

# Techniques to solve school bullying outlined in public talk

March 2 2015, by Anna Kellett

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A trial on techniques to solve bullying at school is the topic of a public lecture at the University of Auckland next week.

Professor Chris Bonell of University College London will discuss and present the early findings from the Learning Together project he is co-directing.

Learning Together is a UK school-based intervention project that addresses youth bullying with the aim of improving [young people's](#) health and well-being.

Learning Together was piloted in the 2011-2012 school year. The three-year trial started in early 2014 and is aimed at all 11 to 16 years old in the 20 participating [secondary schools](#) in London and South England. The trial is already showing encouraging results.

A professor of Sociology & Social Policy at UCL's Social Science Research Unit, in the Institute of Education, Professor Bonell also sits on the UK's National Institute for Health Research board (NIHR).

While the intervention effects on the whole school, the study students are at the end of year 7 (age 11-12 years) on the first year and will be at the end of year 10 at the end of the study (age 14-15). In all, 7200 students are participating in the trial.

"Bullying is commonly presented as an individual problem with clear

victims and perpetrators, caused by deficits in empathy and social skills. However, bullying can also be viewed as an ecological problem," Professor Bonell says.

"Schools vary in levels of violence in ways that cannot be explained merely by the social profile of their students, but also by a school's success or failure in engaging students in academic learning and the school community and protecting them from harm."

Violence may also increase when teachers have poor relationships with students. There is also evidence that bullying and abuse often involves a blurring of victims and perpetrators, often being cyclical, for example involving new media.

Less overt forms of abuse can easily be missed by staff but can nonetheless toxify school environments.

"In this context, we have developed and are trialling "Learning Together", a whole-school intervention to address bullying and aggression in schools."

This involves various strands: empowering students to work with staff to use data to identify local problems and solutions; training staff to use techniques associated with "restorative justice" to repair relationships damaged by [bullying](#) and aggression rather than merely punishing wrongdoers; and educating [students](#) about skills they can use to manage their emotions and develop good relationships with other members of the [school](#) community.

Provided by University of Auckland

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