What children tell us about bullying in schools

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It is argued that much needed policies and practices to counter bullying in Australian schools should be based upon a realistic appraisal of what is known through research into the nature of the problem. This article provides a review of relevant Australian research between 1991 and 1996 conducted primarily by the author and co-workers, drawing particularly on school children's reports and experiences and their perceptions of what can be done; finally it discusses steps that can be taken to reduce bullying in schools.

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As the problem of bullying in schools has become more generally recognised, there has developed a considerable world-wide literature aimed at conveying an understanding of why bullying occurs and describing what steps can be taken to prevent it (see, for example, Smith & Sharp 1994; Olweus 1993; Ross 1996; Rigby 1996a). However, relatively little attention has been paid to how children themselves feel about bullying, how they react to it, and how ready they are to take concerted action to counter it in their own community.

Knowledge gained from children is important for two reasons. Firstly, although awareness of the sad consequences for children of continual bullying is certainly increasing, there is still on the part of some schools and some educational authorities a marked reluctance to acknowledge how serious it is; and secondly, if planned and effective action to stop school bullying is going to happen, we need to know what schoolchildren themselves are prepared to do to rid our schools of this persistent problem.

We are fortunate in Australia in that over the last five years or so an extensive body of survey data has been provided by children from both primary and secondary schools, and from this we can estimate not only the incidence of bullying in schools but also how children feel about it, how they typically react towards it and what they are prepared to do about it. More than 26,000 children with ages ranging from 8 to 18 years have completed the so-called Peer Relations Questionnaire or PRQ (Rigby & Slee 1993a) to provide this information. This paper is based primarily on this source of information. Supplementary information of a qualitative nature has also been obtained from Australian schoolchildren to enable us to examine in more detail how children are affected by bullying.

DEFINING BULLYING

Bullying can be usefully defined along lines suggested by Farrington (1993) as repeated oppression, physical or psychological, of a less powerful person by a more powerful person or group. It is not the same thing as conflict, violence or disagreement – although it may involve all these. With bullying there is always a power imbalance which makes the ill-treatment of the victim possible.

THE INCIDENCE OF BULLYING IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS

As a broad generalisation, about one child in six is bullied in Australian schools on a weekly basis (Rigby 1996a). This is relatively high by world standards (see Olweus 1993 and Smith & Sharp 1994 for comparable results from Norwegian and English sources respectively). As one might expect, there are reliable age and gender differences, with boys reporting being bullied overall more frequently than girls, especially in secondary schools. Primary school children of both sexes are generally bullied more often than students in secondary schools. There is nonetheless a notable

increase in reported victimisation when children enter the first year of secondary school (Rigby, 1996b). As Table 1 shows, different forms of bullying occur with different frequency.

As is the case reported in research conducted overseas, for example in Norway (Olweus 1993) and in England (Ahmad & Smith 1994), the most commonly reported form of bullying in Australia is that of verbal harassment such as cruel teasing and name calling. This is experienced by boys and girls about equally. Unlike physical bullying which tends to reduce with age, verbal forms of harassment show comparatively little change. The main contrast between the genders is that boys are more often bullied physically and threatened by their peers whereas girls report being more commonly the victims of indirect bullying, eg, exclusion (see Tulloch 1995; Owens 1996; Rigby 1996a).

HOW CHILDREN REACT TO BEING BULLIED

Children react to being bullied in different ways. In part, the differences can be attributed to the frequency or intensity with which the bullying is experienced and also the age and gender of the victim, as is evident from the results presented in Table 2.

Some children appear to be particularly resilient and are able to act in a nonchalant way. Here are some things children wrote when we asked them to describe their reactions when children seek to bully them (Rigby, Slee, Martin & Cunningham 1997).

> 'I don't listen to them and walk off and make sure I'm not worried so they don't get the better of me.'
>
> 'I just thought of the kids as little dick-heads and laughed when they called me names.'
>
> 'Well, if someone tries to bully me, they'll find out that it doesn't work on me.'

As the frequency with which children are bullied increases, fewer children say they are 'not bothered' by it (Rigby 1996c). Among children claiming to be bullied frequently, that is at least once a week, two children out of three admit to being 'bothered' by it. Boys appear to be more likely to deny being affected. If boys were bothered they were more likely to say that they felt 'angry'; girls more likely to say they felt 'sad and miserable.' However, one interesting feature of these results is a trend among girls who are frequently bullied to report being more angry about it as they become older.

Although a few children (less than 7%) report that they actually feel 'better' after being bullied – perhaps having 'turned the tables ' on the bully – a large proportion of children feel worse about themselves. Loss of self esteem is particularly common among those most frequently victimised, with about 50% of boys and 60% of girls reporting this experience. Here are some statements made by adolescent

Table 1 Percentages of schoolchildren reporting being bullied by peers in different ways, according to gender and age group.

	AGE GROUPS					
	8 – 12 years			13 – 18 years		
	Never	Some -times	Often	Never	Some -times	Often
Being teased						
BOYS	50.1	38.0	11.9	52.6	38.8	8.6
GIRLS	52.6	38.8	8.6	58.1	33.5	8.4
Hurtful names						
BOYS	49.7	36.4	13.9	56.0	33.1	10.8
GIRLS	49.6	38.4	12.0	56.7	33.2	10.1
Left out						
BOYS	65.9	26.9	7.3	75.7	18.8	5.5
GIRLS	58.7	32.3	9.0	69.0	24.4	6.6
Threatened						
BOYS	71.5	22.7	5.8	74.4	19.8	5.9
GIRLS	84.9	12.6	2.5	87.8	9.7	2.5
Hit/kicked						
BOYS	63.5	28.5	8.0	72.4	21.3	6.3
GIRLS	77.2	18.9	3.9	88.5	9.3	2.2
N>= BOYS	3320			10657		
GIRLS	2587			6973		

Table 2 Percentages of schoolchildren reporting kinds of (i) emotional reactions and (ii) self perceptions of students after being bullied by their peers, according to gender and age group.

	Bullied less than once a week		Bullied once a week or more often	
	8-12 yrs	13-18 yrs	8-12 yrs	13-18 yrs
(i) Emotional reactions				
Not bothered				
BOYS	61.4	62.1	28.7	35.0
GIRLS	44.4	46.7	19.8	22.6
Mostly angry				
BOYS	27.1	28.3	43.1	41.1
GIRLS	25.0	26.9	28.1	36.1
Mostly sad				
BOYS	11.5	9.6	28.2	24.0
GIRLS	30.6	26.4	52.1	41.3
(ii) Perceptions of the self				
Felt better about self				
BOYS	6.5	5.3	6.5	9.0
GIRLS	4.3	3.6	6.9	5.2
Felt much the same				
BOYS	68.8	69.2	41.6	44.2
GIRLS	56.7	53.0	32.3	32.3
Felt worse about self				
BOYS	24.7	25.5	51.99	48.8
GIRLS	39.0	43.5	60.7	62.5
N>= BOYS	2649	9285	912	2204
GIRLS	2098	6487	633	960

Table 3 Percentages of children who have been bullied and have told about it, according to person told, and gender and age group of informant.

	Bullied less than once a week		Bullied once a week or more	
PERSONS TOLD	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs
Mother				
BOYS	52.9	34.1	62.6	48.0
GIRLS	64.0	53.4	71.0	64.6
Father				
BOYS	41.4	25.8	50.0	37.5
GIRLS	40.3	28.3	48.6	37.6
Teacher/school counsellor				
BOYS	34.0	22.0	49.2	43.4
GIRLS	43.4	29.1	61.3	52.7
Friend/friend(s)				
BOYS	59.3	53.7	62.1	58.1
GIRLS	76.9	77.9	74.7	79.5
N>= BOYS	947	2465	586	1235
GIRLS	810	2456	477	693

Table 4 Reported absenteeism in percentages due to bullying at school, according to gender and age group.

Have you ever stayed away from school due to bullying?	Bullied less than once a week		Bullied at least once a week	
RESPONSE:	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs
No, I've never thought of doing so				
BOYS	78.0	80.2	51.3	54.1
GIRLS	64.0	62.9	46.5	41.6
No, but I've thought of doing so				
BOYS	17.8	15.1	33.3	26.3
GIRLS	28.1	25.2	35.5	33.0
Yes, I have once or twice				
BOYS	3.6	3.5	9.4	9.8
GIRLS	6.4	9.5	14.1	16.3
Yes, more than twice				
BOYS	0.6	1.2	6.0	9.8
GIRLS	1.5	2.5	4.0	9.1
N>= BOYS	2629	9201	909	2211
GIRLS	2077	6413	636	961

schoolchildren about how they felt after being bullied:

> 'Made me feel worse than I could already be.'
>
> ' It has made me worry and get more headaches.'
>
> 'Felt kind of sad and need a friend to accompany you and make you feel better.'.
>
> 'I got scared of being alone.'

INFORMING OTHERS

A common reaction to being bullied is to seek help from others, particularly if one is bullied frequently. Table 3 provides details of the frequency with which different people are informed about the bullying according to age and gender of the informant.

From Table 3 we can see that some people are more likely to be informed than others: friends most commonly of all, followed by mother, then father; teachers least of all. Not surprisingly, with more frequent bullying, informing is more common. But it is evident that even among children who are bullied frequently, a substantial proportion do not tell: for example about 40% of boys and 25% of girls who are bullied weekly do not tell their friends; even larger proportions do not tell their mother or their father.

Informing others about the bullying generally decreases with age as children begin to feel that it is somehow shameful to admit to being the sort of person who 'dobs' somebody in. An exception to this trend, however, concerns girls who as they grow older are more likely to tell their friends if they are being bullied. By contrast, as boys become older, they are more inclined to conceal the fact that they are being bullied, even from their friends. It should also be added that one reason for not telling someone is that often it does not improve the situation. Approximately half the students in the sample who had informed someone also reported that the situation had not subsequently improved; among boys in about 9% of cases it got worse (the outcomes were slightly less negative for girls).

LACK OF SUPPORT

Not telling others when one is bullied may also be because there is no-one in whom one can confide. Victimised children tend to have few, if any, friends. Some of our informants have explained that they 'couldn't be friends with a wimp.' We also know that victimised children are commonly more introverted than others and generally lack social skills (Rigby & Slee 1993b). This can add to their sense of isolation. It is also clear from research into the health of adolescent children that those who believe they have someone they can count on and discuss serious problems with are less likely to feel badly or unwell as a consequence of being bullied. (Rigby 1994a). Victimised children who have little or no social support are therefore particularly at risk of physical or psychological damage.

ABSENTEEISM

Some children stay away from school because of bullying, or think of doing so, as Table 4 shows.

Not surprisingly absenteeism was much greater among those bullied frequently. Among these, approximately 1 in 5 boys and 1 in 4 girls reported having stayed away from school at least once because of bullying. Many more children (about 30%) reported that they had thought of doing so. The emerging picture is a gloomy one, with approximately half the children who are bullied frequently

Table 5 Schoolchildren's judgements of the safety of their school for young people who find it hard to defend themselves, according to gender, age group and frequency of being bullied (percentages).

	Never bullied		Bullied less than once a week		Bullied once a week or more	
	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs
Yes it is safe						
BOYS	28.2	24.0	18.8	12.2	11.0	8.5
GIRLS	31.3	20.0	18.4	9.1	16.7	7.3
Usually safe						
BOYS	63.8	64.1	71.3	69.7	63.6	58.1
GIRLS	61.8	68.9	73.0	73.9	63.5	64.3
Hardly ever safe						
BOYS	6.4	8.7	8.9	14.7	19.2	22.6
GIRLS	5.5	9.4	7.1	15.7	16.5	22.9
Never safe						
BOYS	1.5	3.2	1.1	3.5	6.3	10.9
GIRLS	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.4	3.3	5.5
N>= BOYS	1445	6294	1214	3011	911	2221
GIRLS	1316	4654	792	1851	636	972

at school reporting that they had considered staying away from school and at least 20% actually doing so.

SAFETY IN SCHOOLS

How safe are schools? Clearly the answer depends on how we define 'safety'. If we mean 'safe from the threat of being bullied', we must accept that for the most vulnerable children, schools are not such safe places. Judgements about safety from bullying appear to depend upon the individual's own sense of vulnerability, as we see in Table 5

Among those who are bullied at least once a week approximately one out of three children saw their school as 'never' or 'hardly ever' a safe place for those children who find it hard to defend themselves. Contrast this estimate with the one given by children who say they are never bullied; their estimate is about one third of this. Yet even among these seemingly invulnerable students, over 70% of them imply by their answers that their school is not entirely safe for those who find it hard to defend themselves.

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES OF BULLYING

Claims from children that they have become unwell as a result of bullying are not infrequent. Here is a sample of statements about the effects of being bullied at school made by secondary school students in a recent survey conducted by Rigby, Slee, Martin and Cunningham in 1996 in South Australia:

> 'I feel depressed and lonely and getting much more headaches.'
>
> ' Makes me feel bad about myself.'
>
> 'Feeling sick every morning about going to school because of bullying.'
>
> 'I've felt dizzy like I was going to faint or something.'
>
> 'Just feel sick and worthless.'
>
> 'I wish I was dead.'
>
> 'Getting very depressed, staying home, vomiting, attempting suicide.'

Statistical evidence of the relation between being bullied at school and relatively poor health has been provided in Australia in a study conducted in South Australian schools (Rigby 1994). Secondary school students (N = 777) completed the General Health Questionnaire (Goldberg & Williams 1988) and also provided information about how frequently they had been bullied over the last twelve months. In general, both boys and girls who reported being bullied at least once a week (approximately 15% of this sample) were more likely than others to indicate symptoms of relatively poor mental and physical health, as is apparent in Table 6.

The connection between being bullied and poor health has been well demonstrated statistically. But we might question the direction of the causal influence, and ask whether it is that sick children often get bullied or bullying often makes children sick? In a recent study conducted by Rigby and Slee (as yet unpublished), students were asked whether they believed their health had been adversely affected by the nature of their personal relations with other students at school. Their

Table 6 Percentages of secondary students indicating worse than usual health in relation to their status as victims (V) or non-victims (NV) of peer bullying at school

	Boys		Girls	
	V	NV	V	NV
GENERAL ILLNESS				
• Not in good health	25	13	42	22
• Felt ill	34	18	47	26
SOMATIC COMPLAINTS				
• Hot or cold spells	20	10	43	19
ANXIETY				
• Lost sleep over worry	27	15	57	31
• Constant strain	29	16	56	28
• Panicky without reason	17	4	40	15
SOCIAL DYSFUNCTION				
• Not keeping occupied	16	7	26	9
• Not enjoying activities	22	7	26	13
DEPRESSION				
• Feeling worthless	21	8	34	20
• Life not worth living	23	11	40	16
SUICIDAL				
• Wishing one were dead	23	12	40	21
• Recurring idea of taking own life	23	11	32	15
Sample sizes:	boys >377		girls >400	

Table 7 Reasons children give for bullying others according to gender and age group (percentages).

	Boys		Girls	
REASON	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs
they annoyed me	70.0	77.6	61.7	71.7
to get even	67.2	73.2	51.8	65.8
for fun	19.2	29.5	12.7	19.3
others were doing it	17.0	23.3	15.2	18.7
they were wimps	12.7	16.7	8.4	10.4
to show how tough	12.0	15.5	8.0	9.6
get things or money	6.9	9.2	4.8	5.2
N>=	3259	10583	2582	7021

responses indicated that many adolescents **believed** that bad personal relations had affected their health. In fact some 13% of boys and 22% of girls informed us that they believe their health has been adversely affected by their relations with peers. Among those who claimed that they had been bullied frequently (at least once a week) the percentages were much higher: boys 29%; girls 50%.

SUICIDAL TENDENCIES AMONG CHILDREN INVOLVED IN BULLY/VICTIM PROBLEMS

In a number of countries, including Norway, England and Japan, there have been media reports of children committing suicide allegedly following episodes of severe bullying. Because suicide is multiply determined and difficult to establish through case studies, it has been difficult to evaluate these reports. However, recent work in Australia has shed further light on the question. In a series of three studies undertaken by Rigby and Slee in South Australia between 1993 and 1996, self-reports of adolescent school-children of suicidal ideation and attempts to harm themselves were found to be significantly associated with reports of them being bullied by peers and also bullying others. In the latest of these studies with 1500 adolescents, adverse peer relations at school were found to contribute significantly to suicidal ideation after controlling for negative parental influences and low levels of social support (Rigby, Slee, Martin & Cunningham 1997). When statistical evidence of the potential effects of bullying in school on adolescent suicidality is combined with the growing number of accounts of children committing suicide following a history of peer victimisation, it is difficult not to conclude that severe bullying for some children can be devastating.

WHY DO CHILDREN BULLY?

One question on the Peer Relations Questionnaire asked children to indicate which of seven reasons they would give for bullying someone, if they did engage in this behaviour. Data has become available on this question from 13,936 boys and 9,497 girls with ages ranging from 8 to 18 years (Rigby 1996c). Results have been tabulated in Table 7 according to age groups and gender.

What is most evident is that students, regardless of age group and gender, tended to choose reasons that would justify their bullying actions, for example, 'they annoyed me'. However, many disclosed far less creditable motives. About one fifth implied that social pressure might well play a part in them bullying someone ('others were doing it'); some that bullying could be done 'for fun' or simply because the victim was a 'wimp'. Overall, girls and younger students were less inclined to give reasons for bullying someone, arguably because girls bully others less frequently and older students are more aware of their motives in acting as they do. Nevertheless, if one ranks the reasons endorsed by respondents in terms of frequencies with which they are given as explanations, the order indicated by the various subgroups is precisely the same. In a further analysis results were computed for students who reported that they had, in fact, engaged in bullying others during the current year; approximately one third of the students made this admission. As expected, these self-reported 'bullies' were more prone to give reasons than others – but again the order of importance ascribed to the reasons is similar (almost identical) for these two groups. We may conclude that the motivations or justifications for bullying given by children who engage in bullying are not notably different from others.

WHAT STOPS CHILDREN FROM BULLYING ?

Relatively few children believe they **could not** bully other children if they wanted to do so. For instance among older boys (ages 16–18 years) only 12% reported that they were less able than most children to do so (Rigby 1997). Moreover, most students do from time to time wish to hurt others. Some 77% of 16–18 year old boys indicated that they sometimes wanted to hurt others; among girls of this age, the percentage was 61%. Neither an incapacity to bully nor being unmotivated to hurt anyone can account for the fact that a high proportion of children are seemingly averse to bullying others and choose not to do so.

An explanation of why so many children who sometimes wish to hurt someone and also have the wherewithal to bully nevertheless do **not** do so may be found in the reactions of children to questions we asked about what they saw as the consequence of bullying others. In a study conducted in South Australia in 1993, some 5,548 students aged 8 to 18 years in 20 schools were asked in an anonymous questionnaire to indicate how likely various outcomes would be for the bully if he or she bullied someone. Although many indicated that bullying could have the positive consequence of preventing one from being bullied by others (33.6% of boys and 25.9% of girls), a larger percentage of students (42.2% of boys and 55.1% of girls) indicated that bullying someone would make them feel ashamed of themselves (Rigby 1997).

Table 8 Percentages of students indicating their reactions to bullying, according to gender and age group.

		Boys		Girls	
		8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs	8–12 yrs	13–18 yrs
Teachers and students should be concerned about stopping bullying	YES	79.9	70.0	83.0	76.4
	DK	17.3	22.2	15.15	19.7
	NO	2.8	7.8	1.4	3.8
Teachers should try to stop it	YES	85.3	75.9	88.8	80.6
	DK	11.6	16.8	9.4	15.2
	NO	3.1	7.3	1.8	4.2
Students themselves should help to stop it	YES	65.6	64.1	69.9	73.0
	DK	24.6	25.0	22.2	21.6
	NO	9.8	10.9	7.9	5.4
Students and teachers should work together to stop it	YES	64.4	54.2	71.2	61.8
	DK	27.6	33.0	24.5	30.9
	NO	8.1	12.8	4.3	7.2
Could personally use help to stop being bullied	YES	47.3	34.1	46.5	32.1
	DK	29.6	31.5	36.6	36.1
	NO	23.1	34.5	16.9	31.8
Would be interested in talking about the problem of bullying with other students	YES	36.0	24.9	46.7	34.2
	DK	40.7	40.0	39.3	42.3
	NO	23.3	35.1	14.0	23.5
N>=		3446	11467	2650	7496

The sense of shame as a motivational force to prevent bullying is evidently felt by many students. How this arises is suggested in a study of students' perceptions of their parents' attitudes towards bullying (Rigby 1997). Most students saw their mothers and fathers as disapproving of bullying behaviour, and, contrary to what is sometimes said about adolescents, most students indicated that they cared very much about what their parents would think about them if they bullied someone. Indeed, on average they cared as much about their parents' judgements as they did their peers'. We also know from earlier studies that adolescents from dysfunctional families in which there is relatively little caring between family members are much more likely than others to engage in bullying at school (see Rigby 1993, 1994b). Parental attitudes opposing bullying and positive family relations evidently play a significant part in developing in children a propensity not to bully others, arguably because children in such families feel it is wrong.

WHAT CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO SEE DONE ABOUT BULLYING

It is sometimes thought that children, especially boys, are largely amoral and would behave 'like savages' if they were not strictly controlled by adults. The novel, *Lord of the Flies*, encapsulates this view (Golding 1955). On Golding's fictional island a group of boys, free of the restraints of adult authority, engage in the most vicious forms of bullying. However, survey results, admittedly from students in schools supervised by adults, do not suggest that children typically admire bullies and seek to disparage children who find it hard to defend themselves. Studies conducted in Australia clearly show that the bulk of students, boys as well as girls, are supportive of victims and would like to see action to stop the bully (Rigby & Slee 1993; Tulloch 1995). For example, in a study of 685 South Australian school children aged 6–16 years, a large majority of respondents agreed with these statements:

> 'I like it when someone stands up for kids who are bullied'
>
> 'It's a good thing to help children who can't defend themselves'
>
> 'It makes me angry when a kid is picked on without reason'
>
> (Rigby & Slee 1993c, p. 123).

The extent to which students say they could use help to counter bullying and are prepared to help others has been examined using the PRQ (see Table 8).

Substantial numbers of boys and girls of all ages, but especially younger children, say they could use help to stop others from bullying them: overall, about one in three children say this. Although the responsibility for action tends to be placed more often than not on teachers, a majority of students, both boys and girls, regardless of age, younger and older, evidently believe that students themselves should act so as to stop it. Most students believe that students and teachers should work together on the issue. Nevertheless, most students evidently do not usually try to stop bullying when they have seen it happening. Nor does the majority feel disposed to talk about what can be done about stopping bullying with other students.

These last two findings pose a challenge for members of the school community who wish to involve students in anti-bullying action. How can students become empowered so that they can translate their desire to stop bullying, which they evidently do have, into effective bystander intervention ? How can teachers motivate students so that they will become involved in constructive class discussions with other students on the issue of bullying ? It is noticeable that this is particularly difficult to achieve with students in the 14–16 year age range, especially with boys. During that stage of development a readiness to discuss bullying openly is least forthcoming, with only 23% of boys and 34% of girls expressing an interest in doing so.

IN CONCLUSION

It is only by facing the facts about bullying that realistic plans to stop it can be developed. The first and most obvious fact is that bullying is found in all schools and involves a substantial number of students who are harmed by their involvement. Although the majority of children are rarely directly involved in bully/victim problems, a substantial minority of children are periodically involved, with serious consequences for their physical and psychological well-being. We have seen that many children do employ sensible coping practices, especially when teased, whilst others, often the more seriously victimised, become upset and unable to cope, ill, sometimes seriously depressed, even suicidal. The harm is likely to be greater if they feel unsupported by others.

In considering what schools can do to counter bullying, it is well to bear in mind that large numbers of children evidently refrain from bullying not because they are unable to do so, nor from fear of punishment by an authority, but because they would be ashamed of repeatedly threatening or hurting someone weaker than themselves. The question now to be addressed is how the empathic regard most children feel for victims can be increased and extended to include the minority of children who embrace macho values and are often cynically indifferent to the pain of others. Parents have an important responsibility in this area – yet many of them need help themselves to become adequate parents.

A further question is how the good will and positive attitudes that most children certainly have can be harnessed in the development of practical policy and associated actions to counter bullying. This cannot be done by wishful thinking. Plans need to be developed in and by schools: plans which are broadly acceptable to the entire school community; plans that are supported by a Whole-School Policy. Appropriate counselling methods need to be developed to enable school counsellors and other staff to work effectively with bullies and also with victims (see Rigby 1994c, 1996a). Finally, given the readiness of many children to assist in actions to counter bullying, a high priority should be given to the training of students to become peer mediators so they too can help to develop a school ethos in which bullying cannot flourish. □

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