

Does the Content of Anti-Bullying Policies Inform us About the Prevalence of Direct and Relational Bullying Behaviour in Primary Schools?

SARAH WOODS, *University of Hertfordshire, UK*
DIETER WOLKE, *University of Bristol, UK*

ABSTRACT *The current study investigated whether the quality of school anti-bullying policies allows the drawing of any conclusions about the extent of bullying problems in schools. That is, do schools with a more detailed anti-bullying policy have lower rates of bullying? A total of 2377 children in primary schools (six year olds/year two: 1072; eight year olds/year four: 1305) were individually interviewed using a standard interview about bullying experiences. A detailed content analysis scheme that closely followed the core whole-school intervention approach was carried out on a total of 34 schools: 24.5% of the children reported being directly victimised very frequently and 45.9% reported being relationally victimised frequently or very frequently. No correlation between the content and quality of anti-bullying policies and the prevalence of direct bullying behaviour was found. Conversely, an inverse relationship was found for relational bullying behaviour: schools with the most detailed and comprehensive anti-bullying policies had a higher incidence of relational bullying and victimisation behaviour. Inspection of school anti-bullying policies per se provides little guide to the actual amount of direct bullying behaviour in schools.*

Introduction

Direct and Relational Bullying Behaviour

Bullying and victimisation is a pervasive problem in schools and has received widespread media coverage (Bunyan, 1999; Fleet, 1999; Olweus, 1993; Stokes, 1999). The detrimental effects of bullying on concurrent mental and physical health problems, and long-term adverse consequences, include lowered self-esteem (Matsui, Kakuyama, Tsuzuki, & Onglatco, 1996), depression (Craig, 1998), increased anxiety (Salmon, James, & Smita, 1998), greater rates of hyperactivity and conduct problems (Farring-

ton, 1993; Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2000) and more common health problems (Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt, 2001).

As defined by Olweus (1993; 1999), a student is being bullied or victimised when he/she is exposed repeatedly and over time to negative consequences on the part of one or more other students with the intention to hurt. Bullying usually involves an imbalance in strength, either real or perceived (Craig, 1998; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Bullying behaviour constitutes a spectrum of actions including physical (hitting, kicking, pinching, taking money or belongings, and so on) and verbal (name calling, cruel teasing, taunting, threatening, and so on) aggression (Boulton & Underwood, 1992). More recently, another domain of bullying has been described—relational aggression. Crick and Grotpeter (1995) define relational aggression as the hurtful manipulation of peer relationships/friendships that inflicts harm on others through behaviours such as social exclusion and malicious rumour spreading.

The prevalence of direct victimisation behaviour among primary and young secondary school children (aged 8–12) varies across studies, ranging from 8% to 46%, and directly bullying others ranges from as little as 3% to 27% (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Olweus, 1999; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Wolke & Karstadt, 1999; Wolke, Woods, Schulz, & Stanford, 2001).

Whilst the incidence of direct bullying behaviour among secondary school pupils is well documented, studies on the prevalence of relational bullying and victimisation are rare in the bullying literature. Crick and Bigbee (1998) reported that despite taking a different form, relational aggression may be as harmful as direct bullying in its consequences for the victims. Recent work indicates that relational bullying is widespread in primary schools (Wolke et al., 2000).

A recent advance in bullying research has been to consider a broader classification system of bullying behaviour and the roles children take in bullying. Traditionally, studies classified children as bullies, victims, or not involved in bullying or victimisation. However, recent studies have revealed a group of children labelled bully/victims who bully other children but also become victimised at other times (Boulton & Smith, 1994; Stephenson & Smith, 1989; Sutton & Smith, 1999). Wolke and Stanford (1999) and Wolke, Woods, Bloomfield, & Karstadt (2001) concluded that the characteristics, health, social cognitions and behaviours of bullies, victims and bully/victims may differ considerably, therefore highlighting the importance of distinguishing between 'pure' bullies, 'pure' victims and bully/victims.

Anti-Bullying Interventions

Schools in the UK are required by law to have a behaviour/school management policy, within which they are required to make reference to bullying in terms of promoting respect for others and intolerance of bullying and harassment. Schools also have a duty to state clearly what their position is regarding anti-bullying initiatives (School Standards Framework Act, 1998). However, apart from guidelines there are no universal policies that need to be implemented.

The whole-school intervention approach (Eslea & Smith, 1998; Olweus, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994) attempts to intervene from a variety of perspectives, including increasing awareness among teachers, children and parents, publicising school policies designed to decrease bullying problems, and implementing bullying as a serious issue into the school curriculum as part of the daily routine (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Farrington, 1993; Peterson & Rigby, 1999).

TABLE I. Overview of the core intervention programme devised by Olweus (1993)

General prerequisites
Awareness and involvement on the part of adults**
Measures at the school level
Questionnaire survey**
School conference day**
Better supervision during break and lunch times**
Formation of co-ordinating group*
Measures at the class level
Class rules against bullying**
Regular class meetings with students**
Class PTA meetings**
Measures at the individual level
Serious talks with bullies and victims**
Serious talks with parents of involved students**
Teacher and parent use of imagination*
** Core component
* Highly desirable component

The whole-school approach, pioneered and developed by Olweus (1993), was based on the principle assumption of restructuring the social environment. In order to achieve this, the core programme constituted of a set of four key principles: warmth, positive interest and involvement from adults; firm limits to unacceptable behaviour; the application of non-hostile, non-physical sanctions; and adults both at school and home should act as authorities at least in some respects. The four key principles were then translated into specific measures devised at the school, class and individual levels, deemed to be core components essential for the successful implementation of an intervention programme (Olweus & Alsaker, 1991). These elements should be translated into explicit written policies for schools.

Olweus reported that after implementation, bullying problems reduced by 50–70% over a two-year period. This reduction included direct bullying, indirect bullying, and bullying others, for both boys and girls. A reduction was also revealed in general antisocial behaviour, and a marked improvement in the social climate of classes and student satisfaction with school life was reported.

The original evaluation study by Olweus (1993) led to a number of replications of the whole-school approach in different countries (Olweus, 1993; Pepler, Craig, Zeigler, & Charach, 1993; Roland, 1993; Smith & Sharp, 1994). These subsequent studies reported inconsistent findings. Roland (1989, 1993) replicated the intervention programme carried out by Olweus and revealed conflicting results, where bullying rates had slightly increased. The largest replication of the whole-school approach in primary and secondary schools in the UK reported 15–80% decreases in bullying behaviour in primary schools, but less favourable results for secondary schools (Eslea & Smith, 1998; Smith & Sharp, 1994). Pepler, Craig, Zeigler, and Charach (1994) reported increases in bullying others following a whole-school intervention.

No research to date has considered the day-to-day effectiveness of anti-bullying policies in schools and whether they inform us about the rates of bullying behaviour. Evaluations to date (Eslea & Smith, 1998; Olweus, 1993; Pepler et al., 1994;

Smith & Sharp, 1994) have been carried out under highly controlled situations known as efficacy studies (Hauser-Cram, 1990; Rossi & Freeman, 1989). However, policies and their impact also need to be evaluated in daily school practice. One central question therefore is whether the detail of bullying policies is related to bullying rates. If such a relationship is revealed, it illustrates that the policies are integrated into the daily school agenda. If no relationship is uncovered, this will indicate a gap between policy design and implementation at the level of the daily functioning of the school. This will have important implications for parents, who find it extremely useful to have information on the social climate of a school in terms of bullying behaviour before selecting the school for their child. How much can parents and school inspectors rely on school policy prospectus as indicators of the actual bullying problems in schools? Does a dosage-response relationship exist of the type evident in previous whole-school approach evaluations, where those schools that implemented the essential components of the approach to a greater extent revealed the largest reductions in bullying behaviour (Olweus, 1997; Smith & Sharp, 1994)? The present study had three main areas of investigation. Firstly, what is the prevalence of direct and relational bullying among children from primary schools in Hertfordshire and north London? Secondly, does the detail of anti-bullying policies relate to bullying rates in primary schools? Thirdly, do anti-bullying policies relate to bullying rates or victimisation, that is, have an effect beyond that of other school factors such as school size, class size, location of school and ethnicity of pupils?

Method

Participants

Participants were 2377 children from 92 classes in 39 primary schools in the Hertfordshire and the north London region; 1072 children were from year two and 1305 from year four. The age of the children ranged from 6–9, with an overall average age of 7.6 ($SD = 1.0$). The average age for year two children was 6.7 ($SD = 0.6$) and 8.3 ($SD = 0.6$) for year four children. The distribution of gender was effectively equal; 50.7% were male and 49.3% female. Additionally, 9.9% of the sample were non-English Caucasian. The overall participation rate was 91.0%, where 4.1% of non-participation was attributable to non-consent by the child's parents and 4.9% due to school absenteeism on the day of the study.

With regard to school characteristics: the average school size was 246 pupils ($SD = 87$), the average class size was 28 pupils ($SD = 3.4$), 7.5% of schools were from upper socioeconomic status (SES) locations, 47.5% from middle SES and 45.0% from lower SES areas. School SES ratings were supplied by the head teachers, who were asked to give an overall rating of whether their school fell into low SES, middle SES or upper SES, based upon parents' occupations. Upper SES schools were defined as comprising mainly parents with professional occupations. Middle SES schools were defined as comprising parents who had mainly white collar occupations such as administrative roles, but who were not necessarily university educated. Lower SES schools were defined on the basis of parents having predominantly manual or unlearned occupations. Where available, information was collected regarding how many children in the school qualified for free school dinners. In terms of location, 44.0% of schools were in urban areas (> 50,000 inhabitants) and the remaining 56.0% were in rural areas (< 50,000 inhabitants).

Procedure

The study received ethical permission from the University of Hertfordshire Ethical Committee and all instruments and information were logged with the Hertfordshire Education Council. The head teachers, teachers of the year two and four classes, and school governors were approached in writing, with full documentation about the study. When the head teacher and class teachers consented to participate in the study, written information about the study and a non-consent form (parents were asked to sign if they wanted their child not to take part) was passed to all parents via the pupils in sealed envelopes. On prearranged dates all pupils were interviewed individually in a private room in their school by one of four trained interviewers (postgraduate psychologists).

Instruments

Bullying Interview. Children were interviewed individually in a quiet, private room within the school using a standard structured interview. The children were first asked some open questions about their family and school to make them feel at ease. This was followed by standard questions about friendships and social relationships in school (not reported here).

The first part of the interview regarding physical bullying behaviour was adapted from the Olweus (1993) bullying questionnaire (BVQ). First, children were asked whether they had experienced any of six behaviours in the last six months that had upset them: having been called bad or nasty names; having belongings taken; having lies told about them; having nasty tricks played on them; having been threatened or blackmailed; or having been hit or beaten up. If the child answered that s/he had experienced any of the six above behaviours, s/he was asked to give examples and describe how this happened. This was done to ascertain that the behaviours experienced were carried out with intent by the perpetrator(s) to upset the child, rather than having occurred by accident or during play fighting, and secondly, that the child could not easily defend themselves, that is to say, there was an imbalance of power. Those children who had experienced one or more of these behaviours were asked how frequently these incidents had happened in the last six months (seldom = one to three times, frequently = four times or more, very frequently = at least once per week). To aid children's reference to approximately six month periods, anchors such as "since last Christmas" or "since the summer holidays" were used. The children were further asked where these behaviours took place (playground, corridor, classroom, on way to/from school, other areas such as toilets or changing rooms), which class the perpetrator usually came from (own class, parallel class, higher class, lower class, other school), who the perpetrator was (boy(s), girl(s), boy(s) and girl(s) together), whether they told the teacher, and whether they told their parents. The six behaviours were then repeated and the child was asked whether they had used these behaviours to upset other children and how often they had done this over the last six months (never, seldom = one to three times, frequently = four times or more, very frequently = at least once per week).

The second section of the interview asked questions about relational bullying at school and was specifically designed for the present study. Children were asked four questions about: other children saying that they did not want to play with them; other children saying that they would not be the child's friend anymore; other children telling nasty stories/spreading malicious rumours about them which were not true; and other children deliberately spoiling their games. If the child responded that they had experi-

enced any of the above behaviours, s/he was asked to supply a description with examples. This was carried out to ensure that the behaviours had been deliberate to upset them and to ascertain that the perpetrator(s) were part of the child's peer group that normally played together. Children were then asked to express how frequently the relational bullying incidents had occurred in the last six months for each of the four questions individually (seldom = one to three times, frequently = four times or more, very frequently = at least once per week). The four types of relational bullying were then repeated to the child and they were asked whether they had ever used any of the behaviours to relationally bully other children over the past six months (never, seldom = one to three times, frequently = four times or more, very frequently = at least once per week).

At no time during the interview was the term "bullying" used: only behavioural (operational) descriptions were used. This was done to ensure that no confusion occurred about the definition of bullying for young children.

According to the results of the interview, children were classified into the following groups (Whitney & Smith, 1993; Wolke & Stanford, 1999) for direct bullying and relational bullying, separately:

- Direct bullies: children who were involved in directly bullying others frequently or every week but are never or only rarely directly victimised
- Direct victims: children who experienced any of the above described behaviours: being called bad/nasty names, being threatened, having belongings stolen, having lies told about them, being hit/beaten, having nasty tricks played on them, frequently or every week, but bully others rarely or never
- Direct bully/victims: children who both directly bully others and become direct victims frequently or every week
- Direct neutrals who neither directly bully others or become direct victims (never or only rarely).

For relational bullying the classifications were the same, but referring to relational bullying involvement (Wolke et al., 2000).

Anti-Bullying and Behavioural Policies. All head teachers were asked about their school prospectus and whether they had a behavioural or anti-bullying policy. Compliance in supplying behavioural and anti-bullying policies was high although three schools (7.6%) failed to supply the relevant documentation and two schools (5.1%) did not have a behavioural or anti-bullying policy. This resulted in a total of 34 schools being included in the analyses.

A content analysis was designed for the anti-bullying policies which closely followed the core whole-school intervention approach advocated by Olweus (1993). The first section of the scheme contained a set of key principles which are purported to be general prerequisites for the awareness and development of a whole-school intervention programme.

Items which were included under the heading of general prerequisites were:

1. Did the school show evidence of awareness and involvement by adults on the subject of bullying (Olweus, 1993)?
2. Did the school define bullying?
3. Did the school acknowledge the *repeated* notion of bullying behaviour?
4. Did the school acknowledge the *intentional* nature of bullying behaviour?

5. Did the school acknowledge the *power imbalance* present in bullying behaviour?
6. Did the school consider the *physical* nature of bullying behaviour?
7. Did the school consider the *verbal* nature of bullying behaviour?
8. Did the school consider the *psychological* nature of bullying behaviour?
9. Did the school consider the *relational* nature of bullying behaviour?
10. Did the school consider the possible deleterious *outcomes* of bullying behaviour?
11. Did the school consider the possible *locations* where bullying behaviour can take place?

Each school scored either one for meeting the criterion or zero for not meeting the criterion, for each individual item. A total general prerequisite score was generated for each school where the total possible score could range from 0–11.

The second section of the content analysis contained items which were taken from the core intervention programme devised by Olweus (1993). These items were based upon the school level, class level and individual level. Four items were included at the school level:

1. Did the school show any evidence of having carried out a bullying survey/questionnaire?
2. Did the school hold a school bullying conference day for all involved parties before designing the anti-bullying policy?
3. Did the school acknowledge the need for improved supervision in order to counteract bullying behaviour?
4. Did the school show evidence of having formulated a co-ordinated group for dealing with bullying?

Three items were included at the class level:

1. Did the school have class rules against bullying?
2. Did the school hold regular class meetings on the subject of bullying?
3. Did the school hold class PTA (Parent Teacher Association) meetings, where the focus was on bullying?

For the individual level, three items were formulated:

1. Did the school show evidence of having serious talks with both bullies and victims following bullying incidents?
2. Did the school have serious talks with parents and other students about bullying incidents?
3. Did the school show evidence of teacher and parent use of imagination in terms of bullying behaviour?

For each item, the school scored either one for meeting the criterion or zero for not meeting it. Scores gained from the school level, class level and individual level were tabulated to give a total score ranging from 0–10.

From section 1 (general prerequisites) and section 2 (school level, class level, individual level), a total overall anti-bullying content score was generated ranging from 0–21.

Reliability Analysis

Each school policy was blindly and independently rated by two trained post-graduate

students. Each rater was supplied with detailed instructions of the criteria to be met for general prerequisites, and the criteria needed to be met at the school, class and individual level. Kappa coefficients were then computed for each item on section 1 (general prerequisites) and section 2 (school, class and individual levels) to ascertain the degree of inter-rater reliability.

Reliability Analysis for General Prerequisites. Kappa statistics of 0.60 or greater are considered highly adequate (Bakeman & Quera, 1995). Based on this, the results from the kappa coefficients of the 11 items of section 1 (regarding general prerequisites) were generally high apart from two items. A kappa value of 0.31 was obtained for the item "Did the school acknowledge the *psychological* nature of bullying?" and a value of 0.50 was obtained for the item "Did the school acknowledge the *imbalance of power* in bullying behaviour?" All other kappa coefficients for general prerequisites ranged from 0.79 to 1.00, thus confirming high inter-rater reliability.

Reliability Analysis at the School Level, Class Level and Individual Level. Kappa coefficients for four items at the school level were in the range 0.22–1.00. The low kappa value of 0.22 was obtained for "Did the school form a coordinated group?" The three remaining items at the school level obtained kappa values of 1.00.

For the three items at the class level, kappa coefficients were in the range 0.82–1.00. The kappa coefficients for regular class meetings was 0.82. Perfect agreement was obtained for the item "Does the school have class rules against bullying?" No kappa coefficients was computed for the item "Does the school hold class PTA meetings?" as no schools in the present content analysis met the criterion for this item.

For the three items at the individual level, kappa coefficients were in the range 0.44–0.95. A kappa value of 0.44 was obtained for the item regarding teacher and parent use of imagination, 0.59 for the item regarding serious talks with bullies and victims, and 0.95 for the item regarding serious talks with parents and other students.

Inter-Rater Reliability for General Prerequisites and School Scores. Inter-rater reliability on total general prerequisites and school level scores (total for school, class and individual level) was next obtained by computing Spearman rank correlations. A significant association was revealed between the two raters for the total general prerequisites score, confirming high agreement ($r_s = 0.94$, $P < 0.01$). A significant association was also found for the total school level score (total scores at school, class and individual level) ($r_s = 0.82$, $P < 0.01$) and for the overall anti-bullying policy score (total general prerequisites score and total school level score) ($r_s = 0.94$, $P < 0.01$).

Reconsideration of Items Which Gained Low Inter-Rater Reliability. Both raters together reconsidered items that had low inter-rater reliability and several changes were made. In relation to Section 1 (general prerequisites), low agreement was obtained on the item regarding the *imbalance in power* concerning bullying behaviour. This item was highly ambiguous and open to several interpretations, and hence was removed from the content analysis and final analyses. The second item where low agreement was revealed was about considering the *psychological* nature of bullying behaviour. There was considerable overlap with the item regarding the *relational* nature of bullying behaviour, and these two items were collapsed to form one item ('considers the *relational* nature of bullying behaviour'). The modified items meant that the total possible score was now in the range of 0–9.

Review of the Reliability for School Level, Class Level and Individual Level Items. On a review of items with low kappa coefficients on Section 2 (school, class and individual level), consensus was reached between the raters on all items and the appropriate scoring modifications were carried out. All items remained in the content analysis after review, however, a few points are of importance. No schools met the criterion at the class level, "School holds regular PTA meetings about bullying issues." It was decided to leave this item in as it illustrates that this feature is needed for a successful core intervention program and was taken into consideration. It did however mean that the total score on Section 2 (total score of items at the school, class and individual level) was lowered. The new total score was in the range of 0–9.

Due to the modifications of Sections 1 and 2, a new overall anti-bullying policy score was computed: total at general prerequisite level and at school, class and individual level. This new total score could range from 0–18.

A Spearman rank correlation coefficient was computed between the total general prerequisite score and the total score for Section 2 based on school, class and individual levels. The Spearman rank correlation was highly significant ($r_s = 0.93$, $P < 0.01$), illustrating a high association between the two sections in the content analysis. These 2 sections were condensed to form one group. The frequency distribution of the final total policy scores was not normally distributed and the scores were therefore trichotomised to form a categorical variable. Schools were categorised into one of three equal groups; low total anti-bullying policy content scores (score = 2); moderate anti-bullying policy content scores (scores in the range of 3–8); or high anti-bullying policy content scores (scores in the range of 9–16).

Results

First, we will consider the prevalence of direct bullying and relational bullying behaviour. Then, we report on the association between bullying behaviour and the content of anti-bullying policies. Lastly, we consider the best combination of factors predicting involvement in bullying behaviour.

The Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour Among Primary School Children

Direct Bullying. The frequency of direct victimisation and direct bullying of others is illustrated in Table II. Chi-square comparisons in the form of categorical cross tabulations revealed significant gender differences for victimisation [$\chi^2 (2376) = 29.26$, $df = 2$, $P < 0.001$] with boys being victimised more often than girls. Significant gender differences also emerged for bullying others [$\chi^2 (2374) = 51.29$, $df = 2$, $P < 0.001$] with boys reporting that they bullied others frequently and very frequently more than girls.

Overall, 4.5% of children were found to be pure bullies, 12.2% were bully/victims, 42.0% pure victims and 41.2% neutral (Table III). Highly significant gender differences were revealed concerning bullying group classification [$\chi^2 (2374) = 70.64$, $df = 3$, $P < 0.001$]. Boys were classified as direct pure bullies and bully/victims more than girls, and girls were classified as neutral more often than boys (Table III).

Relational Bullying. Overall, 45.9% of children reported being relationally victimised frequently or very frequently over the previous six months and 8.4% of children reported relationally bullying others frequently or very frequently over the previous six months (Table III). Significant gender differences were uncovered for relational bullying [$\chi^2 (2371) = 6.68$, $df = 1$, $P < 0.01$] with boys relationally bullying others more

TABLE II. Percentage of pupils directly victimised and pupils who directly bully others overall, and by gender

	Direct Victimisation				Bully others directly		
	Never/seldom (%)	Frequently (%)	Very frequently (%)	Never/seldom (%)	Frequently (%)	Very frequently (%)	
Overall (<i>n</i> = 2376)	45.8	29.7	24.5	83.3	14.3	2.4	
Gender*							
Boys (<i>n</i> = 1203)	40.6	31.3	28.1	77.9	18.5	3.6	
Girls (<i>n</i> = 1173)	51.2	28.0	20.8	88.7	10.0	1.3	

* $P < 0.001$

TABLE III. Classification of children into bullies, bully/victims, victims and neutrals (not involved in bullying) for direct and relational bullying (frequently and very frequently)

	Direct bullying group status (%)				Relational bullying Group Status (%)			
	Bully	Bully/victim	Victim	Neutral	Bully	Bully/victim	Victim	Neutral
Overall ($n = 2374$)	4.5	12.2	42.0	41.2	1.6	6.8	39.1	52.5
Gender*								
Boys ($n = 1201$)	6.2	15.9	43.5	34.4	2.3	7.5	36.2	53.9
Girls ($n = 1173$)	2.9	8.4	40.5	48.3	0.9	6.1	42.0	51.1

* $P < 0.001$

than girls (9.8% vs. 6.9%). No significant gender differences were found for relational victimisation.

Overall, 1.6% of children were classified as pure bullies, 6.8% as bully/victims, 39.1% as pure victims and 52.5% as neutral (Table III). Highly significant gender differences were found according to bullying subgroup classification [χ^2 (2371) = 16.04, $df = 3$, $P < 0.001$] with boys being classified as relational pure bullies more than girls, and girls being classified as relational pure victims more than boys.

Anti-Bullying Policies and Bullying Behaviour

No significant differences emerged for the frequency of direct victimisation, the frequency of directly bullying others, direct bullying subgroup classification, whether children told the teacher about being bullied, or whether the teacher helped them after being bullied, in relation to scores gained on the content of anti-bullying policies (low, moderate or high score). In addition, no significant effects were found when analysed separately by year group and gender. The only significant difference found was between being bullied in the playground and total policy score [χ^2 (2080) = 9.57, $df = 2$, $P < 0.01$]. Schools that had high overall policy scores had the fewest children reporting being directly bullied in the playground, compared to schools who received moderate or low scores.

However, an association was revealed between relational bullying behaviour and overall policy scores. Significant differences were found between bullying others and total policy scores [χ^2 (2074) = 12.41, $df = 2$, $P < 0.01$]. Those schools that gained high overall policy scores had more children reporting that they bullied (frequently or very frequently) other children than schools with low or moderate policy scores. A significant association was also found between bullying subgroup classification and total policy score [χ^2 (2074) = 19.01, $df = 6$, $P < 0.01$]. Schools with high total policy scores had more children classified as relational bullies, bully/victims and victims compared to schools who only gained low total policy scores. Schools with high total policy scores had the fewest children classified as neutral compared to schools with low and moderate scores (Table IV). No significant differences were elicited for relational victimisation and total overall policy scores.

Anti-Bullying Policies, School Related Factors and Bullying Behaviour

Logistic regression analyses were carried out to determine the best combination of

TABLE IV. Percentages for the frequency of relational victimisation, relationally bullying others and relational bully classification in relation to anti-bullying policy content scores

	Anti-bullying policy content analysis score		
	Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
Bully others overall ($n = 2074$)*			
Yes	5.6	8.1	10.6
No	94.4	91.9	89.4
Victim overall ($n = 2073$)			
Yes	42.0	46.7	49.7
No	58.0	53.3	50.3
Bully group status ($n = 2074$)*			
Bully	0.9	1.6	2.3
Bully/victim	4.7	6.5	8.3
Victim	37.3	40.1	41.3
Neutral	57.1	51.8	48.1

* $P < 0.01$

factors predicting directly bullying others, relationally bullying others, being directly victimised and being relationally victimised. All individuals from the same school were assigned the same school policy score. This allowed comparison of individual characteristics although school policy scores cannot vary according to individual. The dichotomised dependent variables were directly bullying others versus not bullying others, relationally bullying others versus not bullying others, being a direct victim versus not being a victim, and lastly being a relational victim versus not being a victim. The independent variables were categorised as follows for the logistic regression: gender (boys versus girls), age (year two versus year four), ethnic origin (native UK versus non-native UK), SES (upper SES (1) versus middle and lower SES and middle SES (2) versus upper and lower SES), class size (small class size (1) versus medium and large class size and medium class size versus small and large class size), school size (small school size (1) versus medium and large school size and medium school size (2) versus small and large school size), location (urban versus rural), and total anti-bullying policy score (low scores (1) versus moderate and high scores and moderate scores (2) versus low and high scores).

First, a full model was built forcing all eight independent variables into the prediction function and then those variables were removed (backward stepping), which did not make a significant contribution to the model (no significant change in fit when removing variables).

Directly Bullying Others. The final model for predicting involvement in bullying others is shown in Table V [χ^2 (2077) = 63.40, $df = 2$, $P < 0.001$]. Factors which had a significant impact on predicting children's involvement in directly bullying others were, in order of importance, gender (odds ratio 0.41, CI (95%) 0.32–0.52) and age (odds ratio 1.44, CI (95%) 1.13–1.83). Children who directly bullied others were boys rather than girls and children from year four as opposed to year two.

Direct Victimisation. The final model for predicting direct victimisation is shown in Table VI [χ^2 (2077) = 58.74, $df = 4$, $P < 0.001$]. Factors which predicted whether children were directly victimised, in order of importance, were SES (1) (odds ratio

TABLE V. Final logistic regression model of anti-bullying policy content analysis scores, social and school factors related to direct bullying others (backward stepwise method)

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig	R	Exp (B)*	95% CI for Exp (B)	
								Lower	Upper
Gender	-0.90	0.12	52.00	1	0.000	-0.16	0.41	0.32	0.52
Age	0.37	0.12	8.96	1	0.003	0.06	1.44	1.13	1.83

Model chi-square = 63.40; df = 2; P < 0.000; n = 2077

* adjusted odds ratio

0.58, CI (95%) 0.39–0.87), location (odds ratio 1.60, CI (95%) 1.33–1.91), gender (odds ratio 0.65, CI (95%) 0.55–0.77) and SES (2) (odds ratio 0.74, CI (95%) 0.61–0.88). Children who were directly victimised were from lower SES as opposed to middle or upper SES, from rural schools as opposed to urban schools, and boys rather than girls.

Relationally Bullying Others. The final model for predicting whether children will relationally bully others is illustrated in Table VII [χ^2 (2074) = 35.32, df = 6, P < 0.001]. Factors which predicted involvement in relationally bullying others, in order of importance, were total policy score (1) (odds ratio 0.48, CI (95%) 0.32–0.72), SES (1) (odds ratio 0.52, CI (95%) 0.22–1.23), gender (odds ratio 0.53, CI (95%) 0.38–0.75), SES (2) (odds ratio 0.67, CI (95%) 0.47–0.95) and location (odds ratio 1.45, CI (95%) 1.03–2.04). Children who relationally bullied others were from schools that received high total anti-bullying policy scores rather than moderate or low policy scores, lower SES children rather than middle or upper SES children, boys rather than girls, and children from rural rather than urban schools.

Relational Victimization. The final model for predicting relational victimisation is shown in Table VIII [χ^2 (2074) = 82.19, df = 6, P < 0.001]. Factors which predicted relational victimisation, in order of importance, were school size (1) (odds ratio 2.16, CI (95%) 1.72–2.71), total anti-bullying score (1) (odds ratio 0.65, CI (95%) 0.52–0.81), total anti-bullying score (2) (odds ratio 0.74, CI (95%) 0.58–0.94), location (odds ratio 1.23, CI (95%) 1.02–1.48) and gender (odds ratio 1.19, CI(95%) 1.00–1.42). Chil-

TABLE VI. Final logistic regression model of anti-bullying policy content analysis scores, social and school factors related to direct victimisation (backward stepwise method)

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig	R	Exp (B)*	95% CI for Exp (B)	
								Lower	Upper
SES			14.63	2	0.001	0.06			
(1)	-0.54	0.20	7.01	1	0.01	-0.04	0.58	0.39	0.87
(2)	-0.31	0.09	11.09	1	0.001	-0.06	0.74	0.67	0.88
Location	0.47	0.09	25.44	1	0.000	0.09	1.60	1.33	1.91
Gender	-0.43	0.09	23.24	1	0.000	-0.09	0.65	0.55	0.77

Model chi-square = 58.74; df = 4; P < 0.000; n = 2077

* adjusted odds ratio

TABLE VII. Final logistic regression model of anti-bullying policy content analysis scores, social and school factors related to relationally bullying others (backward stepwise method)

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig	R	Exp (B)*	95% CI for Exp (B)	
								Lower	Upper
Policy score			13.65	2	0.001	0.09			
(1)	-0.74	0.21	12.79	1	0.000	-0.10	0.48	0.32	0.72
(2)	-0.09	0.21	0.19	1	0.66	0.00	0.91	0.61	1.37
SES			5.96	2	0.051	0.04			
(1)	-0.65	0.43	2.22	1	0.14	-0.01	0.52	0.22	1.23
(2)	-0.41	0.18	5.09	1	0.02	-0.05	0.67	0.47	0.95
Gender	-0.63	0.17	13.54	1	0.000	-0.10	0.53	0.38	0.75
Location	0.37	0.17	4.62	1	0.032	-0.05	1.45	1.03	2.04

Model chi-square = 35.32; df = 6; $P < 0.000$; $n = 2074$

* adjusted odds ratio

dren who were victimised were from small rather than medium or large schools, from schools that received high total anti-bullying policy scores rather than moderate or low policy scores, rural schools as opposed to urban schools, and boys rather than girls.

Discussion

The Prevalence of Bullying Behaviour

With regard to the prevalence of bullying behaviour among primary school children, 29.7% of children reported being frequently directly victimised (several times that term) and a further 24.5% reported being very frequently victimised. These figures for being very frequently directly victimised (at least once a week) represent a high proportion of primary school children and are high in comparison to previous studies (Bentley & Li, 1995; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Mooij, 1992; O'Moore & Hillery, 1989; Pepler, 1991; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988). Only two previous studies have reported comparable results (Genta, Menesini, Fonzi, Costabile, & Smith, 1996; Smith

TABLE VIII. Final logistic regression model of anti-bullying policy content analysis scores, social and school factors related to relational victimisation (backward stepwise method)

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	Sig	R	Exp (B)*	95% CI for Exp (B)	
								Lower	Upper
School size			51.95	2	0.000	0.13			
(1)	0.77	0.11	44.90	1	0.000	-0.12	2.16	1.72	2.70
(2)	-0.01	0.11	0.01	1	0.91	0.00	0.99	0.80	1.22
Policy score			15.58	2	0.000	0.06			
(1)	-0.43	0.11	15.36	1	0.000	-0.07	0.65	0.52	0.81
(2)	-0.30	0.12	6.05	1	0.01	-0.04	0.74	0.58	0.94
Location	0.20	0.09	4.73	1	0.03	0.03	1.22	1.02	1.48
Gender	0.18	0.09	3.90	1	0.05	-0.03	1.19	1.00	1.42

Model chi-square = 82.19; df = 6; $P < 0.000$; $n = 2074$

* adjusted odds ratio

& Levan, 1995). Conversely, the rates for directly bullying others were much smaller: 14.3% for frequent bullying and 2.4% for very frequently bullying others. Previous studies have reported equivalent findings to the above for bullying others (Bentley & Li, 1995; Byrne, 1994; Kumpulainen et al., 1998; O'Moore & Hillery, 1989; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

The current findings revealed that relational bullying behaviour is a prevalent behaviour among primary school children—46% of children reported being frequently or very frequently victimised and 8.4% reported relationally bullying others frequently or very frequently. These figures represent new findings within the field of relational bullying behaviour, as the present study examined relational bullying according to predefined frequency categories across classes and schools. Previous studies have employed sociometric methods that standardise rates of relational victimisation and bullying within classes and schools (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, 1996; Lagerspetz, Björkqvist, & Peltonen, 1988; Tomada & Schneider, 1997) which do not allow for the determination of rates of relational bullying across classes and schools.

Gender differences for both direct and relational bullying behaviour were revealed, with more boys reporting being directly victimised than girls, which is consistent with previous findings within the literature (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Genta et al., 1996; Kumpulainen et al., 1998). However, not all studies have reported this pattern of findings; opposing results have been reported where girls were found to be victims of direct bullying more frequently (Baldry, 1998; Bentley & Li, 1995; Farrington, 1993; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Boys were also found directly to bully others more than girls, which is consistent with the assertion that boys exhibit more overt aggression than girls at an early age, and this has been a consistent finding across studies of aggression and conduct problems (Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, 1995; Farrington, 1993; Olweus, 1994). No gender differences emerged for experiences of relational victimisation overall, whilst more boys reported relationally bullying others. These findings are contrary to those reported by Crick and colleagues in the US (Crick & Bigbee, 1998; Crick, Casas, & Ku, 1999; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995) who reported that girls were more relationally aggressive or victimised between the ages of six and 11 years. The results are more consistent with previous European studies that have reported no gender differences before the age of nine years (Björkqvist, Lagerspetz, & Kankiainen, 1992; Lagerspetz & Björkqvist, 1994; Österman et al., 1998).

Developmental theory may account for the pattern of findings reported. It is believed that bullying follows three main stages: direct physical; direct verbal, and indirect/relational bullying (Björkqvist et al., 1992; Rivers & Smith, 1994). Direct and relational bullying show moderate overlap in primary school children (Wolke et al., 2000). Thus, children appear to be involved in any bullying behaviour role when young, while physical and relational bullying become distinct behaviours in the later primary school years. Relational bullying appears to become the preferred bullying behaviour of adolescent girls. The exact social cognitive processes and reasons for these emerging gender differences are not fully understood as yet. Alternatively, the gender differences maybe explained by differences in the methodology employed. The majority of previous studies have been carried out with secondary school students by administering anonymous self-report questionnaires, whereas the current study carried out private individual interviews. Previous research has indicated that girls are more socially skilled in individual interview situations, and therefore may have been less likely to admit to bullying other children (McGuffin & Scourfield, 1997; Skuse, 1997).

The proportions of children classified as pure bullies, pure victims, bully/victims and neutral was comparable for both direct and relational bullying, although to a lesser

extent for relational bullying. Of interest is the group known as bully/victims, as this study revealed that a substantial number of children are classified in this way—12.2% for direct bullying and 6.8% for relational bullying. These findings emphasize the need for studies to consider the group bully/victims, particularly in light of other recent findings that bully/victims may be the highest at-risk group for long-term behaviour and health problems (Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Henttonen, 1999; Wolke et al., 2000, 2001).

The Content of Anti-Bullying Policies in Relation to Bullying Behaviour Among Primary School Children

The major focus of this study was whether there is a dosage-response relationship between anti-bullying policies and bullying behaviour in primary schools. No such relationship was revealed for direct bullying, indicating a vast gap between written policies and their daily integration into the school's agenda. The results illustrate that there is a need to determine why policies are not implemented into schools' daily practice, as intervention studies carried out by Olweus (1992, 1993) and others have revealed consequent reductions in bullying behaviour. As previously mentioned, bullying is a major worry and concern for parents, and is likely to be an important consideration for many parents when deciding which school they would prefer to send their child to. Policies on behaviour and bullying also feature prominently in most school prospectuses and are considered in school inspections by the Office of Standards in Education in England.

In view of the above, the results revealed no significant associations between the content of anti-bullying policies and direct bullying, and secondly involvement in both types of bullying behaviour. However, a significant relationship was uncovered for relational bullying behaviour, indicating an inverse relationship: A higher incidence of relational bullying and victimisation problems were reported by children from schools which had more detailed and comprehensive policies, compared to schools which had less thorough policies.

There are several possible explanations to consider in relation to the above pattern of results. The first possible account is that those schools that received high policy scores could have previously reduced bullying rates from already very high levels before the study began, leaving them with bullying problems but to a lesser extent. Alternatively, schools who were aware of a high incidence of bullying could have developed more detailed policies. The authors had no information about the incidence of bullying behaviour in the years prior to the initiation of this study.

A second plausible account is that detailed policies may have actually had a negative impact in terms of shifting direct bullying behaviour to a more covert (relational) nature. Support for this assertion may be derived from the only significant finding, revealed between the location of direct bullying and policy scores. Schools that received high policy scores had the fewest children reporting being bullied in the playground, compared to schools which received lower policy scores. This could imply that less direct bullying behaviour is occurring in the playground due to better supervision, but a shift has taken place with more relational bullying taking place in locations such as the classroom where it is likely to be less noticeable than direct bullying.

Thirdly, anti-bullying policies and whole-school interventions may be failing to consider the problem of relational bullying, and placing exclusive emphasis on direct bullying behaviour only. The whole school intervention program carried out by Eslea

and Smith (1998) and Olweus (1993) are the only two studies to have taken relational bullying into account.

Fourth, theories attributable to increased sensitisation as a result of anti-bullying policy scores could offer an explanation for the findings. For those children with better social cognitive skills (Sutton & Smith, 1999), anti-bullying policies may actually have the opposite effect to that desired. This group of children may be more inclined to employ relational forms of bullying as they realise that these forms of behaviour are much more likely to go unnoticed by staff. However, the weakness with this explanation is that no developmental differences were uncovered regarding relationally bullying others, although more year two children reported experiencing relational victimisation compared to year four. To accept the above explanation, one would expect more year four children to report relationally bullying others, as their social cognitive skills should be more developed than year two children.

A further, more plausible account for the lack of a relationship between direct bullying and policy scores, and for a higher incidence of relational bullying, may be that anti-bullying policies are not well implemented and integrated into the school system, and therefore do not remain at the forefront of the schools' agenda. It could be that the policies are not specifically addressing bullying but general aggression and antisocial behaviour. This explanation is echoed by previous studies which have evaluated whole-school policies. Eslea and Smith (1998) and Roland (1989, 1993) purported that in order for intervention programs to be effective, maintaining the momentum is the essential core component. Cowie (1998) reviewed factors that may be related to the success or failure of school interventions. Recurring issues concerned the allocation of time and the availability of resources underpinning the efforts of adults and young people involved in bullying services. Little spare time is available for teachers to manage intervention services and organise the necessary supervision. Adequate training is often not available and furthermore, the financial and resource requirements that need to be maintained over time are frequently underestimated. Problem families, staffing shortages and inconsistencies in the approach, particularly among lunchtime supervisors, were cited by head teachers as factors which they believed influenced the outcome of the intervention program (Eslea & Smith, 1998).

The current correlational study is unable to explain the underlying processes. However, it clearly indicates that policies per se (for example for school inspection purposes) provide little indication of the bullying behaviour in a school. Our findings highlight the need for future research that includes in-depth individual interviews with teachers and pupils regarding their awareness and perceptions of anti-bullying policies. Furthermore, the motivation of schools to implement a policy should be considered—a glossy policy produced for a variety of audiences such as marketing and recruitment, school inspections and so forth, can be unrelated to actual behaviour.

The concept of keeping policies at the forefront of the schools' agenda incorporates the issue of parental involvement (Arora, 1994; Foster Arora, & Thompson, 1990; Froschl & Sprung, 1999; Rigby, 1996). Parents play an essential role in efforts to create a climate in which bullying is unacceptable, and in developing prevention strategies (Foster et al., 1990). If one considers the individual components of the policies evaluated in the current study, 44% of schools stressed the importance of having serious talks with parents about bullying incidents that their child had been involved in, after incidents had occurred. Conversely, parental involvement in the planning of preventative bullying strategies was minimal; only 26% of schools had formed co-ordinated groups to tackle bullying, and only one (3%) school had held a school

conference day for all involved parties. It would seem that preventative measures are rarely enforced, while retrospective initiatives after bullying incidents have occurred, such as having serious talks with all concerned, are higher on the agenda.

The findings from the current study illustrate that the detail of anti-bullying/behavioural policies per se are not good indicators of the amount of direct bullying reported by children, and more seriously that more rigorous policies were related to increased reports of relational bullying behaviour. Further support for this conclusion can be derived from the logistic regression models carried out to determine significant predictors of primary school children's involvement in direct and relational bullying behaviour. The content of policies did not remain in the final models for direct bullying behaviour, and were unable to predict children's involvement as either a direct bully or victim. However, policy scores did remain in the final models for relational bullying others even after allowing for a number of sociodemographic and school factors and relational victimisation, indicating that high policy scores predicted children's involvement as a relational bully or victim.

Conclusions and Future Directions

It appears that the benefits of intervention initiatives and policies in operation are not being maximised.

School anti-bullying policies per se are not good indicators of bullying behaviour. The more detailed the anti-bullying policy, the higher the rate of relational bullying. The link between relational bullying and anti-bullying policies should be more closely explored, in order to determine whether it is caused by relational bullying not being adequately addressed by schools, or if it is that because direct bullying is addressed that children turn towards more covert methods of bullying. In addition, policy work and whole-school interventions should consider different bullying roles, taking into account bully/victims and not just bullies and victims. Individualised strategies may help to take the differential needs of bullying roles into account (Cowie & Olafsson, 2000; Cowie & Sharp, 1996; Maines & Robinson, 1991; Petersen & Rigby, 1999; Pikas, 1989; Salmivalli, Legerspetz, Björkquist, Osterman, & Kankiainen, 1996). Continued evaluation of the effectiveness of policies in schools should be carried out, as parents or school inspectors cannot currently rely on the school policies themselves to inform them about the incidence of bullying behaviour.

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Correspondence: Professor Dieter Wolke, University of Bristol, Unit of Paediatric and Perinatal Epidemiology, ALSPAC, 24 Tyndall Avenue, Bristol BS8 1TQ, UK (e-mail: Dieter.Wolke@bris.ac.uk).

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