Lesson 5: Bullying Prevention and Pupils with SEND

It is estimated that in excess of 5% of Children or Young people (CYP) aged from birth to 14 have a disability by The World Health Organization in its World Report on Disability (WHO, 2020). There has been an ongoing policy emphasis on including CYP with disabilities within mainstream school settings and supporting inclusive and approach practice across school practices (Buchner et al, 2021; NCSE, 2016). This means that children with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) are accessing education in mainstream school setting with increasing frequency in recent decades and have greater contact with the general pupil population. CYP who can be categorised as presenting with SEND or fitting within this category can diverge or differ greatly from each other. The category of SEND itself is very broad and includes individuals who have a wide range of diagnosed learning differences or disabilities.

- 5.1. Categories of Special Education Need & Disability
- 5.2 Bullying and CYP with SEND
- 5.3 Individualised Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning
- 5.4. Inclusive Activities and Approaches
- 5.5. SEND and A Whole Education Approach to School-Based Bullying Prevention

5.1. Categories of Special Education Need & Disability

In Ireland, the Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Act (GoI, 2004) defined Special educational needs as:

… a restriction in the capacity of the person to participate in and benefit from education on account of an enduring physical, sensory, mental health or learning disability, or any other condition which results in a person learning differently from a person without that condition.

The EPSEN Act was clear that, while a disability may lead to a CYP presenting with support needs or a special education need, this may not always be the case. It is also important to understand that a child can have a disability but not have any special educational needs arising from that disability which require additional supports in school.

The ESPEN Act further outlined four different areas of disability from which special educational needs may arise :

• physical

• sensory

• mental health

• learning disability

These broad categories of disability which can lead to additional areas of support need are also referenced in the UKs 0-25 SEND Code of Practice (2015).

These broad categories were further divided within the UK School Census categories of special educational needs include:

- Specific learning difficulties (SpLD);

- Moderate learning difficulty (MLD);

- Severe learning difficulty (SLD);

- Profound and multiple learning difficulty (PMLD);

- Speech, language and communication needs (SLCN);

- Social, emotional and mental health (SEMH);

- Autistic spectrum disorder (ASD);

- Visual impairment (VI);

- Hearing impairment (HI);

- Multisensory impairment (MSI);

- Physical disability (PD);

- 'SEN support' but no specialist assessment of type of need (NSA)

Importantly, the UKs code of practice (2015) emphasises how such categories of disability can be used to support the inclusive educational practices within schools in the following manner:

'The purpose of identification is to work out what action the school needs to take, not to fit a pupil into a category. In practice, individual children or young people often have needs that cut across all these areas and their needs may change over time... A detailed assessment of need should ensure that the full range of an individual's needs is identified, not simply the primary need.' (section 6.27)

This approach emphasises the role of assessment in identifying the individual profiles of CYP who may present with SEND. These profiles are then advised to be used to allocate resources or supports to ensure the CYP receives the support they may require.

Such an approach is particularly important given the complexity of profile that is common among CYP with SEND. The reality is that the diagnostic frameworks which guide the identification of discrete categories of SEND are increasingly viewed as overly simplifying the complexity of many children's presentations (Embracing Complexity Coalition, 2019; Gillberg, 2010). In the case of the range of diverse neurodevelopment conditions which commonly contribute to SEND diagnosis, there is commonly significant overlap across conditions (Embracing Complexity Coalition, 2019) and co-occurring diagnosis. For example, in the case of Autism, one study found that 70% of Autistic children had a comorbid psychiatric presentation, and 41% had two or more (Simonoff, Pickles, Charman, Chandler, Loucas,& Baird, 2008). Rogers (2019) points out that between 22% and 84% of autistic children and 35% to 77% of adult's report anxiety, with 50% of children describing this as impacting on daily life. The incidence of autism within the population of Ireland is currently estimated to be 1 in 65 (HSE, 2018), while to assessed prevalence of *the same* condition in Northern Ireland is 4.6% of the population. The figure below indicates the level of overlap across the range of Neurodevelopmental differences in CYP with disability, emphasising the need for individualised profiling and assessment of children.

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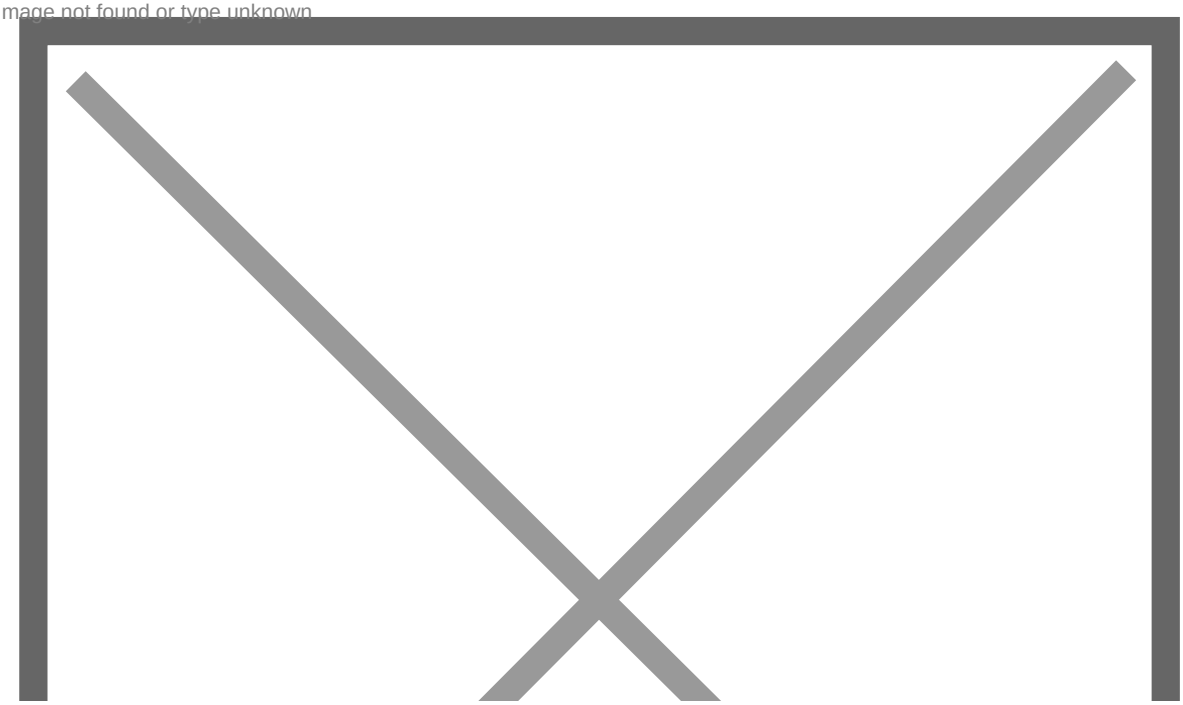


Figure 1. Neurodevelopment differences and their overlap.

5.2 Bullying and CYP with SEND

There is an increasing awareness among the public and within policy development of the phenomenon of bullying and/or cyberbullying involving school-age CYP (Carrington et al., 2017; Cross, Epstein et al. 2011; Cross, Monks et al. 2011; Murray-Harvey and Slee 2010). There is a large literature indicating that CYP with disabilities are more vulnerable across a range of power imbalances or risk factors contributing increased experiences of bullying (Álvarez-García et al., 2015). Indeed, Rose & Espelage (2012) suggest that CYP with SEND are twice as likely to experience peer victimization relative to their non-disabled peers while other studies have estimated that they are 2 to 4 times more likely to be bullied (Hartleyet al., 2015). In the US Blake et al. (2012) reported 24.5% of elementary, 34.1% of middle school, and 26.6% of high school of CYP with SEND met the profile of bully-victims.

A complex picture emerges regarding bullying which may involve those with SEND which is not limited to greater vulnerability to being targets of bullying from others. While some research indicates that CYP with SEND do experience elevated levels of bullying victimization relative to rates among nondisabled peers, other studies found CYP with disabilities displayed higher levels of bullying perpetration or aggression than their nondisabled peers (Marsh, 2018). Some researchers have suggested that CYP with more externalising behaviours are more likely to be targets or to also engage in bullying behaviour while those whose disability involves a more obvious intellectual or physical disability are more vulnerable to being targeted by peers (Farmer et al., 2015; O'Brennan et al., 2015). Indeed, students with physical disabilities constitute "easier targets" for bullies, who tend to persecute the most vulnerable. Due to the lack of understanding of their disability, they tend to be more easily excluded in the playground, as well as not considered in the school environment. Consequently, bullying for students with physical disabilities adds to their feeling of exclusion and low self-esteem, which in turn can worsen their mental health and lead to depression, increased anxiety, or even suicidal thoughts.

Autistic CYP experience particularly high levels of bully victimisation (Horgan et al., 2022: Cook et al., 2018; Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a; Saggers, 2015). Klin et al., 2000, (p.6) described autistic young people as "perfect victims" for bullying. Studies from the US found 90% of Autistic participants reported experience of regular bullying (Carrington et al., 2017), echoing UK finding reporting 75% of school aged students experienced bullying, rising to 82% of secondary aged students. Recent studies exploring the perspectives or experiences of autistic students attending mainstream schools reported that they reported physical abuse occurred with 'alarming regularity' (Humphrey & Lewis, 2008a), with the young people recalled being pushed, squashed behind a door, tackled and punched. Worryingly, many studies found that, while they were regularly the victims of bullying or were excluded by their peers, autistic students regularly chose not to report episodes of bullying or verbal harassment 'as long as they don't do anything physically harmful to

me, there’s no point’ (Saggers, 2015, p.39).

Hand in hand with elevated incidences of bullying among Autistic CYP, social exclusion is also a significant issue. Research from the UK found autistic students are more rejected and less popular than their non-autistic peers (Jones & Frederickson, 2010) and also than students with other forms of disability (Symes & Humphrey, 2010). Autistic students also report significantly lower levels of social support from parents, classmates, and friends (but not teachers) than other students (Humphrey & Symes, 2010), report fewer friends (Cairns & Cairns, 1994) and more limited social networks (Chamberlain et al, 2007). They are also among the most likely to be excluded from school (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007) or placed on reduced timetables than their non-autistic peers (AsIAm, 2019).

While there may be commonality from the existing literature relevant to bullying involving Autistic CYP, the profile of autism differs significantly from that of other forms of disability. It would be inadvisable to make generalisations across the spectrum of CYP with SEND given these well-documented differences in strengths and support needs. This has obvious implications for interventions to support CYP with SEND who are experiencing bullying in school settings.

5.3 Individualised Inclusion and Universal Design for Learning

In order to benefit from any bullying prevention program or intervention for students with disabilities, accommodations or modifications to school social inclusion and school anti-bullying programmes will be required. This is particularly important given the profile of social exclusion and heightened experience of bullying that are common for CYP with SEND.

In designing inclusive and appropriate bullying prevention programmes it may prove beneficial to analyse some of the key components of bullying prevention programs and the characteristics and special needs of students with disabilities to ensure that the programme is 'fit for purpose'. In many instances, there will be a need for accommodations or modifications, much like what is sometimes necessary for academic content and classroom instruction (Sipal, 2013).

The need to adapt an anti-bullying programme with reference to the individual profile of particular children or young people with disabilities, school setting, or pupil population characteristic will mean planning for a diversity of approaches across schools and education systems. **Teachers** will be important factors in understanding their students, classes and schools, with a partnership approach that emphasises empowerment being advisable. The emphasis within the teacher's resources will be on developing capacity among participating teachers to work collaboratively with pupils in the development of engaging and appropriate anti-bullying programmes within their shared school settings.

Approaches to adapting school programmes and policies such that they are accessible for all students, including CYP with SEND are vital. One such framework to guide differentiation of approach is Universal Design for Learning (UDL: CAST, 2018). UDL is a framework organised according to a set of principles, in written and spoken communication, which aim to encourage transparent, inclusive, and community-driven learning and to ensure access to all within learning cohort through flexible and individual design. These guidelines are designed to support improved accessibility within curriculum design and delivery in the sphere of education and to reflect the reality that diversity of preference, ability or support needs was common among learners in many settings. It emphasises the need for schools and teachers to adopt a flexible and appropriate stance in the design of accessible and appropriate

programmes to support participation across the full pupil groups.

In summary, UDL advocates for multiple means of engagement to stimulate motivation and learning, multiple means of representation by presenting information in different ways, and multiple means of action and expression by offering differentiated ways of expressing knowledge and understanding to ensure accessibility (represented in figure 2. below).

These principles can guide school leaders and teachers in adapting or differentiation of Anti-Bullying programmes or processes within their schools. In adopting a UDL informed approach, access and flexibility can be frontloaded into the design process based on informed understanding of pupil profiles or preferences. Such an approach is vital given the diversity of profiles or presentations among cohorts of pupils, inclusive of CYP with SEND. It emphasises the importance of fostering an inclusive and flexible medium for engaging these pupils within Anti-Bullying programmes, and in the social life occurring within schools.

The development of flexible and appropriate communication mechanisms across the education community, including parents, will be of utmost importance in supporting access for students with SEND. Matching the communication form used to the profile of the participating students, allied including their perspectives and interests as part of the process of differentiation of the anti-bullying programmes are effective in supporting participation.

Universal Design for Learning - Impact of Special Needs

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Figure 2. Principles of Universal design for learning

The below detailed considerations aimed at fostering inclusion of the needs of pupils with SEND within school-based bullying prevention programmes may be useful in guiding schools/teachers (Sipal, 2013).

Individualised Planning

It is essential for teachers and intervention leaders to link with "gate-keepers" before commencing any intervention to gain access to:

- Information of pupil/ school profiles/ needs
- Information of communication/ cognitive skills
- Information regarding interests/ preferences/ motivational factors

This information is essential in developing a detailed profile of the CYP with SEND in order to identify their particular areas of strength, interest and areas of support need. This is essential in informing the design of the School-based Bullying Prevention intervention, what roles to roles to given specific CYP within the process and the design of appropriate communication approaches.

When considering the design of the intervention, the materials to be used and the role to be allocated to the CYP, it is important to tailor the degree of participation in a manner appropriate for the pupils preferences or areas of strength. Access and flexibility are key considerations within the design and planning process for the anti-bullying intervention from the outset. Such considerations are, fundamentally, based on informed understanding of participant's profiles or preferences.

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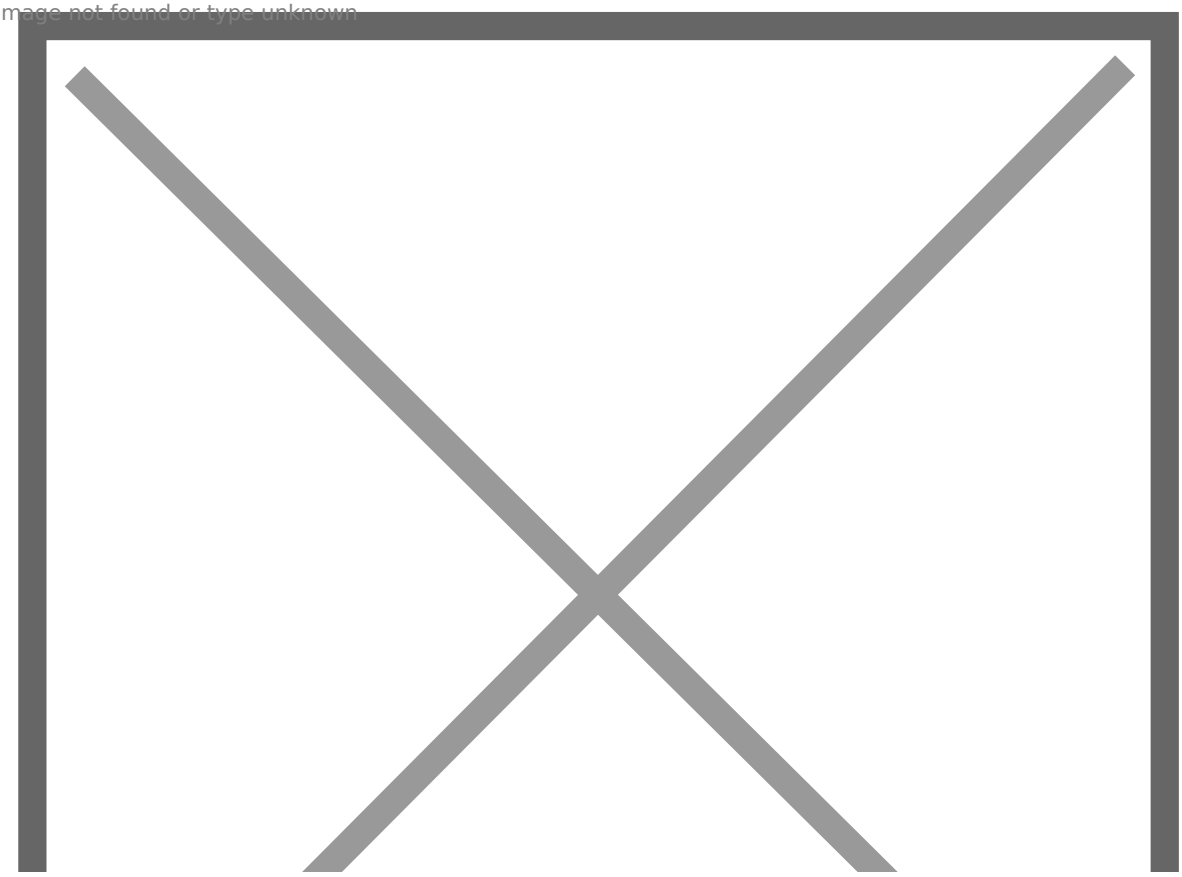


Figure 3. Levels of participation

Details of how the profile of strengths, interests or areas of support can inform the development of the bullying prevention programme include;

- Awareness of individual **cognitive profiles** (e.g., processing speed, working memory, verbal and non-verbal comprehension) will also inform the way in which information
  - is presented and received in terms of how much time is required for the individual to process questions or instructions,
  - how much time is required to formulate a response,
  - whether and what kind of prompts may be required (auditory and/or visual, human and/or material).
- Secondly, understanding the **sensory profile** of each participant will ensure that their comfort needs are met which might include arranging the physical space to allow unimpeded movement, reducing ambient auditory and visual stimuli that may be distracting or stressful, and paying attention to how the teacher/facilitator presents themselves/ interacts with the CYP with SEND. (for example moderating the tone, clarity, and volume of speaking).
- Thirdly, familiarity with the **communication profile and preferences** of each participant frames the method and materials used support participation and access for the CYP within the anti-bullying initiative. This, additionally, knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of accessible information and technologies will

need to be married to the preferences, strengths and needs of the individual pupils. These speak directly to the creation of literature for recruitment of ambassadors and participants within the anti-bullying programme. Additionally, how so support appropriate ongoing engagement during the initiative that necessarily needs to be transparent and comprehensible, to establish a motivation to participate, and to reassure participants that multiple means of communication are welcomed.

In line with a UDL framework, planning for inclusive school-based anti-bullying interventions clear and understandable materials are required which communicate the aims of initiative appropriately. Accessibility considerations within the design and selection of written communication relevant to groups of CYP with SEND is, obviously, a vitally important consideration. These factors are important for two reasons:

1. they may affect a participant's ability to comprehend information that is relevant to their decision making and consent, and
2. effective and appropriate written communication can enhance recruitment and engagement with the initiative

The use of a range of concrete, visual and accessible resources such as from visual timetables or image-based cards familiar to students to convey information or communicate responses can support participation from less verbally developed CYP with SEND. Use of sign language symbols or visual symbols to accompany text can support comprehension of information. In addition, the use of video or vlog based communication can be appealing and attractive to some cohorts of pupils with SEND. Such adaptations and focused flexibility is reflective of the UDL principle of providing multiple means of representation, providing information and content in a variety of ways in order to support understanding.

It is also advisable to consider how to co-develop an agreed coda of ground rules or principles which all participating pupils agreed to adhere to when they engage with each other during the initiative. This can be effective in fostering shared understanding and trust among the group and can support the CYP with SEND to disclose their areas of support needs or other important considerations.

Accessible methods to supporting participation in School-Based Bullying interventions

While planning carefully for flexible and inclusive practice is of vital importance, it is also important to consider UDL informed approaches to support participation *during* the intervention. How to engage, motivate and encourage participation from diverse groups of pupils which include CYP with SEND is important. There are a range of considerations which

can help guide teachers or facilitator in developing inclusive School-Based Anti-Bullying campaigns, which will be discussed below:

Key gatekeepers such as support staff, special news assistants or parents are an important source of information to supporting planning for inclusive interventions. Facilitators should liaise with these gatekeepers in order to ensure that venues, communication, information and transport are appropriate and accessible (National Disability Authority, 2002). These gatekeepers can also advocate or act as translators for the communication intentions or wishes of the pupils with SEND.

Visual representation throughout the data process it is essential to support engagement and empower pupils to express their opinions or contribute to the process. Written texts that use dense or complex language may be simplified and reinforced using social stories, photographs and pictures. Using symbols or cue cards such as ‘stop’, ‘break’ and ‘pass’ can help to alleviate frustration and guesswork by providing a visual means for participants to end the interview, take a break or skip a question (Goodall, 2020).

Adapting verbal language and communication style is essential where processing speed, working memory, verbal and non-verbal comprehension may be compromised, and will inform the way in which information is presented during the initiative or meetings. In their book *Is That Clear? Effective Communication in a Neurodiverse World*, Gaynor, Alevizos and Butler (2020) outline some considered approaches to using accessible language. These include techniques such as:

- Slowing down the language of requests and instructions: Multiple cognitive steps are involved in understanding and responding to questions including information retrieval, manipulation, and expression.
- Avoiding the insertion of unnecessary ‘filler’ words that have no meaning or purpose such as ‘I suppose’, ‘what I mean is’, ‘you might say’. This includes avoiding the temptation to fill silent pauses when the participant is considering their response.
- Speaking clearly and enunciating words to facilitate understanding; running words together as is habitually the case in normal conversation may impede understanding,

for example ‘plisoffiser’ for ‘police officer’.

- Breaking down lengthy instructions into smaller segments or steps adds clarity.
- Avoiding ambiguous words and sentences or any implied or hidden meaning.
- Use short, direct questions, and reframing these if necessary.
- Using the person's name at the beginning or end of the question or instruction.

Alternative and augmentative communication systems (AAC):

Inclusive school based programmes should also be flexible in accommodating the needs of non-speaking or less verbally sophisticated CYP with SEND. Some considerations include providing interview questions in advance to allow time for reflection and composition, posing fewer questions, and acknowledging the need for extended wait time for response (Ashby and Causton?Theoharis, 2009). The inclusion of AAC communication systems that area already used by some CYP with SEND can support their participation within school-based initiatives. Facilitating communication preferences (Paterson and Carpenter, 2015) requires familiarity with the mechanics of AAC; hardware devices use software based on alphabet boards or picture / symbol grids that allow users to combine these to form phrases or sentences.

5.4. Inclusive Activities and Approaches

Individuals with SEND may require adapted and engaging methods to support them in participating and feeling confident to contribute within school based anti-bullying initiatives. Developing engaging activities and workshops that are supportive in eliciting opinions are vital. Rather than depending upon groups settings or meetings with involved pupils, the use of inclusive elicitation techniques allows the teacher to incorporate multiple modalities which may be more accessible to CYP with SEND with limited language or use alternative ways of communicating.
A range of examples of activity-based approaches to supporting engagement will be discussed below.

Elicitation techniques, sometimes referred to as participatory tools or methods (Clark, 2005; Goodall, 2018), can be described as tasks that encourage participating pupils to discuss their ideas or contribute their perspectives (Johnson and Weller, 2002). These usually comprise activity based scaffolds or physical resources which encourage engagement. They can include visual, verbal or written material or objects as useful alternatives to direct questioning or instructions (Barton, 2015).
Their use has the potential advantage of supporting transparency, pupil comfortable and authentic communication. It may also give pupils a greater voice in order to equalize potential power imbalances between the teacher and pupils (Barton, 2015). In addition, they can support pupils confidence, easy and mitigate anxiety or fear.
Examples of elicitation approaches include, for example, activity-based tasks, photo elicitation/photovoice activities, drawing activities, ranking activities, collage making and walking interviews. Examples will be outlined below:

Activity oriented interviews: A study by Winstone et al., (2014) explored the perspectives of young autistic people about their sense of self-identity through interviews that included a number of concrete and engaging activities. Two weeks prior to the interviews, students engaged in drawing tasks exploring self-identity during an Art class (for example, Figure 3). Students were given a small mirror and asked to describe how they felt and what they thought other people would see; students were also invited to discuss the artwork they had produced.

Thus, through the use of activity-oriented interviews, students were able to explore a complex concept from their own point of view and articulate their perspectives in multiple ways.

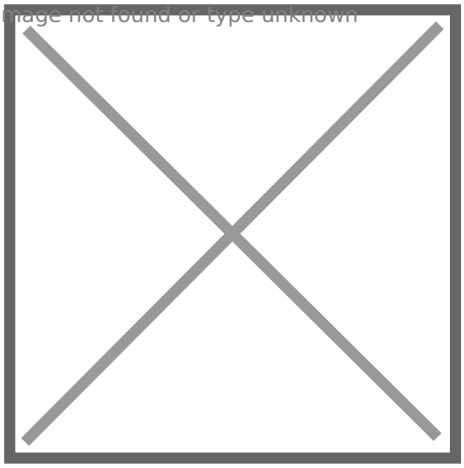


Figure 4. A student drawing of what they would like to be in the future (Winstone et al., 2014, p.198).

An alternative approach was used in a study by Goodall (2018) which explored the perspectives of a group of autistic young people regarding their own school. The drawing activities asked students to describe a good teacher and a bad teacher by adding drawings and text to two generic outlines of a figure. Pupils were also invited to design their own school activity through drawing, and some also produced a drawing of themselves in school with added annotations (Figure 5); subsequently, pupils were asked to orally describe each of these works.

Students also participated in a ‘diamond ranking’ activity (Figure 6) whereby aspects of school life were ranked from most important to least important. Additionally, students took part in a ‘beans and pots’ activity (Figure 7) by placing a personalised polystyrene ball into True, False or Unsure pots in response to a number of statements (Goodall, 2018, 2019, 2020).

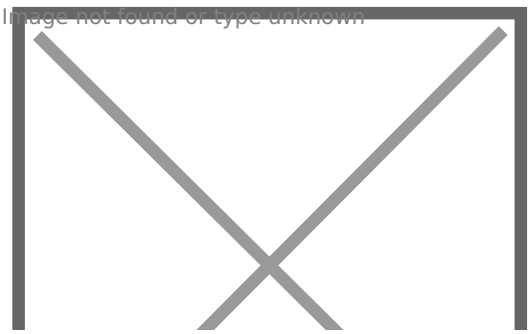


Figure 5. Student drawing from the drawing activity ‘Me at school’ (Goodall, 2019, p.21).

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Figure 6. Diamond ranking aspects of school (Goodall, 2019, p.17)

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Figure 7. ‘Beans and pots’ activity (Goodall, 2019, p.17).

5.5. SEND and A Whole Education Approach to School-Based Bullying Prevention

Research, however, indicates that programmes related to bullying prevention are most effective when they are located as part of a wider **Whole Education Approach** (WEA) that is communicated effectively at student, school staff and parent level. What constitutes effective communication will differ according to the profiles of students involved and will need to be identified in collaboration with students and teachers on a school-by-school basis.

A WEA to prevention of school-based bullying emphasises the importance of recognising schools operate within the communities within which they are located, which have values and norms of behaviour which impact school initiatives. A WEA ensures that local school initiatives recognise the importance of the interconnectedness of the school with the wider community including education, technological and societal systems, values and pressures, all of which can influence the prevalence and type of bullying and cyberbullying that occurs in a school.

A WEA comprises nine components which are considered to be interlined and interconnected within a holistic systemic framework. These components are outlined in figure 3 below and include legal and policy influence that are beyond a whole-school approach. This approach contributes to the pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is especially the case for SDG4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education, and SDG16, which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies. This approach aims to foster a more inclusive and participatory education system which would be to the benefit of SYP with SEND in schools.

https://tacklebullying.ie/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/cc-e1605190364935.png



Figure. 8: A Whole Education Approach to School-Based Bullying Prevention

The impact of school based climate and culture has been shown to have a significant impact on social inclusion and school-based bullying prevention. Whitted & Dupper, (2005) identified three key areas of focus in designing bullying prevention interventions in school settings, which include;

- School-level to change culture and climate

- Classroom level targeting teachers and other adults
- Student level targeting bullying, pupils who engage in bullying behaviour, & bystanders

These were further codified in work by Sipal (2013) who outlined a range of stratified and detailed considerations regarding how schools can develop inclusive Anti-Bullying Policies and practices.

School-level components

1. Questionnaires are utilized to assess the nature and extent of bullying and raise awareness.
    - Does the questionnaire given to students match the reading comprehension level of students with disabilities participating in the survey?
    - Does the student with disabilities understand the definitions of terms such as bully, victim, bystander, and the meaning of various forms of bullying?
    - Does the lowering functioning student with disabilities understand that he/she is actually being bullied?

2. The principal shows good leadership skills in implementing the program.
    - Is the principal a strong advocate for students with disabilities or does he/she treat them as a “surplus population”?

3. Anonymous reporting procedures are established in schools.
    - Do lower functioning students with disabilities understand the concept or the mechanism of telling faculty or staff about bullying incidents?

4. All areas of the school territory are well supervised.
    - This implies that some areas of the school are better supervised than others. Students with disabilities may lack awareness of problem areas or “hot spots” that should be avoided.

Classroom-level components

1. Regular classroom meetings are held to discuss bullying.
    - Students with disabilities may not be capable of full participation in this type of meeting. Some form of prompting may be required to enhance student participation and enable them to benefit from the classroom meetings.

2. Students are involved in developing rules about bullying.
    - Students with disabilities may not be capable of full or meaningful participation in this type of activity. Some form of prompting may be required to enhance their partial

participation.

3. The concept of bullying is integrated into the curriculum.

- Accommodations may be needed in order for higher functioning students with disabilities to master content related to bullying.
- Modifications may be needed in order for lower functioning students with disabilities to grasp developmentally appropriate curriculum content.

4. All school staff model positive interpersonal skills and cooperative learning and do not set a bad example by exhibiting dominating or authoritarian behaviour with students.

- Students with disabilities may be particularly sensitive to negative interpersonal interactions with adult school personnel.

5. Adults respond swiftly and consistently and are sympathetic to students who need support.

- Some students with disabilities infrequently display teacher-pleasing behavior and find that they are not well received by teachers and other adult school personnel. This may lead some adults to be less sympathetic to the student that is a victim of bullying.

6. Adults encourage students to include all students in play and activities.

- Students with disabilities may be excluded from play and activities because of characteristics or behaviours related to their disability and the fact that they are primary targets of bullies.

7. Adults send clear messages that bullying is not tolerated.

- Does the student with disabilities get the message?
- Is it clear to students with limited comprehension and reasoning skills?

8. Parents are encouraged to contact the school if they suspect their child is involved in bullying.

- Do parents of students with disabilities see school administrators as allies?
- Is there a history of positive interaction or hostility between the parents and school officials?
- Is the child capable of, or likely to, communicate bullying concerns to his/her parents?

Student-level components

1. Pupils experiencing bullying are taught social skills (i.e., assertiveness skills) and problem-solving skills.

- Is the curriculum appropriate for the functioning level of students with disabilities?
- Will accommodations or modifications be made?
- Give consideration to supporting agency and clear understanding of responsibility among bystanders who witness incidences of bullying behaviour.
- Restorative practices or approaches to develop empathy and understanding of the impact of bullying for other is an important response for pupils who engage in bullying towards others.

2. A support system is established for students who are the targets of bullies.
    - Is the student with disabilities capable of receiving the full benefit of the support system?
    - Will school staff recognize unique needs that may influence the dynamics of staff/student interactions?

There are a range of guidelines and specific consideration available to support schools, teachers, and school leaders in bringing about positive change in their school setting, focusing on social inclusion and participation for pupils with SEND. One example of comprehensive whole school guidelines for developing differentiated and inclusive school-based bullying prevention procedures that consider the needs of CYP with SEND is the below framework developed by the New Jersey Coalition for Bullying Prevention and Awareness (2012)

Key actions for school leaders, staff, Parents and community stakeholders

- Ensure that school policies and procedures specifically include CYP with SEND.
- Create an understanding of diversity among all students. Help students to understand ways in which we all are different and that disability is simply one of these differences.
- Ensure that materials and communications about anti-bullying and climate-strengthening approaches are modified as/if needed so that CYP with SEND understand the basic tenets and are engaged. Barriers to such understanding/engagement, including language, communication, emotional/behavioural and cognitive challenges, can all be overcome with proper modifications
- Include information that addresses anti-bullying issues specific to students with SEND in all School policy and code of behaviour training/initiatives.
- Involve families. Include students with SEND and their families in the school's anti-bullying assessment, planning and implementation activities.
- Include staff and parent/s with special education experience on the school safety (climate) team.
- Having team members who are familiar with a wide range of students with SEND will help your team be sensitive to their specific issues and challenges.

- Include students with SEND in data collection and assessment of bullying and school climate. Their voices will contribute to the development of more effective programs and policies.
- Encourage all students to participate in anti-bullying programs. For example, students with intellectual and developmental disabilities can successfully participate in curricula and programs related to improving school climate, inclusion, and anti-bullying as long as these programs are appropriately modified to meet their learning needs.
- Address isolation and moderate exclusion. Be sensitive to the needs of students who are separated out of the mainstream because they attend special class or school settings. Establish peer support programs and activities to promote friendships between students with disabilities and their mainstream peers.
- Encourage and provide for safe, accessible means for students to let an adult know about any bullying or negative behavioural interactions they have experienced.
- Address the needs of students with emotional and behavioural conditions. This subgroup may experience greater frequency of bullying (being bullied and engaging in bullying behaviour), partly due to issues related to their diagnosed condition or emotional self-regulation and impulse control challenges. All school staff should receive training in understanding and responding to children with emotional and behavioural disabilities in a supportive manner. Counselling services which focus on prosocial skill development, including anger management training, should be available.
- When bullying occurs, specific services should be available at school to help students with disabilities. Individualised plans should be developed to help students with disabilities cope with the negative impact of bullying experiences. This may include individual counselling or group counselling and restorative practice approaches to develop and strengthen relevant social and behavioural skills. Students with disabilities who engage in bullying behaviour may also need an individualised plan of intervention that provides individual counselling and/or group counselling with a focus on social skill, behavioural skill, and anger management skill development.
- School specialists, such as guidance counsellor and Special Educational Needs Coordinators may have an important role. External professionals such as psychologists and social workers can also have an important supportive roles. These professionals can work with all adults involved with the student, preparing the adults to be vigilant, protective, and ready to support skill development relevant to bullying. Specialists should consult with teachers to help teachers provide the specific support students with disabilities may need.