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978-0-521-82119-3 - Bullying in Schools: How Successful Can Interventions Be?

Edited by Peter K. Smith, Debra Pepler, and Ken Rigby

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Bullying in schools

Bullying in schools: How successful can interventions be? is the first comparative account of the major intervention projects against school bullying that have been carried out by educationalists and researchers since the 1980s, across Europe, North America, and Australasia. Bullying in schools has become an international focus for concern. It can adversely affect pupils and in extreme cases lead to suicide. Schools can take action to reduce bullying and several programmes are available but do they work? In fact, success rates have been very varied. This book surveys thirteen studies and eleven countries. Working on the principle that we can learn from both successes and failures, it examines the processes as well as the outcomes, and critically assesses the likely reasons for success or failure. With contributions from leading researchers in the field, *Bullying in schools* is an important addition to the current debate on tackling school bullying.

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore,
São Paulo, Delhi, Dubai, Tokyo

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521821193

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First published 2004

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data

Bullying in schools : how successful can interventions be? / edited by Peter K.
Smith, Debra Pepler, and Ken Rigby.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p.) and index.

ISBN 0 521 82119 3 – ISBN 0 521 52803 8 (pb.)

I. Bullying in schools—Prevention—Cross-cultural studies. I. Smith, Peter K.

II. Pepler, D. J. (Debra J.) III. Rigby, Ken.

LB3013.3.B815 2004

2004045190

ISBN 978-0-521-82119-3 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-52803-0 Paperback

Transferred to digital printing 2009

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Preface

For some two decades now, bullying in schools has been widely recognised as a societal problem, which can seriously and negatively affect the lives and career paths of many schoolchildren. Following the work of Olweus in Norway in the 1980s, educationists and researchers have been inspired to try out programmes of intervention against bullying in schools. An appreciable number of such interventions have now taken place, in Europe, North America, and Australasia. This is an opportune moment to take stock of what has been achieved, and critically to evaluate these interventions so as to pass on advice to the next generation of educational practitioners and researchers.

There have been some successes, but also some less successful studies. Working on the principle that we can learn from both successes and failures, this book for the first time compiles a detailed account of the major intervention projects against school bullying. It examines the processes as well as the outcomes, and critically assesses the likely reasons for success or failure.

Criteria for inclusion were that a project should have intervened against bullying in more than one school; that there should be a description of the process of intervention; and that there should be some evaluation of the outcome, including some quantitative data on pupil experiences and/or on actual reported incidences of bullying.

The opening chapter summarises the history of research on bullying and makes the case for why interventions are important. We follow this with a new chapter from Dan Olweus, the ‘father’ of bullying research; this is succeeded by another thirteen chapters of accounts of independent intervention studies; we have encouraged authors to follow a standard format here, describing first the impetus for the intervention, and early stages of planning and funding; then the selection of schools, and the characteristics of schools and students; the components of the intervention programme; evaluation framework and procedures; and then, crucially, what actually happened – the achievements and difficulties in implementing the intervention; this is followed by the results of the evaluation; any

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longer term effects or evaluation of the programme; and any dissemination and impact beyond the programme schools. These thirteen chapters cover three continents and eleven countries.

In our final chapter, we try to summarise the main lessons we have learned from this now substantial body of research. What advice can we give now to teachers, schools, education authorities, regional and national governments? What help can we give to pupils involved in victimisation at school? We do not know all the answers, but we do believe that our knowledge is advancing – as always, through failures as well as successes, so long as we learn from them. Our hope is that this book will carry forward the current debate on ways of best tackling school bullying, and contribute to this gradual but cumulative process of applying empirical research to one important area of human experience.