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Education

Children must all feel happy, safe and valued

First person

Jonathan Crofts, head teacher at Wilsthorpe Community School



SINCE January 2008, when I took over as headteacher of Wilsthorpe, I have been determined to create a learning environment where all children feel happy, safe and valued.

As a parent, this was a priority in choosing a school for my own children.

We seized the opportunity to become involved in the I Am Not Scared project in December 2010.

Our experience of networking with other European schools in the 2009 School Inclusion project had been a positive one and we felt we had a lot to offer in terms of advice and strategy.

Bullying is now rare at Wilsthorpe and incidents are decreasing. Anti-bullying initiatives are not complicated but they are effective.

Most importantly, we listen to students and involve them in finding a solution.

We work hard to generate self-confidence and encourage students to be assertive, an essential life skill.

Much of our work is pro-active; we teach and model the right behaviour through assemblies and lessons as well as through our

everyday interactions with each other.

Parents play a major part too. A panel of our parents and teachers produced a leaflet for other schools recently advising parents about methods to safely manage their child's use of electronic media.

We are convinced that our focus on rewarding good behaviour and our vigilance in challenging unwanted behaviour, including bullying, has been a key factor in our recent success.

In just five years, school attendance has risen by four per cent, fixed-term exclusions have reduced by more than 50 per cent, GCSE results have risen by 38 per cent and the school has featured in the BBC's 100 most improved schools in the country list for three years in succession.

Education is a social action that can only be successful if it is done with people and not to them.

Achievement will be high if those striving to achieve feel valued and respected.

When I do the "dad test" on Wilsthorpe Community School, it passes - I am delighted that so many of our community agree.

Joining forces to tackle the problems of cyber-bullying

A national expert will speak at a school about the increasing use of new technology to threaten others. **Emily Winsor** found out more

TEXT messages, tweets, Facebook statuses and instant messaging on mobile phones have offered bullies a new and more secret way to threaten their victims.

It is something which can happen behind closed doors, 24 hours a day.

But cyber-bullies have been noted and tactics to stop them are being developed as part of a European Commission-financed project called I Am Not Scared.

Roger Murfin, business manager at Wilsthorpe Community School, in Long Eaton, and national co-ordinator for the project, said the aim was to draw upon resources from countries all over Europe to tackle cyber-bullying.

He said: "The project intends to identify the best European strategies to prevent and combat bullying, in all its forms. "We also want to involve vocational teachers, directors, pupils, parents, counsellors and key policy makers

"We have a website where schools from Bulgaria, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Romania, Spain, Belgium and the UK have con-

tributed case studies, coping tactics, reports and strategies about dealing with bullying.

"Many of the documents are available in English and English documents can be translated into other languages."

Mr Murfin said there is a particular focus on cyber-bullying. He added: "This is a big issue at the moment because it can happen 24 hours a day.

"It can begin quite innocently. Kids send a text to each other, then

"Kids send a text to each other, then that text gets sent to the whole class, then the whole school

Roger Murfin

that text gets sent to the whole class, then the whole school. "It's a devastating experience for some children and can even lead to suicide.

"As part of the project an international expert on cyber bullying, Adrienne Katz, will talk to teachers, governors, head teachers, and parents at a conference on Thursday, October 18, at Trent College in Long Eaton."

Adrienne Katz, whose latest book - Cyber-bullying and e-safety: What Educators and Other Professionals Need to Know - was published in July, has more than 20



Making a stand: Year nine Wilsthorpe Community School students, from left, Aaron Singh, Katie Tew, Isabelle McMahon and Dylan Barnes, who are involved in the conference on cyber-bullying.

PICTURE: MARK LEE N0M1201210024-070_C

years' experience of working with local authorities, the government and as organiser of anti-bullying initiatives.

The free conference is open to secondary school heads, teachers and other professionals.

Mr Murfin added that Wilsthorpe School was proud to have planned the conference and hoped it would help tackle the growth of cyber-bullying in the UK.

He said: "Incidents around bullying are very low at Wilsthorpe and we do take a proactive approach to eliminating the issue.

"We make our students very aware of signs of bullying and safeguarding and have created a safe environment in school.

"We're training all the teachers in school about anti-bullying tactics and we're very proud to have organised the conference."

Jonathan Crofts, head teacher at Wilsthorpe Community School, said: "Cyber-bullying is of growing concern in our schools.

"There are few secondary schools that have not had to deal with issues of harassment via social networking sites, email or text message, so we are delighted Adrienne is able to address the conference. We also have a speaker from Ofsted, someone to give advice on e-safety and we will be looking at homophobic bullying.

"We believe the conference will be of interest and great value to head teachers, classroom teachers, pastoral leaders and anyone in a position in schools or local authorities who has responsibility for dealing with school bullying." ■ Find out about places at the conference by calling Karen Fox on 0115 972 9421.

How mentors helped other students

DIANOGLY City Academy launched an initiative last year which has successfully tackled cyber-bullying.

Around 20 pupils were taught how to raise awareness among their peers of cyber-bullying from the start of the 2010-2011 academic year.

The initiative was run with the help of the Beat Bullying Organisation.

The students now act as mentors, so other pupils have someone to talk to if they are being bullied online or via their mobile phone.

Since the start of the initiative the academy says it has seen a 28 per cent drop in recorded incidents of cyber-bullying.

The mentors developed a system where students or adults can contact them anonymously if they wish to report incidents and crackdown on further bullying.

The school also has held two drop-in sessions for adults to learn more about spotting cyber-bullying, be through Facebook, text messages, e-mails or Twitter.

'I am not scared'
Anti-bullying conference
18th October 2012
Free places
for education professionals

Topics include: cyber-bullying, OFSTED expectations, Derbyshire anti-bullying strategy, homophobic bullying, on-line safety for professionals.

Contact Karen Fox on 0145 9729421 or email kfox@wilsthorpe.dorbyshire.sch.uk
Or find out more in the 'News' section of the Wilsthorpe Community School web site: www.wilsthorpe.dorbyshire.sch.uk
Open to teachers and all who work in education.
The Conference will be held at Trent College, Derby Road, Long Eaton.

Sherwood E-ACT Academy
High Expectations, Increased Opportunities

We invite you to join us for our
Year 6 Open Evening
on Monday 8th October

The evening will start at 6.00pm with a brief talk from the Principal there will then be ample opportunity for you to look around the academy, speak to staff and students, and ask plenty of questions

The Sherwood E-ACT Academy is an inclusive 11 - 16 school that offers a distinctive, caring ethos where all students are encouraged to achieve their personal best.

We have high expectations for all our students and provide them with a wide range of opportunities and support so that they meet and often exceed them.

If you would like more information about the academy

Telephone: 0115 9521171
Email: info@sherwoode-actacademy.org.uk
Principal: Mrs Leslye Carr

Or visit our academy website at: www.sherwoode-actacademy.org.uk