Chapter 1 – Immediate Intervention Strategies

1. In case of a bullying incident, teachers must arrive at the scene as soon as possible to stop bullying. The following actions should be taken where necessary:
   - Enlist the help of other teachers or students immediately.
   - Send the injured students to hospital for medical treatment.
   - Conduct preliminary investigations with the students at the scene and record the incident immediately.
   - Inform the school.
   - Inform the parents concerned.
   - Consult Secondary School Liaison Officer / School Liaison Officer of the Hong Kong Police Force.

2. Teachers should interview the students involved, including the bullies, the victims and the bystanders, on the day when bullying occurs to get a clear picture of the incident so that measures could be mapped out to prevent recurrence. For interview skills with students, please refer to Chapter 2 " **Improvement through Taking Responsibility**" Approach of this section.

3. Teachers should meet the parents of the bullies and the victims separately at an appropriate time. The following points should be noted:
   - Make good preparation before the interview, including preparing an interview outline and relevant information.

- Explain to the parents that the purpose of the meeting is to show concern for the students, understand the incident and collaborate to find ways in tackling the problem.
- Focus the discussion on the bullying incident.
- State the school's concern to parents and stress that bullying will not be tolerated.
- Tell the parents only the known facts before everything is clear. It is not advisable to give any personal assumption or judgment.
- Relate the whole incident objectively and sensibly; avoid using subjective expressions.
- Discuss with the parents safety measures, such as changing the route or escorting their child to and from school, if the safety of the student is under threat.
- Analyse carefully the incident, balance the views of different parties and consider the position of the school before telling the parents the proposed punishment.
- Seek cooperation from the parents to reach consensus in handling the incident.
- Note carefully the parents' emotional reactions. If they are too agitated, let them calm down before getting on with the discussion.
- Never disclose to the parents information of other students or arrange the parents to meet or contact other students.
- Record the main points of the interview for future reference and action.
- Consider referring the case to guidance professionals if the parents need additional support in emotion management or parenting.

Chapter 2– "Improvement through Taking Responsibility" Approach

1. Theoretical Base

Developing mutual respect and a harmonious relationship among students is the key to eliminate school bullying. Tackling the problem of bullying is therefore an educational process to improve interpersonal relationship. This is precisely the aim of the "Improvement through Taking Responsibility" (ITR) Approach in handling bullying. Taking notice of a bullying incident, a teacher should intervene immediately to stop the incident and handle the case by adopting the ITR Approach. ITR, with its emphasis on positive attitudes in problem-solving, is designed based on local circumstances and needs and comprises the following three methods, principles and skills in counselling and managing bullying.

1. **"Solution-Focused Therapy"**(Metcalf, 1995; HO Wui-shing et. al., 2003; NG Ka-ling et. al., 2003)

   Basic Concepts:

   - There is no correlation between the cause of an incident and its solution. Therefore the primary objective of the interview is not to investigate into the cause of the incident.
   - The interview aims at identifying strategies for timely tackling the problem.
   - There must be a way (often more than one) to solve the problem. Encouragement would help the client to tackle the problem positively.
   - We all have the ability to solve problems. Strategic communication would help the client to develop and make good use of their potentials in problem-solving.

2. **"The No Blame Approach"**(Maines & Robinson, 1992; Sullivan, 2000)

Basic Concepts:

- Handling bullying is a problem-solving process.
- Bullying is a shared concern of the bullies, the victims, the bystanders and those who can offer help, and so they should collaborate to tackle the problem.
- Blame and reprimand will only make the bullies more defiant and evasive, and may even reinforce their hostility and revengefulness against the victims. A no-blame approach would be more helpful in encouraging them to shoulder responsibility and find a solution together.
- Helping the bullies understand the feelings of the victims may prevent recurrence of bullying.

3. **"The Pikas Method of Shared Concern"** (Pikas, 1989; Pikas, 2000; Sullivan, 2000)

Basic Concepts:

- Every student involved, including the bullies, the reinforcers and the victims, is responsible for putting efforts to solve the problem of bullying.
- Taking a no-blame approach to understand the worries and difficulties of the students would encourage them to share responsibilities while avoiding hostility or hatred.
- Follow up interviews are essential to monitoring the development of the incident.
- The teacher should arrange an interview with the bullies and the victims to discuss ways of maintaining long-term peace and harmony when both parties feel acceptable.
- Pikas has recommended two intervention methods:
  - Shared Concern Method (SCm); and
  - Persuasive Coercion Method (PCm)

- There are five steps in SCm:
  - To interview the bullies.
  - To interview the victims.
  - To prepare and train the students involved for a group interview.
  - To reconcile.
  - To take follow up action.
- The PCm focuses on handling the bullies and is used, for example, to stop very dangerous violent behaviour immediately. It attempts to reason with the bullies and arouse a sense of regret in them. Other external means are also used to stop further bullying.
- Pikas considers that SCm should be more readily adopted to reduce students' anxiety and guide all those involved (including the bystanders) to reflect on themselves and share the responsibility. Moreover, Pikas also believes that SCm will result in more enduring improvement.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the ITR approach are:

1. To stop bullying behaviour immediately, and to engage all students involved in the incident to go through the five steps of "recalling", "reflecting", "taking responsibility", "effecting improvements", and "co-creating harmony" to prevent recurrence of bullying and rebuild peer relationship.
2. To educate every student involved in the incident (including the bullies, the victims, the reinforcers and the bystanders) and make them understand that the school will not tolerate bullying, and to impose on them the responsibility of tackling the problem and making self-initiated improvements.

3. Characteristics

1. The teacher reviews the process of the bullying incident with the students involved (including the bullies, the victims and the bystanders) to make them understand that they all have the responsibility to prevent bullying.
2. Though the bully and the victim may both be responsible for the incident, the teacher adopts a no-blame approach to get the students' cooperation to share the responsibility.
3. All parties involved reflect on the improvements that they can make and negotiate for a solution to prevent recurrence of bullying and develop a harmonious relationship.
4. The main emphasis of the interview is to get students' support to solve the problem of bullying. The teacher should focus on the incident and let other non-urgent disciplinary matters be dealt with later.
5. The teacher reviews and makes reference to experience concerning successful or unsuccessful attempts of students (including the bullies and the victims) to prevent bullying, and guides them to explore and identify positive and feasible solutions.

4. Points to Note

1. All interviews should be conducted by the same teacher in order to ensure consistency in attitudes, methods and principles.
2. Preparation for the interview including collecting information and formulating strategies and details should be made before the interview.
3. Interviewing students should be conducted in a quiet room.
4. A brief record of the interview should be made for reference and follow-up action.
5. Depending on the circumstances, the order of the interviews can be as follows:

- The bullies may not want to tell the truth for fear of punishment. If the teacher does not know much about the

incident, he / she may interview the victims and the bystanders first and get a preliminary idea of the impact of the incident on the victims before meeting the bullies.

- If the teacher knows roughly what has happened, he / she may interview the bullies first. The advantage is that this will not give the bullies any impression that the teacher may have prejudice against them after hearing the one-sided story of the victims.

6. If there is more than one bully, the teacher should interview the ringleader or the core member first.
7. All bullies should be interviewed as early as possible to avoid giving them the chance to discuss the matter or take revenge.
8. In the early stage of intervention, it is not advisable to conduct group interviews with the bullies and the victims together as they may blame each other, deny the responsibility and complicate the problem.

5. Five steps of the "Improvement through Taking Responsibility" Approach

Five Steps of ITR	Objectives	Meet the Victims	Meet the Bullies	Meet the Bystanders / Informers
(1) Recalling	To understand the whole case.	• Review what happened in the incident with the students; listen to their stories carefully and do not force them to give details; guide them in relating their involvement in the incident. • If the teacher knows roughly what has happened and finds that the students (including the bullies, the victims and the bystanders) are concealing the truth or lying intentionally, he / she may insist and ask the students to recall and repeat their stories. Do not argue with the students.		

		• Support and encourage the victims as their social skills are generally weaker. • Assess the psychological and emotional impact of the bullying incident on the victims, help them manage their emotions and arrange professional counselling if necessary. • Some victims may not be ready to tell the truth due to some worries (e.g. do not believe that the school can protect them, fear of revenge by the bullies or afraid of	• Be serious, calm, objective and impartial in interviewing the bullies. Blame and reprimand will only make them more defiant and evasive, and may even reinforce their hostile and revengeful mentality against the victims. • If the bullies are extremely defiant, let them calm down under supervision before proceeding with the interview.	• Compliment the students who act positively to report bullying or their bravery or courage to help the victims.

		punishment by the school). If such worries are relieved, the students may be more willing to give a detailed account of the incident.		

Five Steps of ITR	Objectives	Meet the Victims	Meet the Bullies	Meet the Bystanders / Informers
(2) Reflecting	To help the students review their responsibility and what they can do better in the incident.	• Guide the students to review their involvement in the bullying incident so that they can understand the impact of their behaviour on the development of the bullying incident and reflect on their own responsibility. • Stress that the school is a big family and every member of the family is responsible for establishing and maintaining harmony and order in school.		
		• Encourage the victims to face up to the problem and prevent bullying from happening again. • Some victims may have behaved	• Guide the bullies to reflect on their responsibility. • The bullies may evade their responsibility	

		improperly and aggravated the incident. Therefore, they need to make improvements too. • Teachers need to handle the case carefully and avoid making the victims feel that they are being blamed and it is their fault that has led to the incident.	and put the blame on others. Instead of arguing with them who should be held more responsible, the teacher should stress that every person involved is responsible for what has happened in the light of their behaviour and involvement in the incident.	

Five Steps of ITR	Objectives	Meet the Victims	Meet the Bullies	Meet the Bystanders / Informers
(3) Taking Respon-sibility	To encourage the students to explore ways of handling bullying and strengthen their	• Reiterate the school's position that bullying will never be tolerated and bullying incidents must be stopped and tackled immediately.		
		• Guide the victims to face the unhappy experience	• Guide the bullies to reflect on the impact of the incident on students	• Encourage the bystanders to explore

	motivation to improve, thus helping them to face up to the problem positively and make improvement.	and strengthen their motivation to improve. • Assess the victim's possibility of revenge by the bullies; take every step to make the victims feel safe and protected; and hence help them face up to the problem positively and make improvement.	involved, and help them become more empathetic and enhance their motivation to improve. • Guide the bullies to propose positive, specific and feasible ways of improvement and encourage them to put the ideas into action. • The bullies must be held responsible. The teacher may discuss with them their punishment under the system of award and punishment of the school. • Punishment should be constructive, flexible and educational. (Please refer to "Success Factors in Handling	ways to help prevent similar incidents from happening.

			Problem Behaviour", Section 2 of Chapter 5 of the Guidelines on Student Discipline issued by the former Education Department.)	

Five Steps of ITR	Objectives	Meet the Victims	Meet the Bullies	Meet the Bystanders / Informers
(4) Effecting Improve-ment	To set improvement goals with the students involved.	• Understand the background and limitations of the students before setting up goals. • The goals must be specific, practicable, feasible, easily assessable and readily achievable to give the students a sense of accomplishment. Small improvements, when accumulated, may lead to significant changes. • To avoid students taking the matter lightly, the goals must be challenging enough,		

		requiring certain efforts from students. • The numbers and dates of interviews should be agreed on with the students beforehand. • Set the date (preferrably 3-7 days after the prior meeting) and venue of the next interview.	

- To ensure sustained improvement, the teacher may interview the students regularly. Each interview should not last too long and should focus on the positive change of the students and its underlying factors. The direction of further improvement should be explored in detail.
- The teacher should monitor the progress closely before and after each interview, and consult those who are acquainted with the students, including teachers, student leaders and schoolmates, for better understanding of their conditions. Preventive measures should be agreed upon to stop bullying behaviour immediately. If there is any sign of recurrence, immediate intervention should be made.
- In follow-up interviews, the teacher should check if any improvement has been made since the last interview. If there is improvement, no matter how slight it is, the teacher should praise and encourage the students so as to make them more confident and motivated for further improvement. The teacher should also set up further goals with the students and encourage them to make more improvement.
- If the bullying behaviour persists, other measures should be adopted. If the situation deteriorates, further actions may have to be taken, such as seeking support from other teachers or social workers and interviewing the parents, etc.
- It should be noted if the bullies have changed their target of bullying.
- With satisfactory progress and depending on the circumstances, the teacher may arrange the two parties to attend the next interview together to co-create harmony.

Five Steps of ITR	Objectives	Meet the Victims	Meet the Bullies	Meet the Bystanders / Informers
(5) Co-creating Harmony	To enhance mutual respect and cooperation and develop harmonious relationship among students.	• Interview all the bullies first and ask them to share their improvements. Then let the victims join in and share their feelings. • Review and appreciate the efforts of the students and celebrate their achievements. • Invite the students to suggest ways to maintain harmonious relationship in the future. • Depending on the circumstances, ask the two parties to prepare words of apology or appreciation and convey the message directly to the other party during the interview.		

6. Questions to induce reflections

Different questions may be used during the interviews of the ITR approach to guide students in recalling, reviewing, analysing the situation and identifying positive solutions. Some examples of questions are listed below:

Types of Questions	Objectives	Sample Questions for the Victims	Sample Questions for the Bullies
Coping Questions	Guide the students in recalling and analysing experience of success in tackling bullying incidents, and encourage them to continue using these effective methods.	"They have hurt you before by spreading rumours about you. How did you handle it at that time?"	"You have succeeded in holding your temper. How did you do that then?"
*** Exception Seeking Questions**	Guide the students in recalling and analysing occasions when bullying did not happen, and encourage them to create more such occasions.	"They did not pick on you on that occasion. How was it different from usual?"	"You always quarrelled with him. Is there anything different in the circumstances where you find yourself at peace with him?"
*** Probing Questions**	Use questions like "And?" or "Any other ways?" to guide the students in recalling more successful cases, exceptional scenarios or	"You did quite well that time when you successfully avoided being teased. Is there any other ways you can get the same result?"	"Ah! You didn't flare up last time because you thought of the consequence of starting a fight. Was there any other reason that made you do so?"

	problem-solving methods		
*** Scaling Questions**	Advise the students to use numbers to quantify and measure the impact of abstract feeling or behaviour on themselves and others so as to get a clearer picture of the situation, and guide them in making gradual improvements.	"If '1' represents you cannot do it at all and '10' represents you can definitely do it, how would you rate your ability to avoid being laughed at? If your score is '5', what improvements will you make to increase it to'6'?"	"If '1' represents 'very angry' and '10' represents 'very calm', how would you rate your feeling at that time? What would you otherwise do to increase your score from '7' to '8'?"
Supportive Questions	Help the students find more supporters so as to enlarge their interpersonal network.	"Who in your class does not isolate you?"	"Who in your class gets along with you better and can remind you not to use force?"
Miracle Questions	Let the students have a flashback and tell what they could do to prevent the bullying incident if they had a second chance.	"If you had another chance, would you do the same thing? Think if there is any other way to avoid being framed."	"If the same incident happened again, would you handle it differently and how?"

For questions marked with '*', reference is drawn from "Useful Questions" suggested by HO Wui-shing (1999).

7. **Conclusion**

Overall speaking, in the ITR Approach, the students are asked, through interviews and discussions with the teacher, to review what happened in the bullying behavior. This enables students to understand that bullying behaviour is not acceptable and each of them has the responsibility to tackle the problem. They should reflect on their ways to improve, negotiate and implement possible solutions, and eventually attain harmony together.

The ITR Approach helps to stop and tackle bullying behaviour immediately. Other follow-up actions should be made if further improvements are needed in emotion control, stress management, problem-solving ability and social skills of the victims and bullies. If the incident involves several students in a class or affects other classmates, apart from providing support at the individual student level, the teacher should also address it at the class level by explaining to the whole class what has happened and what has been done. The purpose is to clear up doubts and suspicions to avoid unnecessary conjectures or misunderstanding.