



Tackling Bullying at School through Citizenship and Human Rights Education

Overview

The film *Beat Bullying* aims to show how the introduction of a human rights ethos in a school can help to stop bullying.

Bullying is not a single violent act; it is a series of violent acts. When teachers, personnel and students all believe in the need to respect human rights and know what to do when they witness bullying, it is unlikely that it could go on for long without anyone noticing or doing something to stop it.

The film highlights the importance of involving children and enabling them to participate. Children who know that bullying is banned and why, and that they have the support of adults and their fellow pupils, are more likely to intervene.

The actors in the film, aged 6-16, are all volunteers who wanted to help raise awareness of what can be done to tackle bullying. Some of them have themselves been victims.

Practical Information

Beat Bullying is designed both to raise awareness of the importance of citizenship and human rights education and as a teaching tool. It shows two typical bullying situations, one involving physical intimidation among ten-year-old pupils and the other cyber-bullying, among teenagers. The scenarios are left open to prompt discussion of the possible reasons behind the incidents and the pupils own experiences.

It is available, in original English and French versions, on www.coe.int/beatbullying and YouTube from 2pm on 30 January 2014.

German and Russian versions will be available from March 2014.

Governments are encouraged to distribute the film to schools. Those interested in having further language versions made should contact edchre@coe.int.

Website

www.coe.int/beatbullying

The Problem

Bullying in schools is a worldwide problem.

As highlighted in the Parliamentary Assembly's 2011 Report, *Education against violence at school* (Doc. 12513), bullying is the result of aggressive behavior that has to be stopped; the consequences are serious for all concerned and can be fatal for the victims.

All children have the right to learn in a safe environment. They cannot fulfil their academic or personal potential if they are using their energy to protect themselves from aggression. A school where children feel frightened cannot be a good school.

Solutions

Because the problem of bullying is widespread and persistent, it is sometimes pushed aside as inevitable, but parents, teachers and children need to know that something can be done to tackle it and what can be done.

The Council of Europe offers simple and inexpensive solutions which can be introduced in any school anywhere.

Essentially, schools must create a human rights and citizenship culture, where everyone understands that he or she has both the responsibility to treat others with respect and the right to be treated with respect.

A human rights ethos must pervade the canteen and playground as well as the classroom; relations with parents and the local community, as well as pupils and teachers. To combat bullying, everyone needs to work together.

What is required, on one hand, is good will and determination at all levels to make the necessary changes.

All 47 Member States of the Council of Europe have already adopted its *Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education*, which requires them: 'to combat all forms of discrimination and violence, especially bullying and harassment' in schools.

What is also needed, to create this whole school human rights approach, are educational tools. Education and training for democratic citizenship and human rights is crucial. It raises awareness and promotes respect for human dignity and social cohesion. It provides knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for handling diversity and difference and for preventing violence at school. It affirms the existence of others, rejects violence and protects children's rights.

Council of Europe Tools

Human rights and citizenship teaching materials

Publications include: *Human Rights and Democracy Start with Us: Charter for All; Compass* and *Compassito*; and, the *Beat Bullying* film.

School management

Democratic Governance of Schools provides guidelines on how to ensure respect for human rights and to promote the participation of students in all areas of school life.

Teacher training

The Pestalozzi Programme trains 1,000 teachers a year across Europe, with many activities to create a positive and non-violent atmosphere in schools and over 100 online training/teaching resources.

Training young people

Every year 5,000 youth leaders are trained in the European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest and the European Youth Foundation supports activities involving 15,000 young people.

Children's rights teaching materials

Passport to your rights introduces children to their rights and obligations, showing them how their own and others' rights need to be respected.