Meeting 6 of the Steering Committee to Review the Action Plan on Bullying 2013 Minutes

Tuesday 24th May, 2022 10.45 am – 1.30 pm,

Clock Tower Department of Education, Marlborough Street

Attendees:

First Part of the meeting:
Aileen Hickie, CEO, Parentline
Áine Lynch, CEO, National Parents Council Primary
Bridget Wilson, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
Chloe Heaslip, Trainee Teacher and Anti-bullying Activist
Claire Tanner, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Deirdre Shanley, Assistant Secretary, Schools Division, Department of Education
Dualta Ó Broin, Head of Public Policy, Ireland (META)
Emer Neville, President, Irish Second-Level Students' Union
Professor James O'Higgins Norman, Director, UNESCO Chair on Tackling Bullying and Cyberbullying, Director, DCU Anti-Bullying Centre
Jane McGarrigle, Project Officer, Webwise
Judith Lyons, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Majella O'Dea, Teacher Education Section, Department of Education
Maria Bracken, Digital, Teacher Supply, Teaching Council Unit, Department of Education
Maria Joyce, National Traveller Women's Forum
Mohammad Neeam, Youth Advisory Group
Moninne Griffith, CEO, Belong To
Dr. Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children
Niamh Molloy, Parents and Learners Unit, Department of Education
Dr. Noel Purdy, Director Centre for Research in Educational Underachievement (CREU) Stranmillis University College, Chair of Committee
Paul Rolston, Communications Director, National Parents Council Post-Primary
Rebecca Galligan, Post-Primary Inspector, Inspectorate, Department of Education
Sarah Benson, CEO, Women's Aid
Sharon Eustace, Regional Director, National Educational Psychological Service, Department of Education

Second part of the meeting:
The attendees for the first part of the meeting were joined by the following:

Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD

School Staff:
Andrew Forrest
Cathal Fitzgerald
Daphne Wood
David Joyce
Deirdre McDonald
Fiona Garvey
Martin Durkin
Mary Quaid
Niamh Corrigan
Niamh Fowler
Orla Finnegan

Rachel O'Connor

<u>Parents:</u>
Ann Maria Griffin Lucey
Brenda Carthy
Bridget Kelly
Joy-Tendai Kangere
Kathy Gray

<u>Children and young people:</u>
Abbie White, Youth Advisory Group
Anakha Josep, Primary School Pupil
Daegan Browne, Youth Advisory Group
Erin Zoe Daniel, Youth Advisory Group
Kaitlin Gaddy, Youth Advisory Group
Liam Raeside, Primary School Pupil
Sarah Larkin, Youth Advisory Group
Sheril Tomy, Primary School Pupil
Thomas Finn, Primary School Pupil

<u>Department of Children Equality Disability Integration and Youth</u>
Karyn Farrell, Youthwork Ireland
Suzanne Byrne, Youthwork Ireland

Purpose of the meeting:
The sixth meeting of the Steering Committee to review the Action plan on Bullying including consultation with children, young people, parents and school staff.

1. **Welcome and Introduction**

Dr Noel Purdy welcomed the attendees and advised that the first part of the meeting was a regular Steering Committee meeting but that for the second part of the meeting the Steering Committee would be joined by children and young people, school staff and parents.

Dr Purdy introduced the speakers for the first part of the meeting.

2. **Presentation from Dr Niall Muldoon, Ombudsman for Children**

Dr Muldoon's presentation focused on bullying as a children's rights issue, citing a range of articles from the UN convention on the rights of the child, including Freedom of expression (Article 13), Freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14), Freedom of association and freedom of peaceful assembly (Article 15), Privacy (Article 16), Protection from abuse and neglect (Article 19), The highest attainable standard of health, including mental health (Article 24), Education (Article 28), Enjoy their own culture, religion or language (Article 30).

Dr Muldoon spoke about how we need to consider the best interests of the child. The child has a right to privacy, to protection and to an education.

Dr Muldoon referenced the 2012 report from his office entitled 'Dealing with Bullying in Schools'. Dr Muldoon advised that children feel that there needs to be more discipline and less tolerance of bullying and that schools need to know how to address bullying and in particular cyber bullying. Dr Muldoon advised that children want us to increase awareness of bullying.

Dr Muldoon spoke about the importance of the following:

- Schools should submit anonymised disaggregated data to the Department of Education on an annual basis, including about the number of bullying incidents that have occurred in the school, the types of bullying involved, and the actions taken to resolve the bullying incidents and to mitigate against their reoccurrence.
- A clear definition of what "serious instances of bullying" are.
- Greater consistency as regards how serious incidents of bullying, which may have a child protection and/or a criminal dimension, are dealt with by schools and relevant State agencies, including Tusla
- Therapeutic Support for children and young people affected by bullying
- Training and upskilling of school staff including boards of management
- School support and resources at middle management level

3. Presentation from Dualta Ó Broin, Head of Public Policy, Ireland (META)

Dualta Ó Broin presented on the work of META and their approach to supporting online safety. The key points of Dualta's presentation are as follows:

- META's approach to online safety encompasses five key areas: Partnerships, Policies, Tools and Technologies, Resources and Feedback
- META works with partners across various countries to gather feedback from experts on their policies, products and programmes, and to deliver educational and wellbeing campaigns. In Ireland, META has partnered with the FUSE anti-bullying programme.
- META conducts both its own research and supports external research to improve its products and policies and to a gain a better understanding of its users' experiences in terms of health and safety.
- META uses a range of policies and enforcement methods to reduce the prevalence of harmful content. Its community standards cover many areas relevant to wellbeing including suicide and self-injury, coordinating harm, hate speech, cruel and insensitive humour, violence and incitement, bullying and harassment, sexual exploitation, and graphic violence etc.
- META has developed safety tools and technology aimed at preventing harm, and tools and technology to empower teens and help support their wellbeing. Data presented included graphs showing an improvement from 2020 to 2021 in META's success in finding and removing hate speech, bullying and harassment on Instagram before an incident is reported to them.
- One of META's safety tools is a new Family Center and parental supervision tools for Instagram and Virtual Reality (VR). Parents and guardians have access to supervision tools and resources from leading experts. The first version of supervision tools began on Instagram, and will begin rolling out in VR. This is the first step in a longer term journey to develop intuitive supervision tools, informed by experts, teens and parents.
- META's vision for Family Center is to eventually allow parents and guardians to help their teens manage experiences across Meta technologies, all from one central place. New features include 'Topic Nudge', 'Manage your Digital Footprint', 'Control who can send Direct Messages (DM)', 'Control **what** people can DM and comment' and providing limits such as 'Hiding unwanted DMs and comments during spikes of attention'.

4. Presentation from Chloe Heaslip, Anti-bullying Activist and Trainee Teacher

Chloe spoke about her family's experience of losing her brother in tragic circumstances following bullying in school.

Chloe spoke about what she considered was missing or needed strengthening in the 2013 Action Plan on Bullying. This includes the following:

- The need to consider the training provided at ITE level in relation to how to deal with bullying in schools
- The importance of reviewing school policies throughout the school year
- The importance of determining the reason why students leave school early
- The importance of counselling in schools
- The importance of schools recording every incident of bullying which includes the motivation for it, the method used and how it was dealt with
- The importance of the definition of bullying
- The importance of preventative measures

Second part of the meeting:

5. **Address from Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD**

The Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, welcomed the children and young people, parents and school staff who joined the Steering Committee to share their ideas and vision for the new Action Plan on Bullying and updated anti-bullying procedures for schools.

Minister Foley spoke about the importance of an education system where every child and young person feels valued, and is actively supported and nurtured to reach their full potential. To achieve this, we must take an holistic, whole of education approach to promote a positive environment in schools and ensure that bullying is proactively and fully addressed when and where it might arise.

Minister Foley commended the work of the Steering Committee and the contributions of all participants at the meeting who bring a different perspective to this issue, informed by their own lived experience and that of the people in their lives. Minister Foley particularly thanked the chair of the Steering Committee, Dr Purdy, and acknowledged his wealth of knowledge in this area and his excellent chairing skills that have been of immense benefit to the Steering Committee.

Minister Foley expressed her delight at being joined for the meeting by the children and young people from the focus groups who have been instrumental in the work of the Steering Committee. The Minister spoke about how young people are the reason she believes many of us join the education sector and how the vision and voice of children and young people needs to be at the heart of our work and decision making.

Minister Foley was very pleased to be joined by parents for the meeting and spoke about the most important thing for any parent being that their child is happy, both at home and at school. Minister Foley thanked the teachers and principals at the meeting, from across the country, for the work that they and their school communities do every day in order to support children and young people. Schools simply cannot function without the care, dedication and commitment of their staff. She expressed that she was looking forward to hearing their suggestions and views today on the best way forward.

6. **Round Table Discussions with students, parents and teachers**

World café activity - examining bullying in schools

Attendees were assigned to tables consisting of steering committee members, children and young people, parents and school staff.

Each group was asked to take part in a Name Game as an icebreaker activity.

Each group was provided with a 5x5 foot placemat with three circles. Groups were asked to consider in the central circle – 'What is being done to prevent and tackle bullying?', then moving to the middle circle – 'What is working well?' and finally in the outer circle 'What else do we need to do?'. The aim of this activity was to go deeper into the issues and supports needed to prevent and tackle bullying in schools.

Following this activity the groups were asked to look at their own and other groups' placemats for 'sticky-dot prioritisation' – participants move to various tables and place three dots in the outer ring, indicating which three things they think need to be prioritised in terms of 'What else do we need to do?'

The following are some of the responses:

Culture and Environment

- Anonymous tip off box and an online option to report bullying
- Anti-bullying Posters around the school
- Buddy Benches
- Celebration of multi-culturalism
- Consistent support for each individual student
- Dignity in the work place, whole school culture
- Early intervention and Prevention
- Encourage more open discussion in the classroom
- Empower students and teachers with Anti-bullying campaign
- Empower students to encourage them to stand up for themselves and others
- Increase pastoral support and dedicate time to liaise with students
- Consistency re sanctions for bullies
- Less blame culture within the school
- More done for bullying of minority groups
- More effective consequences for bullies
- Much more support for victims of bullying
- Need practice prevention not just reactive response
- Not all incidents of bullying are being reported when identified
- Offering creative alternatives to students to express how they feel i.e. art, drama, dance
- Prejudice against traveller children
- Pressure on students to stay in with the group through cyber bullying
- Schools deal with bullying incidents by keeping written letters and follow up with both parties
- Whole school approach to Wellbeing Mental Health

Relationships and Partnerships

- Authentic consultation with students
- Better structure for partnership with parents
- Bullying incidents addressed in school but not outside the school gate
- Community intervention
- Dedicated helpline to report bullying
- Exit interviews for students leaving a school
- Guidance Counsellor
- More support

- More support and Information for parents
- Parents are not aware of the school policies
- Racial bullying should be included
- Recognise all forms of bullying
- Reflection sheets for everyone involved to complete
- Restorative Practice
- Respectful relationships between teachers and students
- Sanctions for any school staff involved in any type of bullying
- More involvement & support from the wider community needed
- Trusted guidance counsellor in the school
- Visits from Community Gardaí
- Voluntary Committee based in school to investigate allegations of bullying

Curriculum (Teaching & Learning)

- Course on bullying at Junior cycle
- Culture Education Programme
- Junior Cycle wellbeing programme
- Knowledge of how damaging bullying can be
- More awareness
- Training of the entire school staff
- Resilience Programmes/ Stay safe Programmes
- Safe and supportive year programme
- SPHE Programmes (friends for life) in every school
- Start education on bullying early
- STOP-BLOCK-TELL method (stop texting-block person-tell a trusted adult)
- Strategy to promote positive behaviour
- Training on cyber safety

Policy and Planning

- Anti-bullying Policy not implemented
- Anti-bullying co-ordinator in each school
- Bullying Policy read out at beginning of school year and or during assembly in the morning
- Clarity on definition of bullying
- Clarity on what happens after unresolved 20 day period
- Clear and firm guidelines on cyber bullying
- Clear guidelines on when the school can get involved in cyberbullying
- Data Collection, Forms for bullying, who and why
- Make policies more accessible to the community and where they go to report bullying
- Making each student aware that policies are enforced so that they feel safe to tell
- Mandatory reporting to the Board of Management
- More Consistency across all schools
- Post Primary Level sexual harassment policy needed
- Whole school inspectorate evaluation

7. Summary and close

Dr Purdy thanked participants for attending the meeting and the children and young people, parents and school staff for their honest engagement throughout the discussion.