



Emersons Green Primary School

The No-Blame Approach to Tackling Bullying

All members of staff are encouraged to take on board the thinking behind the no-blame approach:

- Bullying and anti-social behaviour is almost inevitable in a community of young people. It can be countered by teaching more appropriate behaviour: - i.e. If children can't read, we teach them; if children can't relate properly to other children, we teach them.
- The best way to do this is to foster empathy with the feelings of others, in particular with the feelings of the bullied child.
- Negative, punitive measures taken against the bully are likely to promote resentment, and to aggravate rather than solve the problem.

One member of staff is nominated to the "bullying person" (BP)! (In this way one person can become skilled in using the approach, one person gets the complete picture etc.) At Emersons Green Primary School the nominated person is the headteacher.

In the Event of a Bullying Incident

- The BP is informed, either by a parent, a child, a class teacher, a school meals supervisory assistant, or whoever.
- The BP has a meeting with the bullied child, explains the rudiments of the no-blame approach and the reasons for it, and obtains permission from the child to arrange a meeting with the bully/bullies/spectators. The BP makes notes about the bullied child's "symptoms", e.g. not wanting to come to school, not sleeping, trying to hide, trying to stay in at playtime to help the teacher rather than going onto the playground, crying, pretending to be ill etc.
- A list of all the spectators and bullies is drawn up, and all are invited to a meeting (at Emersons Green the bullied child is usually present at the meeting, but this is different from the original approach).
- The meeting takes place, led by the BP.
- The first point made, even as the meeting is being set up, is that **it is a meeting** - not a telling off. The tone set is a friendly one: - "we have a problem here in the

school, let's see if we can solve it." It is important to say that the people invited to the meeting are there because they may be able to help, and that nobody is in trouble.

- The BP explains that the bullied child is unhappy, and describes the feelings etc. mentioned by the bullied child at their previous meeting. This needs to be done sensitively, with some empathy and with younger children it can be told almost as a story.
- The next step is that the BP asks for any ideas from the group: How can we stop X from feeling like this? The BP writes down all the children's responses.
- Any side issues are ignored/discouraged, e.g. "John always picks on me first" is countered by "Let's stick to the ideas, what can we do to help X?"
- When the ideas have dried up, the BP summarises in the form of an action plan: "Right then, we're going to try and join X into our games at morning play, keep an eye out for anyone picking on him, not hit him" etc. A bit of humour here can ease the path.
- The BP then arranges a date for the next meeting - about a week later seems to work well.
- If all goes well, the second meeting is usually fairly short: A simple progress chase, positive remarks are encouraged, and X takes the opportunity to say how much better things are for him. The group is thanked for solving a really tricky problem, and that's it.
- If things have not gone well, then the problems need to be analysed, more ideas solicited and tried out and a further meeting arranged. Sometimes children not in the original group will have caused problems. These children are invited to the meeting and quickly brought up to date and joined in.

Conclusion

The no-blame approach is proving to be an effective method of dealing with bullying. The school is seen to have a clear policy on bullying, and to be implementing it.

The underlying principle also helps to shape a positive ethos in the school:

- Teaching is clearly seen to extend beyond the curriculum and into personal and social relationships.

- The positive side of teaching is emphasised because the teacher's intervention brings about learning and better performance, rather than punishment.