



## HALF OF YOUNG PEOPLE SAY SCHOOL ANTI-BULLYING POLICY IS “INEFFECTIVE”

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Citizenship classes will fail to make young people feel part of the community if they continue to feel unsafe on the journey to school and in their neighbourhood, according to a new report by the Foreign Policy Centre think-tank.

Adrienne Katz, writing in the Foreign Policy Centre’s latest publication *Reclaiming Britishness*, argues that fears over personal safety makes a minority of young people lose faith in authority and prevents them from developing any sense of belonging. The report also finds that fear is leading many to carry weapons for self-defence. Katz draws evidence from a study of 2062 young people in an inner city London borough, the first major study of ethnic tensions after September 11. Her study shows that though schools are obliged to have anti-bullying policies in place, almost half of pupils don’t believe their school has one. Meanwhile, half of those who say their school does have a policy consider it ineffective. Bullying policies at school obviously cannot protect young people on the way to school or in their local area.

### FINDINGS:

- **One in six young people in London can be judged “at risk”.** This means that they admitted to at least one of the following: joining a gang, carrying a weapon, taking a drug other than cannabis in the last month, feeling very depressed, suicidal, bullying others and smashing something up or picking fights when distressed.
- **Within this group of “at risk” young Londoners, Asians were the most likely group to join a gang and carry a weapon.** Nearly all of these young Asians described being attacked, bullied and insulted and the feeling prevailed in nine in ten that it is “acceptable to carry a weapon for self-defence”.
- **Though most young people get on well, a small minority are destabilising communities in dangerous ways.** Though 50% of those interviewed thought that different ethnic groups in their neighbourhood get on either “ok” “well” or very well” the 8% of those (including whites) who think that ethnic groups do “not get on at all” in their neighbourhood were disproportionately disturbing to the majority. A third reporting having been bullied within the last two weeks, forty-three per cent said they were likely to join a gang, and 61% believe “it is acceptable to carry a weapon for safety”.
- **Though young people from ethnic minorities as a whole are more likely to be bullied** (one quarter of them report to have been severely bullied in contrast with 13 of white children), it is difficult to make generalizations about individual ethnic groups. Much depends on the local ethnic mix. Remedies that focus on black or Asian populations are ineffective because minority population patterns vary from one neighbourhood to another, with different groups becoming targeted because they belong to the smallest minority.

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- **There are radically different experiences within the same ethnic group.** When pupils were asked if they enjoyed school, black pupils not in the “at risk” category responded more positively than the average of all pupils. A different set of Black pupils in the “at risk” category also topped the groups saying they *disliked* school.
- **Bullying has a significant impact on long-term attainment:** In Bradford this showed itself through a more resigned attitude than average, with 20% of people saying “bullying has made me feel I can’t do things” in contrast to 14% of people saying this in a national sample”.

## **Recommendations:**

- **Make the journey to school safer:** bus drivers, the police and other members of the community need to be trained in dealing with youth violence – as well as teachers and school staff. Durham County Council has already instigated a county-wide programme offering training packages to teachers, pupil peer support teams, and council staff such as librarians and park-keepers.
- **Efforts to promote integration should not be based around simplistic categories:** i.e designing services only for black and Asian teenagers. Services need to factor in the discrepancies between different groups and be able to identify those people who are in a minority in any given area. The minority may be white, or it may be defined as Catholic, Greek Cypriot or Somali. Local authorities should use opinion survey data to monitor whether their anti-bullying policy is keeping up with changing trends.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

1. The Foreign Policy Centre was set up in 1998 by Prime Minister Tony Blair (Patron) and then Foreign Secretary Robin Cook (President) to explore the consequences of globalisation.
2. Adrienne Katz is head of Young Voice, a charity dedicated to making the views of young people known.