

Anti-bullying case study: building awareness through data

The Sir Christopher Hatton Academy in Wellingborough uses data to identify specific training needs to tackle bullying – for staff, students and parents.

This case study highlights how the school:

- categorises bullying and records every bullying incident
- has trained student mentors to gather intelligence and support bullied students
- uses incident data to produce reports that identify bullying problems and what the school needs to do to tackle them
- uses data to improve its policies, procedures and staff training on bullying and to offer training to parents.

Until seven years ago, Sir Christopher Hatton Academy was doing “what schools have always done”, explains the school’s anti-bullying coordinator John Barker. Staff dealt with bullying issues reactively, as there was no strategy to identify trends or proactively tackle problems.

“For any kind of pastoral issue, you’d have a paper trail and folders everywhere,” adds John. The academy then switched to recording all bullying incidents on a central online system and a coordinator was appointed to oversee bullying incidents response and pupil support strategies.

John began embedding practice within the academy to reduce bullying and to improve its categorisation. After all, not everything that is recorded as bullying actually is; many incidents are ‘relational conflict’. Based on feedback from staff and pupils, he focused first on discriminatory language. “I asked: ‘What discriminatory language do you hear?’ We then started initially with the inappropriate use of the word ‘gay’.”

John approached [Stonewall](#) and with the charity's help, the academy implemented various changes. It established clear sanctions for any pupils using discriminatory language and displayed messages about diversity and discrimination throughout the school – for example through posters displayed in classrooms and resources in the library.

Its approach and other strategies resulted in Hatton becoming the first school to get Stonewall's [gold school champion award](#) for tackling homophobic, biphobic and transphobic bullying, and for promoting diversity.

Looking behind the numbers

As valuable as raw data is, it only tells part of the story. Often, it's a prompt for further investigation to find out what the numbers are really saying.

“Students who are lower achievers or in lower years are far more likely to report than someone who's at a much higher ability or in a higher year.” John says higher-ability or older students appear to be more resilient or more accepting of bullying behaviour. “So they don't tell you the stuff that's happening. It's made me very aware of the danger of reporting gaps.”

Raising awareness and skills

John now runs regular training for staff within the academy, driven by trends identified in the data. He also delivers Stonewall-accredited 'train the trainer' courses.

“Recently, I did a staff training session on sexting,” John says. “Before that, I did one on the difference between bullying and relational conflict. We're also having a drive on mental health at the moment. All that comes from the data and the need to provide what both students and staff require in terms of response and training”.

When needed, the school brings in outside expertise. “Recently, we got [Hope Not Hate](#) in for staff training to address some aspects of racism.” The school has also worked with the [Anti-Bullying Alliance](#) to tackle bullying involving pupils with special needs and disabilities (SEND), and the Charlie Waller Memorial Trust to deliver student, staff and parental training on mental health and wellbeing.

Capturing and reporting data

Hatton captures bullying data through [BehaviourWatch](#). John can combine this data with the school's information management system, allowing the academy to link behavioural incidents with pupil records.

John can aggregate the data – across the school or a particular year – by type of bullying (physical, verbal, online), whether pupil premium or students with SEND are involved, or whether it's a gender-based, lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT), or racist incident. He logs these details for both the bully and victim, identifies any trends and produces a report to senior colleagues every half term.

Senior staff can also read details of individual incidents. "Heads of year get an investigated summary: who the bully was, who was bullied, what sanctions were put into place," John says.

Peer mentors: two-way data

Where the data identifies incidents as bullying, support and intervention is implemented for both the victim and the bully. Hatton deploys peer mentors to help pupils. These are 70 fully trained students from Years 8 to 13.

"I go through the data, and if there's a student who's been bullied I allocate them a one-to-one mentor," John explains. The mentors keep a confidential record of their meetings, which are exclusively reviewed by John after each session.

The mentors also provide John with valuable data about issues that haven't been reported.

Supporting parents

John says parents have responded well to the academy's data-driven approach. When a specific incident occurs, the school now has a clear information trail to share. "If SLT ask for data about any given issue, I can provide information about the support that's been given, either through the peer team or a member of staff," John explains.

Hatton also offers training to parents on specific aspects of bullying. "We identified that [cyberbullying] was an issue. So when we had a Year 7 parents' evening, we invited parents to use school equipment to do the online training in e-safety."

“We did the same thing recently with mental health,” John adds. “We did training for 60 students, then with the whole staff body and we had a blanket invite to all parents to do the training as well.”

Hatton’s use of data has transformed its anti-bullying approach, and recorded incidents at the academy have fallen over time. As John sums up: “If you don’t have the data, you can’t act on it.”