
Review of the Literature

This review of the literature is an extract from the National Safe Schools Framework Resource Manual published in 2011. The resource manual has since been replaced by the Safe Schools Hub.

This literature review covered research on student bullying up until 2009. Some information has been since updated in A review of literature (2010-2014) on student bullying by Australia’s Safe and Supportive School Communities Working Group. The latter document is intended to be read as a continuation of this work.

INTRODUCTION

There has been a growing awareness over the last two decades, both within Australia and in other parts of the world, of the harmful impact of school bullying, which has been described as the most common form of aggressive behaviour that occurs in primary and secondary schools (Greene, 2000 & 2003; Nansel et al., 2003). Bullying in schools is now correctly recognised as a societal problem and anti-bullying initiatives are seen as part of the Human Rights movement. Many educators and researchers (e.g. Smith, 2004) have convincingly argued that it is a moral imperative for schools to continue to address the complex problem of bullying and to keep children and young people safe. Professor Dan Olweus, one of the earliest researchers into school bullying, has summed it up in this way:

*It is a fundamental democratic right for a child to feel safe in school and to be spared the oppression and repeated, intentional humiliation implied in bullying (Olweus, 1999:21).*

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) reinforces the importance of protecting children’s quality of life and their rights to be educated in a safe environment, free from all forms of violence, victimisation, harassment and neglect. In September 2005 the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child welcomed the measures taken to combat bullying in Australian schools, such as the National Safe School Framework (NSSF). The Committee indicated ongoing concern in regard to the impact that bullying has on the psychological wellbeing, educational achievements and social development of victimised children and recommended that appropriate measures continue to be taken to counter bullying in Australian schools (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child).

Large-scale proactive initiatives such as the National Safe Schools Framework also reflect a broader global focus on the rights of all people to be safe from harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and abuse. There is a strong connection between being victimised at school and being a member of a group that is forced to defend its rights in other societal circumstances. For example, gay and bisexual students are disproportionately victimised relative to their heterosexual peers (Bontempo & D’Augeli, 2002).
Schools that do not address the problem of bullying can become breeding grounds for a process whereby the more aggressive/powerful dominate the less powerful, a process that underpins various types of violent criminal activity as well as domestic violence and child abuse.

Bullying causes great suffering and can adversely affects development and learning and anti-bullying initiatives in schools are also consistent with the current drive both within schools and in the general community to promote positive mental health and wellbeing in young people (Stevens et al., 2001).

The following section addresses eight important and commonly asked questions about school bullying. These are:

1. What is bullying?
2. What is the prevalence of bullying in schools?
3. Why do some students bully others and why are some students more likely to be bullied?
4. What are some of the negative consequences of persistently or frequently bullying others? What are the negative consequences of being bullied?
5. What school factors, social dynamics & interactive processes help to explain bullying?
6. What are the links between bullying and student wellbeing
7. What legal issues are related to bullying?
8. What evidence-informed directions can schools take to reduce bullying?

The responses to these questions should be read in conjunction with the review by McGrath (2009) along with the following Commonwealth Government reports: Cross et al. (2009), Spears et al (2008), Rigby & Griffiths (2007) and McGrath (2006).
QUESTION 1: WHAT IS BULLYING?

There is no perfect definition of bullying that covers every possible set of circumstances (Smith, 2005a). However the following criteria are accepted as part of a good working definition of bullying by most researchers (e.g. Olweus, 1999; Ross, 2002; Smith & Brain, 2000; Smith, 2005a):

- Repeated negative actions towards a specific person or group that are intended to distress.
- Distress/harm or fear on the part of the student who is targeted.
- An imbalance of power in favour of the person(s) taking the aggressive actions.

The definition of bullying used in this framework is:

_Bullying is repeated verbal, physical, social or psychological behaviour that is harmful and involves the misuse of power by an individual or group towards one or more persons. Cyberbullying refers to bullying through information and communication technologies. Conflict or fights between equals and single incidents are not defined as bullying._

_Bullying of any form or for any reason can have long-term effects on those involved including bystanders._

The power advantage in a bullying situation may derive from a range of factors such as greater size, older age, superior verbal or manipulation skills, social status, knowledge of another student’s vulnerability (e.g. family issues or illness) and/or the level of support from other students. It may also derive from being a member of a dominant group in the community and using that power against members of a less dominant group e.g. through racism, sexism or homophobia (Prevnet, 2010).

The differences between bullying and similar concepts: harassment, aggression, violence and conflict

Harassment, aggression, violence, bullying and conflict are all interpersonal behaviours that can create or contribute to negative social environments. There are no universally accepted definitions of these terms, with different definitions sharing some features but not others.

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1 This definition has since been updated; see the Safe Schools Hub.
The following definitions represent the most commonly accepted characteristics associated with each type of behaviour.

**Harassment**

Harassment involves unwanted and one-sided words or actions towards another person (or persons) that offend, demean, annoy, alarm or abuse. It may be directed towards an individual or to one or more people who belong to a specific group (e.g. based on race, religion, gender, gender-orientation). It may involve a single incident or be part of an ongoing pattern of behaviour. It may be directed randomly or towards the same person(s). It may be intentional or unintentional. Occasionally, the person using words or actions that offend and distress another person may genuinely regard their offensive words as minor or harmless. Harassment is unacceptable and needs to be addressed as part of creating a safe school. If harassment is repeatedly directed towards the same person, and especially if it continues after the targeted person has asked them to stop, it would be considered to be bullying. However it would not be considered bullying if it:

- Occurred only once and was not part of a repeated pattern.
- Was (genuinely) not intended to offend, demean, annoy, alarm or abuse.
- Was not directed towards the same person(s) each time.

**Aggression**

Aggression can be defined as words or actions that are intended to harm another. Aggression may be physical or verbal or may be based on humiliation and other types of harm. It can be directed towards the same person each time or random (i.e. a different target each time). Most researchers view bullying as a sub-type of aggression. However aggression differs from bullying in that it is not necessarily repeated, nor directed to the same person each time and there isn’t always an imbalance of power (Dooley et al., 2009). If aggressive actions towards a specific person are repeated and incorporate a power imbalance, then it would be considered to be bullying.

**Violence**

Violence is usually described as severe aggression, often involving a weapon or other extreme features (e.g. multiple protagonists) that increase both the intended and actual harm (Smith, 2005b). Sometimes it is defined in terms of the severity of the effects on the targeted person, with an emphasis on physical damage or threat to life. The World Health Organisation (WHO, 2002) has defined violence as the intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person, or against a group or community, that either results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in, injury, death, psychological harm, mal-development or deprivation.

**Conflict**

Conflict involves a mutual disagreement, argument or dispute about something important between people of equal physical or psychological strength (Olweus, 1993) where there is no significant power advantage to one party. It often occurs when one person’s actions in
trying to achieve their goals prevent, block or interfere with another person's attempt to achieve their goals (Deutsch & Coleman, 2000; Johnson & Johnson, 1995). Although different to bullying, poorly-resolved conflict situations may lead to either aggressive or bullying behaviour. It is important for students to learn effective skills for the resolution of conflict as this is a normal and predictable aspect of healthy relationships, even although it may not be a pleasant experience. Some students intentionally frame their aggressive action towards another student as conflict (e.g. by calling it a ‘fight’) in order to avoid the consequences for their actions. Many so-called ‘fights’ are really aggressive one-way attacks or part of a bullying situation.

**Social dislike or social rejection is not necessarily bullying**

Social rejection or dislike is not automatically a type of bullying. However social rejection/dislike sometimes becomes bullying when one or more of the following features are usually present:

- One or more students repeatedly point out to the targeted student that they are being excluded and why (e.g. saying ‘no one likes you’ at every opportunity).
- One or more students repeatedly exclude the targeted student (e.g. by refusing to work with the student on a group task, getting up and moving if they are sitting near them in class or ignoring them during a group discussion).
- One or more students repeatedly make non-verbal gestures of exclusion and unacceptability (e.g. gestures which imply that the targeted is a ‘loser’, ‘has germs’). They may also play a series of nasty tricks or practical jokes on them to highlight their social exclusion (e.g. by not turning up to an agreed meeting point).
- Many other students are encouraged to exclude the targeted student and not ‘hang round with them’. There is often an implied threat that their own social life might be adversely affected if they associate with the targeted student.

**The different types of bullying**

Bullying can be divided into face-to-face bullying or covert bullying (including cyberbullying).

**Face-to-face bullying**

Face-to-face bullying (sometimes referred to as direct bullying) is overt and easier for adults to detect and respond to. It may involve physical actions such as punching or kicking or overt verbal actions such as name-calling and insulting.

**Covert bullying**

Covert bullying (sometimes referred to as indirect bullying) is a type of bullying that adults usually do not know about or do not acknowledge because it is hidden from them (Cross et al., 2009). Covert bullying can be as subtle as repeatedly frightening someone with a constant contemptuous stare (Rivers, 2001), but it more often involves ‘relational bullying’ which is the intentional manipulation and damage of peer relationships leading to social exclusion (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995). The tactics used may include, for example, making false allegations (e.g. that the targeted student has violated significant friendship ‘rules’),
spreading rumours about them or their family or conducting a malicious social exclusion campaign through the use of internet or mobile phone technologies (Cross et al, 2009; Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Covert bullying was perceived in previous years to be a less harmful type of bullying or as not really bullying at all (Boulton & Flemington, 1996; Rivers and Soutter, 1996; Bauman & del Rio, 2006; Birkinshaw & Eslea, 1998). However it is now recognised that many forms of covert bullying appear to have significant potential for serious harm, especially those forms that involve anonymity (i.e. the targeted student does not know who is doing it to them) and/or public humiliation (e.g. by texting or posting online embarrassing images or malicious text) (Cross et al, 2009; Smith et al, 2008; Sourander et al., 2010).

Rivers (2001a) argues that covert bullying appears to be linked more strongly than other forms of bullying to both absenteeism and poor school performance, and that teachers need to be aware that students who start to perform poorly or not turn up for school may be on the receiving end of this more insidious type of bullying that can be very difficult for students to explain and substantiate.

**Cyberbullying**

Cyberbullying is a specific type of covert bullying which has been defined as:

- An aggressive, intentional act carried out by a group or individual, using electronic forms of contact, repeatedly and over time against a victim who cannot easily defend him or herself (Smith et al., 2008:376)

- The use of information and communication technologies to support deliberate, repeated, and hostile behaviour by an individual or group that is intended to harm another (Belsey, 2008).

Cyberbullying has been described by many researchers (e.g. Cross et al., 2009; Shariff, 2005; Smith et al. 2008) as a challenging new kind of bullying that has both similar and different characteristics from ‘traditional’ bullying. It is more difficult for adults to detect or track, and almost half of those victimised do not know the identity of the student(s) who are attempting to harm them. Cyberbullying frequently involves ‘relational bullying’ but can also involve covert verbal attacks that insult, threaten or humiliate.

In Australia, cyberbullying appears to most commonly involve the malicious, targeted and repeated use of instant messaging and text messages (Cross et al., 2009) with a trend towards the use of social networking sites (e.g. MSN, Facebook, MySpace and Bebo) by older students. This form of bullying can be very difficult for adults to detect or track, and students who are the target of this type of bullying often do not know the identity of the perpetrator. Slonje and Smith (2008) found that cyberbullying using transmitted or posted picture/video clips was perceived by students as being more severe than other forms of cyberbullying primarily due to the large potential audience for the resulting humiliation.

Cross et al. (2009), Rivers & Noret (2010) and Sourander et al. (2010) have identified that most students who cyberbully also bully off-line and most students who are cyberbullied are
also bullied offline. There are many similarities and differences between bullying and cyberbullying (e.g. refer to McGrath, 2009)

The concept of ‘repetition’ is a core component of any type of bullying as it implies both intention and persecution. Repetition is more clear-cut in situations of cyberbullying in which aggressive actions using one or more types of technology are directed towards a specific student more than once (e.g. sending many insulting text messages over a week, posting insulting comments about them on a social networking site, making prank calls to their mobile phone or sending offensive emails). However it has also been argued (Slonje & Smith, 2008) that a complex multi-faceted and multi-step online campaign, which involves, for example, setting a student up to be involved in a ‘fight’, using a mobile phone to record it, posting the video clip on a website and then sending the web-link to a number of people also involves ‘repetition’ for several reasons. Firstly the campaign involves many steps which are planned and carried out over time (McGrath, 2009). Secondly, a single transmission of a humiliating photo or piece of personal information may bring about multiple responses from others that act like repeated acts of bullying (Slonje & Smith, 2008; Stacey, 2009).

School bullying of any type does not refer to a single event, but rather to a relational pattern repeated over time in which some students gain social dominance over others through the use of anti-social power (Crothers & Levinson, 2004; Smith, 2004; Smorti et al., 2003). A pattern of victimisation in a school, once developed, can quickly become entrenched because students continue to be in contact with each other over time and it is not easy for the targeted student to leave the situation (McGrath & Noble, 2006). Morrison (2001) notes that the repetitive and non-random nature of bullying means that students who are bullied not only have to survive the humiliation and distress of the attacks but also live in constant fear of their happening again.

Avoidance of labelling

Several researchers have cautioned against labelling some students as ‘bullies’ and others as ‘victims’ (e.g. Espelage & Swearer, 2003) arguing that labelling students further contributes to a negative school climate and over-emphasises the personal characteristics of individual children while minimising school risk factors within the school context (Brown, 2008). Souther and McKenzie (2000) highlight the risk that the terms ‘bully’ and ‘victim’ may label the student permanently and Rigby (1997a) has emphasised the benefits of describing the bullying behaviours rather than using emotive labels that may demonise specific students.

QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE PREVALENCE OF BULLYING IN SCHOOLS?

Most data about the frequency of bullying is obtained through student self-reports on written surveys and it can be difficult to get reliable estimates and comparisons because of the different instruments and survey questions that are used by different researchers & the variety in the age of the students who complete the surveys.

Rigby (2006) has estimated that 19 per cent of students between the ages of 7 and 17 are bullied on a weekly basis. In their more recent Australian study of bullying, Cross et al. (2009) identified that an average of 27 per cent of students in years 4-9 (approximately one in four) reported being bullied every few weeks or more often during the previous term, an average
of 16% reported being covertly bullied and between 7 and 10 per cent reported being specifically cyberbullied. According to the 2008 Indicators of School Crime and Safety report from the USA, 24 per cent of primary and secondary schools report daily or weekly bullying incidents (Dinkes et al., 2009).

Cross et al. (2009) have argued that cyberbullying may increasing because schools are now more likely to have policies and procedures in place that make it more difficult for students to engage in face-to-face bullying. Additionally, they argue, the continuing development of new forms of information and communication technology may make cyberbullying easier to engage in.

Research evidence suggests that direct verbal bullying (e.g. name-calling, taunting, mocking and insulting) and covert bullying (e.g. trying to encourage others to socially reject the targeted student) occur much more often than physical bullying (Atlas & Pepler, 1998; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Rivers & Soutter, 1996).

**Age patterns in bullying**

Bullying appears to peak during ‘transition’ i.e. the year in which students move from primary school to high school (e.g. Nansel et al., 2001; Pellegrini, 2002). This peak has been ascribed to changes that occur in social hierarchies at the time of transition and regrouping (Pellegrini & Long 2002). Bullying then decreases to relatively low levels at the end of the high school years (e.g. Baldry & Farrington, 2005; Nansel et al., 2001; Pellegrini, 2002) with two apparent exceptions: cyberbullying in Australian schools continues to increase after the transition year (Cross et al. 2009); and relational bullying amongst girls also increased as they get older (Wolke et al., 2009).

The development of an adolescent student’s sexual identity can become the focus of bullying when they enter secondary school (Craig & Pepler, 2003) as mixed-sex socialising becomes increasingly important (McMaster et al., 2002). Romantic relationships can also become a context for the use of power and aggression. Connolly et al. (2000) found both boys and girls aged twelve to fifteen who reported bullying others were also more sexually advanced, more likely to be involved in romantic relationships at an earlier age, and also more likely to report that they either used or received verbal and physical aggression within romantic relationships.

Empathy for students who are bullied appears to decline with age, especially when the student being bullied is male (Olweus & Endresen, 1998; Rigby, 1997b; Smith et al., 2004). Boys’ levels of responsive empathy may be influenced by the social context in a bullying situation (Cowie, 2000; Naylor & Cowie, 1999; Smith et al., 2004). For example, they may be more inclined to express contempt for vulnerable boys when there are girls nearby or when they are in the presence of more aggressive male classmates.

It is becoming apparent that many students who persistently bully others don’t just ‘grow out of it’. Several longitudinal studies have shown that for a great many students there is a continuity of aggressive and dominating behaviours over time (Huesmann et al., 1984; McCord, 1991; Moffitt, 1993; Pepler & Rubin, 1991; Tremblay et al., 1992). What starts as mild anti-social or aggressive tendencies during early childhood, evolves into bullying and
then moves to youth and adult violence and anti-social behaviour (Dupper & Myer-Adams, 2002; Pepler et al, 2008; Schaeffer et al., 2003; Tremblay et al., 2006).

**Gender patterns in bullying**

Boys bully more than girls do (Natvig et al. 2001; Olweus 1997; Rigby, 2006) and (especially younger boys) use more physical aggression in bullying others than do girls (Arora & Thompson; 1987; Craig & Pepler, 1997; Kalliotis, 2000; Rivers et al., 2007), possibly because of their greater physical strength (Rivers & Smith, 1994).

Girls use more covert relational bullying than boys (e.g. Crick et al., 1996; Crick & Grotpeeter, 1995; Cillessen & Mayeux, 2004) and, according to Rivers & Noret (2010) bully more through the use of emails and text messages. Both genders appear to use direct verbal aggression at similar levels (Bjorkqvist et al., 1992; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993).

**Where school bullying occurs**

Primary students are more likely to be bullied face-to-face in the playground (Blatchford & Sharp, 1994; Boulton, 1994; Charach et al., 1995; Craig et al., 2000; Olweus, 1991, Pepler et al., 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). This trend may be partially due to the lower likelihood of being detected in the playground since the ratio of students to teachers in the playground is lower than that in the classroom (Olweus, 1991; Andrews & Hinton, 1991; Craig et al., 2000; Soutter & McKenzie, 2000).

Secondary students are more likely to be bullied in the corridor and in class (Ahmad & Smith, 1994; Olweus, 1991; Rivers & Smith, 1994; Whitney & Smith, 1993). Bullying is also more likely to occur during competitive or aggressive activities (Murphy et al., 1983). There appears to be increasing use of information and communication technologies by both primary and secondary students to bully others students but secondary students use them more for this purpose (Cross et al., 2009).

**QUESTION 3: WHY DO SOME STUDENTS BULLY OTHERS AND WHY ARE SOME STUDENTS MORE LIKELY TO BE BULLIED?**

Bullying occurs at some level in all primary and secondary schools (Elias & Zins, 2003; Whitney & Smith, 1993; Zubrick et al., 1997) and all students can potentially become involved in bullying others or being bullied. Many students report occasionally taking part in some form of bullying and most students are teased or experience some form of peer harassment during their years at school (Espelage & Swearer, 2003; Pepler et al., 2008). For most students it occurs as part of their moral development or their temporary involvement with peer group dynamics. However longitudinal studies indicate that a small group of students will have frequent, long-lasting, serious, and persistent involvement in bullying (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Pepler et al., 2008; Sourander et al, 2000; Sourander et al, 2010).

**Characteristics of students who are more likely to frequently or persistently bully others**

Students who persistently or frequently bully others far more likely to:
• Feel disconnected from school and dislike school (Adair et al., 2000; Forero et al., 1999; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Kumpulainen et al., 1998).

• Demonstrate low levels of moral reasoning and high levels of egocentric reasoning (Hymmel et al. 2005; Menesini et al. 2003).

• Believe that the use of aggression is an acceptable way to achieve their own goals. (Lowenstein, 1994; O’Brennan et al., 2009; Slee & Rigby, 1993a).

• Be preoccupied with their own goals and not concerned about the rights of others (Tani et al., 2003).

• Show more emotional instability, as do those students who support them (Tani et al., 2003).

• Be less friendly and cooperative than other students (Nabuzoka, 2003; Tani et al., 2003).

• Have reasonable levels of peer acceptance and social status but are more disliked than non-bullying peers. In a large-scale survey of young people in the USA, Thomas & Smith (2004) found that a substantial percentages of young people who reported being violent and bullying others did not perceive themselves to be liked by classmates and reported loneliness and a lack of enjoyment of life at school. Classmates often acknowledge the social dominance of students who bully but avoid their company when possible (Juvonen et al., 2003). Most students appear to perceive them as both disliked and feared but also, to some extent, popular (Bradshaw et al., 2007).

• Associate with other aggressive and anti-social peers (Cairns & Cairns, 1994; Espelage et al., 2001; Salmivalli, 2001).

• Be less anxious than peers (O’Moore, 1997 & 2000; Craig, 1998; Kumpulainen et al., 1998; Salmon et al., 1998).

• Have high self esteem and an inflated view of themselves, especially about their social behaviour and influence (Austin & Joseph, 1996; Bjorkqvist et al 1982; Johnson, and Lewis, 1999; Natvig et al., 2001; O’Moore, 2000; O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001; Slee & Rigby, 1993b; Stuart & McCullaugh, 1996).

• Their peers tend to describe them as tough and confident and inclined to show off in front of others (Stuart & McCullaugh, 1996). Salmivalli et al. (1999) found that these students not only think highly of themselves but are very sensitive to any criticism that might deflate their self-perception. They described this as ‘defensive egoism’ or a tendency to be grandiose and psychologically defensive.

• Have lower levels of empathy than other students (e.g. Espelage et al. 2004; Gini et al., 2007; Jolliffe & Farrington, 2006; Menesini et al. 1997, Olweus 1991; Rigby 1996). Endresen & Olweus (2001) have argued that observing the distress of others and responding to it with empathy is what inhibits most students from taking part in bullying. Students who frequently bully others tend to have trouble managing anger and to strike out aggressively. Bosworth, Espelage, and Simon (1999) found that children who are the angriest are the most likely to bully others. Students who bully report that the need to
relieve stress and ‘having a bad day’ are the primary reasons for their actions (Swearer & Cary, 2007).

- Have poor impulse control and poor anger management skills (Lowenstein, 1994).
- Feel less confident about using non-violent strategies to resolve conflict (Bosworth et al., 1999; Kumpulainen et al, 1998) and tend to experience a lot of conflict in their relationships with friends and family members (Society for Research in Child Development, 2008).
- Be less likely to consider the negative consequences of their actions on others or on their own relationships over time (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001).
- Often feel angry and inclined to attribute hostile intentions to other people, especially when they are having a ‘bad day’ (Kumpulainen et al, 1998; Orobio de Castro et al., 2003).
- Be skilled at finding student to bully who will pose little threat to them, either physically or in terms of their social status (Perry et al., 1990).

Students who frequently bully others are more likely to come from family backgrounds with a combination of some of the following characteristics:

- Their parents are not supportive (Baldry & Farrington, 2000) and tend to use an authoritarian and harsh, punitive style of parenting (Loeber & Hay, 1997; Olweus, 1978; Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998).
- Their parents have a history of having bullied others when they were at school (Farrington, 1993), a history of criminal activity (e.g. Farrington & Baldry, 2005).
- The child has witnessed domestic partner abuse on the part of a parent (Baldry, 2003; Bauer et al 2006).
- The child spends less time than similar-aged children under the supervision of their parents (Baldry, 2003; Espelage et al., 2000; Farrington, 1993; Loeber & Hay, 1997; Olweus, 1993).
- The child has been maltreated by family members, been bullied by their siblings (Duncan, 1999) or has bullied their siblings (Wolke & Samara (2004).
- The child has high levels of disagreement with his/her parents (Baldry & Farrington, 2005; Stevens et al. 2002) and their parents are relatively uninvolved with them (Ahmed and Braithwaite, 2004a; Spriggs et al., 2007).
- Their parents are permissive towards aggressive behaviour (Olweus, 1980; Espelage et al., 2000)
- The child is part of a large family (Ma, 2001).

However many students who frequently or persistently bully others do not come from families with these characteristics and their parents are surprised, disappointed and angry when they find out that their child has been involved in bullying others.
The kind of family circumstances which make it less likely that children will bully others are those that are characterised by family harmony, non-authoritarian parenting, a reasonable level of parental supervision, parental disapproval for aggression and bullying behaviour (Rigby, 1997a), and a high level of positive involvement between parents and their children (Roland & Galloway, 2002; Stevens et al., 2002).

Emerging evidence suggests that there are different sub-types of students who frequently or persistently bully (Vaillancourt et al., 2003), and there may be at least two (and possibly more) distinct types. The first type has been described as students who bully proactively and instrumentally, that is, to achieve a goal. The second type has been described as impulsive students who bully reactively. These are described below.

**Students who bully proactively and instrumentally**

Students who bully proactively see their aggressive mistreatment of other students as ‘instrumental’ in achieving their goal of social dominance. They show low levels of remorse and moral reasoning (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2001; Sutton et al., 1999; Vaillancourt et al., 2003) and have been described as cold and callous schemers (Sourander et al, 2007a).

These students are more likely to use covert forms of bullying such as relational bullying based on humiliation, social exclusion and/or reputation damage (Kaukiainen et al., 1999). They hold a ‘Machiavellian’ view of relationships that endorses aggression and bullying as an acceptable way to achieve personal power and status in the peer group (Andreou, 2000). They feel little empathy for the students that they persecute and believe that it is okay to use someone else for your own ends (Sutton et al. 1999, 2000).

Research by Jolliffe and Farrington (2006) suggests that, although these students are low on emotional empathy (i.e. ‘feeling’ the distress of another), some of them have high levels of cognitive empathy (i.e. ‘reading’ how others are feeling and predicting and explaining their reactions). This ability to ‘read’ others plus a reasonable level of social competence enables them to socially manipulate other students to take part in the bullying they initiate (Craig & Pepler, 2003; Kaukiainen et al., 1999; Sutton et al., 1999). Although they are often socially dominant and have some status in the peer group, students who bully proactively and instrumentally are not typically liked by other students (Bukowski, 2003; Veenstra, 2005) and not sought as friends, although they would like to be (Veenstra et al. 2010).

**Students who bully reactively**

Students who bully reactively are more likely to be quick to anger and lash out impulsively and usually with physical aggression. They have low levels of social competence and poor emotional control (Roland & Idsoe, 2001; Vaillancourt et al., 2003). They have difficulties in particular with controlling frequent angry feelings especially when they are having a ‘bad day’ and feel stressed (Bosworth et al., 1999; Orobio de Castro et al., 2003; Swearer & Cary, 2007).

These students tend to be poorly accepted and sometimes move between bullying others and being bullied. These are often the students who have been described as ‘bully-victims’
(e.g. Baldry & Farrington, 1998) and tend to have the worst short-term and long-term outcomes (Lodge, 2010; Sourander et al., 2010).

Some students may start to bully others reactivity out of poorly controlled anger and frustration. Others may use aggression as a form of countering their own victimisation but then adopt bullying behaviour as an ongoing anticipatory/preventative strategy. Students who are ‘bully-victims’ may be at the greatest risk for adjustment difficulties (Craig & Pepler, 1995). Students with Attention Deficit Disorder, characterised by poor impulse control, are also more likely to both bully and be bullied (Bacchini et al., 2008; Kokkinos & Panayiotou, 2004; Unnever & Cornell, 2003; Wolke et al., 2000).

**Behaviour disorders**

Phillips (2007) has argued that society’s view of children as ‘innocents’ over the last few decades has made it difficult to acknowledge that many children are quite capable of bullying, aggression, and even violence (Nansel et al., 2001). Patterns of aggressive and anti-social behaviour in many adolescents can be traced back to similar, but milder, behaviour patterns in their early childhood years (Fitzpatrick et al., 2007; Dupper & Myer-Adams, 2002).

Ttofi & Farrington (2010) have argued that it is not unreasonable to predict that many students who persistently bully would meet the criteria for being diagnosed with childhood psychopathy and several researchers (e.g. Kokkinos & Panayiotou, 2004; Sourander et al., 2010; Vitaro et al., 2002; Wolke et al., 2000) have argued that many would also meet the criteria for common clinical childhood behavioural disorders, especially ‘conduct disorder’. Sourander et al., (2007b) found that 80 per cent of the 8-year old boys in their study who persistently bullied others met the criteria for either Conduct Disorder or Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD).

**Characteristics of students who are more likely to be bullied**

Any student can become the target of bullying. A student may be bullied, for example, simply because he or she is different in some way (e.g. they do not conform to gender stereotypes or have different preferences or opinions), or they may be is new to a school or lose social support because a friend moves interstate. It can also occur when a friendship or school-based romantic relationship breaks up and the ensuing conflict is not managed well and evolves into bullying. Some students may be targeted because they pose a threat (e.g. by being likable or successful in some way) to the social status of a student who has a pattern of bullying others.

It can be difficult to separate cause and effect in much of the research into the characteristics of students who are more likely to be bullied. For example, Fox and Boulton (2006c) identified a bi-directional relationship between being relationally bullied, through social exclusion, and behaving non-assertively. In other words, using non-assertive social behaviour makes it more likely that a student will be bullied, but being relationally bullied through social exclusion also leads to a student becoming more non-assertive over time. Similarly, they found that a student’s anxious behaviour and social withdrawal can increase the likelihood of being bullied but being bullied can also lead to an increase in their anxious behaviours and social withdrawal.

In summary, research suggests that students who are more likely to be bullied are also more likely to:

- Feel disconnected from school and not like school (Adair et al., 2000; Cross et al., 2009; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Nansel et al., 2001; Rigby, 1997b).
- Lack quality friendships with peers and teachers at school (but not necessarily outside school) (e.g. Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003; Smith et al., 2004).
- Display high levels of emotionality that indicate vulnerability (e.g. look sad or anxious and cry, or become sad or angry easily) and low levels of resilience (Analitis et al., 2009; Patterson et al., 1967; Perry et al., 1990; Rodkin & Hodges, 2003). This results in some students responding to being bullied in an angry, retaliatory, or distressed manner that may escalate the bullying (Goldbaum et al., 2006; Salmivalli, 1999; Wilton et al., 2000).
- Be less well accepted by peers, avoid conflict and be socially withdrawn (Eslea et al., 2003; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Nansel et al., 2001; Nansel et al, 2004; Pellegrini, 2002; Salmivalli, 1999). Buhs et al., (2006) found that early peer rejection in the first two years of schooling was related to being chronically socially excluded and bullied by peers.
- Be relatively non-assertive (Fox & Boulton, 2006c; Schwartz, et al., 1993).
- Lack confidence and skills in effectively interacting with peers (Fox & Boulton, 2006b; Pellegrini, 2002; Salmivalli, 1999).
- Be less likely to have other children come to their defence when they are bullied (Rodkin & Hodges, 2003; Slaby, 2005).
- Be different in some way. They may be different in a simple way e.g. they have an unusual physical characteristic or choose to dress differently or like a less usual sport. Students with learning disabilities are more likely to be bullied (Mishna, 2003; Nabuzoka et al., 1993) as are students with Autism Spectrum disorder (Bottroff et al., 2005; Little, 2002). Gay, bisexual and ‘questioning’ students are also more likely to be bullied (Bontempo & D’Augelli, 2002; Pilkington & D’Augelli, 1995; Rivers, 2000; Williams et al., 2003).

Students who are bullied are also more likely to come from family backgrounds in which there is parental conflict & disharmony (Rigby, 1994) and the parents tend to be restrictive, over-protective, controlling, and over-involved with their children (Bowers et al., 1994; Georgiou, 2008; Georgiou, 2008a).

However, many students who are bullied do not come from families with these characteristics and their parents are puzzled, shocked and angry when they find out that their child is being bullied. The kind of family circumstances that make it less likely that children will be bullied are those that are characterised by significant parental involvement (especially by the father) with their children (Flouri & Buchanan, 2002; Flouri & Buchanan, 2003) & good communication between the child and his/her parent(s) (Spriggs et al., 2007).
QUESTION 4: WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF FREQUENTLY OR PERSISTENTLY BULLYING OTHERS? WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING BULLIED?

School bullying is a complex and pervasive social problem (Martin & Huebner, 2007). Bullying others has been shown to be a relatively stable pattern of behaviour. In a longitudinal study, Sourander et al. (2000) identified that students who were bullying their peers at age 8 were highly likely to still be doing so when they were followed up at age 16. They also found that a large number of students who were being bullied at age 8 were likely to still be bullied at age 16. Being bullied can even be repeated in new surroundings (Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Salmivalli, 1998) most likely because the bullied student has become increasingly apprehensive and wary about any sign of potential threat from other students and this reaction is picked up as vulnerability by any student(s) looking for someone to target.

Bullying has serious short-term and long-term psycho-social consequences (e.g. Ttofi & Farrington 2008) for both those who are bullied and those who bully others (Bond et al., 2001; Rigby & Slee, 1999).

Negative consequences that both students who bully and students who are bullied experience in common

The following negative consequences have been identified for both students who frequently bully as well as for students who are bullied:

- Both feel unsafe at school (e.g. Cross et al., 2009; Nansel et al., 2001). However O’Brennan et al. (2009) have suggested that students who persistently bully others may feel unsafe because they are defensive and hypersensitive to any perceived threats to their ‘status’ and are inclined towards the attribution hostile intentions to other people (Kumpulainen et al., 1998).

- Both have an increased likelihood of being depressed and/or having suicidal thoughts (Crick, 1996; Cross et al., 2009; Kaltiala-Heino et al. 1999; Roland, 2002; Rigby & Slee, 1999). Although research consistently identifies this as an outcome for students who have been chronically bullied (Mills et al., 2005), several researchers have found this to be either not true, or less true, for students who bully (e.g. Gini & Pozzoli, 2009; Juvonen et al., 2003; Nansel et al., 2004; Sourander et al., 2010).

- Both have lower levels of academic achievement than might otherwise be expected (Andreou & Metallidou 2004; Glew et al., 2005; Nansel et al., 2001; Kaukiainen et al. 2002; Nansel et al., 2004; Srabstein & Piazza 2008; Woods & Wolke, 2004).

- Both have negative attitudes towards school and relatively high levels of school absenteeism over time (Rigby, 2003; Tremblay, 1999).
Long Term Consequences Associated Only with Frequently or Persistently Bullying Others

Longer-term negative consequences that are likely for students who frequently or persistently bully include:

- Continuing to bully and have children who bully: students who persistently bully peers at age fourteen tend to also bully others at age eighteen and, at age thirty-two, are likely to have children who also engage in bullying (Farrington, 1993).

- Excessive drinking and other kinds of substance use (e.g. Berthold & Hoover, 2000; Kaltiala-Heino et al. 1999; Pepler et al., 2002; Sourander et al., 2010).

- Juvenile anti-social behaviour e.g. graffiti, vandalism, shoplifting (Lodge, 2010; Paul & Cillessen, 2007; Rigby & Slee, 1999; Sourander et al., 2010; Vreeman & Carroll, 2007; Whitted & Dupper, 2005). Kumpulainen and Rasanen (2000) found that children who bullied their peers at 8 or 12 years of age had a higher risk of being deviant at age 15 than those not involved in bullying.

- Carrying weapons and being violent outside the school context: in their study of 2,915 students aged 14-15 years, Andershed et al., (2001) found that bullying others at school was strongly linked to engaging in violent behaviour and weapon-carrying out of school, for both boys and girls. Other researchers have found similar outcomes (e.g. Lodge, 2010; Sourander et al., 2010). Berthold and Hoover (2000) found that bringing weapons to school was also associated with bullying others at school. This suggests that school bullying is often part of a more general violent and aggressive behaviour pattern, and that preventive anti-bullying programs in schools may also contribute to decreasing the level of violence by young people when they are in the broader community.

- Engaging in criminal activity as young adults (Aluede et al., 2008; Bollmer et al., 2006; Heydenberk et al., 2006; Lodge, 2010; Nansel et al., 2003; Nansel et al., 2001; Sourander et al., 2006; Sourander et al., 2007a; Sourander et al., 2010; White & Loeber, 2008). In a Norwegian study by Olweus (1997) 70 per cent of students who had persistently bullied others were convicted of at least one crime by the age of 24. Being regularly involved in bullying others might allow young people to achieve immediate gratification of their goals by using aggression and they may therefore rarely have the opportunity to learn socially acceptable ways to negotiate and work cooperatively with others to achieve their goals (Feder, 2007; Haynie et al. 2001).

- Involvement in other forms of aggressive or abusive behaviour as adults (Lodge, 2010; Moffitt, 1993, Pepler & Craig, 1997; Rigby et al., 1994; Williams et al., 2008). Pepler and Craig (2010) have identified that the form that bullying takes changes with life stages: The nature of bullying changes as children mature. From early adolescence, new forms of aggression, carried out from a position of power, emerge. With developing thinking and social skills, children become aware of others’ vulnerabilities and of their own power relative to others. Bullying then diversifies into more sophisticated forms of verbal, social, homophobic, and sexually- and racially-based aggression. Over time, these new forms of
aggression are carried forward into different relationships and environments. The destructive lessons learned in childhood about the use of power may translate into sexual harassment in the workplace, dating violence, marital abuse, child abuse, and elder abuse. (Prevnet, 2010).

Several researchers (e.g. McIsaac et al., 2008; Pepler et al., 2002; Williams et al., 2008; Connolly et al., 2000) have found an association between bullying others at school and dating violence.

Additional negative consequences associated only with being bullied at school over time

Apart from the negative consequences listed above, that appear to be common to both students who bully and students who are bullied, the following additional shorter-term consequences are associated with being frequently bullied at school.

Students who are frequently bullied:

- Are more likely to have physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomach aches than non-bullied students (Due et al., 2005; Williams et al., 1996).
- Have ongoing low self esteem (Hawker & Boulton, 2000).
- Experience high levels of anxiety and are more likely to be referred for psychiatric services (Brain, 1997; Crick & Grotpeter, 1995; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Rigby, 2005a; Salmon et al., 2000).
- Fear for their safety and their life, especially if they are being cyberbullied (Sourander et al., 2010), as cyberbullying can occur 24 hours a day/7 days a week.
- May attempt or successfully commit suicide (Kaltiala-Heino et al., 1999; Mills et al., 2005). Between January 2004 and May 2005, 36 teenagers committed suicide in Victoria and 14 (or 40%) of these students had been bullied at school (Gough, 2007).
- May resort to violent retaliation. Borg (1998) found that many bullied students reported feelings of anger and vengefulness and Brockenbrough et al., (2002) found that there is an increased risk of their bringing weapons to school to defend themselves.

In many cases the negative effects of being frequently bullied at school are long-term and have been shown to often persist into adult life (Smith, et al., 2003). These include:

- Physical and mental health problems, especially anxiety and depression and increased susceptibility to illness (Dempsey & Storch, 2008; Kumpulainen & Rasanen, 2000; Sourander et al., 2010; Williams et al., 1996). In a retrospective study conducted in South Australia (Alison et al., 2009) nearly one-fifth of adults who were surveyed reported having been bullied when they were at school. These adults also reported significantly poorer mental and physical health compared to those who had not been bullied. Rivers (2000) identified that 72 per cent of lesbian, gay and bisexual adults reported a regular history of absenteeism at school due to homophobic bullying or harassment. Of those that had been bullied in this way, 50 per cent reported having contemplated self-harm.
or suicide when at school and 40 per cent had made at least one attempt to self harm since then.

- High levels of loneliness and impaired relationships (Forero et al., 1999; Hawker & Boulton, 2000; Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996b; Woods et al., 2009) which are probably linked to difficulties with trust and reluctance to become involved in intimate relationships (Bond et al., 2001).

**Negative effects of bullying on bystanders, school climate and achievement**

Bullying also has an impact on the climate of a school (Skiba et al., 2006; Stockdale et al., 2002) and all students within the school—including those who are not directly involved in bullying or being bullied.

Felson et al. (1994) found that tacit approval for the use of aggression in a school (e.g. through bullying) was associated with students’ not valuing academic achievement. Overall levels of achievement in both reading and maths were found to be lower in schools with higher levels of bullying (Konishi et al., 2010).

Witnessing peers being bullied can produce feelings of anger, fear, guilt, and sadness in student observers (Batsche & Porter, 2006). Bystanders who witness or know about repeated bullying of peers can experience negative effects similar to those experienced by the students being bullied (Kyriakides et al., 2006; Pepler & Craig, 2000). Rivers et al., (2009) surveyed 2,002 students ages 12 to 16 and found that 63 percent reported that they had witnessed peers being bullied. Those who had witnessed acts of bullying were more likely to report even greater psychological distress than those students who had been involved in bullying or had been bullied. Many reported that they felt unsafe because they knew it could also happen to them, and felt guilty about their inaction and lack of support for the student being bullied. Research by Janson et al., (2009) and Janson & Hazler (2004) has also identified that witnessing low-level repetitive bullying of another student at school is quite traumatic for most bystanders. In a study by Boulton et al., (2008) a significant number of students (aged 10-11) reported high levels of fear about the possibility of their being bullied too (and especially of being bullied through social exclusion) and this ongoing fear disrupted their concentration on class work.

Bullying can also create a school culture where bullying is accepted and students feel powerless to stop it from happening (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Salmivall & Voeten 2004; Stevens et al., 2000). In a New Zealand study, Adair et al., (2000) found that nearly half of the students in their study (aged 13-18) believed that bullying could not be stopped at school.

It seems that the wellbeing of many students within the school is adversely affected by bullying, not just those who are directly involved, and that the overall school climate becomes tainted.
QUESTION 5: WHAT SCHOOL FACTORS, SOCIAL DYNAMICS AND INTERACTIVE PROCESSES HELP TO EXPLAIN BULLYING?

Although the definition of bullying focuses on the repeated aggressive behaviour of one or more individual students, bullying is most often a group phenomenon, played out in a social context (Salmivalli, 1999). Swearer and Doll (2001) have stressed the importance of an ‘ecological framework’ for explaining the initiation and maintenance of bullying. They state that:

*A bullying interaction occurs not only because of individual characteristics of the child who is bullying, but also because of actions of peers, actions of teachers and other adult caretakers at school, physical characteristics of the school grounds, family factors, cultural characteristics and even community factors. (Swearer & Doll, 2001:10).*

**School culture**

A school’s culture plays a significant role in influencing how students treat each other. A school’s culture manifests itself in many different ways: the values the school most strongly endorses; the nature of the physical environment of the school; the way in which teachers and students treat each other; the way in which teachers treat each other and parents; the school’s motto, customs, ceremonies, reward systems, celebrations and events; the rituals associated with the entry and exit of students, families and staff; and how time and money are used (Stewart, 2000).

When teachers act in accordance with the expectations and values that are being formally communicated to students, they are more effective positive role models for respectful, inclusive and accepting behaviour (Prosser & Deakin, 1997). When teachers, for example, refrain from making homophobic, sexist or racist remarks or comments that vilify or ridicule particular students, other students are less likely to perceive there is tacit approval for engaging in these unpleasant behaviours.

Conversely, teachers who use behaviour management strategies that are based on dominance and submission as part of their more powerful position (e.g. by being sarcastic or unfair, making fun of or ridiculing a student, regularly threatening a student with punishment or forcing a student into a submissive posture or response) model this type of behaviour for students. Students who are already prone to bullying classmates may feel that not only are they justified in their own bullying behaviour but that these behaviours are tacitly sanctioned.

**The dynamic of social positioning**

A number of studies have demonstrated that one of the most common dynamics in bullying situations is that of ‘social positioning’ (Thornberg, 2010). This most frequent dynamic involves one student deciding to bully another more vulnerable student in order to enhance or maintain their own social status with peers and attain social dominance/power (Gini, 2006a; Karatzias et al., 2002; Pellegrini, 2004; Pellegrini & Bartini, 2001; Pellegrini & Long 2002; Thornberg, 2010). Other students are more likely to consider bullying to be an acceptable behaviour if a socially dominant individual or group adopts it (Gini 2006a).
A student’s friendship network, especially in early adolescence, can exert a significant influence in enticing him/her to assist with or support bullying despite never having been involved in such behaviour before (Salmivalli et al., 1998). To not do so could threaten their social standing and inclusion (Gini, 2006a). The targeted student becomes trapped in a dynamic in which they become increasingly powerless to escape the destructive relationship they find themselves in (Pepler et al., 1999). They become even more disempowered if their friends abandon them, join in with bullying them, or take no action when they are bullied in order to enhance their own sense of ‘belonging’ and protect their own social wellbeing. Many young people who are bullied then attempt to ‘maintain face’ by putting on a ‘mask’ of seeing indifference, assuring any adult who asks about their wellbeing that ‘everything is okay’.

**The dynamic of rejecting difference and imposing conformity**

O’Brien has described bullying as a ‘demonstration of the norms of young people’s social groups, outlawing and punishing those who do not conform’ (2007:297).

The most common explanation given by students to explain why some peers bully a classmate is that the classmate is different or ‘deviant’ in some way (Bosacki et al., 2006; Buchanan & Winzer, 2001; DeRoiser & Mercer, 2009; Frisén et al., 2008; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Hazler & Hoover, 1993; Hoover et al., 1992; Teräsahjo & Salmivalli, 2003; Thornberg, 2010; Varjas et al., 2008).

Such ‘differences’ may relate to their appearance, their speech, their preferences, with whom they spend time, their family and their circumstances, their sexual orientation, their interests and achievements, or a disability of some kind (Thornberg, 2010). The process of rejecting and isolating those who are different is part of an attempt to affirm the ‘correct’ way to be and highlight supposed superiority. This conformity process creates apprehension in students that their own social inclusion might be threatened if they dress, speak or act in the ‘wrong’ way (Thornberg, 2010), and some steps to reduce this apprehension can including taking part in bullying the ‘stigmatised’ student in order to disassociate themselves from him/her.

**The dynamic of ‘blaming the victim’**

The ‘Belief in a Just World’ theory (Montada & Lerner, 1998) refers to the tendency of most people to want to believe that the world they live in is ‘just’ and not unfair. Therefore, when students, teachers and parents witness (or know about) a student who is being unfairly treated, they can find this injustice difficult to explain to themselves. To make themselves feel better and safer, people may search for things that the other has done to deserve the mistreatment they are experiencing.

This ‘blame the victim’ dynamic can be detected in how many students or teachers respond to bullying situations. For example: a student who talks to a teacher about being bullied might be asked, ‘what did you do to deserve it?’; or a teacher, when talking to parents about their complaint that their daughter being bullied, might comment several times on their daughter’s poor social skills, implying that she is the ‘cause’ of her own mistreatment.
Several researchers (e.g. Gini, 2008; Hara, 2002; Teräsaaho & Salmivalli, 2003) have demonstrated that children (especially boys) tend to blame the student whom they are bullying for their own plight. They underestimate their bullying behaviour by constructing it as a harmless ‘game’ and claim that is justifiable behaviour because the real problem is the ‘deviance’ of the student. Teräsaaho & Salmivalli (2003) also showed that many bullied students accept this construction of what is happening and in turn blame themselves for being bullied. Students who blame themselves are less likely to seek support and more likely to ‘suffer in silence’ (Graham et al., 2006).

**The dynamic of misleading teachers by claiming ‘provocation’**

Some students can become quite adept at misleading teachers about their role in bullying (and aggressive assaults) by claiming ‘provocation’ by things that the bullied student has (supposedly) said about them or their family, or by actions they have (supposedly) taken. This common dynamic serves a dual purpose:

1. It shifts the blame onto the student who is being bullied and helps the bullying student feel less discomfort over behaving in a socially unacceptable way (Burns et al., 2008)
2. It encourages adults to see their behaviour as justified, to not take it as seriously and so not apply consequences.

In some cases this claimed provocation from things said or done might be true, but more often it is exaggerated or fabricated. In some cases ‘provocation’ simply represents annoyance with, or intolerance of, the bullied student’s ‘different’ social behaviour or physical characteristics (Phillips, 2003; Teräsaaho & Salmivalli, 2003; Akiba, 2004).

**The dynamic of bullying that occurs within a ‘friendship’**

Several researchers have identified the dynamic of bullying that takes place within the context of a friendship or friendship group (e.g. Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Dane, 2001; Mishima, 2003; Mishna et al, 2008).

This interpersonal dynamic is more likely to occur amongst girls (Mishima, 2003; Crick & Celson, 2002) and where the friend, or one member of the friendship group, is relationally aggressive and creates a power imbalance (Crick & Grotpeter, 1996; Dane, 2001). When bullying occurs within boys’ friendships there may also be physical aspects to the bullying, such as punching and overly-aggressive wrestling (Mishna et al., 2008). The intimacy that characterises friendship may be used by aggressive students to control and bully specific friends e.g. they may threaten to tell secrets if a friend does not go along with what they want (Grotpeter & Crick, 1996; James & Owens, 2005).

This dynamic can result not only in emotional pain, but also in confusion for the student being bullied, their family and the school (Mishna et al., 2008). It can take some time to identify that a student is being bullied by someone they consider to be a friend and who claims to be a friend. Friends are motivated to sort out any conflict without endangering the relationship and this can make it more difficult for students who are being bullied by friends (e.g. by being called names or being made fun of often, by being excluded for periods of time or by being meanly and repeatedly told to ‘go away’) to either recognize what is
happening or ask for support in dealing with it (Mishna et al., 2008). Many students feel they are invested in the friendship and really ‘need’ it and may therefore be reluctant to deal with the ongoing mistreatment they are receiving (Mishna et al., 2008).

Some students in this situation report that, if it was someone other than a friend behaving towards them in such a way, they would tell a teacher what was happening or angrily retaliate (Mishna et al., 2008). A friend who is bullying them is more easily able than a non-friend to successfully deflect the anger of the targeted student and create further confusion by saying ‘can’t you take a joke’. Teachers are less likely to recognise bullying within a friendship and are more likely to perceive what is happening as ‘a friendship problem’ (Mishna et al., 2008).

The dynamics of bystander behaviour

Bystanders (i.e. those students who witness bullying) are now recognised as a critical part of the group dynamics of bullying (Tremlow et al., 2004; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, 1999; Macklem, 2003; Oh & Hazler, 2009). Peers are present in 85 per cent of bullying episodes in school settings (Craig & Pepler, 1995; O’Connell et al., 1999). In their observational study of the playground behaviour of primary-aged students, O’Connell et al. (1999) found that, on average, there were four peers present in bullying incidents. When bystanders intervene to defend the student being bullied, the bullying stops in 57 per cent of cases (Hawkins et al., 2001).

Research (e.g. Craig and Pepler, 2000; Salmivalli et al., 1996; Salmivalli, 1999) suggests that student bystanders can be divided into several categories:

- Those who assist the students who are bullying and actively join in.
- Those who reinforce and give silent approval to the students who are bullying.
- Those who watch but are passive and do nothing.
- Those who defend or support the student who is being bullied by intervening, seeking teacher support or comforting them.

In a study of 685 South Australian school children aged 6 to 16 years a large majority of respondents agreed that they liked it when someone stood up for someone being bullied and that it made them angry when a student is picked on without reason (Slee & Rigby, 1993a). In other studies students have reported that they think students should defend and support classmates who are bullied, that they feel safer when other students do defend a student who is being bullied (Kanetsuna et al., 2006). Rigby & Johnson (2006) found that 43 per cent of students aged 12 to 15 indicated, in hypothetical scenarios, that they would be likely to help a student being bullied. However in practice it appears that most students don’t intervene or support students who are being bullied (Craig & Pepler, 1997; Craig et al., 2000). Most bystanders are passive and do nothing (Craig and Pepler, 2000; O’Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli, 1999; Slaby, 2005) or behave in ways that support or reinforce the bullying (O’Connell et al., 1999 Salmivalli, 1999; Whitney & Smith, 1993). In an observational study of 5-12 year-old children by O’Connell, et al., (1999):
• 54 per cent passively watched bullying incidents.
• 21 per cent joined in with the bullying.
• 25 per cent tried to defend the student being bullied.

Several reasons have been identified for the inaction of most student bystanders:

• They fear for their own safety and social inclusion: they are fearful of becoming a target themselves or being socially excluded because of their actions (Burns et al., 2007; Hazler, 1996; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Older students prefer not letting a teacher know about bullying due to concerns that it would threaten relationships among peers (Tisak et al., 1996).

• There is a diffusion of responsibility i.e. they are hoping that someone else will do something to help (Olweus, 1993; Salmivalli & Voeten, 2004).

• They are concerned that they could make things worse (Hazler, 1996).

• They feel powerless: they do not know what to do, are concerned that they may make things worse and/or feel their actions will make no difference (Carney, 2000; Hazler, 1996: Oh & Hazler, 2009).

• They believe that it is none of their business (Randall, 1995; Rigby & Johnson, 2006).

• They believe that the student being bullied must deserve it (Rigby & Johnson, 2006).

• They find it fun and enjoyable to watch (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Rigby & Johnson, 2006).

Thornberg (2007) observed primary-aged students in a real-life classroom setting over time and recorded their reactions to a child who was distressed and crying. He interviewed the children afterwards about why they had (or had not) supported the distressed classmate. Some of the explanatory categories used by the children who did not support the distressed classmate were:

• Trivialisation e.g. it didn’t seem serious or unusual.

• Disassociation from responsibility e.g. I’m not their friend OR that’s the teacher’s job.

• Avoidance of embarrassment: e.g. it might make me or them the centre of attention.

• Modelling e.g. no-one else did anything to help so I didn’t either.

• Ineptitude e.g. I didn’t know how to help them.

Some key factors that predict which students will defend or support a student who is being bullied (and under what circumstances) are listed below:

• Girls defend and support more than do boys (Burleson & Gilstrap, 2002; Camodeca & Goossens, 2005; O’Connell et al., 1999; Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Salmivalli, 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996). Boys are more often in the role of assisting or reinforcing those who are bullying (O’Connell et al., 1999; Salmivalli et al., 1996).
Primary-aged students are more likely to defend and support than are students in secondary schools (Menesini et al., 1997; Rigby & Johnson, 2006). There may be greater risks to wellbeing associated with being bullied within a secondary context (Rigby & Johnson, 2006) and correspondingly greater risks associated with bystander intervention and support. There also appears to be a decline in empathy for bullied classmates as students get older, and possibly a related decline in preparedness to help victimised students (Henderson & Hymel, 2002; Menesini et al., 2003; Olweus & Endresen, 1998; Rigby, 1997b).

Students are more likely to defend and support someone who is being bullied when:

- They are not in the same friendship network as the student(s) doing the bullying (Chaux, 2005; Oh & Hazler, 2009).
- They have a strong sense of empathy and are well-liked (Caravita et al., 2009; Rigby & Johnson, 2006; Salmivalli et al., 1996).
- There is only one type of bullying occurring as opposed to two or more types (Oh & Hazler, 2009).
- They feel connected to their school and have strong school-based peer relationships (Ahmed, 2008; Lodge & Frydenberg, 2005).
- They have a reasonable level of moral development (Menesini et al., 2002) and a general concern for the wellbeing of others (Rigby & Johnson, 2006).
- They have positive feelings and attitudes toward the student being bullied (Rigby & Johnson, 2006).
- They are in a school where there is a positive sense of community (Gini, 2008).
- They have no history of bullying other students (Rigby & Johnson, 2006).
- They believe that their parents and friends would expect them to defend and support peers who are being bullied, and are part of a prosocial friendship network (Rigby & Johnson, 2006). Friends strongly influence students’ values (Astill et al., 2002).

Since students report feeling safer when other students defend a student being bullied, it would seem that the way in which bystanders react to bullying has a direct impact not only on the safety of the bullied student but also on the school climate and all students’ sense of safety (Gini, 2008).

The cycle of inaction

Cross et al. (2009) have described a ‘cycle of inaction’ that can occur in response to covert bullying:

1. The cycle begins when a teacher receives a report about covert bullying and they do not respond to it seriously or effectively. This may occur as a result of their inexperience and lack of knowledge about covert bullying and/or a belief that what is happening to a student either is not really bullying or is not as harmful as other types of bullying.
2. The student who is being covertly bullied reacts to the teacher’s inaction by feeling disempowered and hence becomes less willing to ask for teacher support if it happens again.

3. The students who are doing the covert bullying interpret the teacher’s inaction by forming a belief that covert bullying is tolerated in the school.

4. All students who are bullied are less likely to seek help because they perceive that there is a culture of acceptance of (covert) bullying.

**The cycle of over-reaction**

Mishna & Alaggia (2005) argue that students weigh up the benefits and the risks of asking a teacher for support when they are being bullied. The benefits are that they may be effectively supported and the bullying will stop. The risks are many: they may not be believed or taken seriously; they may be blamed by the teacher for their own victimisation and feel ashamed; there may be retaliation from the student complained about or their friends; the teacher may handle the situation insensitively or ineffectively, and it will either make no difference or even make the situation worse; it may make them feel like they cannot handle their problems by themselves (Bijttebier & Vertommen, 1998; Boulton & Underwood, 1992; Clarke & Kiselica, 1997; Miller et al., 1998; Mishna et al., 2005; Naylor et al., 2001; Newman et al., 2001; Rigby & Slee, 1991; Smith, 1991; Smith & Myron-Wilson, 1998).

The cycle of over-reaction can start when a student decides to seek support from a teacher because they are being bullied.

1. The teacher responds to this request for support by quickly punishing the students who are bullying.

2. The student who is being bullied receives either ‘payback’ or condemnation from the students who have been punished (or their friends) for bullying, and may then be socially marginalised.

3. The bullying goes underground for a while and sometimes other students bully on behalf of the students who were punished.

4. The next time the student is bullied they decide to remain silent about it and assure the teacher that the bullying has stopped.

Other students who are bullied are less likely to ask a teacher for support when they become aware of this dynamic. Secrecy empowers students who bully. When no one talks about bullying, students who bully feel they can carry on without consequences.

A punitive response by the school may ultimately be necessary in some circumstances. However, an approach which initially engages students who are bullying and attempts to enhance their feelings of empathy and understanding for the student they are harming is more likely to bring about a change in behaviour (Cross et al., 2004; Tyler, 1998).

Fear of retaliation and social exclusion as a result of peers being punished often prevents students from letting teachers know that they are being bullied (Rigby & Barnes, 2002).
Students perceive that the best way for a school to respond to a bullying situation is to find a way for students who are being bullied to rationally work through the problem with the aggressor (Gamliel et al., 2003). However, more than simple mediation is required because it inappropriate for mediation to be used in situations where one student is clearly the aggressor. The Support Group Method (Robinson & Maines, 2008), the Method of Shared Concern (Rigby & Griffiths, 2007) or Restorative Practices (Armstrong & Thorsborne, 2006) can be used as a first step in responding to many bullying situations.

**QUESTION 6: WHAT ARE THE LINKS BETWEEN BULLYING AND STUDENT WELLBEING?**

**Student wellbeing**

Student wellbeing is a student’s level of satisfaction about the quality of their life at school. Optimal (or desirable) student wellbeing is characterised by positive feelings and attitudes about school, positive relationships with peers and teachers, resilience, and satisfaction with self and learning experiences at school (Noble et al., 2008). It is clear from research that both students who bully and those who are bullied experience reduced wellbeing, and perceive that they receive low levels of support from peers and teachers (e.g. Espelage & Holt, 2001; Flaspohler et al., 2009; Frisén & Bjarnelin, 2010; Stockdale et al., 2002; Valois et al., 2001; Wilkins-Shurmer et al., 2003; You et al., 2008).

There is also some evidence that the wellbeing of many students who are not involved in bullying within their school is also negatively affected by their awareness of bullying in their school (e.g. Boulton et al., 2008; Janson et al., 2009). However in a study by Flaspohler et al. (2009) students who were not being bullied nor engaging in bullying reported higher levels of student wellbeing and felt supported by their teachers and peers. The authors suggest that being satisfied with one’s quality of life at school life is protective against both bullying others and being bullied.

The pathways to student wellbeing are very similar to the pathways that lead to safe schools and many of them are bi-directional (i.e. one affects the other but is also affected by the other).

**Key risk factors**

The key risk factors for bullying others and for being bullied, as outlined in Question 4, are summarized below. They are similar to many of the key risk factors for low levels of student wellbeing (Noble et al., 2008).

The major risk factors over which schools have some influence that predict a high likelihood of a student bullying others, are:

1. Low levels of connectedness to school.
2. Low levels of social and emotional skills (especially skills for impulse control, empathy, making and maintaining friendships, conflict management and anger management).
3. A lack of prosocial values.
4. A lack of quality relationships with prosocial peers.
5. Association with peers who endorse antisocial values and especially the use of aggression.

The major risk factors over which schools have some influence that predict a high likelihood of a student being bullied are:

1. Low levels of connectedness to school.
2. Low levels of social and emotional skills (especially skills for resilience, assertiveness, making and maintaining friendships, managing anxiety and conflict).
3. A lack of high quality friendships.
4. Low levels of peer acceptance.

**Factors that contribute to both low levels of bullying and high levels of student wellbeing**

Research studies suggest that lower levels of bullying, lower levels of violence and school crime and/or higher levels of student wellbeing are highly likely when the following circumstances are in place in a school:

- Most students feel connected to their school (e.g. Brookmeyer et al., 2006; Eisenberg et al., 2003; Idsoe et al., 2008; Iimori, 2003; Lonczak, et al., 2002; Nickerson et al., 2006; Resnick et al., 1997; Schaps, 2003; Urbanski, 2008; Wilson & Elliott, 2003; Young, 2004).

  - Student connectedness is the positive sense of belonging, attachment and commitment a student feels in relation to their school as a result of perceived caring from, and closeness to, teachers and peers (Resnick et al., 1997). When students feel connected to their school they are more likely to adopt the standards and norms of the school and act in pro-social ways (Ahmed, 2008). Students who have more support from teachers, are more resilient, have a stronger sense of school connectedness and higher self esteem, are more likely to defend and support other students who are being bullied (Ahmed, 2008; Flaspohler et al., 2009; Lodge & Fredenberg, 2005). Students who feel connected to their school are also more likely to:
    - Have higher levels of academic achievement (Finn & Rock, 1997).
    - Engage less in health-compromising behaviour (Blum et al., 2002; Bond et al., 2001; Dornbusch et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2005).
    - Complete secondary school (Miltich et al., 2004).

- Students have sound levels of social and emotional skills. Increases in social and emotional competency have been shown to lead to reductions in school bullying (Bear et al., 2003) and increases in school connectedness (e.g. Whitlock, 2003).

- Prevention program that focus on teaching social skills have shown considerable promise in promoting student wellbeing and reducing bullying and aggression (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, n.d.; Greenberg et al., 2003; Tolan & Guerra, 1998). They can also contribute to higher levels of achievement and resilience (Caprara et al., 2000; Catalano et al., 2003; Hawkins et al., 2001; Schonert-
Reichl et al., 2003; Wentzel, 2003; Wentzel & Caldwell, 1997; Wentzel & Watkins, 2002). However Fox & Boulton (2003) found that teaching social skills in small groups to students who were being bullied at the time did not result in the bullying decreasing or stopping (although students reported feeling more confident). It appears to be an effective prevention strategy, but not an effective intervention strategy.

- There are strong school norms against bullying and aggression. In a review of 25 studies that had focused on strategies for reducing bullying and other forms of anti-social behaviour Johnson (2009) identified, that in schools with lower levels of bullying and violence, students are aware of school rules about aggression and bullying and believe that the rules are fair.

- Students perceive that the school has clear support and disciplinary structures in place (e.g. Gottfredson et al., 1993; Gregory et al., 2010; Mayer & Leone, 1999).

- Students perceive that teachers in the school actively care about and promote student wellbeing and student welfare, and that the environment of their school is positive, welcoming, cooperative and fair (Barboza et al., 2009).

- The classroom teacher uses effective behaviour management (Idsoe et al., 2008; Roland & Galloway, 2002).

- Teachers promote cooperation (e.g. Barboza et al., 2009), and use cooperative learning and cooperative group work. Some research-based outcomes from the use of cooperative learning (e.g. Johnson, et al 2001; Ortega & Lera, 2000; Roseth et al., 2008) include:
  - Students increased ability to tolerate different perspectives on the same issue.
  - Increased levels of assertive problem-solving skills.
  - Improved peer relationships.

- The culture of the school is positive, caring, respectful, and supportive (e.g. Barboza et al., 2009; Reis et al., 2007; Stewart, 2003). A caring positive, respectful and supportive school culture is linked to both student wellbeing and school connectedness and is characterised by:
  - Students feeling connected to their school and perceiving that they are in a classroom and school environment that is safe, positive and focused on learning.
  - Students having meaningful involvement and feeling that they have some ownership of what happens in their school (e.g. Johnson, 2009).
  - Positive classroom management and participation in extracurricular activities (McNeely et al., 2002).
  - Students feel that they are in a classroom and school environment that is positive and focused on learning and is ‘orderly’ i.e. not in a state of disrepair or damaged by graffiti and vandalism (Johnson, 2009; Mayer & Leone, 1999; Van Dorn, 2004; Wilcox et al., 2006).
- Positive relationships between students and between students and their teachers (Johnson, 2009).

**Positive relationships**

Students who experience positive relationships with peers and teachers are less likely to engage in misbehaviour such as aggression and bullying, and less likely to use weapons (Jessor *et al*., 2003; Henrich *et al*., 2005). The systematic promotion and facilitation of positive relationships at school has been identified by many researchers as a core component for improving student wellbeing, enhancing school culture, preventing school violence and bullying, successfully engaging students’ intrinsic motivation to learn and improving student academic outcomes (Battisch, 2001; Battisch *et al*., 1995; Benard, 2004; Resnick *et al*., 1997). When a school works to facilitate positive school-based relationships bullying is less likely to thrive, student wellbeing is enhanced and there is a greater likelihood of higher student engagement with school (Blum & Libbey, 2004; Galloway & Roland 2004; Schaps & Lewis, 1999; McGrath & Noble, 2003).

(a) Peer relationships

Research suggests that having high-quality friendships, or at least one best friend, can help prevent children from bullying and being bullied (Bollmer* et al*., 2005; Boulton *et al*., 1999; Fox, 2006a; Goldbaum *et al*., 2006; Hodges *et al*., 1999). High quality friendships are characterised by loyalty and support and a willingness to stand up for one’s friend. Children with poor social skills who have supportive friendships are less likely to be bullied than similar children without such relationships. A positive peer relationship can provide some students with an opportunity to learn the skills needed for healthy peer relationships (Bollmer *et al*., 2005).

(b) Students’ relationships with their teachers

Gregory *et al*., (2010) have suggested that students in schools with highly supportive cultures and relationships with teachers may be more open and responsive to directives from teachers and leadership as they perceive them to be fair, caring and respectful.

Many students feel they ‘owe’ something in return to a teacher who shows genuine interest in and care for them (Davidson, 1999; Stipek 2006) and may be less likely to disappoint them by failing to complete assignments or by engaging in antisocial behaviour such as bullying.

Positive teacher-student relationships can contribute significantly, not only to students’ wellbeing and prosocial behaviour but also to their learning outcomes.

Raskauskas et al. (2010) have also noted that positive and supportive relationships between students and their teachers is also a resilience factor.

**Moderating effects**

Many of the factors that contribute to both wellbeing and a lower likelihood of bullying and being bullied have also been shown to moderate harm if bullying does occur:

- A high level of school connectedness has been shown to minimise the effect of being bullied on academic outcomes (Eisenberg *et al*., 2003).
Students who are in a school which has a positive caring, respectful and supportive learning culture and who are being bullied, are less likely to be disliked by other students, more likely to be socially included and less likely to be blamed for their own plight (e.g. Gini, 2008).

**QUESTION 7: WHAT LEGAL ISSUES ARE RELATED TO BULLYING?**

A range of criminal legislation is relevant in regards to bullying and cyberbullying behaviour. These include: stalking, making threats to kill or harm, malicious damage (e.g. by sending a computer virus), ‘acting in concert’ in the above intentions and racial vilification (Adams, 2007; Nicholson, 2006). E-crime is a new term that covers criminal offences when a computer or other electronic communication devices (e.g. mobile phones) are used in committing an offence, are the target of an offence or are used as a storage device in committing an offence. E-crime offences include: making or distribution of child pornography (e.g. taking and sending nude photograph of young people under 16, even if the subject is oneself); impersonating someone else; menacing, harassing or causing offence using a mobile phone or internet carrier.

The rights and responsibilities of school leaders in relation to cyberbullying that occurs out of school hours and off school grounds

There is a growing trend for senior staff in schools both in Australia and internationally to have discretionary rights to take action to manage and respond to cyberbullying that involves students (or staff) from the school, occurs outside school hours and is enacted through the use of a student’s personal mobile phone and/or computer. The underlying assumption is that school leadership has the right to respond to this behaviour when it could result in a substantial disruption of the school environment or adversely affect learning or wellbeing of students (or staff) at the school (Aftab, 2007b; Hinduja & Patchin, 2007; Willard, 2007). Being cyberbullied outside school has the potential to create strong negative emotions in students who are targeted. Feelings of anxiety and embarrassment may negatively affect schoolwork and classroom climate and lead some students to stay away from school (Diamanduros et al. 2008). Feelings of humiliation, shame and anger can lead to potentially dangerous situations for both the bullied student him/herself (who may self-harm), those who are suspected of involvement in the cyberbullying (who may be attacked) and other classmates (Willard, 2007c). Thus what happens between students outside school grounds and hours may have a very strong impact on what happens at school when it resumes. It makes sense for schools to be informed about what has happened and to have the right to intervene and/or follow up in a timely and effective manner. This may only involve activating the school’s behaviour management and welfare procedures when school resumes or may involve more serious responses.

Students and parents need to be clearly informed of the school’s rights to take action in situations involving behaviours that can have a negative effect on the safety of students, staff, and/or the educational environment. Asking parents and students to sign a contract about this ensures that they understand the consequences of cyberbullying behaviour that
results in placing student and staff safety at risk and has a negative impact on the educational environment (Diamanduros et al., 2008).

**QUESTION 8: WHAT CAN SCHOOLS DO TO REDUCE BULLYING?**

In their global meta-analytic review, Molcho et al., (2009) found that there has been a significant decrease in the frequency of bullying in Northern European, Western European and most Eastern European countries between 1994 and 2006. These countries have had ongoing focused national efforts to address bullying over the last decade. This is encouraging news for countries all around the world as they continue their efforts to prevent and reduce bullying in schools.

In their search for ‘what works’ schools have faced a confusing collection of possible interventions, many of which have not been evaluated or have been shown to produce only very small reductions in actual bullying behaviour (Merrell et al., 2008). It can be difficult to identify an approach that works in all types of schools with students of varying ages in a variety of contexts. One of the major limitations involved in evaluating the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs is not always being able to identify how consistently and accurately the teachers implemented the same program (Ferguson, 2007). Another difficulty is the variation in the length of time over which a program is implemented.

In 2004 Professor Peter Smith (2004) described the big picture of research into bullying interventions as one of limited successes. He optimistically noted that the small successes up to that point should encourage schools and the failures and more limited successes could provide useful information to build on. Since that time, however, evidence has slowly started to emerge about effective approaches and useful directions. Additionally many anti-bullying strategies link logically both to research about the nature, dynamics and theories of bullying.

Smith et al., (2004) reviewed fourteen studies of whole-school anti-bullying interventions. A whole-school approach involves prevention as well as intervention. It assumes that bullying is a systemic problem and targets the whole school community (i.e. students, teachers, parents and the local community) rather than just the individual students involved in a bullying situation. The researchers concluded that, when they confined their review to the seven studies that employed a comparison control group, there was a small positive effect of the intervention in reducing bullying. These occurred predominantly from primary schools (Years K-5) and middle schools (Years 6-8) rather than secondary schools.

Cross et al., (2004) developed guidelines for preventing and managing school bullying based on a combination of published research evidence, expert opinion, practitioner advice and their own research in Australian primary schools using the Friendly Schools and Families program. Their findings suggested that the following broad features and guidelines contribute to the effective reduction of bullying:

- A whole-school approach (i.e., an approach that targets the school, community (especially parents), classes, the peer group and individual students).

- An increased awareness of bullying in the school community

- A whole-school policy that addresses bullying.
• The promotion of a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and student wellbeing.

• Effective methods of behaviour management that are consistently used, non-hostile, non-punitive and that arouse empathetic concern for the person bullied, encourage problem-solving and positive action and that involve monitoring future developments.

• Mobilisation of all students (and especially bystanders) to respond negatively to bullying behaviour and to support students who are bullied.

• Social skill development within teaching and learning activities.

• Enhancing the school physical environment and its supervision.

Vreeman and Carroll (2007) carried out a similar review of school-based interventions designed to prevent bullying and also found that the reductions in bullying were very small and that the identical program hadn’t necessarily worked when delivered to a different school population. They concluded that the most effective interventions were those that adopted a whole-school approach consisting of some combination of rules and sanctions, teacher professional development, classroom curriculum units, training in skills for conflict management and counselling for individual students. They also concluded that programs that only focused on the individual students involved in bullying situations are less likely to be effective.

A statistical meta-analysis carried out by Ferguson et al., (2007) with research studies that had evaluated the effectiveness of anti-bullying programs found that the small reduction in bullying overall was insignificant. Merrell et al. (2008) also conducted a meta-analytic study of 16 studies into the effectiveness of anti-bullying intervention programs and concluded there were improvements in students’ knowledge and attitudes about bullying but the reductions in self-reported bullying was only modest.

Farrington & Ttofi (2009) conducted a meta-analysis of 30 well-designed evaluations of anti-bullying interventions in an attempt to identify the specific components that had the greatest impact on decreasing bullying behaviour. They concluded the anti-bullying programs in the meta-analysis were effective in reducing bullying by an average of 20–23 percent. The specific components that made the most impact were:

• Classroom rules against bullying.

• Intensive professional learning for teachers.

• Effective classroom management.

• Improved playground supervision.

• School conferences or assemblies that raised awareness of the problem.

• Effective behaviour management strategies.

• Student-owned approaches to address bullying.

• The use of video educational material for students.
• Parent training.

They also found that the most effective interventions were multi-faceted, of longer duration and involved school collaboration with other appropriate professionals in working with individual student. They also concluded that those programs that were based on the work of Dan Olweus (1999) were more effective.

Taken together, these reviews confirm that the following features are likely to be the most effective in preventing and reducing bullying:

• A universal whole-school approach of long duration that takes a multi-faceted approach rather than focusing on one single component.

• An increased awareness of bullying in the school community through assemblies, school forums and student-owned plans and activities.

• A whole-school detailed policy that addresses bullying (including cyberbullying).

• Effective classroom management and classroom rules against bullying.

• The promotion of a positive school environment that provides safety, security and support for students and promotes positive relationships and student wellbeing.

• Effective methods of behaviour management that are consistently used, non-hostile and non-punitive; they should arouse empathetic concern for the person bullied, encourage problem-solving and positive action and that involve monitoring future developments.

• Mobilisation of all students (and especially bystanders) to respond negatively to bullying behaviour and to support students who are bullied.

• Social skill development within teaching and learning activities (e.g. through the use of cooperative learning).

• Enhancement of the school physical environment and its supervision.

• Teacher professional development.

• Classroom curriculum units that address bullying and related issues (e.g. values education) and include the use of video materials.

• Counselling for individual students and collaboration with other appropriate professionals to provide support.

• Parent partnerships and education.

The following additional or more detailed directions either follow logically from the research (described in earlier sections of this literature review) into the nature and dynamics of bullying or from related research studies. These are:

• Addressing boredom and disengagement both in class (e.g. by the use of engaging and stimulating approaches to teaching and learning) and in the playground (e.g. by the provision of an adequate supply of stimulating equipment or the organisation of clubs (Cross et al., 2004; Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008; Thornberg, 2010)).
• The Use of Values education with a focus on respect for the rights and feelings of others, acceptance of diversity, compassion, fairness, cooperation and inclusion (Hawkins et al., 2000; Lovat & Toomey, 2007).

• The use of the Method of Shared Concern (Burns et al., 2008; Rigby, 2005b; Rigby & Griffiths, 2007) or the Support Group Approach (McGrath & Stanley, 2006).

• The use of Restorative Practices (Armstrong & Thorsborne, 2006; Morrison, 2001; Shaw, 2007).

• The use of Positive Behaviour Supports (Lewis et al., 1998; Ross et al., 2009; Sprague & Horner, 2006; Sugai et al., 2000; Walker et al., 1996) which has been recommended by a number of researchers into bullying (e.g. Bradshaw et al., 2008; Bradshaw et al., 2009a; Bradshaw et al, 2009b; O’Brien et al., 2009).

• The use of Social Architecture. This involves redesigning situations to facilitate students’ pro-social interactions and social opportunities within a class or year-level context (Pepler & Craig, 2009). Students who bully need to be mixed with pro-social students where possible (Vitaro et al. 1999). It is more difficult to escape from being bullied in classrooms and year levels in which the social hierarchies are clear and relatively inflexible (Wolke et al., 2009). These hierarchies are often more ‘fixed’ amongst girls (Cairns et al., 1985; Murray-Close et al., 2007) and access to new friendships is limited. Girls who are covertly and relationally bullied and are in classes or year levels where there are inflexible and fixed social hierarchies are very prone to changing schools (Wolke et al., 2009).

• Early intervention: It is essential to identify those children who may be at risk for bullying others or being bullied and to provide them with early developmental support (Buhs & Ladd, 2001; Farrington & Coide, 2003; McGrath, 2005; Moffitt & Caspi, 2003; Sutton et al., 2005; Webster-Stratton et al., 2001).
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