What Schools May Do to Reduce Bullying

Ken Rigby

THE UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA, ADELAIDE, AUSTRALIA

Abstract

Bullying in schools is now widely regarded as a major social problem, because of its prevalence and demonstrated harmfulness to young people. Bullying has been conceptualized in different ways: as aggressive behavior and as an aspect of aggressive behavior characterized by an imbalance and abuse of power. Bullying has been viewed as the product of an antisocial personality and, alternatively, as the product of past and present social influences. Treatments vary, with some educators emphasizing the part played by behavior modification directed towards changing the pattern of behavior of individual perpetrators, and others emphasizing the provision of moral and social education. This chapter first highlights why it is important to understand what schools are actually doing in addressing bullying. Next, the chapter discusses the conceptual bases that underpin the steps that educators are taking in seeking to counter school bullying. This chapter also describes a range of procedures that are being employed by schools, both pro-actively and in response to cases of bullying. There follows a critique of what is currently being done in countering bullying in schools. Finally the chapter highlights the main implications for practice in schools.

Reducing bullying in schools is widely regarded as a major challenge in countries throughout the world (Jimerson & Huai, 2010; Jimerson, Swearer, & Espelage, 2010). In part, this has occurred because of repeated reports on its disturbing prevalence in schools. For instance, in the United States a survey undertaken with 15,686 students between 6 to 9 year old revealed that 30% of students were involved in moderate or frequent bullying (Nansel et al., 2001). In Australia, Cross and colleagues (2009) estimated that between 4 and 9 year old approximately 1 child in 4 is bullied “every few weeks or more often.” The harm that bullying can do to the psychological development of both bullies and victims has been examined in numerous studies (see Rigby, 2003). It is well known that bullying in schools is linked to deteriorating mental health among a substantial proportion of students and the effects can be long lasting (Ronning et al., 2009).

Growing concern over the problem of school bullying has been reflected in increasing media attention, especially following incidents of bullying that have led to children committing suicide, as in the case of a 15-year-old girl in Massachusetts who committed suicide after weeks of being
bullied by her peers on Facebook in January 2010. This incident, like others of this kind, was followed by calls for legislation to deal more severely with offenders and also with schools that failed to take adequate action to prevent and deal effectively with the issue (Boston Globe, 2010).

Increasingly, educators have sought to develop and implement policies and programs to reduce school bullying. Recent appraisals of the outcomes of school-based interventions suggest that some programs have achieved a significant but modest degree of success in reducing bullying. In a comprehensive examination of interventions that have been carefully evaluated, it has been claimed that on average anti-bullying programs reduce the prevalence of bullying by around 20% (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009).

Given that schools can take effective action to reduce bullying, albeit as yet to only a limited degree, it is particularly important to examine and critique what schools are actually doing to prevent this harmful behavior and to appraise the steps they are taking.

Conceptual Bases

Conceptual bases may be implicit or explicit. We may be unaware that we are making assumptions about what bullying is, what bullies and victims are like, why they behave as they do and what makes us think that a given response or practice will have the desired effect of preventing bullying from occurring or preventing it from continuing. Alternatively, we may be clear about what assumptions we are making and the implications of acting upon them. The most basic concept is what is meant by bullying.

There is general agreement that bullying is an undesirable form of behavior in a school. In developing an anti-bullying program some educators do not differentiate between aggressive acts and bullying. For example, the promoters of the Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS) focus upon specific, undesirable behaviors, regardless of intentionality, power differentials and frequency of occurrence (Ross, Horner, & Higbee, 2009).

This simplification is appealing to some teachers. They see a child acting forcibly, physically and/or verbally. Action is needed. The “bully” needs to be told that his/her behavior is unacceptable. An appropriate mode of negative reinforcement is applied—to deter the undesired behavior—and positive to encourage a pro-social alternative. This approach has a strong affinity with the views held by the behavior modifiers of the 1960s as described by Skinner (1971).

Pitted against this conceptualization of bullying is the view that bullying is a subcategory of aggression. It is maintained that bullying can occur only when an individual or a group acting aggressively is more powerful than someone who is being targeted. In short, bullying can only occur when there is an imbalance of power—physically, psychologically, numerically, or status-wise. This refinement is often dismissed by those who prefer the simpler definition because it appears impractical. Certainly, it is sometimes far from evident who or which is the stronger party. For instance, an aggressor may be physically stronger but capable of being outwitted by a smaller target with a sharp tongue.

Nevertheless, there is a good reason for distinguishing between aggression and bullying. This becomes clear when individuals engage in a heated argument or a “fair fight.” We may reasonably want the combatants to resolve their differences in a more civilized or amicable way. But most people would say that this is a very different matter from a case in which a child is being hounded day after day by someone against whom resistance is virtually impossible or impracticable.

Precisely what kinds of behavior can be classified as bullying is a further issue. There is general agreement that it may take direct physical forms, as in hitting and kicking and direct verbal forms as in name calling and making abusive comments. Increasingly, it is being recognized that bullying may be indirect and covert, as in deliberate ostracism and rumor spreading. The use of
electronic technology to convey hurtful messages over the last ten years or so has given rise to the increasing acceptance of the notion of cyberbullying.

A further consideration in conceptualizing bullying is whether to view it as a moral issue. It would be simpler if we didn’t have to. But it is fair to say that whether we are inclined to call bullying “evil” or “undesirable” or “unfair” or “inappropriate” we are making a moral judgment and many educators think that this should be made explicit. Hence a common definition of “bullying” includes the notion that it involves an abuse of power. This forces us to ask ourselves the very basic question of how power should be used. It also leads one into an area fraught with difficulties since moral judgments invariably differ and are greatly influenced by cultural factors and changes occurring over time.

Making a defensible judgment becomes particularly hard when a targeted person has behaved provocatively and, unsurprisingly, elicits a bullying reaction. If the reaction is disproportionate, being too extreme or prolonged, we may call it bullying. But where and how does one draw the line?

There is another practical dilemma. Many heated arguments occur over whether bullying invariably involves a series of acts of aggression or can be said to occur when someone feels he or she is being bullied (and others concur) on a single occasion. Because we tend to think of bullying as repeated aggression, it is sometimes hard to acknowledge that the term is sometimes used to describe a one-off experience.

How Participants Are Viewed

When bullying takes place, there are commonly several people involved—the bully or bullies, the target(s), and the bystanders. How each behaves is sometimes seen as determined by the individual personality or character each may possess. This perspective is increasingly being considered as unduly narrow. It may result in the bully being demonized and the target stigmatized as a weak person. It does not, for instance, take into account the potential influence of bystanders whose presence may encourage or discourage the bullying.

At odds with this way of viewing the participants is what has been called the social ecological perspective (Espelage & Swearer, 2004). This perspective promotes the view that children’s interpersonal behavior is crucially influenced by many other factors besides individual characteristics, personality, and biological predispositions. These include family members, the ethos of the school, people in the neighborhood, and the broader cultural context. Rather than focus exclusively on what children do to each other, it is sometimes argued that it is much better to consider the quality of the relationships that children form with others in their social environment. According to this view, bullying is seen as the resultant of a wide range of factors that make up the social ecology.

Conceptualizing What Can Be Done to Reduce Bullying

A broad distinction can be made between proactive work aimed at preventing bullying from occurring and reactive work, which is concerned with dealing with cases of bullying after they have occurred. Responding reactively to bullying has characterized the way schools have traditionally sought to counter bullying. More recently the emphasis has been much more on proactive intervention. However, schools generally recognize that taking appropriate action to deal with cases when they arise is invariably needed; hopefully after proactive action has had the effect of reducing the overall incidence.

Schools typically see the need for a broad range of strategies to address the problem of bullying. Action is typically undertaken at different levels; at the level of individual students, at
the classroom level and at the policy-making level. Thus a school must consider what it is that particular students need to know and how they can receive help when it is needed. At the classroom level, action may involve the delivery of curriculum content and the provision of activities that can help students to acquire relevant knowledge, attitudes and social skills that will help them in developing positive social relations and minimize the likelihood of their involvement in bullying. At the policy-making level, action is needed in developing an appropriate and agreed anti-bullying policy and related strategies, and, most importantly, the means by which they can be implemented through cooperation between stakeholders—staff, students and parents. Rather than leaving it to a selected group of people in a school to do what they think is needed, schools have generally adopted what is called a “whole school approach” in which all members of the school community are meaningfully engaged in implementing an agreed policy. Consistent with a social ecological approach, many schools seek to involve parents and the community at large in their plans.

What has been described above is what, in the broadest terms, most schools seek to do in countering bullying. Some aspects of their work may be prescribed. For example, there are some jurisdictions where some action by schools is mandatory, e.g. in having an anti-bullying policy available for public inspection. Some schools elect to deal with cases of bullying in only one way, e.g., using a traditional disciplinary approach; other schools may decide to use a non-punitive approach in dealing with some cases of bullying.

**Approaches Adopted by Schools**

**Anti-Bullying Policy**

Although there are some variations in what schools put in their policies, they generally contain these features:

1. A statement of the school’s stand against bullying, for example, zero-tolerance.
2. A succinct definition of bullying with a listing of the different kinds, both face-to-face and covert. Explicit reference to racial, sexual, and cyberbullying.
3. A declaration of the basic rights of individuals in the school community—students, teachers, other workers and parents—to be free of bullying.
4. A statement of the responsibilities of those who see bullying going on as bystanders to help to stop it, for example, by reporting what has happened to a teacher.
5. A general description of what the school will do proactively in seeking to prevent bullying, including the monitoring of the school grounds, undertaking risk management procedures, and the inclusion of content relating to bullying in the school curriculum.
6. An invitation to students and parents to report any cases of bullying to the school authorities and a commitment by the school to take appropriate action.
7. In general terms, how the school proposes to deal with actually cases of bullying should they arise.
8. An undertaking to collaborate with parents in addressing the problem of bullying, especially in the resolution of cases in which action is to be taken by both the school and parents.

**Work With Students in Classrooms Relating to Bullying**

There can be considerable variation between schools in the amount of time and attention devoted to such work, and also in the specific content of the lessons and activities. These are the main
features found in curricula dealing with bullying. They can be grouped under the headings of Knowledge, Attitudes, and Skills.

**Knowledge:** what bullying is; why it must be stopped—the harm it does; the content of the school’s anti-bullying policy.

**Attitudes:** being unprejudiced; being cooperative and empathic; resisting negative group pressure; self-acceptance as an antidote to discouragement.

**Skills:** being assertive and not acting aggressively; resolving differences constructively, using conflict resolution techniques; helping others who are being bullied, as a good bystander; reacting effectively if bullied.

What is done under these headings will differ according to the age and maturity of students. It is generally accepted that students are much more likely to be influenced through work undertaken in classrooms if they are can take part in activities, role plays and discussions that enable them to learn through experience and by listening to each other’s opinions.

**Work With Peers to Counter Bullying**

Some schools opt to work closely with students, often a selected group of students, to bring about a more peaceful school environment in which bullying is minimized. Peer support may involve students being trained to carry out a variety of roles as befrienders, mentors, peer mediators and peer counselors. In the UK it has been estimated that some 62% of schools make use of some form of peer support (Houlston, Smith, & Jessel, 2009). By contrast, in the United States according to school psychologists it is among the least frequently used strategies (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010).

**Working With Parents**

Many educators believe that bullying can be addressed more effectively through working with parents. When parents are systematically informed about what the school is doing they may become involved in the development of school policies. They are then more inclined to provide significant support for the school’s anti-bullying initiative. Moreover, progress in resolving cases of bullying often requires active collaboration with parents. Finally, bullying behavior of students can sometimes be traced to negative influences in the home. Such knowledge can be helpful in dealing with some cases. Involving parents through newsletters and periodic meetings can assist in implementing policies and solving problems (Rigby, 2008).

**Dealing with Cases of Bullying**

Six major methods of responding to cases of school bullying can be identified. Each has a distinctive rationale and appears to be more appropriate in dealing with some cases of bullying than others. Some schools choose to adopt one or several of these approaches; a minority show familiarity with the entire range and apply them according to the nature of the bully/victim problem with which they are confronted.

**The Traditional Disciplinary Approach**

This approach seeks to suppress bullying behavior, primarily through the use of sanctions or graded punishments directed towards the person or persons judged to be responsible for the bullying. Such treatment is seen to be not only just but also likely to deter the offender(s) from
engaging in further acts of bullying, and send a message to others regarding the consequences of bullying behavior. The practitioner may also counsel the bully and undertake efforts to positively reinforce any subsequently observed pro-social behavior. This latter element in treating cases of bullying is emphasized in programs offering positive behavior support (Ross et al., 2009). According to on-line surveys conducted in the United States some 75% of teachers indicate that they favor the use of punishment in handling cases of bullying in schools (Bauman, Rigby, & Hoppa, 2008). Among a sample of 206 U.S. school psychologists “disciplinary consequences (i.e., suspension, expulsion) for bullies” was an item on a questionnaire endorsed by 97% of respondents as being the most frequently implemented strategy in dealing with school bullying (Sherer & Nickerson, 2010).

This approach assumes that the imposition of sanctions will suppress the undesired behavior. Research into the psychology of punishment indicates that it may well do so under some conditions, that is if the punishment is sufficiently aversive, is imposed shortly after the unwanted behavior, and is typically administered closely following any repetition of that behavior. These conditions are rarely present in schools; for instance, extreme forms of punishment are seen as unethical and rigorous monitoring of bullying behavior, especially in its more covert forms, is often impractical. At the same time, when bullying is of a criminal nature, as it is sometimes, traditional and legalistic responses appear inevitable.

**Strengthening the Victim**

This approach aims to help the victim to acquire the capacity to cope with the bully or bullies unassisted, for example, by training targeted children to act more assertively. Teachers appear to be divided regarding the value of approach (Rigby & Bauman, 2010). One technique that victims may be taught is known as fogging (Rigby, 2010a). This involves the potential victim focusing on the perceptions of the aggressor, acknowledging that the bully may actually believe the negative things he or she is saying and refusing to be disturbed or intimidated.

It is assumed that the targets of bullying can be effectively advised or trained to become less vulnerable to attack. Practical limits to the efficacy of this approach are obvious. Where the imbalance of power between attacker(s) and victim is great, training is unlikely to be effective. Not surprisingly, it is considered more appropriate in handling cases of one-to-one bullying but is limited to bullying that is verbal. To date, empirical studies of how widely and effectively this approach can be successfully employed are lacking.

**Mediation**

Students in conflict are invited to work with a trained teacher or peer-mediator to exchange views on what has been happening between them and to find a mutually acceptable way of resolving a dispute that may underlie the bullying behavior. This approach is often seen as more appropriately employed in cases in which students in conflict are both looking for help in resolving an interpersonal problem (Cremin, 2007).

A basic assumption underlying mediation is that parties in conflict will freely seek help from a neutral third party to resolve a dispute that is sustaining the conflict. Its application is severely limited to cases in which both parties are genuinely interested in working with a mediator who can remain neutral. Often those who bully are not motivated to seek mediation, and it is difficult for a practitioner to remain neutral when the bullying is seen as entirely unjustified, as it normally is. There is research that shows that peer mediation, when the training students receive is adequate, can resolve some forms of student conflict (Johnson & Johnson 2001). And this may result in the creation of a school ethos in which bullying is less likely to thrive. However, there
appears to be no evidence that peer mediation is a successful way of dealing with most cases of bullying, and its use is inappropriate in cases of severe bullying, which normally require adult intervention.

**Restorative Practice**

This method requires offenders to reflect upon their behavior in the presence of their victim(s), to experience a sense of remorse, and to restore damaged relationships through a sincere apology or restorative act. In recent years this approach has gained acceptance in a growing number of schools. It can be applied in a variety of situations—in a meeting involving a bully and a victim, a classroom meeting where many more students are involved, or at a conference at which community members who are supportive of the individual students are also present (Thorsborne & Vinegrad, 2006).

Restorative practices assume that students who engage in bullying will feel remorse over their actions after they have been induced by a trained practitioner to reflect upon their deplorable behavior. They will then act to repair their damaged relationship with the person they have victimized. Unfortunately, the extent to which students who bully actually show genuine remorse is rarely examined, and while some bullies appear to respond positively to this approach, there is little evidence of its overall effectiveness in reducing the level of bullying in schools (see Sherman & Strang, 2007).

**Support Group Method**

This was originally called the “no blame approach.” It involves first speaking with the victim and identifying the perpetrators. Subsequently, a group meeting is held which includes the bullies and several students who support the victim, but not the victim. The practitioner graphically describes the victim’s distress and each person present is asked to say how he or she will help. The situation is then carefully monitored (see Robinson & Maines, 2008).

This method assumes that children who bully can be reformed without the use of punishment and also without being subjected to external pressure to feel remorse or shame. It is thought that when a practitioner meets with the bullies and graphically describes the distress that the victim has experienced, the perpetrators will experience some degree of empathy and become motivated to help to improve matters; especially so when supporters of the victim are also present. This approach is generally seen as appropriate for non-violent, non-criminal forms of bullying. It does not, however, take into account any provocation that may have occurred prior to the bullying and the need in some cases for changes in behavior on the part of both parties. There is some empirical evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of this approach (Robinson & Maines, 2008).

**Method of Shared Concern**

This is a multi-stage process in which suspected bullies are first interviewed individually. The practitioner shares a concern for the victim with each one of them and asks for their cooperation in improving the victim’s situation. The victim is next interviewed and told about what has happened. After some progress on the part of the suspected bullies has been confirmed, the practitioner meets with them as a group. They are required to make an agreed plan to present to the victim, who is then invited to join them to bring about an enduring solution (see Pikas, 2002; Rigby, 2010b, 2011; Rigby & Griffiths, 2011).

Like the support group method, the method of shared concern assumes that a non-punitive approach can be used effectively with groups of students who have engaged in bullying, especially
if the suspected bullies are not accused of bullying and are carefully prepared through one-to-one meetings for a subsequent mediation session with the person they have bullied. It does not assume that the victim is invariably “innocent.” Research has demonstrated that around 16% of victims behave provocatively and need to change their behavior as well (Solberg & Olweus, 2003). Although this method can be time consuming in its application and requires well-trained and skillful practitioners, it effectiveness has been well documented in a number of studies (Rigby & Griffiths, 2010).

A Critique of Contemporary Efforts to Address Bullying

In response to the growing awareness over the last 20 years of bullying in schools, there has emerged a substantial body of relevant theory and proposed practices. Many anti-bullying programs have been developed and implemented by schools. Numerous surveys conducted in Europe and the United States between 1996 and 2008 have reported an overall reduction in the prevalence of peer victimization in schools (see Molcho et al., 2009; Rigby & Smith, 2011). Some but not all programs have proved to be effective in reducing bullying. Among the 44 programs that have been rigorously evaluated, some 17 have been shown to have been successful in significantly reducing bullying in schools (Ttofi & Farrington, 2009). What schools have been doing in countering bullying thus appears to be making some headway. What is not yet known is what works best and why.

Identifying the best programs and the crucial elements in anti-bullying programs remains problematic. For instance, the most widely employed anti-bullying program, devised by Olweus (1993), has been reported as highly effective in a series of applications in Norway but generally unsuccessful in applications in Germany and Belgium (Smith, Pepler, & Rigby, 2004). Despite the popularity of this program and widespread adoption in the United States, outcomes have been mixed. Some positive outcomes have been indicated, especially in California where significant reductions in bullying were reported. However, elsewhere many of the outcomes were disappointing. For instance, in relation to the South Carolina study, it was reported that “no significant changes were observed in the frequency with which students reported being bullied” (Olweus & Limber, 2010, p. 395). In the Washington study, Olweus and Limber note that some significant reductions in victimization occurred for White students but that there were “no overall program effects regarding rates of victimization” (p. 396). In Philadelphia, they report that changes in self-reported being bullied varied between schools—from a decrease of 10% to an increase of 7%. They note that “due to the great attrition rate [over 50% of respondents dropped out of this study] firm conclusions about students’ self-reported victimization cannot be drawn in this study” (p. 396).

Such inconsistency in outcomes for a given program suggests that other factors besides those indicated in the blueprint operate, for instance, cultural factors and the way the program is implemented. Moreover, when the implementation of a program does result in a reduction in bullying, it is unclear whether success is due to specific features, such as the proactive work being undertaken by teachers in classrooms or by the method employed in intervening with cases of bullying or a combination of different elements in a program.

The broadly accepted view is that both proactive and reactive methods are needed and that a whole school approach should be adopted. This has been assumed but never tested. It is not known, for instance, whether reductions in bullying in schools could occur without any work being done in teaching students about bullying and helping students to develop appropriate social attitudes and skills. It is unclear whether specific kinds of interventions in cases of bullying constitute a necessary component in anti-bullying programs. Although it is widely believed that a whole school approach is needed to have a significant effect in reducing bullying, the
alternative approach—say action devised and undertaken independently by a task force within a school—may have a similar or even a more beneficial effect. Many pertinent questions, such as those raised above, have never been examined and tested empirically. Appraisals of what schools do to counter bullying must therefore be made largely on what appears to be plausible rather than upon overwhelming evidence.

The foregoing raises a number of issues that are important for addressing the problem of school bullying. The first and most crucial question concerns the way bullying is to be conceptualized. Should schools conceive bullying as essentially no different from other kinds of undesired behavior and most treatable by (a) clarifying for students what kind of behavior is acceptable and unacceptable and (b) applying positive or negative reinforcement accordingly? As discussed earlier, this conception of bullying underlies the adoption of Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS) program in the United States and in some parts of Australia. Given that its proponents do not accept that bullying per se can be usefully operationalized and assessed as distinct from generalized aggression, there is logically no way in which the effectiveness of this approach in reducing bullying can be assessed empirically. We must therefore ask first whether there is persuasive evidence that it can reduce aggressive behavior on the part of schoolchildren.

Evidence regarding the effectiveness of BP-PBS in reducing aggressive behavior of schoolchildren is sparse. When the focus has been on several individual students whose behavior has been closely monitored, aggressive behavior has been significantly reduced (Ross et al., 2009). However, when effects on school-wide prevalence of aggressive behavior were examined, using, as appropriate, a control group, that is, one not using PBS, no significant reductions in aggressiveness were reported (Metzler, Biglan, & Rusby, 2001). It therefore appears unclear whether this approach can in fact reduce the level of bullying conceived as inseparable from aggression in general.

A related question is whether there may be significant gains in viewing bullying as a subset of aggressive behavior, that is, abusive behavior in a situation in which there is an imbalance of power? Conceiving it in this way would incline teachers to think about bullying as involving more than acts of aggressive behavior. It would result in them focusing on power differences that make bullying possible, and also attitudes and beliefs that underlie and lead to aggressive acts. Those who think this way argue that countering bullying should include encouraging students to think about moral issues and especially the unfairness implicit in bullying behavior and the harm it does, understand the nature of prejudice, develop greater sensitivity and empathy towards others, cooperate more effectively, and, in general, become more emotionally and socially intelligent. Bullying is thus seen as capable of being countered by inducing changes in the thinking and feelings of individual students and their interpersonal relationships rather than by arranging appropriate contingencies of reinforcement to operate upon student behavior.

Finally, as we have seen, there is considerable variation in the way schools deal with cases of bullying. Although most teachers continue to favor a traditional, disciplinary approach, alternative or supplementary methods are being employed in some schools. These include strengthening the victim, peer mediation, restorative practices, the support group method and the method of shared concern, each making distinctive assumptions about how bully/victim problems can best be resolved. Which approach a school opts to employ may depend not only on the assumptions it makes on what can stop the bullying but also on the kind of bullying that is being addressed, such as its degree of severity, whether it has been provoked, and whether there is group involvement.

Conclusions and Implications for Practice

Schools are being placed under increasing pressure to provide places in which children can learn without being bullied by peers. Information about what can be done to prevent bullying and
take appropriate action when cases occur has grown in recent years in many countries, and there are encouraging signs that in many schools bullying has been reduced. It still remains seriously high and disturbing incidents of great harm and even cases of suicide of tormented students continually come to light.

Currently there is among educators a broad level of agreement regarding the things schools can do to address the problem. These include the recognition of the need for schools to have an anti-bullying policy and plan, the education of children about bullying and especially its unacceptability as a way of behaving, and a readiness to take appropriate action with cases of reported bullying. However, important differences at both theoretical and practical levels remain. This is especially apparent in the way bullying is conceptualized and the actions that flow from different conceptualizations. On the one hand, following the Bully Prevention in Positive Behavior Support (BP-PBS), many schools are persuaded that bullying should be conceived as essentially no different from other acts of aggressive behavior and invariably dealt with by the use of reinforcement strategies. Others conceive bullying as a kind of aggressive behavior that constitutes an abuse of power and emphasize the importance of social and emotional learning and the development of constructive relationships among members of the school community. In pursuit of this aim some schools introduce content and activities into the school curriculum designed to develop greater emotional intelligence and the capacity to provide support for students who need their help.

Divisions do exist among teachers as to how schools should respond to the problem of bullying. As noted earlier, striking differences of opinion occur over whether students should be helped to stand up to bullies with some teachers believing this is both desirable and practical, and others feeling that this is blaming the victim and its advocacy unhelpful. We have seen that at a more general level there is a tendency among some legislators, as well as some teachers, to take a strong no-nonsense legalistic or justice-driven approach. In contrast, there are educators and teachers whose approach is guided more by considerations of care and the need to help solve relationship problems between students (Ellis & Shute, 2007; Noddings, 2010). Clearly, these different orientations must affect the way schools go about countering bullying.

There is in some quarters a belief in a silver bullet that will solve the problem. Draconian and simplistic remedies are sometimes proposed. However, as the complexity of the problem becomes more and more apparent, it is becoming evident that a wide range of methods of intervention, both proactive and reactive is needed. As discussed earlier, bullying can and does take a variety of forms and treatments may differ as is appropriate according to its nature. Alternative and complementary measures need to be taken by schools depending on the specific situation or problem with which they must deal.
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