



Submission on School Bullying and The Impact on Mental Health

Prepared for:

The Joint Committee on Education,
Further and Higher Education, Research,
Innovation and Science

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 IPPN is the officially-recognised professional body for the leaders of Irish primary schools. It is an independent, not-for-profit voluntary association with a local, regional and national presence. Recognised by the Minister for Education as an official Education Partner, IPPN works with the Department of Education, the National Parents' Council, management bodies, unions, education agencies, academic institutions and children's charities towards the advancement of primary education. IPPN articulates the collective knowledge and professional experience of over 6,000 Principals and Deputy Principals.
- 1.2 This submission captures the issues, concerns and suggestions of a small number of Irish primary school leaders in relation to bullying in schools, as well as research we have been able to source in the short time provided to make the submission.

2 Health Impact

- 2.1 The research that we have drawn from, including from the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA) Psychiatry and the Departments of Psychiatry at the Royal College of Surgeons of Ireland (RCSI) and Beaumont Hospital, provides compelling evidence of the severe impact of bullying – on the ‘victim’, their friends and family, those who witness bullying behaviour, and even on the perpetrator.
- 2.2 The research confirms that bullying, whether of children or adults, can cause significant mental health issues - including social isolation, stress, anxiety, depression, even psychotic episodes and suicide, and leaves deep emotional scars – as well as physical health issues, including increased risk of heart disease and other serious illness.
- 2.3 Chapter 2 of the Child Protection Procedures (2017) makes explicit reference to bullying as a form of abuse, with principals on their CPOR reporting when and if specific types of bullying has occurred and advice sought from Tusla. This indicates the level of damage that can be done when bullying behaviour isn’t identified early and dealt with effectively.
- 2.4 Arseneault (2018) as referenced in Appendix I, highlights the fact that the scars of bullying are carried into adulthood. Adulthood, as other research highlights, can be very difficult for those who experience bullying in childhood. This is a key consideration in terms of mental health considerations and bullying. Consequently, early intervention and a focus on healing relationships are of crucial importance.
- 2.5 It behoves everyone involved in education – policy-makers, officials in relevant government departments and education agencies, boards of management, school leaders, teachers, parents and everyone involved in school communities – to take seriously the issue of bullying, in all its forms, and to put in place and monitor effective measures to prevent and counteract it.

3 Issues to be addressed

- 3.1 The Department of Education determines which aspects are delegated, or not, to the Boards of Management of almost 4,000 schools. Given the voluntary role of the eight-person Boards in each school, such delegation in effect means delegation to school leaders. Given that there is little or no HR training provided for school leaders or Boards of Management, this can lead to difficulties in developing and implementing effective policies to prevent and counteract bullying, particularly in relation to adult bullying, and this leads also to stress and conflict.
- 3.2 CPD and materials are not fully up-to-date in guiding schools, children and parents in relation to cyber bullying, racist bullying, homophobic/transphobic/gender-based bullying, which were not as widely understood at the point of developing the anti-bullying guidelines in 2013
- 3.3 Teachers have significant preparation in dealing with children, but much less in dealing with adults, leaving them ill equipped for interactions with parents. This can exacerbate an already challenging situation and points to a gap in teacher/school leader CPD
- 3.4 IPPN's Leadership Support service provides guidance and support to school leaders on a wide range of issues. Of almost 7,000 cases logged by the service since September 2017, we have provided support in relation to a small number of bullying cases, as follows:
- 3.5 Child-related bullying - 25 cases, of which 9 (36%) pertain to cyber/online bullying
- 3.6 Adult/workplace bullying/staff grievance procedure – 29 cases
- 3.7 Most people take the phrase 'Bullying in schools' to mean bullying of and by pupils / students. However, there is evidence of bullying among adults in school communities also.
- 3.8 Adult bullying can present itself in a number of different ways –
 - Parents bullying teachers
 - Teachers or other staff bullying each other, including the principal, or bullying children
 - The principal bullying teachers, other staff or children
 - Some bullying can occur owing to disappointment relating to promotions to posts of responsibility in schools – there are few opportunities for teachers to progress, which can lead to frustration about the process, and resultant interpersonal issues.
- 3.9 Boards of management are voluntary and not necessarily trained to provide support to the principal and staff in dealing with complex cases of bullying
- 3.10 There is no significant body of research that we are aware of that gives an in-depth analysis of adult bullying in Irish schools – any studies we are aware of are small in scale. Perhaps this is an area the Committee might look to pursue.
- 3.11 Bullying-related supports and services are not centrally organised and it can be unclear how to access them.
- 3.12 A centrally approved anti-bullying programme that meets all the best practice guidelines that can be delivered, with training, at a local level would be of benefit to all schools.
- 3.13 Given the significant impact adult bullying has on the school community, there is a need for clear guidance, CPD and supports to be made available to teachers, school leaders and boards of management
- 3.14 There is a complete lack of training of school leaders in how to handle an aggressive or threatening approach from a staff member.
- 3.15 As there is a lack of structure in education for dealing with such issues, school leaders, as front-line managers, are left to deal with problems which should be the remit of the Board of Management

- 3.16 Research conducted by Dr Philip Riley for IPPN and our post-primary counterparts NAPD (See Appendix I – [Philip Riley](#)) highlights a very worrying point – that school principals experience nearly twice the incidence of threats of violence and actual physical violence at work than other population groups measured on the COPSOQ-II. The incidence is higher for female principals.
- 3.17 A lack of timely access to counsellors to provide early intervention and support where bullying behaviour has been identified increases the risk of escalation and exacerbation in the behaviour and its impact
- 3.18 There is overwhelming recognition across schools of the importance of multidisciplinary teams to provide support for pupils and their families who experience socio-economic inequalities which may result in bullying. This finding highlights a need for the Department of Education and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to come together in adopting a strategic approach to developing multidisciplinary teams in and around schools. These teams should focus on bullying and the other emotional needs of children.
- 3.19 According to research by the DCU National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre, the number of cyber-bullying incidents has soared during lockdown – see Irish Times article 8th February 2021 in Appendix I.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Structures and Resources

- 4.1.1 To enable them to carry out their very important governance role in relation to child protection and staff management, Boards of Management require training in relation to bullying guidelines, procedures, best practices and how to support the principal in managing difficult cases.
- 4.1.2 Provide for a fully-trained member of staff in each school who has allocated time as a school-based behaviour support teacher, to provide first-level support to teachers and the principal and Board relating to all issues related to bullying, and liaise with external experts as needed.

4.2 Training

- 4.2.1 Refresh teacher CPD on bullying prevention and counteraction, including content based on the tenets of the professional Code of Conduct of the Teaching Council
- 4.2.2 Additional CPD modules for all teachers with regard to prevention and counteraction relating to the following specific issues:
 - Cyber-bullying
 - Homophobic/transphobic and gender-based bullying
 - Anti-racism/racist bullying
 - Adult/workplace bullying
 - Socio-economic disadvantage
 - Disability.
- 4.2.3 Professional development in dignity in the workplace/ restorative practices, relationship building and the prevention and counteraction of adult bullying is crucial and should be available as CPD for teachers and SNAs. Ideally, this would be delivered by experienced practitioners with an educational background, and resourced in a similar way to the CPD provided on the *Incredible Years* programme which has been rolled out to all DEIS schools, which is highly regarded, and offers training for all teachers in a school, as well as parents.

4.3 Standard Policies/Templates

- 4.3.1 National standard anti-bullying policy templates which can be used by schools, showcasing best practices, and updated regularly to include the latest thinking, research and tools
- 4.3.2 Such policy templates would include the aims of the policy, a clear definition of bullying and what constitutes a 'bullying incident' as well as categories of bullying behaviour, the strategies the school will implement to prevent bullying and the procedures that will be followed in dealing with incidents of bullying, how this will be monitored, the roles and responsibilities of the school community in relation to the policy and how and when the policy will be reviewed and ratified.
- 4.3.3 Template communications for pupils/students and parents in relation to bullying
- 4.3.4 Best practice *policy statements relating to cyber bullying and bullying behaviours that are discriminatory on the basis of race, gender, sexual orientation, socio—economic disadvantage, disability or any other form of bullying, as part of an overall bullying policy*, would set out to promote the celebration of difference and facilitate effective protection and redress against all forms of discrimination within a school, sending a clear message that bullying in any form will not be tolerated, and to fulfil a school's legal obligation to the pupils, staff and parents.
- 4.3.5 Dignity in the workplace policy development – standard policy and template to address potential adult bullying behaviours. This is about creating a school culture that respects everyone in the school community, where children and adults alike can thrive.

4.4 Student and Parent Charter

- 4.4.1 There is a real opportunity to identify, implement and embed best practice in terms of bullying prevention and counteraction, with the development of the proposed *Student and Parent Charter*.
- 4.4.2 Its development and successful implementation in schools requires *meaningful* consultation with the affected parties – school leaders, teachers, pupils/students and parents as well as Board of Management representatives. This would need to include consultation in relation to bullying policy and implementation.
- 4.4.3 The Charter needs to take into account the responsibilities as well as the rights of all parties to ensure that it is balanced and fair.
- 4.4.4 Currently, parents are told by HSE that services are available in primary schools when they are not necessarily available to individual schools. There needs to be clarity around what resources are available, to manage parents' expectations. Otherwise, this pits parents against schools when everyone should be working together.

4.5 Supports & Services

- 4.5.1 Ensure that all schools are aware of the supports and services currently available and how to avail of them – a clear ‘pathway’ needs to be developed and provided in a central repository, ideally hosted by a single credible body such as a recognised education stakeholder organisation. See the list of supports below that IPPN is currently aware of; this list is by no means exhaustive.
- 4.5.2 A central helpline/hub that school leaders, teachers and parents can contact to access expert guidance and support in relation to all forms of bullying and effective strategies, tools and materials to prevent and counteract bullying behaviour, both child-related and workplace/adult-related. Currently, if schools have a child protection concern, they can call the duty care social worker for guidance. This helpline would ideally be organised in a similar way.
- 4.5.3 Inclusive educational environments focus on equal opportunities for all children. If schools are to become truly inclusive, they will have access to occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, psychologists etc. to support children with additional needs. There are clear deficiencies in resourcing across the system.
- 4.5.4 Every school should have special education/additional needs teachers and SNAs to meet the needs of the children in that school. The current resourcing is inadequate in many schools, particularly for new and developing schools.

4.6 Future Research

- 4.6.1 There is a dearth of research on adult bullying in Irish education. This is something that the Committee could perhaps commission.

5 Research

[See Appendices](#) which contains relevant excerpts of the following:

- [Child Protection Procedures 2017](#) – Excerpts
- DCU National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre report - [National Anti-Bullying Procedures by School Principals between 2013-2016](#)
- Principal Health and Wellbeing Survey (2014) - [Irish Primary and Deputy Principals Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey](#), Dr Philip Riley, Australian Catholic University - Excerpts
- IPPN Position Paper – [Emotional wellbeing in Irish Primary Schools, 2016](#)
- Colm Ó Tuathail - [A Small Case Study Into How School Leaders Address Workplace Bullying](#) (TCD Master in Education research, 2015) - Excerpts
- Grace Sheehan - [Occupational Health Reports, Perceived Control and Bullying at Work - The Experience of Primary Principals in Ireland](#) (UCC Master in Applied Psychology research, 2018) – Excerpts
- [Bullying and psychotic experiences: Type, reason, timing and gender](#), Niamh Dhondt, Colm Healy, Mary Cannon, Departments of Psychiatry at the RCSI and Beaumont Hospital
- [Concurrent and Longitudinal Contribution of Exposure to Bullying in Childhood to Mental Health The Role of Vulnerability and Resilience](#), Journal of the American Medical Association (Psychiatry)
- [Relevant newspaper and website articles.](#)

The full reports are available to the Committee on request.

6 Supports available

6.1 Child bullying

- DE [Child Protection Procedures](#) 2017
- [Children First National Guidance](#) 2017
- DE website www.TackleBullying.ie
- webwise.ie - cyberbullying and online safety
- PDST anti-bullying support materials (<https://www.pdst.ie/primary/antibullying>)
- DE Stay Safe programme, part of SPHE curriculum at primary level
- PDST Walk Tall programme
- ISPC 'Shield' anti-bullying programme
- Anti-bullying Institute (ABI) bullying prevention programme
- Anti-bullying Campaign bullying prevention programme.

6.2 Workplace bullying

- the [Teaching Council Professional Code of Conduct](#)
- The Health and Safety Authority (HSA) and the Workplace Relations Commission (WRC) [Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the prevention and resolution of workplace bullying](#), which came into effect on 23rd December 2020
- [Working Together](#) document (INTO, 2000).

[Link to publication](#)

Bullying

It is recognised that bullying affects the lives of an increasing number of children and can be the cause of genuine concerns about a child's welfare. Children First National Guidance 2017 outlines that bullying can be defined as repeated aggression – whether it be verbal, psychological or physical – that is conducted by an individual or group against others. Children First National Guidance 2017 describes bullying as behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs mainly among children in social environments such as schools. It includes behaviours such as physical aggression, cyber bullying, damage to property, intimidation, isolation/exclusion, name calling, malicious gossip and extortion. Bullying can also take the form of identify abuse based on gender, sexual preference, race, ethnicity and religious factors. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices.

While bullying can happen to any child, some may be more vulnerable. These include children with disabilities or special educational needs; those from ethnic minority and migrant groups; those from the Traveller community; lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) children and those perceived to be LGBT; and children of minority religious faiths.

There can be an increased vulnerability to bullying amongst children with special educational needs. This is particularly so among those who do not understand social cues and/or have difficulty communicating. Some children with complex needs may lack understanding of social situations and therefore trust everyone implicitly. Such children may be more vulnerable because they do not have the same social skills or capacity as others to recognise and defend themselves against bullying behaviour.

Research suggests that children with disabilities and with special educational needs are more likely to be bullied than others. Homophobic and transphobic bullying (bullying targeted at those who are or who are perceived to be LGBT) has also been found to be prevalent with evidence that such pupils have particular difficulty in speaking up or reporting the bullying behaviour.

Children First National Guidance 2017 states that bullying in schools can be a particular problem due to the fact that children spend a significant portion of their time there and are in large social groups. In the first instance school authorities are responsible for dealing with school based bullying behaviour. School authorities are required to have a code of behaviour and an anti-bullying policy in place in accordance with the Department's "Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools" (the Anti-Bullying Procedures) and Circular 0045/2013.

The Anti-Bullying Procedures define bullying as “unwanted negative behaviour, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against another person (or persons) and which is repeated over time”. In the context of the Anti-Bullying Procedures “placing a once-off offensive or hurtful public message, image or statement on a social network site or other public forum where that message, image or statement can be viewed and/or repeated by other people” is also regarded as bullying behaviour.

School personnel should be aware of their school’s anti-bullying policy and the procedures to be followed in relation to any alleged bullying incidents. Children First National Guidance 2017 and the Anti-Bullying Procedures provide that in cases of serious instances of bullying where the behaviour is regarded as possibly abusive, a referral may need to be made to Tusla or An Garda Síochána as appropriate. Where school personnel have concerns about a child arising from alleged bullying behaviour but are not sure whether to report the matter to Tusla, the designated liaison person shall seek advice from Tusla in accordance with the procedures set out in chapter 5 of these procedures.

[Link to report](#)

Introduction

The following report has been developed by ABC – National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (ABC) at Dublin City University arising from research conducted into the implementation of Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools which were published by the Department of Education and Skills in September 2013. These procedures were developed to give direction and guidance to school authorities and school personnel in preventing and tackling school-based bullying behaviour. The new Procedures and an associated Department Circular 0045/2013 apply to all recognised primary and post-primary schools in Ireland.

The Anti-Bullying Procedures arose out of a review of the 1993 Guidelines on Countering Bullying in Schools, a forum hosted by the Minister for Education and Skills with the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (2012), and the Action Plan on Bullying – Report of the Anti-Bullying Working Group to the Minister for Education and Skills (January 2013) and as such they represent the most significant development in relation to tackling bullying in schools for 20 years. In these Anti-Bullying Procedures responsibility for tackling bullying among pupils falls to the individual school.

At the end of a period of 3 years of implementation, it was decided to undertake research to ascertain the extent to which these Procedures had been successfully implemented at a local level by school management. A survey was conducted by researchers at DCU's National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre (www.dcu.ie/abc) with colleagues in DCU's Educational Disadvantage Centre (www.dcu.ie/edc) with support from DCU Institute of Education's shared research fund.

ABC is a national research and resource facility at DCU. Researchers at ABC were the first in Ireland to undertake research on school bullying (1996), workplace bullying (1999), homophobic bullying (2004) and cyberbullying (2009). ABC leads the field of research, resource development, and training in bullying, in Ireland and is an internationally recognised centre of excellence in bullying research. The Centre's activities are currently funded by the Department of Education & Skills under the National Action Plan on Bullying (2013), the Irish Research Council, the EU's Erasmus+ Framework Program for Education, Training, Youth and Sport, DCU Research and Innovation Unit, and the Fulbright Commission. ABC works in partnership with other research centres in DCU including the Educational Disadvantage Centre and the Centre for Assessment Research and Policy in Education (CARPE). The

Centre is also a strategic partner with the Norwegian Centre for Learning Environment and Behavioural Research in Education and the Cyberbullying Research Centre (USA).

Aims of the Study

The associated Department Circular 0045/2013 required all schools to fully comply with the Anti-Bullying Procedures no later than the end of the second term of the 2013/14 school year. By the time this study was conducted, in autumn 2016, schools had been implementing the Procedures at a local level for 3 years. The aim of the study was to establish the extent of the implementation by school management.

Methodology and Profile of Participants

The survey was designed by researchers at ABC with colleagues in the Educational Disadvantage Centre, with further input from the Central Policy Unit of the Department of Education & Skills, the National Association for Principals and Deputy Principals (NAPD) and the Irish Primary Principals Network (IPPN).

The survey was mainly quantitative in nature, containing 37 closed questions specifically related to the content of the National Action Plan on Bullying (2013) and related Policies and Procedures, however, it also included 3 questions that allowed for a more qualitative response. The survey was initially distributed online to all school principals in Ireland (n = 4028) in October 2016 with reminders sent by email a further 4 times, before the survey closed in December 2016. There was a 23% response rate (n = 918) broadly representing most types of schools in Ireland. Participants described their school as one or more of the following: Mainstream Primary Schools (65%), Mainstream Post-Primary Schools (26%), DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) Primary Schools (15%) and DEIS Post-Primary (6%). The DEIS plan was introduced in 2005 to tackle educational inequalities among children and young people.

Findings

Policy

Principals were asked if their school had an anti-bullying policy in place and if they had used the content of the template provided by the Department of Education and Skills' Anti-Bullying Procedures. The results point toward some success with the implementation of the Procedures as 100% of respondents reported that their school had an Anti-Bullying Policy which is a requirement of the Anti-Bullying Procedures and the associated Department Circular 0045/2013. Furthermore, 98% of

respondents reported that they had updated their school's anti-bullying policy since 2013 to reflect the content of the template provided with the Anti-Bullying Procedures.

Prevalence and Impact of Bullying

In relation to incidents of bullying, 42% of respondents stated an increase in reports of bullying since the introduction of the Procedures with the majority (79%) of principals reporting up to 9 recorded incidents of bullying per term.

The increase in the number of reported cases of bullying is probably more reflective of schools having more clarity on the definition of bullying and employing better reporting mechanisms, rather than an actual increase in the amount of bullying occurring in schools.

Principals were asked about the impact of bullying on the children in their schools. The overwhelming majority of respondents were unequivocal in their belief that bullying can have a negative impact on a child's attendance (96%) and academic performance (97%) at school. This points to a direct link between bullying and a heightened risk of early school leaving.

Tackling Bullying

While our findings revealed that the majority of principals who responded to the survey had in place an anti-bullying policy and were aware of the possible negative impact of bullying on academic performance and attendance, the results show that schools are challenged when it comes to implementing the more practical aspects of the Procedures.

The Anti-Bullying Procedures require schools to identify the most suitable intervention for their school, and to research and understand both the techniques of intervention involved and the assumptions and rationale of particular methods. Only 42% of respondents reported that they had undertaken this type of research.

The Procedures also require schools to appoint a "relevant teacher(s)" to investigate and deal with cases of bullying. When asked if they had appointed a specific member of staff to undertake this task only half (51%) of respondents reported that a specific member of staff had been appointed to investigate and tackle bullying in their school. A recent report for the European Commission went further in its recommendation that each school should establish a committee to develop a whole-school approach to tackling bullying (Downes & Cefai 2016). So our finding that just 51% of the

principals surveyed reported that they had appointed a relevant teacher raises questions about 1) the role this teacher has in relation to other staff, parents and pupils, and 2) what steps have the other 49% of schools taken to implement a whole-school approach to tackling bullying.

The Anti-Bullying Procedures require schools to have specific supports in place for those who are bullied and those who engage in bullying behaviour. In relation to supporting those who are bullied 75% of principals responded that they had specific supports in place while less (67%) reported that they had supports in place for those who engage in bullying. While the majority of principals confirmed that their schools provide specific supports for those who are bullied and those who engage in bullying behaviour, it is a concern that 25% did not provide specific supports for those who are bullied and 33% did not provide specific supports for those who bully.

Principals were asked what additional resources they required, if any, in order to meet the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Policies and Procedures. The most frequently occurring replies are illustrated in Figure 3. Principals overwhelming preference was that the Department of Education & Skills provide a national anti-bullying programme, with training, for schools to implement.

Principals were asked if children in their schools could easily access qualified counsellors when they experienced bullying but only 39% of respondents agreed that this was the case. This finding is of particular concern given the increasing and widespread recognition in international research that bullying impacts upon not only short-term mental health issues, but also risks long-term damage to mental health (Thornberg et al, 2013).

95% of principals agreed that it is important for multidisciplinary teams of teachers and other professionals to work together to provide support for pupils/students and their families who experience extreme levels of socio-economic inequality which may result in bullying. This figured increased to 97% for DEIS schools. Multidisciplinary teams in and around schools are a basic feature of good practice in many European contexts (Edwards & Downes 2013) and are recommended in a range of EU Commission documents (EU Commission 2013, 2015).

Conclusions

The key findings in this national survey clearly highlight in a positive way the significance of the introduction in 2013 by the Department of Education & Skills of National Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools. These Procedures provide clarity about bullying and an overarching

national approach to tackling bullying at a local level in schools. The Procedures ensure that schools understand that they are required to be accountable for how they manage bullying. Our findings show that the introduction of the Procedures was a positive step in how the Irish school system tackles bullying, particularly in terms of developing local anti-bullying policies, raising awareness and reporting bullying.

With regard to principals' perceptions of the impact of bullying on attendance and academic performance at school, together with the reported gaps in access to qualified counsellors we are concerned about the long-term effects on those who are bullied and those who engage in bullying. A lack of access to counsellors risks a situation where problems associated with being bullied or engaging in bullying behaviour become worse without early intervention and supports. There is also a need for school management to prioritise fulfilling their obligation to implement the Anti-Bullying Procedures particularly in relation to appointing a relevant teacher and/or developing whole-school committees to tackle bullying in an ongoing way at local level.

There is overwhelming recognition across schools of the importance of multidisciplinary teams to provide support for pupils and their families who experience socio-economic inequalities which may result in bullying. This finding highlights a need for the Department of Education & Skills and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to come together to develop a strategic approach to developing multidisciplinary teams in and around schools with a focus on bullying among other emotional needs of children.

The Action Plan on Bullying (2013) and related Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools has provided a national integrated strategic approach to tackling bullying in schools. However, based on responses from principals it seems that many of them have not been able to meet the Procedure's requirement to identify the most suitable intervention for their school. This includes identifying specific supports for those who experience bullying and those who engage in bullying. As such they are asking for more support in doing this, possibly through the introduction of some form of centrally approved anti-bullying programme that can be delivered, with training, at a local level. Such a programme would be informed by findings from national and international research that show the need to take a whole-school approach led by a specific staff member or a school committee (Downes and Cafai, 2016; O'Higgins Norman and Sullivan, 2017).

Chief Investigator

Associate Professor Philip Riley, from Australian Catholic University, a registered psychologist with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency oversaw the project. He is a former school principals and deputy principal, and is also the Chief Investigator for The Australian Principals and deputy principals Health and Wellbeing Survey. The Irish survey was conducted using the same protocols as the Australian survey, which has run annually in Australia since 2011.

The Survey

The survey captured three types of information drawn from existing robust and widely used instruments. First, comprehensive school demographic items drawn from the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) (Williams, et al., 2007), Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) (Thomson, et al., 2011), and International Confederation of Principals and deputy principals surveys were used to capture differences in occupational health and safety (OH&S) associated with the diversity of school settings and types. Second, personal demographic and historical information was captured. Third, principals and deputy principals' quality of life and psychosocial coping were investigated, by employing two widely used measures, the AQoL-8D (Richardson, et al., 2009; Richardson, Iezzi & Maxwell, 2014) and COPSOQ-II (Jan Hyld Pejtersen, et al., 2010). The combination of items from these instruments allows opportunities for comprehensive analysis of variation in both OH&S and wellbeing as a function of school type, sector differences and the personal attributes of the principals and deputy principals themselves.

Ireland's Primary School Principals and Deputy Principals: A Snapshot

- Responses from 624 principals are reported.
- 72.9% female
- Administrative principals comprised 49% and Teaching Principals 39.35% of the survey. 7.45% were deputies. 49.2% were in the role full time
- Average age 47.42 years
- Most had been in their current role for 9.25 years and leadership roles for 11.71 years, following 13 more years in teaching.

- Approximately 54.4% work upwards of 41 hours a week during term with just over 18% working upwards of 56 hours per week. During school holidays, 22.6% work upwards of 25 hours per week.
- Annual salaries range from <€40,000 - >€120,00 per annum.
- 84% rate personal achievement as very important or higher.
- 97.3% rate personal relationships with family and friends as very important or higher.
- 81.4% are in a partner relationship, and 82% report that their greatest source of support comes from their partner. Almost one quarter of their partners also work in the education sector.
- 64.7% have children living at home.
- 19.4% of the principals have a family member with a long-term health condition, with serious impact on the family in 5.3% of the sample.
- They appear to come from stable backgrounds and have been upwardly mobile and value education for themselves as well as others: 84.9% were living with a mother and father at age 14. The families of origin appear to be largely working class with about 15% of their parents qualified with a university degree, whereas 33.3% of the principals have a masters degree or above, mostly in formal leadership courses.
- 47.1% volunteer their time for community support outside of their role, and 40.9% are active members of a formal community or sporting association.
- 62.7% of the sample conducts regular spiritual practice.
- There are large differences in their self-reported maintenance of healthy levels of exercise, diet and weight control.
- Only 82% of respondents rate their own happiness as very important or higher.
- They are generally positive about their job with only 2.6% becoming frequently depressed about it.
- 44% are taking prescription medication for a diagnosed condition.
- Most maintain a healthy alcohol intake, and do not use it to manage stress.
- Principals experience nearly twice the incidence of threats of violence actual physical violence at work than other population groups measured on the COPSOQ-II. The incidence is higher for female principals.
- Cluster analysis revealed that despite having many predictive attributes for high scores on both wellbeing (PWI) and quality of life (AQoL-8D) measures, collectively principals score less than the general population on both. Their mental health ranges from very good to very poor. The differences are outlined in more detail in the full report.

Recommendation A: Improving the wellbeing of principals and deputy principals through Professional Support

Principals and deputy principals mostly learn how to deal with the demanding emotional aspects of the role on the job, rather than through systematic preparation. In other professions, such as psychology and social work, where highly charged emotional interactions occur, high levels of professional support and debriefing are standard procedure. This is not so in education. As a result, the average principals' and deputy principals' wellbeing survey scores are lower than the average citizen. However, there is a lot of variation and distinct differences between the principals and deputy principals who appear to be coping well with the complexity of the role and those who are not. Professional support is a strong predictor of coping with the stresses of the role (job demands), therefore policies need to be developed that address this issue directly. In the 21st Century, no principals and deputy principals should feel unsupported in the face of growing job complexity, increased scrutiny stress from public accountability and decreased control over the ways in which the accountability targets are met (Riley & Langan-Fox, 2013). The evidence from this survey and a similar study in Australia (available at: <http://principalhealth.org.au/reports>) clearly points to the benefits of professional support for all principals and deputy principals. Those who receive the least have the greatest challenges to maintain their mental health. The principals and deputy principals identified as coping least well with their daily tasks had the lowest levels of professional support from colleagues and superiors while those who coped the best reported the highest levels of professional support. This is an area of improvement that would be relatively easy for education systems to improve.

1. Provide opportunities for principals and deputy principals to engage in professional support networks on a regular basis.
 - a. Networks would need to be determined locally, contextually and formally, and provide opportunities for informal support alongside formal support, outlined in Recommendation B.
 - b. A provision of time for principals and deputy principals to build and maintain professional support networks would be needed.
 - c. This could be augmented by experienced principal mentors, perhaps retired principals, visiting schools to provide support in the form of professional conversations ("agenda-less" meetings) allowing school principals and deputy principals time to discuss the day-to-day functioning of their schools with a sympathetic, experienced colleague.

Recommendation B. Professional Learning

Systematic attention needs to be paid to the professional learning of principals and deputy principals, as targeted professional support. There is a considerable need for skill development in the emotional aspects of the leadership role outlined in Recommendation A: dealing with the highs and lows associated with the emotional investment of parents in their children. In-service provision of education on the emotional aspects of teaching, learning, organizational function, emotional labour, dealing with difficulties and conflicts in the workplace, employee assistance programs, debriefing self and others would be a great benefit.

Targeted professional learning is likely to make principals and deputy principals feel better supported than they currently report. Provision of ongoing professional learning is likely to assist all principals and deputy principals in two ways. First, by skill improvement and secondly through the benefits of increased perceptions of support outlined in Recommendation A.

The three areas that all principals and deputy principals' report lacking in confidence about their managerial skills are: Managing myself and my time; Dealing with Stress and Pressure; and, Budgeting. Even principals and deputy principals who are dealing well with these issues will benefit from professional learning in these areas.

Recommendation C. Review the work practices of Teaching Principals and deputy principals

Teaching principals and deputy principals report lower levels of physical and mental health, coping, confidence, autonomy, personal wellbeing and a raft of other negative factors, along with the highest levels of work-related stress. As the role of principals and deputy principals has changed significantly in the last 15 years, becoming increasingly complex, the teaching principal and deputy principal may be roles that are becoming impossible to carry out effectively. The current report presents strong evidence of the negative factors associated with the role. Further investigation is needed to determine which, if any, teaching principals and deputy principals are thriving in the role and what factors may be contributing to this, so that employment conditions can be altered for the other teaching principals and deputy principals. It should be noted that, consistent with the literature on stress in the professions (Langan-Fox and Cooper, 2011), job satisfaction, which all principals and deputy principals report at very high levels, is not a protective factor, and does not mediate or moderate the other negative factors involved in the role.

Recommendation D: Address Bullying and Violence

There is need to form a working party to independently investigate:

1. adult-adult bullying (occurring at triple the rate of the general population); and
2. threats of, and actual violence in schools (occurring at double the rate of the general population).

The working party should consist of all the stakeholders with an independent facilitator/chair. The group could establish its own terms of reference and also seek access to expert advice. Specifically, it should investigate:

1. differences in the occupational risk of the different types of principals and deputy principals, with particular emphasis on Female Teaching Principals and Deputy Principals in primary schools, and Administrative Principals and Deputy Principals in second level schools who are most at risk.
2. whether/how the risk also extends to teachers and students.
3. Governance structures, information flow between adults, and external influences on school functioning.
4. The working party should have powers to interview teachers, parents and students. The consequences of offensive behaviour in schools are likely to become costly for employers, through: time lost to ill health; absenteeism; OH&S claims against employers' for not providing a safe working environment; reduced functioning while at work (presenteeism). Therefore the investment in such a working party may prove to be the least expensive option in relation to this issue. The difficulties between the adult stakeholders in schools that have been identified in the survey need to be acknowledged and dealt with on a more systematic basis.

Context

For several years principals have been highlighting increasing levels of child emotional ill-health, including issues such as anxiety, depression, neglect, obesity, bullying, physical and sexual abuse, drug and alcohol abuse, anti-social behaviour and specific mental illness.

Meanwhile, principals say that they do not feel sufficiently trained to support these children adequately. Clearly, teachers are not trained to diagnose, solve or resolve emotional and mental health problems among their students or their families. However, there are some actions that can be taken by schools to support these children, and their families, provided the required supports and training are provided at a national level. This position paper sets out to examine what needs to be done and how this may be achieved.

The proportion of principals citing depression among children as the greatest child welfare challenge has doubled since 2009. Three times as many principals in 2016 stated that mental illness was the greatest child welfare challenge than in 2009. In the same way, neglect has increased by 6%, and obesity has doubled from 3.3% in 2009 to 6.1% in 2015. In 2016, the greatest challenge is family issues such as marital breakdown and bereavement. Despite the anti-bullying guidelines and training for teachers on bullying prevention, the rate of bullying has remained constant during this period, with 25% stating in both 2009 and 2015 that bullying was the greatest challenge. The number of principals citing anti-social behaviour reduced from 17.9% to 10.8% in the same time period, which may also be explained by the focus on, and resources given to, bullying prevention strategies. The number of principals citing alcohol abuse, drug abuse, sexual abuse or physical abuse as the greatest challenge in the past 6 years has declined slightly, which is also encouraging.

The Issue

Given the prevalence of child welfare issues in our primary schools, and the related issues around emotional wellbeing, it is crucial that school principals and teachers are equipped to deal with these issues, both to identify problems and to address them adequately. A January 2016 IPPN membership survey of principals tells us that 79% of principals feel 'insufficiently trained' or 'not trained at all' to identify mental health issues in children, much less adequately support them once the problems have been identified. Children can present with a very wide range of emotional issues on a spectrum of emotional wellbeing, from complete wellness on one end to suicidal at the other. While the supports

available at the more extreme end are relatively well known, it is less clear where to go for help when a child displays distress or the school becomes aware of some dysfunction at home. In other words, there is a need for a clear 'continuum of support' to meet the varying needs right across the spectrum. By this we mean that there needs to be support for ALL children to help them develop emotional literacy and resilience to cope with life's many challenges; additional support for SOME children experiencing significant personal challenge; and, for the FEW children who require it, referral to medical and/or psychiatric experts to deal with diagnosed illness. This is in line with National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) guidelines, which we wholly endorse and support.

It needs to be emphasised that it is not the responsibility of teachers to deal with issues of mental health when they arise, as the professionals in this field have the expertise and qualifications to address these issues. A teacher's role in this continuum of support is restricted to creating a safe place for children to express their anxieties. As educators, we need to give children the language and the opportunity to express and convey their emotions. This can be achieved by creating a school environment where it is safe for a child to talk to a teacher on a human level. Schools need to engage in a professional conversation around this issue.

It must be acknowledged that there is a range of national, regional and local services available to schools aimed at improving awareness and providing support around mental health, including NEPS, SESS and DCYA youth services committees. This is particularly true at second level. There are also state programmes such as the DOHC Health & Wellbeing Programme as well as national guidelines for mental health promotion in schools (NEPS, 2015). However, it is fair to say that supports and services are largely ad hoc and inadequate, do not integrate with each other and it is not clear to schools which services to engage with, when and how. Some supports are available only in certain regions or counties.

Others are only available in specific local areas. Schools report having to prioritise between the needs of the child and the CPD needs of staff when accessing NEPS resources. There is a need for joined-up thinking as well as provision and a clear communication plan so that schools know where to go to help children in their schools, whatever the type or severity of issue.

In November 2015, IPPN co-hosted (with NAPD) a National Symposium on Emotional Wellbeing in Schools, with the aim of raising awareness among school leaders and education agencies of the importance of this issue. An informal working group was initiated and is working towards an Action Plan on Emotional Wellbeing in Schools. Our partners in this work are wellbeing ambassador Conor

Cusack, the Ombudsman for Children, NAPD, the Teaching Council, NEPS, and the DES Inspectorate. Our recommendations (below) will be further informed by the work of this group.

Recommendations

1. To improve the situation in schools significantly, there is a real need to create an Action Plan for Emotional Wellbeing. This Plan would need to include all education sectors, from pre-school to post-primary. When a strategy is backed up with action, as was the case with the National Strategy for Literacy and Numeracy, impressive results can be achieved in as few as five years. This Plan should involve all of the key stakeholders in education – principals, teachers, the Department of Education & Skills and its agencies, Teaching Council, Ombudsman for Children, the Department of Health & Children, the Health Service Executive, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, Professional Development Service for Teachers, among others.
2. Map the existing cross-sectoral guidelines for emotional wellbeing and identify any gaps in provision.
3. Develop a cross-sectoral continuum of supports and services for schools, whereby it is clear which service to engage, for what type of issue, and how to go about it.
4. Develop a CPD programme for teachers and for principals to develop an understanding of the issues pertaining to emotional wellbeing, how to identify specific issues and how to avail of the continuum of supports and services described above.
5. Review the balance of the national curriculum, ensuring that adequate time is given to personal development, emotional wellbeing and resilience to help children develop holistically as well as academically – preparing them for life, not just for the workplace. A rebalancing in favour of SPHE and PE would be a good place to start.
6. The emotional wellbeing of staff is central to managing the emotional wellbeing of children. Unless the staff themselves are emotionally well they cannot hope to provide the best relationship with, or the environment necessary to deal with the wellbeing needs of children. This requires a sustained focus underpinning all that the school does. Personal development of staff has to be emphasised as an integral component of a teacher's continuous professional development, beginning with the Colleges of Education.
7. A school culture focussed on emotional wellbeing for all needs to form part of the SSE process and be evaluated as part an element of WSE to form a continuum of action.

Conclusions

IPPN believes that the above recommendations would collectively greatly improve schools' ability to support children to develop emotionally and deal with issues that arise during their school years. The timing is right, given the recent emphasis on mental health and wellbeing across government departments and Irish society generally. While there is no desire to reinvent the wheel, there is certainly a need to integrate services and supports and also to plug any gaps in provision. With the emotional health of everyone in the school community at stake, what could be more important?

Abstract

The complex roles of teaching and administrative primary principals have been debated, for many years. Both roles require an ability to multi-task in relation to all aspects of health and safety, teaching and learning and human resource management in schools. The aim of the study is to investigate and health and safety risks that impact upon primary school principals in Ireland and to identify the types of and perpetrators of bullying, they encounter at work. The research questions are: What, if any are the differences in occupational health risks between administrative and teaching principals in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland? Do administrative and teaching principals report different degrees of control on the job? What are the types of adult-to-adult bullying in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland? The method used to collect both quantitative and qualitative data was a survey with a link sent initially via the Irish Primary Principals' Network to all registered primary principals. Two hundred and ninety-seven principals completed the survey in full. Statistical analysis was completed using the statistical package for social sciences. A thematic analysis was also completed. The most relevant results indicate, that there are no significant differences, between the occupational health risks and perceived control of administrative and teaching principals. The role type of the principal has a direct bearing on the perpetrator of bullying in schools. It is recommended that training in health, safety and bullying should be mandatory for principals and nominees on boards of management. Recruitment, induction and training of principals needs to be based on an accurate definition of the skills; knowledge and abilities required. A continuum of support which includes coaching and training should be provided for all principals throughout their career.

Introduction

Occupational health, as advocated by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) (2008), involves the holistic health and wellbeing of employees while supporting them in reaching their full potential. It involves the prevention of illness in holistic terms and rehabilitation provision, if it occurs (HSA, 2008). Many factors impact on occupational health in the workplace. The Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act (2005) in Ireland puts an onus on employers and employees to ensure their own, and that of others' safety at work and this includes all aspects of occupational health. Schools, as places of work, are obligated to promote occupational health while supporting the holistic development of students and the wellbeing of staff (Konu & Rimpleá, 2002). This responsibility belongs to the principal of the

school who acts on behalf of the Board of Management (BoM) throughout the school day (Attorney General, 1998). Konu and Rimpelá (2002) outlined an effective school environment, as one which includes: positive social relationships; opportunities for fulfilling one's potential and physical as well as psychological health. Ensuring a school encompasses best practice in these areas, is essential to promoting health and wellbeing in schools internationally. He suggests that progress in teaching and learning, which is the main function of all schools, is inextricably linked with health and wellbeing (Konu & Rimpelá, 2002). Research suggests that the wellbeing of the principal, in their role as manager of the school, has an impact on the whole school community. Ensuring that any occupational health issues for principals are identified and addressed is a prerequisite for an effective work force (Stanley, 2017).

Other elements to health and safety in schools include support from the BoM in meeting health and safety regulations as well as the development of policies which impact on same (DES, 2015). The implementation of effective policies and procedures can support an employer in providing for a safe and healthy place to work (HSA, 2008). The provision and implementation of a health and safety policy and an anti-bullying policy as well as the provision of opportunities for training in these areas are all important aspects of wellbeing promotion in schools (DES, 2013). Whereas the health and safety policy is a legal obligation of employers to develop and implement, so too, is any identified risk (HSA, 2013) such as the bullying policy where bullying has been identified as such a risk (DES, 2013). Policies can act as preventative measures and assist in supporting wellbeing in the school environment (DES, 2018).

Many factors impact on the health and wellbeing of principals, one factor which has been identified as a concern, is bullying (O' Moore & Stevens, 2013). Riley (2015) reported, that Irish principals experienced twice the amount of physical bullying than experienced by other sectors. Riley (2015) suggests that identifying the causes as well as the perpetrators of adult to adult bullying in schools, will support its reduction. Riley (2015) suggests that consequences of not addressing issues such as bullying in schools, will be costly in terms of absenteeism; health and safety claims as well as low functioning presenteeism. Riley (2015) suggests that existing risks in relation to the occupational health and wellbeing of principals should be examined further and the differences between alternative principal roles should be investigated.

This research will examine the difference in occupational health risks between teaching and administrative principals. The research also intends to investigate the degree to which principals

perceive the amount of control they have over their job and the implications for same. In addition, the research aims to outline the types and perpetrators, of adult to adult bullying experienced by principals in primary schools, in the republic of Ireland. Recommendations will be outlined, which may improve the occupational health of those in educational leadership roles in the future.

Quantitative Results

RQ3: What are the types of adult-to-adult bullying in primary schools in the Republic of Ireland?

Direct and indirect bullying. A cross-tabulation was completed between teaching and administrative principals, of those who reported being bullied in the workplace. In relation to teaching principals and administrative principals who completed the survey 46 of 115 teaching principals and 109 of 181 administrative principals reported being directly bullied at work. Direct bullying included verbal and physical forms of bullying. Eight principals reported being physically bullied at work. However, the difference was not significant between the two principal categories, when likelihood of direct bullying was examined ($X^2(1) = 0.07$, $p = .788$, Cramers' $V = .112$).

In relation to the teaching principals, 46 out of 115 reported being indirectly bullied at work and 109 out of 182 administrative principals have reported being indirectly bullied at work. Indirect bullying included: rumours being spread about them; an individual interfering with their property; individuals undermining decisions they made; being ignored and being recorded either verbally or via video. However, no significant difference in likelihood were reported for indirect bullying ($X^2(1) = .038$, $p = .539$, Cramers' $V = .036$). Further analyses showed no difference was observed in terms of verbal bullying ($X^2(1) = .13$, $p = .719$, Cramers' $V = .021$). Both teaching and administrative principals are equally likely to experience being bullied in the workplace.

Perpetrators of bullying. A Chi-Squared Analysis was completed to examine the differences between teaching and administrative principals in relation to the type of bullying they experienced from different parties. Potential bully groups included teachers, special needs assistants, and parents, individuals from an external agency, bus escorts, bus drivers and ancillary staff. Only marginally ($p < .10$) and significant ($p < .05$) are reported.

Bullying by another teacher. Where principals experienced bullying from a teacher, a marginally significant difference was noted in terms of bullying between teaching and administrative principals

($\chi^2(1) = 3.70$, $p = .054$, Cramers' $V = .112$). Administrative principals were more likely to report bullying by another teacher (92/84 observed vs. expected frequencies) compared to teaching principals (45/53 observed vs. expected frequencies). This means administrative principals were more likely to experience bullying by another teacher than teaching principals.

Bullying by parents. A significant difference was noted in terms of bullying experienced in relation to bullying by a parent ($\chi^2(1) = 7.74$, $p = .005$, Cramers' $V = .161$). Teaching principals were more likely to report bullying from a parent (46/35 observed vs. expected frequencies) compared to administrative principals (45/56 observed vs. expected frequencies). This means teaching principals were more likely to experience bullying by a parent than administrative principals.

Bullying incidents requiring the attention of the principal (third party bullying). A significant difference was noted in terms of bullying experienced in relation to bullying by a parent ($\chi^2(1) = 7.58$, $p = .006$, Cramer's' $V = .162$). Administrative principals were more likely to encounter third-party bullying incidents at work (127/116 observed vs. expected frequencies) compared to teaching principals (61/72 observed vs. expected frequencies).

Bullying by various parties. In relation to third party bullying 63% of principals both teaching and administrative ($n=290$) had dealt with this matter in schools. Of this number 32.4% of teaching principals and 67.6% of administrative principals had dealt with bullying of third parties. Of this cohort 32.1% had dealt with bullying between two staff members; 37.4% had dealt with bullying between a staff member and a parent and 3.6% had dealt with a parent being bullied by a staff member. From the same cohort, 9.5% had dealt with a parent being bullied by a child; 12.5% had dealt with a staff member bullying a child; 4.6% of principals reported staff from external agencies bullying school staff and 1% reported school staff bullying staff from external agencies.

Qualitative Results

Occupational health risks for administrative and teaching principals in primary schools

The three main themes which were prominent in the comments section under occupational health and safety for both principal roles were supportive/non-supportive BoM (comments from 36 participants in total); lack of funding (comments from 10 participants in total) and building structures (comments from 12 participants in total). It should be noted that the themes that emerged are not representative of all participants. This is highlighted when examining the percentages of principals in relation to their ratings on the alternative scales (see Appendix D for frequencies).

Supportive and non-supportive BoM. A variety of themes emerged in relation to health and safety for both administrative and teaching principals alike. There were contrasting opinions between a non-supportive BoM (25 comments in total) and a supportive BoM (11 comments in total). While some comments in relation to the BoM and their support of the principal in relation to health and safety, alluded to the fact that the BoM, consists of individuals without expertise and training and while supportive, did not have the skills to enable the principal to complete their duties effectively in relation to health and safety. Overall the comments suggested, that while supportive, the BoM, did not have the skills or expertise to put the correct supports in place, to enable the principal, to ensure effective health and safety for the whole school community.

Lack of funding. While both teaching and administrative principals are very conscious of endeavouring to ensure health and safety, a common theme throughout for those that did comment, was a lack of funding from the DES to ensure that buildings met basic standards to ensure correct ventilation; heat and lighting requirements for

Adult-to-Adult Bullying in Primary Schools

A number of themes emerged throughout the discourse on adult to adult bullying. The themes included: parents; BoM; perception; reciprocity in communication as well as training and guidelines.

Parents. The issue of parents engaging in bullying behaviours was expressed throughout the discourse. There were seven participant comments on bullying in relation to parents.

BoM. The second theme which emerged was the BoM in relation to bullying. The word BoM was mentioned by 5 participants in relation to bullying.

Perception. The issue of perception was highlighted by the participants also. For this theme some of the comments express the difficulty in dealing with bullying issues, as principals have to deal with how a concern is being perceived, rather than what is actually taking place. The issue of perception was mentioned by 5 participants.

Reciprocity. The next theme was that of reciprocity which included aspects of communication working both ways and having a voice. There were 15 comments on this theme.

Training and guidelines. The final theme was that of training and guidelines within this discourse. There were 6 comments in total in relation to training and guidelines. Overall, the discourse from both administrative and teaching principals revealed, that they are on the receiving end of bullying behaviour from many sources and felt they required more support in addressing the issue in schools.

Exploratory Qualitative Results

Recommendations made by principals

A variety of recommendations were given by the participants throughout the discourse analysed, in relation to the three questions posed by this research. The data analysed included recommendations from principals which included: health and safety; perceived control and bullying.

Health and Safety. In relation to health and safety one suggestion made was to reduce initiatives. A further suggestion involved, making effective use of the posts of responsibility recently re-allocated to schools. Other suggestions included the availability of Guidelines on Managing Safety, Health and Welfare and the necessity for training.

Perceived Control. Recommendations which were also given by participants in the comment section in relation to perceived control, included being assertive. A further suggestion made, was that the current organisation of BoMs is not working effectively and that compliance with the Financial Support Services Unit would be challenging.

Bullying. Recommendations given by participants in relation to bullying included the development of policies. Clear guidelines and support in relation to policy development and implementation was requested.

Bullying

A marginally significant difference was found between principal groups, in terms of reports of bullying by teachers, where administrative principals were more likely to report bullying by another teacher. When one considers the type of role, it is apparent that administrative principals have more teachers to deal with and have more contact time with teachers than do teaching principals. With this in mind, the results are feasible, when one examines the role type and what is involved.

Direct and indirect bullying. This research found that direct bullying (mostly verbal abuse) is experienced by 39.8% of teaching principals and 60.2% of administrative principals. In previous research, Riley (2015) suggested that Irish principals were twice as likely to be physically bullied, than individuals from other sectors. However this research found, that only eight principals reported being physically assaulted at work. The difference in direct bullying (verbal and physical) was not found to be significant between the two groups. However 40.3% of teaching principals and 59.7% of administrative principals reported being indirectly bullied (rumours; interference with property; undermining; ignoring; being recorded) at work. There was no significant difference found between teaching and administrative principals in relation to indirect bullying. O' Moore and Stevens (2013) outlined 11% as the amount of all Irish principals reported being bullied in the previous twelve months in 2013 and suggest that bullying for principals takes place due to the principal endeavouring to execute their duties. Ignoring the principal and being undermined, were two main areas of bullying outlined by O' Moore and Stevens (2013).

Bullying by parents. O' Moore and Stevens (2013) identified parents as the second highest perpetrators in relation to bullying of principals. However differences between principal types, in relation to perpetrators, were not outlined in previous research. This research found that teaching principals are more likely, to report bullying from a parent, than administrative principals. A reason for this perhaps is that, while a principal is teaching the pupils, this inevitably leads to more contact with parents in relation to the teaching and learning of pupils. While administrative principals are usually, in contact with parents once the interaction with the class teacher has been unsuccessful. Therefore teaching principals have more regular contact with parents, due to the type of role. These results are plausible as teaching principals have less time to spend with other teachers and are dealing with classroom issues with parents on a continuous basis and more frequently than administrative principals.

Bullying by teachers. A significant difference was reported in terms of bullying experienced in relation to bullying of the principal by a teacher. A reason for this perhaps is that, an administrative principal does not have teaching duties and thus has more time to interact with teachers. Also the administrative principal has a larger cohort of adults to deal with on staff. Considering the role type, the fact the administrative principals are more likely to be bullied by teachers, than teaching principals is plausible. O' Moore and Stevens (2013) suggest that there is an issue regarding the Irish National Teachers Organisation (INTO) representing both the teacher and the principal in bullying disputes. This

demonstrates a conflict of interest where both parties are being represented by the same organisation (O' Moore & Stevens, 2013).

Third party bullying. In relation to bullying incidents requiring the attention of the principal (third party bullying), there was a significant difference between teaching and administrative principals. Administrative principals are more likely to encounter third-party bullying incidents at work when compared to teaching principals. When one examines the type of role, administrative principals have more staff and thus more frequent industrial relation issues to contend with on a daily basis. Kitt (2009) suggests that bullying by adults in schools has direct negative consequences for the children in their care. It should also be noted that staff in schools have a professional onus to exhibit respectful behaviour in front of pupils. There should be a zero-tolerance approach to disrespectful behaviour in schools (Kitt, 2009). Riley (2015) suggests whole school approaches as necessary, to eliminate bullying in schools, as well as at system level. Kitt (2009) advocated the necessity for effective whole school policies which need to be consistently applied to combat adult bullying in schools.

Training. Training was highlighted by principals in the thematic analysis in relation to the health and safety as well as a necessity for dealing with bullying in the workplace. Shantal et al. (2014) advocate on-going training as an essential prerequisite to effective job performance as a principal. Training which meets the intrinsic needs of the individual will enhance their motivation and work performance (Herzberg, 1964). VanSaane et al. (2002) suggest that, developing the appropriate skills in the workplace, leads to stress reduction. It has been suggested that newly appointed principals without training, are leading by default, as expressed by Shantal et al. (2014) which can result in challenging and stressful inductions. This has obvious implications for health and safety risks. Shantal et al. (2014) suggest that mentoring such as shadowing of other principals should be an essential component for the training of principals internationally. Comprehensive training during induction, with the support of a mentor would be commensurate with effective leadership in schools (Shantal et al., 2014).

Conclusions and Recommendations

This research investigated the reported differences between teaching and administrative principals in relation to occupational health risks and their perceived control over their work. The research also investigated the perpetrators and types of adult to adult bullying in primary schools. Suggestions regarding the recruitment, induction and training for primary principals and the BoM, have been

outlined as a result. Although some of the recommendations by previous researchers have been fulfilled, (Fullan, 2006; O' Moore & Stevens, 2013; Riley, 2015), more have yet to be addressed.

Training. This research confirms that similar training may be offered to administrative and teaching principals in relation to occupational health and safety. While guidelines on health and safety are available (DES, 2017), on-going training for their implementation, which is specific to school settings would be beneficial. Training in occupational health and safety from the health and safety authority which is designed for schools, should be mandatory for all personnel in school management including the BoM. Training and resources need to be provided for schools to ensure that these are put in place without delay. To ensure the prevention of work related stress and illness, further training and policies on dealing with health and safety issues, as well as bullying, should be provided for organisations on a continual basis. A training and support continuum has been published by the Teaching Council, for teachers (2011). The same relevant continuum does not exist for principals. While the DES have also highlighted the importance of post-graduate training for 200 aspiring to leadership roles in education (DES, 2016), this type of preparation and induction is mandatory for all principals in other countries (Shantal et al. 2014). Training, paid for by the employer, will improve job performance and job satisfaction and thus reduce stress (Chowhan, 2015). On-going training should be provided for principals on developing such policies on bullying and dealing with industrial relation issues effectively. Continuous training in transactional (encouraging creativity in employees and sharing decision making processes) and transformational leadership (providing development of opportunities for employees) is reported to increase the levels of wellbeing in employees (Sparks et al. 2001).

Dealing with bullying. The Health and Safety Authority suggest, that where bullying has been identified as a hazard, a bullying policy should be put in place by the organisation (HSA, 2008). Eller and Eller (2011) suggest useful strategies in dealing with individuals who utilise 'undermining' as a bullying strategy. They should be confronted in a professional manner, with evidence of what has occurred and once each individual has the right of reply, finding a way forward is required (Eller & Eller, 2011). An independent body which supports principals in relation to bullying and issues in relation to industrial relations should be considered. Perhaps both the IPPN and the INTO could collaborate on recommendations, which represent and support each party, on implementing the Working Together Guidelines (INTO, 2000) which outline procedures for dealing with issues around industrial relations. Alternative training modules for teaching and administrative principals in relation to adult bullying in schools and bullying need to be designed and implemented on an on-going basis to support principals in their alternative roles.

Drea and O' Brien (2001) suggest that the qualifications and abilities of those entrusted with the selection process needs to be assured. Recruitment needs to be based on a clear definition of the alternative roles which should involve an in-depth analysis of the skills; knowledge and abilities that are required of candidates applying for the posts. Recruitment should involve more than just a structured interview based on the competencies of the post. This would facilitate the selection of the best quality candidates for the alternative positions. The use of personality measurements in selecting individuals as principals, is not part of the selection procedures for principals in Ireland. It is an area which deserves exploration.

Primary principals put a lot of time and effort into fostering and promoting collegiality among their staff members. However they lack specific training and supports when confronted with the issue of adult bullying. A lack of awareness by school leaders of what specifically constitutes workplace bullying coupled with a dismissive attitude regarding its prevalence is a major finding of this research.

There is then no one agreed upon definition of workplace bullying. However, there is agreement that bullying is different from simple conflict in that by its very nature it is more insidious, more frequent, and prolonged (Leymann 1996; Lutgen-Sandvik, Tracy & Alberts, 2007). Also, in workplace bullying, unlike simple conflicts, targets are unable to defend themselves and bring about an end to the torment because they have less power than the bully (Leymann 1996; Lutgen Sandvik et al. 2007). There is broad agreement among researchers and academics that bullying is the repeated and persistent non-physical mistreatment of a person (Namie & Namie, 2009).

The Economic and Social Research Institute (E.S.R.I.) (2007) survey of bullying in the workplace in Ireland adopted the definition of workplace bullying first used by the taskforce on the prevention of workplace bullying in Ireland in 2001. Furthermore, this definition was also adopted by the Health and Safety Authority (2007) who define workplace bullying as:

Repeated inappropriate behaviour, direct or indirect, whether verbal, physical or otherwise, conducted by one or more persons against another or others, at their place of work and/or in the course of employment, which could reasonably be regarded as undermining the individual's right to dignity at work. An isolated incidence of the behaviour in this definition may be an affront to dignity but as a once-off incident is not considered to be bullying (p. 5).

The effects of workplace bullying are many, impacting negatively on organisations, individuals and co-workers. The effects on the person can be both physical and psychological. Although targets display the greater degree of symptoms, colleagues who witness bullying behaviour are also negatively affected (Lutgen, Sandvik et al., 2007). Workplace bullying can have a profound negative impact on organisational success (Keashly & Jagatic, 2003).

The compelling evidence from a review of the literature in this area is that the targets of workplace bullying are likely to suffer a myriad of physical and emotional complaints. They are likely to manifest

physical ailments that targets directly associate with being bullied, including gastrointestinal problems e.g. irritable bowel syndrome, insomnia, weight gain and loss (Namie, 2003). Other studies point to musculoskeletal ailments e.g. rheumatoid arthritis and fibromyalgia (Kivimäki et al., 2004). A more recent study of healthcare workers in Japan identified associations between work-related bullying and headache, stiffness of the neck or shoulders, lumbago, and pain of two or more joints which were positive and significant (Takaki, Taniguchi, & Hirokawa, 2013). In an Italian study, spinal column problems and gastritis occur more frequently with increasing levels of exposure to bullying (Balducci et al., 2010). A survey of over 5000 hospital employees in Finland showed that the odds of heart disease are more than doubled in someone who has been bullied. This increased risk may be related in part to the fact that they are more likely to be overweight, possibly due to comfort eating as a coping mechanism (Kivimäki et al., 2003). In a previous study, three of the same researchers had discovered a strong linkage between workplace bullying and rates of sick leave amongst a large hospital based workforce. Interestingly they reference research which suggests that serious interpersonal conflict at work is more destructive of personal well-being than similar problems outside the work environment (Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989, Kivimäki, Elovainio, & Vahtera, 2000). The apparent paradox may be explained by the fact that work is not only regarded as a basic adult obligation to provide for oneself and one's family but is also assumed to be highly important in shaping a person's self-respect, self-image and identity (Einarsen & Raknes, 1997).

Empirical research has confirmed that exposure to bullying results in significantly higher levels of anxiety (Baruch, 2005; Bilgel, Aytac & Bayram, 2006; Kaukiainen et al., 2001; Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996). In extreme situations, this can lead to targets experiencing panic attacks (Vaughan, 2012). Moreover, many researchers have found a significant association between exposure to workplace bullying and depression (Leymann & Gustafsson, 1996; Adoric & Kvartuc, 2007; Bilgel et al., 2006; Bowling & Beehr, 2006; Hauge, Skogstad & Einarsen 2010). Even more indicative of the detrimental effects of bullying on mental health is the research finding that individuals who are bullied experience symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder (Matthiesen & Einarsen, 2004; Balducci, Alfano, & Fraccaroli, 2009). However, in contrast to 'regular' sufferers from post-traumatic stress disorder, many targets have to face their trauma day in and day out. At work, some are even 'forced' to relive their trauma on a daily basis.

Workplace bullying does not just have negative and indeed life changing consequences for the targets but can also seriously impact co-workers and the effective functioning of the organisation. The bullying behaviour does not occur in a vacuum and is frequently observed by 'non-involved' bystanders.

Keashly and Neuman (2008) found that 41% of the participants in a study among faculty members in a university setting had witnessed bullying. Indeed, it has been suggested that the secondary victims of bullying, those who are not the direct target, often experience similar perceptions, fears, and expectations as the primary victims (Barling, 1996). Vartia (2001) reports that those who witness the bullying of a colleague have reported significantly more stress than non-exposed workers.

There is little surprise then that workplace bullying can be detrimental to an organisation's goals and efficiencies. A workforce that experiences bullying can damage an organisation's productivity, through decreases in the performance of employees, decreased cooperation, increased aggression, higher rates of resignations and early retirements, and a subsequent increase in recruiting costs to fill vacant positions. (Mayhew et al., 2004; Djurkovic et al., 2008). Bullying in the workplace can also cultivate a hostile work environment that is characterised by distrust, anger and suspicion, culminating in poor group communication (Frost, 2003).

One trend that has emerged in the international literature and on which there is widespread agreement among researchers is that there is a higher risk of being bullied in the caring professions; the social and health, public administration, and education sectors, which all belong to the public sector (Zapf et al., 2011). Within the public sector, a significant finding is the over-representation of education professionals in incidents of workplace bullying (Blase, Blase, & Du, 2008; Leymann, 1996; Zapf, Escartin, Einarsen, Hoel, & Vartia, 2011). Hall (2005) reported that although bullying is well recognised in students, the educators that teach these students are often subjected to the same type of behaviours in the school setting. In Ireland, the Economic and Social Research Institute (E.S.R.I.) found that 7.9% of the nationally representative sample of 1,260 individuals had experienced workplace bullying in the previous six months. The highest incident rate of this problem occurred within the Irish Education sector which, consistent with the international studies cited above, experienced the highest rate of all the professions listed in the survey results at 13.8% compared to, for example, Health and Social Work (12.4%), Public Administration (13.2%), and Construction (3.3%) (ESRI, 2007, p. 38). Surveys conducted by two of the three teacher unions (Irish National Teachers Organisation), (I.N.T.O.) (2000; 2007) and (Teachers Union of Ireland, 1999) reported workplace bullying incidence of 41%, 44% and 43% respectively. A further study conducted by Stevens (2010) of Irish Primary Principals reported a prevalence rate of 41%. More recently results published by the IPPN into the health and wellbeing of primary school principals and deputy principals reported adult bullying occurring at triple the rate of the general population (Riley, 2014).

Some schools may have put a policy in place to address workplace bullying; however a policy has to provide more than a means of dealing with a complaint if and when it arises, it should also be a road map to guide prevention and intervention (Rayner and Lewis, 2011). The same authors go on to state that putting a policy in place without the necessary mechanisms to ensure it is embedded in the organisation such as induction and training may be counter-productive.

If management and in the education system, the principal teacher, in particular, is already under pressure as a result of a myriad of competing demands as outlined in the recent Health and Wellbeing Survey of Principals and Deputy Principals (2014), they may well fail to prioritise this area with potentially catastrophic consequences. Since the onset of the fiscal crisis in Ireland in 2008, the Department of Education and Skills has imposed a series of cutbacks in the education sector. In particular schools have experienced a moratorium on Posts of Responsibility (Department of Education and Skills, 2009). This has led to an enormous effect on the workload of principals (IPPN, 2010). The cumulative effect of these cuts has had a colossal impact on staff morale (INTO, 2012) and has proved an additional challenge for school leaders (IPPN, 2012).

Despite the prevalence of workplace bullying and its undoubted negative impact on the individual, the organisation and society at large, there is a dearth of research and little published in the area of measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of interventions to address the problem (Hoel & Giga, 2006; Skehan, 2014). The research literature shows that the main approach taken by organisations to address workplace bullying is usually conciliatory (Salin 2008, 2009; Saam, 2010).

The current procedures for dealing with adult bullying in the Irish primary school sector (INTO, 2000) adopt a problem solving / mediation approach in dealing with this issue. However, only 5% of principals who had participated in this approach considered it effective in resolving workplace bullying disputes, with more than 50% reporting that they were totally ineffective (Stevens, 2012). Even more worrying 17% of principals who adopted these procedures claimed that engaging in the process had made matters significantly worse (Stevens, 2012).

[Namie's] finding that only 29% of principals found that confronting the perpetrator was effective, with significantly higher percentages reporting consultation with the IPPN or seeking legal advice far more effective at 86% and 83% respectively. Considering that confronting the perpetrator is the recommended action of first response in the INTO / Management agreed guidelines for addressing this issue, this research calls into question the effectiveness of such an approach (Stevens, 2012).

The E.S.R.I. Report (2007) highlighted the battle facing teachers when trying to address the issue of workplace bullying. Teachers shared how they felt they were misled by the information that was provided to them by the Department of Education and Skills, management and their teacher unions. While the guidance offered to them to help address their problem appeared, in theory, to offer a path towards a resolution in reality they were met by many obstacles. For example, participants who maintained they were bullied by their principals felt stymied when it came to lodging a complaint as their principal was secretary of their board of management. Moreover, teachers who took their complaints further found the lack of communication between the parties involved meant that allegations were not dealt with expeditiously; in one case the procedure took over four years. Considering the persistent and escalating nature of bullying this type of response could result in a target and the wider school community being subjected to the negative effects of bullying over an unacceptably extended time-frame.

Unlike other European countries such as Sweden and France, Ireland like the U.K has no specific legislation to outlaw workplace bullying (Hoel, 2013). Individuals who have suffered from workplace bullying and who wish to seek legal redress may have to navigate their way through antidiscrimination, health and safety or whistleblowing legislation, or even go down the constructive dismissal route. In summary, there appears to be a lack of clarity concerning workplace bullying as a separate construct to child bullying. It also seems evident that there is a lack of recognition that unresolved conflict can escalate into adult bullying.

All participants were in agreement that when workplace bullying occurred that it posed an enormous challenge for the entire school and most especially, the principal teacher. Many participants singled out the plight of the teaching principal who is ill-equipped to respond to the challenge of workplace bullying as he/she is perceived to be already suffering from work overload in attending to the pedagogical and administrative demands of the school.

When participants were asked to identify the causes of workplace bullying three factors dominated the discussion, leadership style, school climate and culture and personality related considerations. It is interesting to note that several participants referred to the onset of workplace bullying following a period of change in the school.

Redeployment Panels

One principal spoke about "the enormously negative impact which successive appointments from the Diocesan Panel had made in his school." He recounted how he was "the only person who had been appointed out of a staff of seven as a result of a competitive recruitment process. The remaining staff members had all come from the Diocesan Panel and despite serious misgivings on his part as to their compatibility he had no option but to comply with panel procedures and recommend their appointment to the Board of Management. He questioned how he was expected to build a team with a staff of strong personalities some of whom had a previous history of negative personal interactions." Whilst it could be argued that the redeployment panels were in part the brainchild of the I.N.T.O. as a mechanism to prevent teacher redundancies, it does not alter the fact that they are an inflexible and blunt instrument for filling vacancies in national schools.

One of the four leadership responsibilities identified by the O.E.C.D. report (2008) as improving learning outcomes is enhancing strategic human resource management which includes involving leaders in recruiting their teachers (O.E.C.D. 2008). When this key function is removed by a system that coerces a principal into making appointments which he knows or strongly suspects will be detrimental to staff cohesion and collaboration it clearly needs to be reviewed.

The vast majority of interviewees did not have a specific adult anti-bullying policy in their schools. Principals rather prioritise creating a positive climate and culture and believe this to be the best preventative measure. Those who claimed to have a policy in place seemed vague or even a little confused as to its contents.

The research explored how school leaders addressed the issue of workplace bullying when it arose. Perhaps the first and most important finding in this regard is that the vast majority of principals had no experience of using the I.N.T.O. / Management agreed procedures for handling complaints of workplace bullying.

There was unanimity amongst participants that members of boards of management are out of their depth when it comes to dealing with an issue of this complexity. Many pointed to the voluntary nature of the role, the difficulty in recruiting board members and their lack of training.

Research conducted by Dr. Philip Reilly on behalf of I.P.P.N. and N.A.P.D. examined a range of health and well-being issues and reported that almost one in five principals had been subjected to bullying in the past year with almost 3% being bullied on a daily or weekly basis (Riley, 2014). The biggest cause

of concern to I.P.P.N. arising from this report was the levels of stress among principals that emerged which was much higher than expected with cognitive stress symptoms particularly high. The findings in this research are in line with the figures quoted above with one-third of interviewees reporting significant and life changing emotional turmoil as a result of adult bullying.

CPD

In addressing the issue of training and preparedness of principals to deal confidently with workplace bullying, there was unanimity amongst participants that they were singularly unprepared to tackle the issue. That one can be appointed to the post of principal teacher in Ireland without any specific training or any track record in managing people must surely be a matter of concern.

It may well account for the fact that nearly 90% of the eighteen principals that took part in this study did not have an adult anti-bullying policy in place. Instead they relied heavily on the training they received to counter and prevent child bullying and may have had an addendum to this policy to the effect that the school expected the same level of mutual respect among adults as they were trying to inculcate in their pupils. This could hardly provide any guidance or roadmap to a solution when a case of adult bullying occurred.

Two professional development programmes are currently available to school leaders, Misneach and Forbairt. The Misneach programme offers support for newly appointed principals in key professional areas of school leadership including - Leading Learning, Leading People, Leading the Organisation and Managing Self (Leadership Development for Schools (L.D.S.), 2014). The Forbairt programme explores the same modules but is designed for experienced school leaders (L.D.S., 2014). The National Centre for Leadership and Innovation, which is currently being established and supported by the Irish Primary Principals' Network (IPPN) also provides professional development for school leaders (IPPN, 2015). While these programmes provide support for dealing with and managing conflict, none of them addresses the issue of workplace bullying. Therefore, school leaders are required to tackle workplace bullying without receiving any formal professional development relating to the topic.

Implications of the research findings for educational policy and practice

- There is a requirement to increase awareness of bullying and its consequences among Irish primary school principals, management and staff members.
- In line with the objectives expressed in the D.E.S. Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life 2011-2020 (D.E.S. 2011), there is a need for an accredited leadership development

programme for future principals with specific training in the area of people management skills and more especially strategies to effectively deal with adult bullying.

- In light of the findings of this research, the managerial bodies of primary schools should as a matter of priority organise training for teaching staff, principals and boards of management to raise awareness of and familiarity with the key stages to be followed in addressing workplace bullying as set out in the Working Together Document: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations.
- There is a need for the current I.N.T.O. agreed procedures to be amended so as to remove the onus from the target of bullying to confront the perpetrator as presently outlined in stage two. The procedures would be infinitely more enabling if a third party e.g. a teaching colleague or the principal could be called on to act on the target's behalf.
- Irish primary principals are in serious need of independent professional advice and support in dealing with allegations of adult bullying. The current situation as highlighted in this research whereby the I.N.T.O., I.P.P.N. and C.P.S.M.A. are perceived as failing to provide this support to principals needs to be addressed.
- The system of redeploying teachers as presently constructed can have serious adverse effects on a school and deny the principal any input into the appointment procedure. The present system needs to be reviewed and some flexibility introduced so that a school is not coerced into appointing a teacher who is likely to cause conflict between staff.
- In light of the evidence that emerged in this study where nearly 90% of principals did not have a specific adult anti-bullying policy in place, it is recommended that the D.E.S. should put a mandatory requirement on boards of management to develop and formally adopt such a policy.

A lack of purposeful training for addressing adult bullying was highlighted by all participants in this research. A lack of awareness of current procedures, an absence of any formal training for boards of management, principals and staff on how to effectively address adult bullying and prevent its occurrence was emphasised by school leaders. The implications for policy are as stark as they are obvious:

- There is a clear requirement to increase awareness of workplace bullying among principals and to provide continuous professional development in the areas of interpersonal relations, conflict management and workplace bullying. The current I.N.T.O. / Management procedures whilst providing a direction for the resolution of workplace bullying are not without their flaws

and need to be reviewed but in particular principals have to be made more aware of the procedures and trained in their use.

- Principals need a professional body or forum capable of providing expert guidance in the areas of conflict resolution and adult bullying.
- The current structure of boards of management needs to be reviewed with a view to providing boards with the training and resources to function more effectively as an employer with access to human resource expertise.
- The term teaching principal is a misnomer involving as it does two distinct and competing roles. Allowing for the present distribution of small schools especially in rural areas the concept of a helicopter principal as described in *New Horizons for Smaller Schools & Teaching Principalship in Ireland* (IPPN, 2005) should receive serious consideration with a view to implementation.

Implications for further research

Further research is needed to determine if a relationship exists between workplace bullying and educational outcomes. If it is established that adult bullying negatively impacts on the *raison d'être* of the educational system, the issue of workplace bullying would become a central focus of educational discussion and school policy.

- A more comprehensive analysis of why I.N.T.O. / Management procedures are not utilised and used more widely by Irish primary school principals to resolve adult bullying.
- Further research to view the effectiveness of the B.O.M. in supporting the principal in addressing adult bullying.

With reference to bullying, Professor Sugrue states:

“It is sometimes asserted that teachers have significant preparation in dealing with children, but much less in dealing with adults, leaving them ill equipped for contemporary interactions with parents. [...] others are more cautious and circumspect while recognising also that having the courage to take a stand is also part of being a leader, integral to ‘professional responsibility’ (C. Sugrue & Solbrekke, 2011).

Bullying can be prevented if schools have staff who are trained and children have the right supports in place. If schools are to prevent bullying, we need:

1. **Purposeful consultation** with schools, parents and children's advocacy groups to inform an inclusion model that will work.
2. **Multi-Disciplinary teams:** Considerable increases in staffing and resourcing of the various services are essential.

1. What would purposeful consultation look like for you? Who should carry it out? How should it be carried out?

Purposeful consultation is getting the grassroots, the frontline people into the room. The DES NCSE should commit to ongoing sustainable in-depth consultation with focus groups. Too often, the DES/NCSE calls a meeting to tell teachers, OTs, SLTs, parents, advocacy groups etc. what is happening, rather than listening to the lived experience and basing their decisions on real information. This would require a budget commitment and representation from rural, urban, special and mainstream settings.

2. What is the relationship between a good inclusion model and reduced bullying?

Inclusive educational environments focus on equal opportunities for all children. If schools become truly inclusive they will have OTs, SLTs, psychologists etc. available to support children with additional needs. If these children's needs are met, teaching and SNAs staff should be available to identify and deal with friendship/bullying issues. A staff that feels valued and understands restorative practices is essential to dealing with friendship/bullying issues.

3. What staffing increases would be the most useful? What training should be provided? Ideally, by whom?

Every school should have special ed/additional needs teachers and SNAs to meet the needs of the children in that school. The current criteria from NCSE is woefully inadequate, particularly for new and developing schools. On-going training in restorative practices and relationship building should be available as CPD for teachers and SNAs. Ideally, this would be delivered by experienced practitioners with an educational background e.g. <https://www.connectrp.ie/news>

4. What services need to be better resourced to prevent bullying/reduce its impact?

OTs, SLTs, psychologists etc. should be available to schools. Currently, parents are told by HSE that services are available in primary schools when they are not available. This sets up parents against schools when everyone should be working together, including advocacy groups.

The DES and NCSE must stop engaging in tactics of setting parents up against schools. If the people in the room making the decisions really want to prevent bullying in schools, they will treat their employees (school staff) and clients (children and their families) with respect.

Appendix 9: Bullying and psychotic experiences: Type, reason, timing and gender, Niamh Dhondt ¹, Colm Healy ¹, Mary Cannon ^{1,2}

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[Link to presentation](#)

- Bullying victimisation is a commonly experienced stressful life event in childhood and adolescence, associated with a number of mental health problems in childhood and adolescence, including psychotic experiences (Arseneault, 2018)
- Intention to harm may make an adverse experience more likely to lead to psychotic experiences (Moriyama et al., 2018)
- 22.4% of Irish primary school children and 11.8% of post primary children report having been bullied (Foody, Samara, & O'Higgins Norman, 2017).

Psychotic experiences

- A recent meta analysis of types of trauma and psychotic experiences suggested that different types of traumatic experiences are differently associated with psychotic experiences (Croft,
- One study of a help seeking population found different associations between different types of bullying and types of psychotic experiences, including relationships between verbal bullying and paranoia and physical bullying and grandiosity
- Evidence showing different mediators between bullying and hallucinatory and delusional experiences suggests the existence of different but related pathways leading to the development of different PEs (Moffa et al., 2017).

Type

- In childhood, only verbal bullying was associated with an increased risk of PEs. Previous research has demonstrated that verbal bullying is strongly related to paranoia (Catone et al., 2017)
- Bullying by exclusion was the only type of bullying specifically associated with delusional experiences
- While childhood bullying was associated with adolescent hallucinations this association was not a specific to a type of bullying, with the possible exception of physical bullying
- In adolescence, both bullying by exclusion and sexual comments were associated with an increased risk PEs.

Gender

- Boys were more likely to experience physical bullying while girls were more likely to experience other forms of bullying in childhood
- Overall, there appeared to be a particularly strong relationship between bullying by exclusion and PEs but on closer inspection of the data this effect is stronger for boys than girls
- Experiencing physical bullying, written bullying and bullying by sexual comments were specifically associated with PEs in girls
- The severity or frequency of bullying may differ between boys and girls and this may account for some of these discrepancies
- Response from observers may also vary with type of bullying and gender.

Reason

- Most reasons for bullying were associated with an increased risk of PEs, particularly ethnicity and jealousy in childhood and disability in adolescence
- Mechanisms for the relationship between ethnic minority position and psychotic phenomena include social adversity, low ethnic density and a heightened sense of perceived ethnic discrimination
- Previous research has highlighted that children with neurodevelopmental disorders have an elevated risk of PEs.

Appendix 10: Concurrent and Longitudinal Contribution of Exposure to Bullying in Childhood to Mental Health The Role of Vulnerability and Resilience, Journal of the American Medical Association, Psychiatry

[Link to article](#)

Findings

This population-based cohort study using a twin differences design (11 108 twins) provides evidence that childhood exposure to bullying directly contributes to multiple mental health domains, particularly anxiety, depression, paranoid thoughts, and cognitive disorganization. This direct contribution dissipates or is reduced after 5 years.

Meaning

In addition to primary prevention aiming to stop childhood exposure to bullying, secondary preventive interventions should support resilience processes and address prior vulnerabilities in children exposed to bullying.

One-third of children report having been bullied by their peers according to estimates from the World Health Organization. Childhood exposure to bullying refers to the experience of being a target of hostile behavior from other children (eg, being physically or verbally attacked); it is associated with a wide range of long-lasting adverse outcomes, particularly mental health outcomes such as anxiety. A key challenge for current research is to probe the causal nature of these widespread associations.

Discussion

[...] childhood exposure to bullying directly contributes to multiple mental health domains. In particular, findings were consistent across multiple informants and multiple scales for concurrent depression and anxiety. Increased levels of anxiety persisted in the short term (2 years), while findings indicated a small but enduring contribution of exposure to bullying in childhood to paranoid thoughts and cognitive disorganization.

Westmeath Independent article 5th November 2020

<https://www.westmeathindependent.ie/2020/11/05/childline-service-there-for-any-child-or-young-person-facing-bullying-and-other-challenges>

ISPCC website

<https://www.ispcc.ie/childline-answered-over-70000-contacts-from-children-during-peak-covid-19-restrictions/>

Irish Times article 8th February 2021

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/cyberbullying-soared-during-lockdown-what-are-schools-doing-about-it-1.4473011>

Digital platforms have proved a lifeline for students during school closures – but there’s been a hidden downside. All that time spent online – whether on social media or gaming consoles – has resulted in a sharp increase in cyberbullying, according to new research by DCU’s National Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre.

Cyberbullying among children and adolescents soared by 28 per cent during the lockdown. The younger children were, the more likely they were to become victims. The problem is particularly prevalent in young boys aged 10-16, with nearly 50 per cent experiencing more cyberbullying since the first lockdown.

While bullying has always been a problem in school, the fact that cyberbullying is so difficult to escape from intensifies the negative impact.

“In the old days you could leave the classroom or the schoolyard and go home and the bullying would most likely stop,” says James O’Higgins Norman, director of the National Anti-bullying centre in DCU. “Unfortunately, smartphones mean the bullying can continue and never stop.”

DCU has developed an anti-bullying programme called Fuse which is child-led and free to all schools in Ireland.

“It is very successful,” says O’Higgins Norman. “Eight-five per cent of kids that participate in it tell us that they now feel safer online and that they know how to recognise bullying online and know how to go about reporting it.”

David Swaine, education project coordinator at the National Anti-Bullying Centre, helped design and develop the programme which is available to both primary and post-primary schools.

“It is clear from research that children are accessing social media at a much younger age, with or without parental consent,” says Swaine.

He recommends educating children about cyberbullying from as early as second class.

“Social media is so woven into the fabric of a young person’s life now and while it does have a lot of benefits in relation to connectivity, you have to be more aware of the more pernicious elements of it,” says Swaine.

“It is in everyone’s interest – parents, guardians, teachers, school staff and the wider school community – to be mindful of this from a very young age.”

The DCU study showed that there was a 66 per cent increase in the use of gaming consoles during the first lockdown.

O’Higgins Norman says while there was an increase in cyberbullying during the first lockdown, the research also showed there were positive developments in terms of cyber safe behaviours for children and adolescents.

“Parents and children spent more time online together and because of this increased amount of time, a lot of children were reporting that they were getting better at protecting themselves online,” says O’Higgins Norman.

“It wasn’t just the case that more time online meant more bad things, some felt better able to deal with being online because there was increased involvement of parents being online with their kids.”