ZERO
Schools' Action Plan Against Bullying
Introduction and Templates
Centre for Behavioural Research, University of Stavanger
Introduction

Work to prevent bullying in schools in Norway is now enshrined in Norwegian law. From 1 April 2003, such work comes under Chapter 9a of the relevant law, the chapter on pupils’ school environment. Bullying is listed under the paragraph dealing with the psycho-social environment in school. This links the school’s role in instigating anti-bullying initiatives and following up any information about bullying to administrative law. It stresses the importance of good procedures for discovering bullying, and solving bullying issues which are discovered or reported. In the law, preventative work against bullying is linked both to the psycho-social environment and to the paragraph covering systematic work to promote health, environment and safety among pupils. This chapter emphasises the importance of pupil participation in the work and the role of Parent Councils” in planning and carrying out initiatives. *(All Norwegian schools are required to have a Parent Council with parent representatives elected from each year group.) These points also apply to care in before- and after-school clubs. The changes to the law follow up the intention of the Manifesto Against Bullying which was signed in the autumn 2002 by ministers, the Children’s Office, the Association of Local Councils, the Committee of School Parents and the Education Association.

This document is one part of the materiel in the Norwegian anti-bullying programme Zero. It contains details of how to prepare an Action Plan Against Bullying and a template, which can be used for the documentation.

The aim of the Action Plan Against Bullying is to present the school’s systems for discovering, solving and preventing bullying. The finished plan contains procedures, initiatives and principles which should be followed by the staff in the school. The plan comes into being through a process which involves the teaching staff as a group, parents, as well as pupils who are in the resource group.

In addition to more information about procedures, initiatives and understanding, the section on prevention includes lists of relevant literature. This should not be seen as exclusive, but as a suggestion which the individual school can add to as it sees fit.

The introduction to this document describes how to organise and work with the template, so the Action Plan can become a useful tool with many individuals sharing a sense of ownership. We believe this introduction will be helpful for school leaders and others who have a particular responsibility for the work to develop the Action Plan.

The actual template for the Action Plan starts on page 8. Teaching staff work through this point by point and the result is the written plan. When the plan is finished, it will be familiar to all staff and accessible to all parents and pupils.

Good luck.

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**Action Plan**

An Action Plan against bullying is a presentation of a school's systems and readiness for dealing with bullying. Discovering, solving, preventing and continuing are the four essential principles in work against bullying. The Action Plan will show the school's attitude and initiatives within these four principles. Routines and agreed procedures are central in an Action Plan. However, putting routines and procedures into practice is also dependent on the individual's understanding of them. Therefore, work with understanding and attitudes is a central part of developing an Action Plan.

The aim of developing an Action Plan is to create a living tool in the school's work against bullying. One way to do this, is to involve all staff in the work. Through involvement, a sense of ownership is created and this leads to a greater commitment to following up the plan. This can be seen as development work where working out procedures goes hand in hand with creating a culture.

Developing an Action Plan

**ORGANISING THE WORK**

The school sets up a resource group in Zero, where the school’s leadership is central. This can be an existing group, such as a resource team or special needs team, a planning group or suchlike, supplemented with representatives from the pupil council and parents' representatives. If the school does not have any existing groups of this kind, a new group can be created. The resource group has responsibility for managing the development of the action plan. This involves necessary initiatives, ensuring suitable organisation, taking necessary decisions and taking responsibility for sending the plan to relevant groups for comment. Both the parents' representatives and the pupil council should be asked for comments on the plan. Two people in the resource group have the role of editors for the written action plan document.

Developing an action plan against bullying can be seen as development work, where the written plan is the result of internal discussions in different groups. When a school starts work like this, time must be allowed for the work process to be done thoroughly. This allows participants to gain a better understanding of routines and changes. The template provided describes how to develop an action plan and organise the work during this process. The task can appear elaborate, but it includes the discussion necessary for creating a shared understanding in the teaching staff, and a lot of learning takes place during the process. When a plan is created in this way, everyone involved gains a sense of ownership.

If an Action Plan is to be a living document which expresses the school's position, what is put into the plan must put into action at the same time. Sometimes this will take the form of agreeing procedures. At other times it will be an individual teacher working with his or her own role as a teacher. The 'realisation' of the plan does not end when it is written, but continues to become part of the everyday life of the school. Only when this happens, is the plan implemented. The action plan is 'activated' at the same time as it is developed.

The plan is to belong to everyone. So everyone must be involved in the work. All the school's employees are divided into working groups. We recommend that groups contain 5-8 members. The groups should be actively involved in the development of the action plan, which will be based on the template and any additions the resource group has felt necessary for local conditions. The working groups can be existing groups or can be set up specifically for this purpose. It can be useful to set up new groups, which work across usual patterns of cooperation. This can enable more open discussion, which is not limited by established role patterns or ideas.
TEMPLATE FOR AN ACTION PLAN

The template consists of four parts: discovering, solving, preventing and continuing. It builds on information in the booklet 'Bullying in schools – a guide for teachers' published by the Norwegian Department for Education and Research in 1996, and has been adjusted in connection with the anti-bullying programme, Zero, launched in 2003.

SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPMENT WORK ON THE ACTION PLAN

DISCOVERING BULLYING

The school's systems for dealing with bullying must include procedures to ensure that bullying is regularly investigated. Suggestions for how the resource group and working groups can work with the section on discovering in the action plan:

1. **Resource Group**, prompted by the school leadership, suggests procedures for the annual questionnaire on bullying at the school.
2. The template contains some check lists on supervision, communication with pupils and parents to discover bullying, as well as procedures for when bullying is suspected. The **resource group** goes through these. If the **resource group** feels there is a need for more points or procedures, these are added.
3. All the procedures need to be put into more concrete form. This is done by discussion in the **working groups**.
4. **Working groups** deliver their contributions to the **editors in the resource group** who process the material and prepare a meeting in the **resource group**.
5. On the basis of the suggestions received, the **resource group** chooses some concrete ideas from the check lists and decides who is to be responsible for the various initiatives.
6. The concrete ideas are presented and agreed in plenum.

Suggested time used: a 2 hour meeting in the working groups. Two meetings in the resource group. In addition, the editors will need some time to go through and work on the suggestions from the working groups.

SOLVING PROBLEMS WHEN BULLYING OCCURS

The school's planning for bullying must include good procedures for **problem solving** when bullying occurs. Everyone in the organisation should be familiar with these procedures and be obliged to follow them. Written procedures are important, but how they are followed up is even more important. The first case of bullying to be dealt with gives signals about the school's attitudes, knowledge and will to deal with future cases. Therefore the handling of the first case of bullying after the start of the new initiative is very important.

Suggestions for how the resource group and working groups work with **problem solving** in the action plan:

7. The template lists some procedures. The **resource group** should go through these and discuss whether they should be supplemented with any extra procedures needed for the specific school.
8. The procedures need to be put into a more concrete form. This is done in the **working groups** through discussion.
9. **Working groups** deliver their contributions to the **editors in the resource group** who put the various contributions together and prepare a meeting for the **resource group**.
10. On the basis of the contributions, the **resource group** decides which concrete solutions will apply and who should be responsible for the various initiatives.
11. The decisions about procedures and responsibilities are presented and agreed in plenum by the whole staff. After this agreement, it is important that the procedures are followed when any bullying case is to be tackled.

Suggested use of time: one two-hour meeting in the working groups. Two meetings in the resource group. In addition, the editors will need time to go through and work on the contributions from the working groups.

Has the work uncovered a need for more competence in this area? If so, it is important that the school's leadership is made aware of this and that relevant action is taken.

PREVENTION

The school's planning for bullying must also contain preventative initiatives. These are initiatives which promote a positive learning environment where relationships between people form a protection against bullying. The work to build up this type of environment requires a continual effort among the pupils and the adults. It includes routines, ways of working, knowledge and attitudes. Even though the pupils should be brought into this work, it is the adults who have the responsibility to develop such an environment. To do this, there needs to be common understanding throughout the school and some initiatives involving the whole school need to be carried out.
The template includes nine areas for creating the kind of environment which allows positive learning and growing conditions for pupils. This part of the plan deals in particular with the work of individual adults and touches on understanding and developing the teacher role. To develop a common understanding, it is important that both teachers and assistants in school and after school clubs discuss their understanding and experience in the working groups. We recommend the following way of working:

1. The resource group goes through the suggested statements in the template under each of the nine headings. It is, of course, possible to add others, but we would warn against having too many. These statements form the basis of the analysis and reflection in the working groups.

2. Working groups consider each statement in turn in the following way:
   a) Think about the statement individually and note down how you understand it. Think: What does this statement mean for me in carrying out my job? Use bullet points. Suggest an initiative or action which should apply to the whole school to ensure this area is dealt with.
   b) Share with others in the group (don’t comment on each other’s understanding).
   c) Use discussion in the group to reach a common understanding. This is written down and delivered to the editors in the resource group. This should preferably be in one sentence. Then agree on one suggested initiative or activity which is then also written down and delivered to the editors in the resource group.

3. The editors collect in the suggestions from the working groups and formulate these contributions as a common understanding, with between 1-3 suggestions for activities.

4. These are presented to the resource group who can add comments or accept the suggestions. Then the material is sent out to the working groups for final agreement. The agreed understanding and the concrete activities are then written into the action plan.

Suggested use of time: 4 two-hour meetings in the working groups (first meeting deals with areas 1 and 2, the second meeting with areas 3 and 4, the third meeting with areas 5 and 6, and the fourth meeting with areas 7-9). Two meetings in the resource group. In addition, the editors will need some time to go through the contributions from the working groups.

Has the work uncovered a need for more competence in this area? If so, it is important that the school's leadership is made aware of this and that relevant action is taken.

CONTINUITY

If the school’s efforts against bullying are to be reliable, the work must be continuous. There needs to be a chain of responsibility and responsible individuals who can, if necessary, revise the plan.

We recommend the following:

1. The resource group suggests a chain of responsibility, as well as suggesting a time and individuals to revise the plan.
2. The staff are informed of the decisions.

When the plan has been written, the editor writes a foreword. The plan is sent for comment to the parents’ representative body in the school, the pupil council and the trade unions in the school. Comments from this round are dealt with in the resource group. After this the plan is agreed in the school’s highest decision making body, whatever form this takes.

The plan is given out to all staff and is sent to the parents’ representative body and the pupil council. All parents in the school are informed about the plan. The subject teams or year group teams need to go through the plan to discuss how the various initiatives are to be implemented into everyday activity. If the written plan is to become a living document, it needs to be high in the consciousness of all the staff.

If a positive learning environment for all pupils is to be a reality, it is not enough for the staff to be involved in the plan. The pupils must also be involved, both in prevention and discovery of bullying. From the areas sketched in the plan, the pupils can discuss how they can contribute to making a positive learning environment using the different headings.

TEMPLATE FOR THE ACTION PLAN

We have designed a template for schools to use when developing their action plan against bullying. This is intended to aid the work of the school. In the first part of this document, we went through the process for working with the template. In the following section, we present the actual template. The resource group and working groups work from the template. As the work progresses, the school fills in the procedures, initiatives and understandings so the written document is created through the process. To help this work, a number of explanations are written in small italics. These can be deleted as the school fills in the content.
ACTION PLAN
AGAINST
BULLYING

(NAME OF SCHOOL)
Foreword by
the headteacher
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The school’s work against bullying

Aim: All pupils have the right to experience a safe and positive learning environment, which is free from bullying at school

‘By bullying or teasing, we mean physical and/or mental aggression towards a victim, carried out by individuals or groups. Bullying assumes an unequal relationship of strength between the victim and the bully and episodes which are repeated over time.’


The school’s work against bullying is described in the school’s Action Plan. The plan builds on four principles:
- Discovering bullying
- Solving individual cases of bullying
- Prevention
- Continuity in the work
1. Discovering bullying

**Aim:** To discover bullying which happens in or around school

The school’s procedures for regular initiatives designed to discover any bullying of or among pupils. Relevant actors may include: school leadership, teachers, assistants, other employees, pupils and parents.

1.1 ANNUAL SURVEY OF THE LEVEL OF BULLYING IN THE SCHOOL

Procedures for the annual survey: (suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups report back to resource group which writes the agreed procedures into the plan)

Responsibility for carrying out and following up on the annual survey: (suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups then report back to the resource group which writes who is responsible into the plan)

1.2 DUTY AND SUPERVISION

Check list for duty and supervision routines: *(in addition to the points suggested, the resource group can add others. These are considered by the working groups and put into concrete form as described. The working groups report back to the resource group which writes the agreed procedures into the plan)*

1. Everyone on duty wears a reflective vest which make them visible in the playground and outdoor areas.
   - Further concrete ideas:
   - Responsibility:

2. The school has an area which is ‘secure’. There is always an adult present here. All pupils know about this.
   - Further ideas:
   - Responsibility:

The individual’s responsibilities when on duty or supervision: *(suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups report back to the resource group which writes the agreed responsibilities into the plan)*
1.3 COMMUNICATION, TEACHER – PUPIL – PARENT

Check list: The individual pupil’s learning environment as the starting point for discovering any bullying that may occur. (As well as the four points suggested, the resource group can suggest others. These are considered by the working groups and decided on in the way described. The working groups then report back to the resource group which writes the agreed procedures into the plan)

1. Bullying is discussed in all the regular interviews the teacher has with pupils and parents.
   • Further ideas:
   • Responsibility:

2. Bullying is discussed in all regular interviews with pupils
   • Further ideas:
   • Responsibility:

3. Bullying is a theme for discussion at all year group parents’ meetings
   • Further ideas:
   • Responsibility:

4. Bullying as a theme is taken up with all the parents at the school
   • Further ideas:
   • Responsibility:

1.4 IF BULLYING IS SUSPECTED

Procedures when bullying is suspected: (In addition to the points suggested, the resource group can suggest others. They are then discussed in the working groups and agreed according to the process described. The working groups report back to the resource group, which write the agreed procedures into the plan)

1. Gathering information by observation
   • Further ideas:
   • Responsibility:

2. Gathering information by talking to the suspected victim
   • Further ideas:
   • Responsibility:
2. Stopping Bullying

Aim: The school takes the responsibility and initiative to stop bullying. This is done in such a way that it prevents future bullying in the school.

The school's shared strategy should ensure that any teacher or parent who takes up any bullying case knows it will be taken seriously and acted upon according to the guidelines agreed.

2.1. THE SCHOOL’S PROCEDURES WHEN BULLYING IS REPORTED OR DISCOVERED

The school’s procedures in a case of bullying are: (these are suggestions for consideration by the resource group and then the working groups as described)

1. Investigations to secure factual information
   - Details:
   - Responsibility:

2. First conversation with the victim according to the procedures set out in the Zero Teacher’s Guide
   - Further details:
   - Responsibility:

3. First conversation with the bully or bullies according to the procedures set out in the Zero Teacher’s Guide
   - Further details:
   - Responsibility:

4. Follow-up meeting with the victim
   - Further details:
   - Responsibility:

5. Follow-up conversation with the bullies
   - Further details:
   - Responsibility:

6. Conversation with the parents of the victim
   - Further details:
   - Responsibility:

7. Conversation with the parents of the bullies
   - Further details:
   - Responsibility:
2.2 COOPERATION WITH OTHER PARTIES WHEN BULLYING OCCURS

Relevant parties outside school are: (suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups report back to the resource group which writes the agreed responsibilities into the plan)

Procedures for cooperation with parties outside school: (suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups report back to the resource group which writes the agreed responsibilities into the plan)

Responsibility for following up the procedures: (suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups report back to the resource group which writes the names/roles of those responsible into the plan)
2.3 WORK AFTER A CASE OF BULLYING – PUPIL-BASED WORK

After a case of bullying has been solved, or action has been taken to change the situation, it is necessary to work strategically in relation to the different parties: the victim, the bullies and witnesses/audience. The aim of this work is to prevent any of the parties falling into the same roles again later.

Procedures for post-bullying work with individual pupils and classes/groups: (suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups report back to the resource group which writes the agreed responsibilities into the plan)

Responsibility for the work: (suggested by the resource group, then considered by the working groups in the way described. Working groups report back to the resource group, which writes the names/roles of those responsible into the plan)

2.4 WORK AFTER A CASE OF BULLYING – ORGANISATIONAL WORK/LEARNING

Solving individual problems and working with bullying that has occurred, can reveal weaknesses in the system. These need to be dealt with to prevent further bullying. It is therefore important that after each case of bullying, there is an evaluation where the leadership, together with relevant parties, discuss what the organisation can learn from this case, with the aim of preventing bullying in future.

Procedures for working after bullying– with the focus on the organisation: (suggested by the resource group, discussed by the working groups as described. The working groups report back to the resource group, which writes the agreed procedures into the plan)

1. Going through the case with a focus on which parts of the organisation or routines did not work well enough.
   • Further details:
   • Responsibility:

2. Information to other employees on what came out of point 1
   • Further details:
   • Responsibility:
3. PREVENTION

Aim: All pupils will have access to a positive learning environment

3.1 RELATIONSHIPS, TEACHER - PUPIL

The teacher is a prominent adult who the pupil can rely on

This means: *(is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, is then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)*

Initiatives the school will start to help teachers continually build better relationships with individual pupils to ensure these are of a high quality: *(chosen by the resource group from suggestions made by the working groups)*

3.2 RELATIONSHIPS, TEACHER - CLASS/GROUP

The teacher shows clear leadership in such a way that the class or group is experienced by all pupils as a secure environment

This means: *(is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, is then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)*

Initiatives the school will start to help teachers build better relationships with the class/group and to ensure these are of high quality: *(chosen by the resource group from suggestions received from the working groups)*
Literature which addresses the importance of teacher-pupil and teacher-class relationships:

(replace the Norwegian literature with relevant literature in your own language)


3.3 RELATIONSHIPS, PUPIL - PUPIL

The pupils in the class take care of one another and want everyone to feel safe.

This means: (is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)

Initiatives the school will start to make sure that the adults’ efforts to assist positive relationships between pupils are continuous and of good quality: (chosen by the resource group from ideas suggested by the working groups)

Literature about the importance of good relationships between pupils

(replace the Norwegian literature with relevant literature in your own language)


3.4 RELATIONSHIPS, TEACHER – PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Relationships between the teacher and the parents of the individual pupil should show respect, trust and willingness to cooperate

This means: (is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)

Initiatives at the school for helping teachers build good relationships with parents and guardians are continuous and of high quality: (chosen by the resource group from suggestions made by the working groups)

3.5 THE SCHOOL’S COOPERATION WITH HOME

The school has an open and active cooperation with parents and guardians as a group

This means: (is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)

The school’s initiatives to help cooperation with home are of high quality and contribute in the best possible way to the development of good learning environments for pupils: (chosen by the resource group from suggestions made by the working groups)
Literature which considers the importance of good relationships between home and school:

(replace the Norwegian literature with relevant literature in your own language)


I Sandbæk, M. og G. Tveiten (red.): Sammen med familien. Arbeid i partnerskap med barn og familie (Together with the Family. Working in Partnership with Children and Families). Oslo: Kommuneforlaget


3.6 STARTING AT SCHOOL

Starting at school should be a predictable, safe experience which is positive for all pupils

This means: (is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)

Initiatives in the school to ensure a good start for every individual pupil: (chosen by the resource group from suggestions made by the working groups)

3.7 CLASS/GROUP START

The teacher meets the class/group in a way, which signals secure leadership and concern as the basis of mutual confidence

This means: (is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)

The school’s initiatives to ensure a good start each year for groups/classes: (chosen by the resource group from the suggestions made by the working groups)
3.8 TRANSITIONS FROM NURSERY/PRE-SCHOOL TO SCHOOL AND BETWEEN SCHOOLS

Transitions from nursery/pre-school to school and between schools should be experienced by pupils as predictable and secure.

This means: (is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)

The school's initiatives to secure good transitions for each individual pupil: (chosen by the resource group from suggestions made by the working groups)
Literature which considers the importance of good transitions and a good start of year:

(Replace the Norwegian literature with relevant literature in your own language)

3.9 THE SAFETY OF AREAS SUCH AS PLAYGROUNDS, TOILETS, GYM AREAS, AFTER-SCHOOL CLUBS AND ROUTES TO SCHOOL

The school has procedures and checklists which ensure that playgrounds, toilets, gym areas, after-school clubs and school routes are experienced as safe places to be.

This means: (Is formulated first by the working groups according to the procedure described, then sent to the resource group which works on the material received until they reach a consensus for the whole staff. This is written into the plan)

Initiatives the school implements to ensure safe playgrounds, safe toilets, safe gym areas and safe school routes for pupils as individuals: (chosen by the resource group from suggestions made by the working groups)
4. Continuity

Aim: The school’s work with preventing, discovering and stopping bullying takes place continually.

4.1 CHAINS OF RESPONSIBILITY

The principle is that problems are solved at the lowest possible level, but that teachers know when cases should be reported further and who they can turn to if problems cannot be solved at their level. This will be like a ‘staircase’, where each problem is solved at the lowest level possible, but moves up one step at a time as necessary.

An overview is drawn up of who has responsibility for what is done when bullying occurs. (suggested by the resource group, discussed by the working groups as described above. Working groups report back to the resource group who write the agreed procedure into the plan)

4.2 ANNUAL INITIATIVES IN THE SCHOOL CALENDAR

To ensure continuity in initiatives for preventing and discovering bullying, certain regular initiatives are planned into the school’s annual calendar.

An overview is drawn up to show the school year and who is responsible for carrying out the different initiatives: (suggested by the resource group, discussed by the working groups as described above. Working groups report back to the resource group who write the agreed procedure into the plan)

4.3 RESPONSIBILITY FOR FOLLOW-UP AND REVISION OF THE PLAN

To make the plan an active tool in the organisation, there needs to be annual follow-up to see whether the plan is functioning in a satisfactory way or whether any revisions are necessary.

a) timepoint for the annual follow-up of the plan: (suggested by the resource group, discussed by the working groups as described above. Working groups report back to the resource group, which writes the agreed procedure into the plan)

b) responsibility for the annual follow-up of the plan: (suggested by the resource group, discussed by the working groups as described above. Working groups report back to the resource group, which writes the name of the responsible person/people into the plan)