

Support Group Method (7 steps approach)

There are seven steps in the method, beginning with an interview with the victim, then holding a meeting with a group of pupils including both the bullies and other students (but not the victim), and ending with meetings with the individuals who have taken part in the application of the method.

Step 1 - Talking with the victim

The practitioner meets with the victim to establish the impact that the bullying has had. The victim is not asked to describe particular incidents in which bullying has taken place, but is encouraged to provide a detailed and graphic account of the distress that he or she has experienced. This may take the form of a piece of writing or a drawing that expresses how the child has been affected by the bullying. The victim is asked to identify the 'bullies' and to suggest the names of people to form a group who could help solve the problem. Assurance is given that no one will be punished.

Step 2 - Convening a group meeting

This meeting includes the children who have been identified as those engaging in the bullying, and some other students who are selected by the practitioner because they are expected to be helpful in bringing about a positive outcome. The victim is not required to be present. Generally the group size is around 6 to 8.

Step 3 - Explaining the problem

The practitioner draws attention to the problem and especially to the distress that the victim is experiencing, using evidence provided by the victim. Specific incidents are not described and no accusations are made.

Step 4 - Promoting shared responsibility

It is made clear that no one is going to be punished and that the group has been convened to help solve the problem and that everyone has a responsibility to improve the situation.

Step 5 - Asking for ideas

The practitioner asks for suggestions about how things can be made better for the victim. Each person present is asked to make a personal statement on what he or she will do to help.

Step 6 - Leaving it up to them

Having explained the situation, the practitioner passes responsibility for the problem over to the group, thanks them for their support and indicates that there will be further meetings with each of the students to see how things are going.

Step 7 - Final meetings

A week or so later the practitioner meets with members of the group individually to ascertain progress. The victim is also interviewed as part of the monitoring process. It is important to recognise that although no one is being blamed for the bullying this approach is quite confrontative and conveys that the children do have a joint responsibility to improve the situation for the victim.

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Possible role plays for the Support Group Method

1. Role play the interaction between the practitioner and the victim (see Step 1 on page 10). This involves:

(i) Carefully explaining your role, which is to help students who may be feeling unsafe and troubled by how they are being treated by others at the school

(ii) Gaining the confidence of the victim and listening carefully to an account of what the student has experienced

(iii) Ensuring that the victim understands that no-one will be punished and it is safe to talk about who has been involved in the bullying.

(iv) Obtaining a good picture of the distress that the victim has experienced to be shared later with the bullies.

(v) Recording the names of the bullies.

(vi) Arranging for another meeting later to discuss progress

2. Role play the group meeting with the 'bullies' – say three of them – and a similar number of other students who are likely to be supportive of the victim. (The victim is NOT present at this meeting)

The practitioner goes through the process described in Steps 3, 4, 5 and 6 on page 10. The practitioner should ensure that everyone appreciates the distress that the victim has been experiencing and that there is a joint responsibility to help that person. Make sure that everyone present indicates what he or she are prepared to do to help. Emphasise that there will be a further meeting arranged to discuss progress. The practitioner should leave the meeting once the students have become motivated to help – and the role play can continue briefly with just the 'students'. On completion of the role plays, discuss together the circumstances.

From Rigby, K (2010) Bullying interventions in schools. Six Basic Methods. Camberwell: ACER

All staff

Recording and reporting incidents

All bullying allegations and incidents are recorded as a method of keeping track for the school. After reassuring the victim the Head Teacher will begin the process by contacting all relevant parents to inform them of the situation and process/ strategies / sanctions to take place.

The Head Teacher will review the actions and outcomes with the learning mentor / teacher and parents on a regular basis to determine the appropriate next steps.

Monitoring and Evaluating the Policy

This policy is part of Inclusion and every day life at Peover Superior EC Primary School. Its profile is raised by new initiatives, the PSHE and SEAL curriculum, assemblies and is a regular item on the School Council agenda.

Annual questionnaires to parents and pupils also allow us to measure the success of our strategies in ensuring the well being and care of our pupils.

Communication by all is an integral part of the process in reviewing and updating the policy.