

ISPC

ALWAYS HERE FOR CHILDREN



**A SELF-EVALUATION TOOL
TO COMBAT BULLYING**

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Section 1: Overview of the Self-Evaluation Tool

a) What is the Self-Evaluation Tool for schools?

The 'Shield My School' self-evaluation tool is a component of the ISPCC Shield Campaign which aims to protect children from bullying.

The tool consists of ten statements, referred to throughout the document as Shield Statements. Each of these shield statements is based on international evidence in relation to the management of bullying. The series of questions that follow each shield statement reflect evidence informed practice that has been shown to have a positive impact on bullying.

The self-evaluation tool asks a group of teachers to consider a set of evidence informed statements and questions about their schools approach to bullying. The questions are designed to act as evidence informed prompts to the school to facilitate a self-assessment of where they are in relation to the statement and known evidence based approaches to bullying. The process encourages participants to reflect on their approach to bullying, to identify the aspects where they are strong and the areas they would like to improve upon. The self-evaluation tool includes an action plan for schools to record the outcome of their evaluation, their proposed actions, time-frames and review schedule.

This self-reflection component enables schools to measure where they are in relation to meeting the core elements of an evidence informed approach to bullying and the built-in evaluation focuses efforts towards acknowledging strengths and identifying areas for improvement.

The overall aim of the self-evaluation tool is to help schools identify how effective they are in dealing with, and reducing, incidences of bullying within the school and community environment. To be effective the self-evaluation tool relies on honesty and trust within the group and therefore individuals require a secure setting where difficulties can be raised and opinions challenged in a constructive manner. Within this safe group setting teachers are encouraged to consider their personal and combined approach to bullying, and the systems they have in place within the school, while being mindful of the available evidence and best practice research.

b) Why a Shield?

The ISPCC shield symbolises protection from bullying and in meeting each of these evidence informed statements schools can help create a safer, more bully-proof

environment. While the potential for bullying will always exist where groups of people gather, an approach that harnesses the principles and actions as outlined in each shield statement will lessen the potential for harm.

c) How does the Self-Evaluation Tool work?

The tool works by bringing together school personnel with responsibility for student welfare to consider how well they deal with bullying. There are three fundamental principles required for the process to work:

- Trust and security within the group setting which is conducive to an honest debate.
- An openness to examine, to challenge, and work through a process of change focused on a specific outcome.
- A commitment to follow the process from assessment to implementation and review, forming a continuous exercise of assessment, self-reflection, and evaluation.

In completing the exercise the group is encouraged to take a step back to individually reflect on their experience and perceptions of bullying before collectively moving forward to assess how they respond to bullying. The self-evaluation tool requires commitment from the group, sufficient time allocation to allow for discussion, an acceptance of the appropriateness of honesty within the group setting, and the combined obligation of all present to implement the agreed actions.

d) What is the purpose of the Self-Evaluation Tool?

There is now a large body of evidence regarding effective approaches to bullying and what has been proven to work. This self-evaluation tool helps break through this body of evidence and present the information in a user friendly format of information, prompts, self-reflection and evaluation. Through completing and working toward each of the shield statements teachers can be reassured that they are taking an evidence informed approach to tackling bullying and that the efforts they put in to combat bullying have been proven to work.

e) Who is the self-evaluation tool designed for?

The self-evaluation tool is designed for teachers working within primary and secondary school environments. The self-evaluation tool can be used on a one-to-one basis for

individual reflection, but it is best used as part of a group setting where a level of trust and security exists among the members.

f) How will I use it?

The self-evaluation tool is designed to be completed in one sitting within two hours. Further time may be required for more detailed discussions arising from a particular shield statement and this can be built into the school action plan.

A school may decide to work through the tool over a series of meetings focusing on different sections at each meeting. This may allow for more time for discussion however, it will help maintain momentum in the discussion if a significant time lapse does not occur between sessions.

The process is time efficient and generally more effective if preparation by participants occurs prior to the meeting however, this is not an absolute requirement.

In working through each statement the school embarks on a journey of reflection of where they are in terms of an evidence informed approach to bullying.

g) Who will I include in the group?

It is essential that the self-evaluation exercise is fully supported by the person(s) within the school who has overall responsibility for school management, generally the school principal and/or board of management. The tool works best if all individuals working within the school environment are involved including those responsible for supervision outside of the classroom. It is essential to bear in mind that an atmosphere of trust is integral to the process allowing for an open and honest debate of existing strengths and areas to build upon.

h) What are the benefits to our school?

The school self-evaluation tool will help schools understand how effective they are in relation to bullying based on the evidence provided throughout the document. This tool is designed to be used among teachers within a safe group setting. Through a means of self-assessment and useful prompts teachers are encouraged to self-evaluate their effectiveness in relation to bullying and actively contribute to a whole school action plan to combat bullying.

The process will help generate a time efficient response to bullying as each shield statement is evidence informed making it more likely that positive effects identified in research studies will be replicated within participating schools. The unified approach to

the exercise is fundamental, sending a consistent message to students within the school and providing added reassurance to parents and guardians regarding the schools approach to bullying.

i) What help is available?

The self-evaluation tool is available to download free of charge from the ISPCC website www.ispcc.ie. The ISPCC would like to be kept informed of usage of the tool and welcomes submissions and user feedback regarding the appropriateness of the tool in meeting the school's needs.

The ISPCC is available to respond to queries and offer support to individual schools through the ISPCC's Anti-Bullying Coordinator. This support can be accessed through contacting our head office on 01 6767960.

Section 2: The Evidence Base & Legal and Policy Context

The Education (Welfare) Act section 23(3) requires that every school must have in place an **anti-bullying policy** within the framework of the school's overall school code of behaviour which includes specific measures to deal with bullying behaviour.

The Department of Education and Skills (DES) **Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour** offer a guide to schools to develop anti-bullying strategies but have not been updated since 1993. The DES issued a template as a **guide** to developing an anti-bullying policy in 2006. A recent report 'Action Plan on Bullying' from the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills (01/13) recommends the revision of the existing anti-bullying guidelines and the 2006 policy template for post primary schools (DES 2013 page 108).¹

This 'Action Plan on Bullying' recommends nine core principles that should underpin a schools approach to preventing and tackling bullying which are as follows:

- A positive school culture and climate
- School-wide approach
- Effective leadership
- A shared understanding of what bullying is and its impact
- Anti-Bullying policies
- Consistent recording of reported bullying behaviour
- Education and training
- Prevention strategies and awareness raising
- Established evidence based intervention strategies

Furthermore the 'Action Plan on Bullying' strongly recommends the implementation of existing legislation in order to promote safety and welfare within schools. This legislation includes the following:

- Equal Status Acts
- Employment Equality Acts (1998-2008)

¹ DES (2013) 'Action Plan on Bullying' Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills.

- Safety, Health & Welfare at Work Act (2005)
- Education (Welfare) Act (2000)
- Education Act (1998)

Section 3: 10 Shield Statements about our School

Section one outlines the process by which schools move through the self-evaluation tool which begins with a shield statement. Following are the 10 shield statements each based on international evidence of effective approaches, values and beliefs about bullying.

1. We acknowledge that bullying is an issue for all schools and the wider community of which schools are a part.
2. Our school has an effective Anti-Bullying Policy in place which is open for all to see and passed on to all concerned.
3. Our policy is fully implemented and bullying incidences are recorded, analysed and followed through consistently.
4. Our whole community approach to bullying is reflected in our policy which is a culmination of ideas and thoughts from the whole school community.
5. Our school is inclusive and our activities acknowledge diversity and individual difference among students, parents and teachers.
6. Our evidence based intervention strategies are actively implemented on an on-going basis and address the multiple aspects of need that exist in every bullying situation.
7. Our school is open to the uptake of new ideas, learning new skills and a change of behaviour in order to combat bullying.
8. Our school actively tackles bullying behaviour through awareness raising, tolerance and empathy building as well as improving general levels of self- esteem.
9. Our internal culture promotes openness and transparency and constructive relationships are in place between teachers, parents and students whereby feelings and concerns are acknowledged, listened to and supported.
10. Our students are able to report bullying concerns, they feel listened to and we help build confidence.

Shield Statement 1.

We acknowledge that bullying is an issue for all schools and the wider community of which schools are a part.

Cross world research clearly shows children bully other children (Baldry & Farrington 1999; Berthold & Hoover 2000; Olweus 1995). Regardless of the best efforts of the school the potential for bullying still exists and a consistent unified approach is required to prevent bullying from occurring.

Group Reflection:

- 1.1 *Does bullying exist in our school?*
- 1.2 *How do we define bullying and are we alert to the possibility of bullying occurring in our school that goes unreported?*
- 1.3 *How do we distinguish between bullying behaviour and normal banter or disputes among students?*
- 1.4 *Are we alert to the different forms of bullying that occur such as identity based bullying and cyber bullying?*
- 1.5 *Is there a shared understanding of bullying within the whole school community which includes students, parents and guardians?*
- 1.6 *Do we work to help students and parents understand their role in preventing and addressing bullying behaviour?*
- 1.7 *Do we talk to the whole school at least once a term reminding all the students of the bullying policy, the importance of students supporting each other and everyone's responsibility to reject bullying behaviour?*
- 1.8 *Is there an anti-bullying coordinator within the school, and is this person's role clearly identified?*

ACTION PLAN

We are good at:

We want to improve upon:

We agree to the following actions:

Person responsible:

- I.
- II.
- III.
- IV.
- V.

Review date:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Shield Statement 2:

Our school has an effective anti-bullying policy in place which is open for all to see and passed on to all concerned.

An effective anti-bullying policy is a culmination of inputs, suggestions and solutions from the whole school community bringing a feeling of ownership from all involved (Smith, Cowie & Sharp, 1994). The policy is based on current evidence of how best to respond to bullying while taking account of legal and recommended guidelines (O' Moore & Minton, 2004). The policy has a clear understanding of bullying and details the appropriate steps required to resolve and prevent bullying within the school and community environment.

Group Reflection:

- 2.1 *Do we have an anti-bullying policy and does it list actions to both counter and prevent bullying?*
- 2.2 *Does the policy contain a clear definition of bullying and does it match our understanding of bullying? (See section 1.2.)*
- 2.3 *Do the actions listed to counter bullying include how it is reported, investigated and recorded as well as sanctions and supports for those involved in bullying behaviour?*
- 2.4 *Were teachers, parents and students involved in the anti-bullying policy formation and was consensus achieved?*
- 2.5 *Is the policy accessible, clearly written and easy to understand taking account of individual abilities and levels of understanding of bullying?*
- 2.6 *Does our anti-bullying policy stand-alone or does it form part of a wider school code of behaviour?*
- 2.7 *Is the policy regularly reviewed, updated and evaluated with a clear dissemination plan in place?*
- 2.8 *Do we have a shared responsibility approach for the implementation and dissemination of the policy?*

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Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Shield Statement 3:

Our policy is fully implemented and bullying incidences are recorded, analysed and followed through consistently.

All anti-bullying policies require practical implementation on a daily basis emphasising the inherent code of behaviour that exists between students, teachers, parents and the wider school community. Evidence suggests that documenting incidents of bullying leads to a reduction of episodes, especially the physical bullying of boys (Flygare E. et al 2001).

Group reflection:

- 3.1 *Are accurate records of bullying maintained within the school and are they regularly reviewed and analysed?*
- 3.2 *Do we evaluate our records to inform our thinking about bullying? This includes an analysis of the level, prevalence and type of bullying recorded, the frequency of reporting, the existence of trends such as peak periods that indicate a heightened risk of bullying and the effectiveness of actions taken.*
- 3.3 *Do our records indicate that we are a 'telling school' where concerns about bullying or incidences witnessed by bystanders are reported?*
- 3.4 *How often do we speak about bullying within the day to day classroom setting?*
- 3.5 *Are our discussions about bullying proactive, or do they primarily stem from a breach in behaviour?*
- 3.6 *Do we reinforce key messages about our approach to bullying on a more formal basis such as during a specific class each term?*
- 3.7 *How well do we manage the additional demands that a consistent and regular approach to anti-bullying places upon us?*
- 3.8 *Is there a shared responsibility between students, parents and teachers to implement the anti-bullying policy?*

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Shield Statement 4:

Our whole community approach to bullying is reflected in our policy which is a culmination of ideas and thoughts from the whole school community.

Students, parents and the wider community members have a greater sense of ownership and commitment to a policy if they have had the opportunity to feed into the process and have their views heard. Schools who adopt a whole school approach experience a significant reduction in bullying. (Olweus, D. 1993b). Whereas the school is required to initiate the formation of the policy, the involvement of all interested groups will garner support and a level of acceptance not easily achieved with a policy that is 'handed down from on high'. (O' Moore & Minton, 2004).

Group Reflection:

- 4.1 *Were students, parents, teachers, and other interested groups actively involved in the policy formation and are the ideas and thoughts of the whole school community accurately reflected in the anti-bullying policy?*
- 4.2 *Was the process of involvement designed to be empowering to all individuals concerned taking account of the different levels of understanding and the inherent power imbalance that can exist within groups?*
- 4.3 *Is there a whole community approach to bullying and a feeling of shared ownership of the anti-bullying policy among students, parents and teachers and wider community members?*
- 4.4 *What on-going opportunities do students, parents and teachers have to input into the policy and have their views heard?*
- 4.5 *Is the anti-bullying policy supported and accepted within the whole school community or are there aspects that remain contentious?*
- 4.6 *Is the existence of a policy specific to bullying visible within our school and do students, parents and teachers have access to the policy on an on-going basis?*

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Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Shield Statement 5:

Our school is inclusive and our activities acknowledge diversity and individual difference among students, parents and teachers.

A school that values difference and openly acknowledges diversity will help promote a culture of tolerance and acceptance among the whole school community. The promotion of tolerance and respect for individual differences will help prevent and counter bullying behaviour on the basis of perceived differences (O' Moore & Minton, 2004). To promote a positive culture within the school and an atmosphere of inclusivity key messages need to be reinforced throughout the school year.

Group Reflection:

- 5.1 *Is there a positive culture based on inclusivity within the school?*
- 5.2 *Is our school welcoming of difference?*
- 5.3 *Does homophobic bullying exist within our school and what messages do we portray to LGBT students within the school?*
- 5.4 *What key messages do we actively reinforce in our school regarding inclusivity and diversity?*
- 5.5 *Do respectful relationships exist between students, teachers and parents?*
- 5.6 *Can students, parents and teachers share an open exchange of ideas and concerns about bullying leading to a constructive course of action based on our anti-bullying policy?*
- 5.7 *Do we take positive steps to acknowledge diversity among our school population?*
- 5.8 *What do our records on bullying tell us about our openness to difference and the welcoming of diversity within our school?*

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Shield Statement 6:

Our evidence based intervention strategies are actively implemented on an on-going basis and address the multiple aspects of need that exist in each bullying situation.

All approaches to bullying should acknowledge the different levels of need that exist in every bullying situation. In fostering a multi-dimensional approach schools can address the needs of all those affected by bullying from the victim to the perpetrator to the bystander. It is only through identifying and addressing the needs of all involved that a school can be truly proactive against bullying. This code of behaviour requires leadership at management level and the cooperation of all within the school environment.

Close attention is required to draw in the bystander as bullying behaviour that is ignored is silently condoned and reinforced (Craig et al 2000b).

Group Reflection:

- 6.1 *Does our policy clearly state the actions that will be taken and the supports available to the victims of bullying?*
- 6.2 *Does our policy address the needs of the bully and the supports available to bring about a change in behaviour?*
- 6.3 *How well do we draw in bystanders and do we actively encourage and support them when they come forward?*
- 6.4 *Does our policy meet the overall needs of all those affected by bullying within the school environment?*
- 6.5 *Do we raise awareness among students, parents and teachers of the effects of bullying and our combined responsibility to be proactive against bullying?*
- 6.6 *Do we provide regular training and support for all those affected by bullying and do we work with bullies to improve the whole school environment?*

ACTION PLAN

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Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Shield Statement 7.

Our school is open to the uptake of new ideas, learning new skills and a change of behaviour in order to combat bullying. Our students are regularly taught new ways of responding to bullying and teachers receive regular training and updates of evidence based approaches to tackling bullying.

Teachers need to have a thorough understanding of bullying behaviours which will enhance their confidence to intervene (Craig et al 2000b).

Group Reflection:

- 7.1 *Are we open to hearing about new ideas and adopting new ways of working with regard to bullying?*
- 7.2 *Would we feel challenged by a new behavioural approach to bullying or are we actively seeking new ways of working to tackle bullying?*
- 7.3 *Do we receive training, guidance and feedback of how to prevent and address bullying in the school environment?*
- 7.4 *Are we aware of the different approaches to bullying such as 'The No Blame' approach which explores how behaviours impact on victims rather than seeking to punish the offender?²*
- 7.5 *Are lessons incorporating bullying given throughout the year to allow for continuous reflection on appropriate behaviour within the whole school community?*
- 7.6 *Is there a mechanism or process in place to allow the whole school community to bring forward new ideas and suggestions regarding bullying to ensure a regular flow of communication between all parties?*

² The ISPC does not promote any one particular approach to bullying. Information regarding evidence informed approaches to bullying based on the individual needs and requirements of each school as arising from the school action plan is available from the ISPC.

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Shield Statement 8.

Our school actively tackles bullying behaviour through awareness raising, tolerance and empathy building as well as improving general levels of resilience and self- esteem.

Children with higher self-esteem are more likely to use active and assertive responses to bullying behaviours and experience less negative effects of bullying (Sharp 1996). Research shows that children involved in bullying behaviour have lower levels of self-esteem compared to their peer group (O'Moore & Kirkham 2001). Opportunities to work or play in a cooperative group helps children to develop assertive, problem solving skills and increases their ability to tolerate different perspectives on the same issue (Cowie & Sharp, 1994).

Group Reflection:

- 8.1 *Do we hold regular events which focus on raising awareness of bullying, its effects, and available support?*
- 8.2 *Is there classroom based anti-bullying work which includes awareness raising, class charters, self-esteem and assertiveness training?*
- 8.3 *Do students have opportunities to work and play in cooperative groups to help them develop assertive problem-solving skills and an ability to tolerate different perspectives on the same issue?*
- 8.4 *Are there any other specific actions that we could take that would promote self-esteem and resilience building among students?*
- 8.5 *Are any of our actions in relation to bullying damaging to self –esteem?*
- 8.6 *Do we have a multi-faceted approach which includes learning on the part of parents in the development of self-esteem and resilience through positive parenting?*

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Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Shield Statement 9.

Our internal culture promotes openness and transparency and constructive relationships are in place between teachers, parents and students whereby feelings and concerns are acknowledged, listened to and supported.

An effective approach to bullying is one which fosters and encourages positive pro-social behaviours from students once negative bullying behaviours are addressed and not accepted. An atmosphere is needed whereby staff members consistently encourage pro-social values and behaviours and where clear sanctions against bullying behaviour are implemented consistently (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000).

Group Reflection:

- 9.1 *Is there one person in our school, such as an anti-bullying coordinator, who leads on the implementation of the anti-bullying policy, the collation and analysis of record data and the coordination of anti-bullying training sessions within schools?*
- 9.2 *Is the role of the lead person/anti-bullying coordinator clearly defined and does it emphasise the equal responsibility of all teachers to proactively address bullying?*
- 9.3 *Do we talk to the whole school at least once a term, reminding all the students of the bullying policy, importance of all students supporting each other and everyone's responsibility to reject bullying behaviour?*
- 9.4 *When bullying is thought to occur, are the alleged bully and victim interviewed separately and are there adequate supports in place for both throughout the process of investigation?*
- 9.5 *In the case of a group of individuals alleged to be involved in bullying is each individual interviewed separately before bringing the group together?*
- 9.6 *Are sanctions and behaviour contracts in use and are they readily utilised with review dates agreed?*

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Shield Statement 10.

Our students are able to report bullying concerns, they feel listened to and supported and we help build confidence.

Students and bystanders need to feel empowered to let trusted adults know of any bullying concerns confident that a consistent and fair approach will be adopted as per the anti-bullying policy. When bullying behaviour is ignored it is condoned which can allow other children to join in or passively view the incident. This can result in the bullying behaviour being reinforced with the bully gaining status through aggressive behaviour thus continuing the cycle of negative behaviour and increasing the likelihood of others joining in (Craig et al, 2000b).

Group Reflection:

- 10.1 *Is there an open dialogue among students, parents and teachers whereby bullying concerns can be raised and issues discussed?*
- 10.2 *What facilities or supports are in place to report a bullying concern and are students informed of them on a regular basis?*
- 10.3 *Are there methods of reporting that protect the identity of the person making the concern?*
- 10.4 *How easy is it for bystanders to come forward with concerns?*
- 10.5 *Are students regularly made aware of the supports available to them to report bullying?*
- 10.6 *Do any of our actions inadvertently condone or reinforce bullying?*

ACTION PLAN

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Review date:

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Summary of School Action Plan:

Section 4: Evaluation

No	SHIELD STATEMENT	Implementation Date
1	<p>We acknowledge that bullying is an issue for all schools and the wider community of which schools are a part.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
2	<p>Our school has an effective anti-bullying policy in place which is open for all to see and passed on to all concerned.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
3	<p>Our policy is fully implemented and bullying incidences are recorded, analysed and followed through consistently.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
4	<p>Our whole community approach to bullying is reflected in our policy which is a culmination of ideas and thoughts from the whole school community.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
5	<p>Our school is inclusive and our activities acknowledge diversity and individual difference among students, parents and teachers.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	

No	SHIELD STATEMENT	Implementation Date
6	<p>Our evidence-based intervention strategies are actively implemented on an on-going basis and address the multiple aspects of need that exist in every bullying situation.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
7	<p>Our school is open to the uptake of new ideas, learning new skills and a change of behaviour in order to combat bullying.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
8	<p>Our school actively tackles bullying behaviour through awareness raising, tolerance and empathy building as well as improving general levels of self-esteem.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
9	<p>Our internal culture promotes openness and transparency and constructive relationships are in place between teachers, parents and students whereby feelings and concerns are acknowledged, listened to and supported.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	
10	<p>Our students are able to report bullying concerns; they feel listened to and we help build confidence.</p> <p><u>Outcome of actions:</u></p>	

Signature: _____ Date: _____

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Notes:



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