



# All-Wales Survey of Bullying in Schools

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## Research

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# All-Wales Survey of Bullying in Schools

<b>Audience</b>	Local authorities, schools, pupil referral units, parents, families, pupils and school governors.
<b>Overview</b>	This report outlines the key findings of research undertaken in the summer 2009, from information gathered by questionnaire from around 7,400 pupils.
<b>Action required</b>	None – for information.
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<b>Additional copies</b>	Can be obtained by visiting the Welsh Assembly Government website <a href="http://www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills">www.wales.gov.uk/educationandskills</a>
<b>Related documents</b>	None

## **All-Wales Survey of Bullying in Schools**

The first comprehensive survey of bullying in schools across Wales took place in Summer 2009 and gathered information from around 7,400 pupils. The survey, commissioned by the Welsh Assembly Government and undertaken by the People and Work Unit, gives a new powerful source of information on bullying which schools, local authorities and the Welsh Assembly Government can use to improve anti-bullying approaches. It will be also be an important baseline for us in Wales to measure our progress.

This document gives a brief summary of some of the key findings. More detail will be available shortly in an executive summary and the full report.

### **How and when was the data collected?**

Pupils in years 4, 6, 7 and 10 were asked to complete questionnaires. All secondary schools, Pupil Referral Units (PRUs) and a sample of primary schools in Wales were invited to participate in the survey.

The survey was conducted between April 2009 and July 2009. In total, 7,398 pupils from 162 schools and 5 PRUs took part.

We are able to compare the results for years 6, 7 and 10 directly as the questions were very similar. However, this is not possible for year 4 pupils as the questions had to be simplified to make sure they were understandable.

### **How many pupils reported being bullied?**

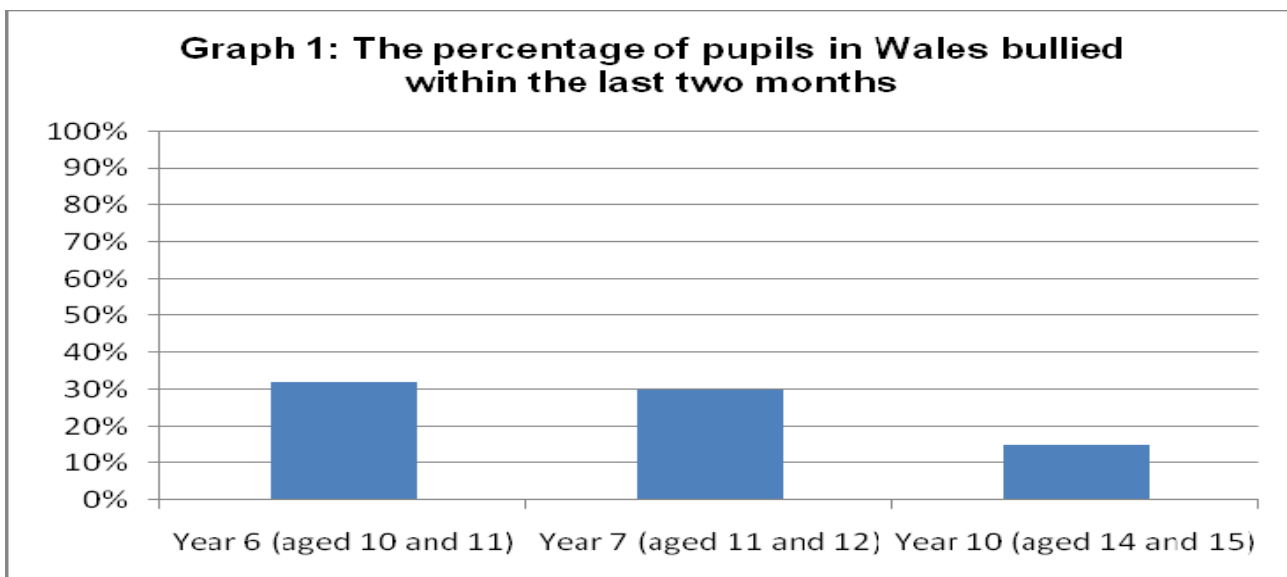
Year 4-15% of pupils reported being bullied “all the time”. The way bullying was measured in year 4 was different, as other studies have shown<sup>i</sup> that care has to be taken with younger pupils reporting bullying, as their understanding of what bullying means may not be as clear as for older pupils.

In line with other studies<sup>ii</sup> bullying was seen to decline with age:

Year 6-32% of pupils reported being bullied in the last two months.

Year 7-30% of pupils reported being bullied in the last two months.

Year 10-15% of pupils reported being bullied in the last two months.



There is some evidence that the level of bullying in Wales has declined since 2005/06 - a survey conducted by the World Health Organisation<sup>iii</sup> showed that 36% of pupils aged 11 and 24% of pupils aged 15 had been bullied within the last two months.

A survey of pupils in year 6 in Northern Ireland<sup>iv</sup>, found that 43% of pupils reported being bullied within the last two months. This suggests that rates of bullying in Wales are lower than rates in Northern Ireland.

### **Long-term victims of bullying**

The proportion of pupils in years 6, 7, and 10 reporting being bullied for “about a year” (6-8%) does not decline with age. These pupils also reported being bullied more frequently - they were at least seven times more likely to be bullied “several times a week”, and they were less likely to agree that they were confident that the school could help them if they were bullied.

### **Types of bullying**

The most common type of bullying in all four year groups surveyed was being called hurtful or nasty names. The types and relative frequency of different types of bullying were fairly similar across all four year groups - except for physical forms of bullying (such as being hit, kicked or pushed) which declined with age.

Newer forms of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, were only reported by a relatively small proportion of pupils. For example, 17% of pupils in year 6, 15% of pupils in year 7 and 11% of pupils in year 11 reported one or more types of cyber-bullying (social websites, mobile phones or email) in the last two months.

There was a difference in the type of bullying boys and girls reported in most of the year groups surveyed. Girls in all year groups were more likely than boys to report indirect forms of bullying, for example having lies or rumours spread about them, and girls in years 6, 7, and 10 were more likely to be bullied through social websites. Boys in years 4 and 7 were

more likely to report physical forms of bullying, and boys in years 6, 7, and 10 were more likely to report homophobic bullying.

## Reasons for bullying

In all four age groups “appearance” and “being different” were identified by pupils as the main reasons for being bullied and seeing others being bullied. Many pupils identified issues to do with their appearance, such as “weight” and “hair”, as the reason why they were bullied.

Other issues were asked about within the survey; see the results in table 1 below:

<b>Table 1 The percentage of pupils in Wales bullied for different reasons within the last two months</b>			
<b>Questions as asked within the survey</b>	<b>Year 6</b>	<b>Year 7</b>	<b>Year 10</b>
I was bullied in a homophobic way, e.g. being called gay as an insult, whether or not it's true	22%	19%	9%
I was bullied in some way due to my learning difficulties	9%	7%	4%
I was bullied in some way due to my race or ethnic origin	3%	2%	3%

## Location of bullying

In years 4, 6, and 7, the school yard was the most common location of bullying within the school. This changes in year 10, when the classroom was the most common location.

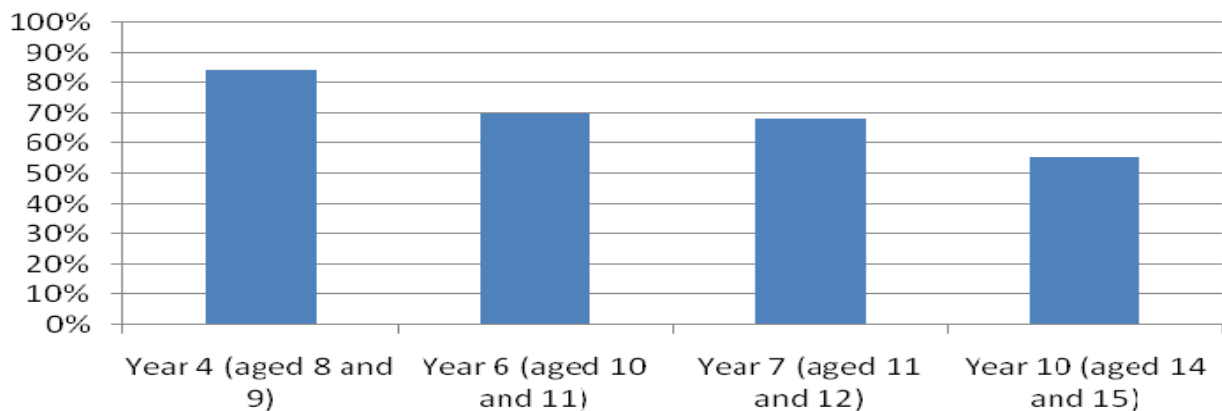
## Bullying others

18% of pupils in year 6, falling to 11% of pupils in year 10, admit to bullying other pupils “as part of a group” within the last two months. Smaller proportions admit bullying others “on their own”. For example, in year 7 and 10, around 7% of pupils report bullying others “on their own” within the last two months.

## School support

As graph 2 below illustrates, although most pupils were confident that their school could help them if they were bullied, this tends to decrease with age. Girls in year 10, were less likely than boys to be confident that their school could help them if they were being bullied, and if they had experienced bullying, they were less happy with the way their school dealt with bullying.

**Graph 2: The percentage of pupils in Wales who were confident\* the school could help them if they were being bullied**



\*In year 4 survey the word “sure” was used instead of “confident”

## Conclusions

Although it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions about trends in bullying in Wales until future surveys are undertaken, comparison of the results of this and other surveys<sup>v</sup> suggests that the overall incidence and frequency of bullying in Wales is relatively low compared to other industrialised countries and has declined over the last two to three years.

This survey also highlights a number of key issues for anti-bullying policy and practice to consider:

- Bullying is not a serious problem for many pupils. The majority of pupils report that they have not been bullied in the last two months. However, a small proportion were victims of bullying which was sustained over long periods of time and more frequently. This group also had less confidence that their school could help them if they were bullied, when compared to other pupils. Finding better ways to reduce the levels of bullying and to support these pupils should be a priority.
- Whilst a majority of pupils were satisfied, a notable minority of pupils in all year groups were not satisfied with the support offered by schools. In particular, pupils in year 10 were less satisfied with schools’ support, and girls in year 10 were less confident that the school could help them if they were being bullied. Schools may need to consider why their anti-bullying and support policies are not effective for all groups of pupils.
- The types and locations of bullying which have traditionally been common, remain the most widespread across all year groups. In contrast newer forms of bullying, such as cyber-bullying, whilst not insignificant, are much less prevalent. This indicates priorities for anti-bullying strategies. Nevertheless, because this survey did not measure the impact of different types of bullying, schools may still judge that whilst the prevalence of some types of bullying is low, they should still be prioritised, because they have a particularly negative impact upon pupils.

- Girls and boys experience different types of bullying. It is important that anti-bullying and support strategies reflect these differences.

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<sup>i</sup> Borgers, N., De Leeuw, E., Hox, J., 2000. Children as respondents in survey research: cognitive development and response quality. *Bulletin de Methodologie Sociologique* 66: 60-75; Scott, J., 1997. Children as respondents: methods for improving data quality, in L. Lyberg et al. (eds) chap 5 p98:119. *Survey Measurement and Process Quality*, New York: Wiley; Smith, P., Levan, S., 1995 "Perceptions and Experiences of Bullying in Younger Pupils", *British Journal of Educational Psychology*, 65, 489-500.

<sup>ii</sup> Department for Children, School and Families (DCSF), 2008. *Youth Cohort and Longitudinal Study of Young People in England: The Activities and Experience of 16 year olds: England 2007* [online]. Department for Children, School and Families, London. Available at:

[http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000795/YCS\\_LSYPE\\_Bulletin\\_final.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000795/YCS_LSYPE_Bulletin_final.pdf) [accessed

February 4, 2009]; Oliver, C. and Candappu, M., 2003. *Tackling bullying: listening to the views of children and young people* [online]. Department for Education and Skills, London. Available at:

<http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR400.pdf> [accessed on November 13, 2009]; Smith, P.K.,

Madsen, K. & Moody, J., 1999. What causes the age decline in reports of being bullied at school? Towards a developmental analysis of risks of being bullied. *Educational Research*, 41 (3), pp 267-285.

<sup>iii</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO), 2006. *Inequalities in Young People's Health* [Online]. World Health Organization (Europe). Available at: <http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E91416.pdf> [accessed November 13, 2008]

<sup>iv</sup> Livesey, G.E., McAleavy, G.J., Donegan, H.A., Duffy, J., O'Hagan, C., Adamson, G., White, R., 2007. *The Nature and Extent of Bullying in School in the North of Ireland*. Department of Education.

<sup>v</sup> World Health Organisation (WHO), 2006. *Inequalities in Young People's Health* [Online]. World Health Organization (Europe). Available at: <http://www.euro.who.int/Document/E91416.pdf> [accessed November 13, 2008]