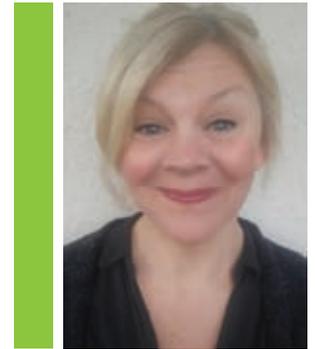


Study finds one bully per class in Irish Primary Schools



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A new study by the Anti-Bullying Institute (abi.ie) an Irish research institute focusing solely on bullying behaviours at school level, has found that there is at least one potential perpetrator of bullying behaviour in every primary school classroom in Ireland. The study is the first of its kind to look at bullying behaviour patterns in Irish primary school children from ages 6 to 12.

From a sample of over 4,000 primary school children, the study has revealed that around 850 children (21%) feel bullied, almost 1,430 of children (35%) witness bullying and a startling 214 children (5%) admitted to using bullying behaviours. A further 1,071 children (27%) affirmed that they had reported bullying.

This effectively means that 50% of Irish primary school children are suffering serious stress and a long term threat to their mental health due to exposure to bullying.

Asked about their experience with bullying in their current school year, 789 children (20%) reported being victims of repeated name calling, 694 children (17%) reported being repeatedly physically hurt. Interestingly, the lowest reported bullying behaviour was cyber-bullying, with 505 children (12%) reporting being victims of on-line bullying.

The very large international PISA study of 15-year olds in secondary schools found that there were significant differences between schools, but we did not find a pattern of especially "good" or particularly "bad" schools in our sample of 28 primary schools. Another interesting finding was that children admitting to bullying were

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very evenly distributed over classes. With around one student using bullying behaviours per class, we are looking here at evidence for a systemic emergence of the 'bully' role phenomenon. The PISA study also confirmed in its findings that "on average, there is a bully in every class." (OECD 2017, 3).

Variations between primary schools were found in respect of understanding and reporting bullying behaviour. "This indicates the vital importance of best practice intervention planning within schools to make sure school children's voices are being heard and that they can trust the school is acting on what they are saying" says PD Dr. Micha Strack, abi Research Advisor.

The abi programme teaches young children what bullying behaviour actually is, enhances caring behaviour and empathetic responses, how to manage their wellbeing and mental health and develop frustration tolerance in potential bullying cycles. The initiative is now being taken up by a number of county councils, including Fingal.

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