of the bullying behaviour following an incident.

Third, while the Northern Ireland policies compared favourably with the English sample (Smith et al., 2012) in three of the four sections, there is a weakness in Section C which focused on recording, evaluating and consulting on the policy. In particular it is clear that while the majority of schools are recording incidents, few gave any detail of how this process operated or who was responsible for coordinating it. While a moderate number of policies made a general commitment to regularly reviewing and updating the policy, many failed to specify when exactly the next review would take place, and even fewer gave details of the (statutory) consultation with parents and pupils. While there is evidence of widespread recording of incidents, less than one in ten policies made reference to a systematic evaluation of the policy's effectiveness. Once again, in the advent of new legislation which will make it a requirement to record incidents centrally, it would be important to ask schools to be more specific about their own internal processes, to ensure that there is a clear reporting and recording system. Further guidance would also be important to ensure that the efficacy of the policy is evaluated rigorously.

Conclusion

The implications of the current study for practising educational psychologists are threefold. First, educational psychologists should be aware of the importance of recommending a clear yet robust definition of bullying in schools, forming the bedrock of any further anti-bullying work in the school. This regional example from Northern Ireland exposes wide variation and potential confusion arising from a lack of understanding of the fundamental nature of bullying behaviour. Second, this study highlights the unfortunate absence of any government criteria for the content of school anti-bullying policies, and suggests that more could be done by educational psychologists on a Local Authority basis to guide and support schools through providing checklists and/or exemplars of good practice. And, third, this study exposes the need for educational psychologists (and other educationalists) to get involved in the parliamentary legislative process by making their voices heard at the committee stage where evidence can be presented to improve a Bill, thus ensuring that any future legislation in relation to bullying in schools is as effective as possible.

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		Northern Ireland			Northern Ireland Primary vs Post-Primary	England (Smith et al., 2012)		
		All schools % (n=100)	Primary % (n=50)	Post-Primary % (n=50)		All schools % (n=217)	Primary % (n=169)	Post-Primary % (n=48)
A	**Definition of bullying behaviour (13 items)**	**7.3 [2.8]**	**6.7 [SD.2.4]**	**8.1 [SD 2.6]**	F= 7.21, p<0.01	**6.8 [3.0]**	**6.4 [3.0]**	**8.1 [2.7]**
A1	Have a definition of bullying?	98 (n=98)	98 (n=49)	98 (n=49)		88.5 (n=192)	87.6 (n=148)	91.7 (n=44)
A2	Does the definition make it clear that bullying is different from other kinds of aggressive behaviour?	74 (n=74)	70 (n=35)	78 (n=39)		70 (n=152)	71 (n=120)	66.7 (n=32)
A3	Mention physical bullying (hits, kicks)?	94 (n=94)	94(n=49)	94 (n=49)		85.7 (n=186)	82.8 (n=140)	95.8 (n=46)
A4	Mention direct verbal bullying (threats, insults, nasty teasing)?	90 (n=90)	90 (n=45)	90 (n=45)		83.4 (n=181)	80.5 (n=136)	93.8 (n=45)
A5	Mention relational bullying (rumours, social exclusion)?	91 (n=91)	90 (n=45)	92 (n=46)		78.3 (n=170)	75.7 (n=128)	87.5 (n=42)
A6	Mention material bullying (damage to belongings, extortion of money)?	76 (n=76)	64 (n=32)	88 (n=44)	χ^2 =7.9, p<0.01	71.4 (n=155)	69.2 (n=117)	79.2 (n=38)
A7	Mention cyberbullying (email, text messages)?	71 (n=71)	58 (n=29)	84 (n=42)	χ^2 =8.2, p<0.01	32.3 (n=70)	26.6 (n=45)	52.1 (n=25)
A8	Mention homophobic bullying?	28 (n=28)	20 (n=10)	36 (n=18)		24.9 (n=54)	18.9 (n=32)	45.8 (n=22)
A9	Mention racial bullying (or harassment)?	47 (n=47)	40 (n=20)	54 (n=27)		63.6 (n=138)	59.8 (n=101)	77.1 (n=37)
A10	Mention sexual bullying (or harassment)?	22 (n=22)	12 (n=6)	32 (n=16)	χ^2 =5.8, p<0.05	47.9 (n=104)	42.6 (n=72)	66.7 (n=32)
A11	As well as pupil-pupil bullying, discuss the issue of adult/teacher-pupil bullying or vice versa?	7 (n=7)	6 (n=3)	8 (n=4)		8.3 (n=18)	7.1 (n=12)	12.5 (n=6)
A12	Mention bullying due to disabilities?	16 (n=16)	16 (n=8)	16 (n=8)		14.7 (n=32)	11.8 (n=20)	25.0 (n=12)
A13	Mention bullying because of faith or religious beliefs?	28 (n=28)	16 (n=8)	40 (n=20)	χ^2 =7.1, p<0.01	7.4 (n=16)	5.9 (n=10)	12.5 (n=6)
B	**Reporting and responding to bullying incidents (11 points)**	**6.8 [2.2]**	**6.3 [SD.1.4]**	**7.5 [SD 2.3]**	F= 9.01, p<0.01	**5.7 [2.0]**	**5.6 [2.0]**	**5.9 [2.2]**
B1	State what victims of bullying should do (e.g. tell a teacher; should clearly apply to victims/ pupils who experience bullying)?	90 (n=90)	88 (n=44)	92 (n=46)		63.6 (n=138)	62.7 (n=106)	66.7 (n=32)
B2	Say how teaching staff should respond to a report of bullying (should specifically mention bullying, and be more specific than just 'deal promptly')?	96 (n=96)	96 (n=48)	96 (n=48)		65 (n=141)	66.9 (n=113)	58.3 (n=28)
B3	Clearly mention the responsibilities of other school staff (teaching assistants, lunchtime supervisors etc)	13 (n=13)	12 (n=6)	14 (n=7)		13.8 (n=30)	16.6 (n=28)	4.2 (n=2)

	if they know of bullying? (more than simply referring to 'all staff')						
B4	Clearly mention the responsibilities of parents if they know of bullying (this can include knowing if their child has a behaviour problem if bullying is included elsewhere)?	85 (n=85)	90 (n=45)	80 (n=40)		56.2 (n=122)	58.0 (n=98)	50.0 (n=24)
B5	Clearly mention the responsibilities of pupils (e.g. bystanders) if they know of bullying?	78 (n=78)	74 (n=37)	82 (n=41)		59.9 (n=130)	55.6 (n=94)	75 (n=36)
B6	State whether sanctions applied for bullying can vary (e.g. by type or severity of incident)?	63 (n=63)	60 (n=30)	66 (n=33)		67.7 (n=147)	65.1 (n=110)	77.1 (n=37)
B7	Mention follow-up to see whether the sanctions were effective?	52 (n=52)	42 (n=21)	62 (n=31)	χ^2 =4.0, p<0.05	33.6 (n=73)	32.0 (n=54)	39.6 (n=19)
B8	Discuss what action will be taken if the bullying persists?	43 (n=43)	40 (n=20)	46 (n=23)		23.0 (n=50)	21.9 (n=37)	27.1 (n=13)
B9	Suggest how to support the victim? (more than just 'we will support victims')	50 (n=50)	32 (n=16)	68 (n=34)	χ^2 =13.0, p<0.001	49.3 (n=107)	49.1 (n=83)	50.0 (n=24)
B10	Suggest how to help the pupil(s) doing the bullying to change their behaviour (apart from sanctions)? (more than just 'we will support …')	45 (n=45)	26 (n=13)	64 (n=32)	χ^2 =14.6, p<0.001	43.3 (n=94)	42.0 (n=71)	47.9 (n=23)
B11	Discuss if, when or how parents will be informed? ('parents will be informed' is sufficient if it clearly refers to bullying)	79 (n=79)	76 (n=38)	82 (n=41)		91.2 (n=198)	91.1 (n=154)	91.7 (n=44)
C	**Recording bullying, communicating and evaluating the policy (6 points – Northern Ireland)**	**2.5 [SD 1.6]**	**2.6 [SD 1.5]**	**2.5 [SD 1.7]**				
	Recording bullying, communicating and evaluating the policy (4 points – Northern Ireland and England)	**1.7 [SD 1.0]**	**1.8 [SD 0.9]**	**1.8 [SD 1.1]**		**2.2 [SD 1.4]**	**2.3 [SD 1.4]**	**1.8 [SD 1.4]**
C1	Say reports of bullying will be recorded?	81 (n=81)	82 (n=41)	80 (n=40)		75.6 (n=164)	76.9 (n=130)	70.8 (n=34)
C2	Say who is responsible for co-ordinating the recording system?	26 (n=26)	24 (n=12)	28 (n=14)		41.9 (n=91)	43.2 (n=73)	37.5 (n=18)
C3	Show how records or survey data will be used to know whether the policy is working or not?	8 (n=8)	2 (n=1)	14 (n=7)	χ^2 =4.9, p<0.05	34.6 (n=75)	36.7 (n=62)	27.1 (n=13)
C4	Mention periodic review and updating of the policy?	61 (n=61)	68 (n=34)	54 (n=27)		65.0 (n=141)	70.4 (n=119)	45.8 (n=22)
C5	Mention consultation with parents	38 (n=38)	42 (n=21)	34 (n=17)				
C6	Mention consultation with pupils	40 (n=40)	38 (n=19)	42 (n=21)				
D	**Strategies for preventing bullying (6**	**2.2 [SD 1.5]**	**2.2 [SD 1.4]**	**2.3 [SD 1.5]**		**2.1 [SD 1.1]**	**2.1 [SD 1.0]**	**2.3 [SD 1.2]**

	points)							
D1	Mention any of encouraging co-operative behaviour, rewarding good behaviour, improving school climate, or creating a safe environment?	73 (n=73)	84 (n=42)	62 (n=31)	χ^2=6.1, p<0.05	86.2 (n=187)	87 (n=147)	83.3 (n=40)
D2	Discuss general issues of peer support (beyond B5)?	33 (n=33)	38 (n=19)	28 (n=14)		30 (n=65)	25.4 (n=43)	45.8 (n=22)
D3	Discuss advice for parents about bullying (beyond B4)?	48 (n=48)	42 (n=21)	54 (n=27)		44.7 (n=97)	42.6 (n=72)	52.1 (n=75)
D4	Mention the preventative role of playground activities or lunchtime supervisors?	34 (n=34)	36 (n=18)	32 (n=16)		27.6 (n=60)	29.6 (n=50)	20.8 (n=10)
D5	Discuss issues of inclusiveness (e.g. non English speakers; pupils with learning difficulties)?	11 (n=11)	4 (n=2)	18 (n=9)	χ^2=5.0, p<0.05	3.7 (n=8)	3.0 (n=5)	6.3 (n=3)
D6	Mention the issue of bullying on the way to school or happening outside school?	25 (n=25)	18 (n=9)	32 (n=16)		18.4 (n=40)	17.2 (n=29)	22.9 (n=11)
	Total anti-bullying policy content (36 items)	**18.7 [SD5.6]**	**17.6 [SD 4.7]**	**19.8 [SD 6.1]**	*F*= 4.27, p<0.05			
	Total anti-bullying policy content (34 items)	**17.9 [SD.5.1]**	**16.8 [SD 4.2]**	**19.1 [SD 5.7]**	*F*= 5.30, p<0.05	**16.7 [SD4.9]**	**16.3 [SD.4.6]**	**18.1 [SD5.2]**