

Bullying as a relationship problem

“Relationship problems require relationship solutions”

by Rob Osborn (Leicestershire Anti-Bullying Strategy Manager) – October 2007.

Over the last few years much of the research to address bullying has focused around the area of relationships. We are now aware that children with secure friendships and the ability to develop positive relationships with their peers are much less likely to be bullied.

Research by Craig and Pepler highlighted the need to look at the social make up of the classroom to promote learning by supporting a student’s capacity to develop healthy relationships. A number of initiatives have developed as a result of this desire to address the issue of relationships.

One programme called **R time** was developed in 2002 and can now be found in over 40 Education Authorities and was highlighted in “Bullying Today” a report by the Children’s Commissioner (November 2006)

First pilot

When Leicestershire developed its first Anti-Bullying Strategy it chose to focus on Primary aged students and became the first authority to pilot R time.

From a pilot in one school in 2003 R time is now successfully in place in over 175 Primary schools across the county.

What is R time

- The programme consists of a weekly lesson of 15 minutes length.
- Questionnaires at the start and end of the programme help to set class and individual targets, and evaluate progress.
- There are 30 sessions, for each year group from Nursery to Year 6.

Each session has five component parts:

- Random Pairing** –the children work each time with a different partner until they have worked with all of the children in their group
- Introductions** – once in their pairs they greet one another with a positive statement e.g. “Hello, my name is Simon. I’m glad that you’re my partner today Sarah”.
- Activities** – there are 30 easily achievable short activities for each year group for the children to do with their partner.
- Plenary** – the children feed back their experiences to the whole group and the teacher helps them to reflect on their learning.
- Conclusion** – at the end of the session the children thank their partner and say something positive to finish.

Has R time made a difference?

Leicestershire’s annual Pupil Attitude Survey has shown a significant decline amongst Primary pupils reporting that that they had been bullied since the

introduction of R time. The most striking reduction has been in years 5 and 6. We believe that R time grows in impact as the work is reinforced each year from the Foundation stage.

<u>Year Group</u>	06/07	05/06	04/05	03/ 04	02/03	Fall of
Year 3	10.6%	18.3%	21.0%	21.1%	22.9%	50%+
Year 4	9.6%	17.6%	16.9%	17.9%	17.0%	43%
Year 5	8.2%	12.1%	11.7%	14.8%	16.2%	49%
Year 6	5.7%	7.6%	8.3%	8.8%	11.6%	50%+

R time research findings

The Leicestershire Anti-Bullying Team evaluated the benefits of R time in 2004/5 through the use of questionnaires with 1140 pupils from 8 Primary schools (before R time was introduced and again after 3 and 6 months). The research showed that R time had a positive impact on social inclusion, contentment in school, relationships and promoting a positive ethos. It also showed that students perceived that their school was against bullying and were increasingly willing to talk about it.

Why is R time successful?

After the initial training the programme is easy to implement and requires few resources.

It is a whole school approach and positive results quickly become apparent.

It is teacher friendly and the students love it.

It has no academic bias so it is accessible to students of all ages and abilities

The whole programme is based on good practice and uses comparatively little curriculum time

R time complements and supports the SEAL initiative.

SEAL

Within the Primary National Strategy the SEAL materials provide a whole school framework for explicitly promoting the social and emotional aspects of learning. These are identified as self awareness, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and social skills. They are developed through 6 whole school themes lasting half a term during which time the students have the opportunity to practice the pro-social strategies they have learned.. In addition there is a smaller module over two weeks called "Say no to bullying" which is intended to be covered around Anti-Bullying Week.

A new publication R time for SEAL uses the R time approach to support schools in introducing and developing SEAL. Together R time and the SEAL materials are having a dramatic impact on developing a positive school ethos in which children learn the skills to develop social skills, accepting, respectful relationships and bullying is not tolerated.

Further information

R time manuals can be found at www.rtime.info

Your local R time consultant's details are as follows:

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