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## **The Breaking News English.com Resource Book**

"1,000 Ideas & Activities For Language Teachers"

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## **Bullying an epidemic in the U.K.**

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**21 November, 2005**

## **THE ARTICLE**

### **Bullying an epidemic in the U.K.**

Bullying in British schools has reached epidemic levels. Last week, England's Commissioner for Children said nearly every child was affected by the problem. Education ministers are keen to reverse the worrying trend, especially as today is the start of Anti-Bullying Week. Politicians are thinking about fining the parents of bullies up to \$1,700. Schools minister Jacqui Smith said: "This will send a strong message to parents that schools will not tolerate a failure to take responsibility for bullying." Other proposals give teachers the right to restrain students "through reasonable force" where necessary.

Ms. Smith said: "Bullying should never be tolerated in our schools, no matter what its motivation." She added that: "Children must know what is right and what is wrong." She said children must know what will happen if they cross the line. She spoke after many recent cases of violence in schools. Twelve-year-old bullies have slashed their victims with knives and used iron bars to beat students unconscious. One child was told she would be "dead meat" if she returned to school. It seems many of Britain's schoolchildren are more interested in tormenting and injuring other students than learning.

## **WARM-UPS**

**1. THE BAD KIDS:** Write down the names of some of the bad kids from when you were at school. In pairs / groups, talk about the bad things these students did. Did their bad behavior affect you? Did you ever behave badly at school?

**2. BULLYING:** In pairs / groups, talk about bullying. Were you bullied at school? What kind of bullying did you see? Who was the biggest bully? Did you bully a younger brother or sister? Is there bullying in your office? What would you do if these things happened to you?

- Being harassed
- Being pushed and shoved
- Being beaten
- Having your nose broken
- Being harmed with a knife
- Having your head banged against the wall
- Being grabbed
- Being choked
- Being teased and called names
- Being told you'll be "dead meat"

**3. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

*Bullying / epidemics / British schools / worrying trends / politicians / monetary fines / strong messages / using force / teachers / right and wrong / violence / education*

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

**4. COMMENTS ON BULLIES:** (1) Read the comments below about bullies. Agree or disagree with them with your partner(s). (2) Rewrite the sentences so they match your own opinions. Add an extra sentence to each opinion. (3) Change partners / groups and read and talk about what you wrote.

- a. Bullies never win in life.
- b. If you fight back, the bully will stop bullying you.
- c. Bullying is a part of school life. It does no real harm.
- d. Bullies have mental problems.
- e. Teachers too often ignore bullying in classrooms.
- f. Bullying leaves mental permanent mental scars.
- g. Boys are worse bullies than girls.
- h. Bullying stops after people are eighteen years old.
- i. Bullies should be arrested.
- j. Being bullied builds a stronger character.

**5. BULLY:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with bullies. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

## BEFORE READING / LISTENING

**1. TRUE / FALSE:** Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- |  |       |
|--|-------|
| a. Britain's government announced it needs anti-bullying drugs.          | T / F |
| b. A government spokesman said bullying affects nearly every child.      | T / F |
| c. Parents of bullies could receive fines of over \$1,500.               | T / F |
| d. Proposals may give teachers rights to use maximum force with bullies. | T / F |
| e. The education minister said some bullying is acceptable.              | T / F |
| f. Violent bullying disappeared from British schools many years ago.     | T / F |
| g. One child was forced to eat the meat of a dead animal.                | T / F |
| h. Many of Britain's students don't seem so interested in learning.      | T / F |

**2. SYNONYM MATCH:** Match the following synonyms from the article:

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. epidemic    | allow       |
| b. affected    | appears     |
| c. reverse     | reason      |
| d. tolerate    | abusing     |
| e. restrain    | touched     |
| f. motivation  | hold back   |
| g. slashed     | senseless   |
| h. unconscious | widespread  |
| i. seems       | cut         |
| j. tormenting  | turn around |

**3. PHRASE MATCH:** Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| a. Bullying in British schools has       | their victims with knives     |
| b. nearly every child was affected       | reverse the worrying trend    |
| c. ministers are keen to                 | students unconscious          |
| d. Politicians are thinking about fining | injuring other students       |
| e. to restrain students                  | reached epidemic levels       |
| f. Children must know what               | happen if they cross the line |
| g. children must know what will          | through reasonable force      |
| h. bullies have slashed                  | the parents of bullies        |
| i. used iron bars to beat                | by the problem                |
| j. tormenting and                        | is right and what is wrong    |

## WHILE READING / LISTENING

**ODD WORD OUT:** Delete the incorrect word from each of the groups in *italics*.

### **Bullying an epidemic in the U.K.**

Bullying in British schools has *reached / got to / graded* epidemic levels. Last week, England's Commissioner for Children said *nearly / almost / all* every child was affected by the problem. Education ministers are keen *to reverse / severe / turn around* the worrying trend, especially as today is the start of Anti-Bullying Week. Politicians are thinking about fining the parents of bullies up to \$1,700. Schools minister Jacqui Smith said: "This will send *a powerful / strength / strong* message to parents that schools will not tolerate a failure to take responsibility for bullying." Other proposals give teachers the right to restrain students "through *deadly / acceptable / reasonable* force" where necessary.

Ms. Smith said: "Bullying should never be *tolerated / accepted / totaled* in our schools, no matter what its motivation." She added that: "Children must know what is *correct / write / right* and what is wrong." She said children must know what will happen if they cross the line. She spoke after many recent *cases / examples / bags* of violence in schools. Twelve-year-old bullies have slashed their victims with knives and used iron bars to *knock / win / beat* students unconscious. One child was told she would be "dead meat" if she returned to school. It *seems / appears / sums* many of Britain's schoolchildren are more interested in tormenting and injuring other students than learning.

## **LISTENING**

Listen and fill in the spaces.

### **Bullying an epidemic in the U.K.**

Bullying in British schools has \_\_\_\_\_ epidemic levels. Last week, England's Commissioner for Children said nearly every child was \_\_\_\_\_ by the problem. Education ministers are keen to reverse the worrying trend, especially as today is the start of Anti-Bullying Week. Politicians are thinking about \_\_\_\_\_ the parents of bullies up to \$1,700. Schools minister Jacqui Smith said: "This will send a strong message to parents that schools will not \_\_\_\_\_ a failure to take responsibility for bullying." Other proposals give teachers the right to restrain students "through \_\_\_\_\_ force" where necessary.

Ms. Smith said: "Bullying should never be tolerated in our schools, no matter what its \_\_\_\_\_." She added that: "Children must know what is right and what is wrong." She said children must know what will \_\_\_\_\_ if they cross the line. She spoke after many \_\_\_\_\_ cases of violence in schools. Twelve-year-old bullies have slashed their \_\_\_\_\_ with knives and used iron bars to beat students unconscious. One child was told she would be "dead meat" if she returned to school. It \_\_\_\_\_ many of Britain's schoolchildren are more interested in tormenting and \_\_\_\_\_ other students than learning.

## **AFTER READING / LISTENING**

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**recent**' and '**case**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. ODD WORD OUT:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. STUDENT "BULLYING" SURVEY:** In pairs / groups, write down questions about bullying.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

**6. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- |                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| • reached        | • tolerated |
| • affected       | • line      |
| • start          | • cases     |
| • parents        | • iron      |
| • responsibility | • meat      |
| • reasonable     | • learning  |

## **DISCUSSION**

### STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What is your image of British schoolchildren?
- c. Is bullying a big problem in your country?
- d. Did you see or experience bullying at school?
- e. What would you do if your child was being bullied?
- f. What would you do if you knew who the bullies were?
- g. Do you think bullies become good members of society?
- h. What should the British government do if nearly every child is affected by bullying?
- i. Do you think Anti-Bullying Week will be effective?
- j. Do you think the parents of bullies are bad parents?

### STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Do you think fining the parents of bullies is a good idea?
- d. Bullies often destroy the confidence and lives of their victims, who have mental scars for life. Should bullies be punished?
- e. Do you think teachers should have more powers to discipline bullies?
- f. Whose fault is it that there are so many bullies in schools?
- g. Do you think children have problems understanding the difference between right and wrong?
- h. Do you think video games and movies give bullies ideas?
- i. Do you think teachers care if someone is being bullied?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

**AFTER DISCUSSION:** Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?



## **SPEAKING**

**BULLYING SOLUTIONS:** Do you agree with these solutions to stopping bullying in schools? Discuss the pros and cons of each with your partner(s).

SOLUTIONS	PROS	CONS
All classrooms should have web cameras so parents can monitor their children.		
Children who often misbehave should be told to leave the school forever.		
Parents of bullied children can sue the bully's parents.		
Teachers should receive better training to understand bullies and stop them.		
Parents of bullies should be named and shamed in local newspapers.		
Parents must pay a fine for all incidents of their child's bullying.		
Well-behaved children can suggest punishments for badly behaved children.		
Teachers who cannot control their classrooms should be fired.		
Bullies should be put in special children's prisons.		

- Change partners and compare and share your ideas.
- Agree on one point for each of the solutions.
- Return to your original partner(s) and discuss your points.

## **HOMEWORK**

**1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION:** Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

**2. INTERNET:** Search the Internet and find more information on Anti-Bullying Week in the UK. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson. Did you all find out similar things?

**3. ANTI-BULLYING POSTER:** Make an anti-bullying poster explaining the different kinds of bullying offences and the punishments for each offence. Show your posters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did you all think of similar things?

**4. LETTER:** You have been bullied for the past year. Write a letter to the bully explaining your feelings. Ask the bully some questions. Show what you wrote to your classmates in the next lesson. Did you all write about similar things?

## ANSWERS

### TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F      b. T      c. T      d. F      e. F      f. F      g. F      h. T

### SYNONYM MATCH:

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| a. epidemic    | widespread  |
| b. affected    | touched     |
| c. reverse     | turn around |
| d. tolerate    | allow       |
| e. restrain    | hold back   |
| f. motivation  | reason      |
| g. slashed     | cut         |
| h. unconscious | senseless   |
| i. seems       | appears     |
| j. tormenting  | abusing     |

### PHRASE MATCH:

- |  |                               |
|--|-------------------------------|
| a. Bullying in British schools has       | reached epidemic levels       |
| b. nearly every child was affected       | by the problem                |
| c. ministers are keen to                 | reverse the worrying trend    |
| d. Politicians are thinking about fining | the parents of bullies        |
| e. to restrain students                  | through reasonable force      |
| f. Children must know what               | is right and what is wrong    |
| g. children must know what will          | happen if they cross the line |
| h. bullies have slashed                  | their victims with knives     |
| i. used iron bars to beat                | students unconscious          |
| j. tormenting and                        | injuring other students       |

### ODD WORD OUT:

#### Bullying an epidemic in the U.K.

Bullying in British schools has *reached* / *got to* / ~~*graded*~~ epidemic levels. Last week, England's Commissioner for Children said *nearly* / *almost* / ~~*all*~~ every child was affected by the problem. Education ministers are keen *to reverse* / ~~*severe*~~ / *turn around* the worrying trend, especially as today is the start of Anti-Bullying Week. Politicians are thinking about fining the parents of bullies up to \$1,700. Schools minister Jacqui Smith said: "This will send *a powerful* / ~~*strength*~~ / *strong* message to parents that schools will not tolerate a failure to take responsibility for bullying." Other proposals give teachers the right to restrain students "through ~~*deadly*~~ / *acceptable* / *reasonable* force" where necessary.

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