

Initiating change locally in bullying and aggression through the school environment (INCLUSIVE): a pilot randomised controlled trial

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Plain English summary

Changing bullying and aggression in the school environment

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We examined 'INCLUSIVE' (initiating change locally in bullying and aggression through the school environment), a programme for secondary schools to reduce bullying and aggression among students. The programme involves several elements. First, staff and students work together to improve how the school is run, ensuring students have a say. Second, school staff manage discipline differently, focusing on repairing relationships rather than just punishing bad behaviour. Third, students are taught social and emotional skills, helping them to get on better together. In this study, INCLUSIVE was delivered only in four schools for 1 year, so we could not examine its impact. Instead, using questionnaires, interviews and focus groups with staff and students, we examined whether INCLUSIVE was feasible and acceptable. We found that it was. Schools improved their policies and let students have a say in decisions, altered how they managed discipline and taught students social and emotional skills. Local policy changes included new school rules that students felt were fair (and so were less likely to break) and timetables giving students more time with their form tutors (so problems with other students could be resolved more quickly). In terms of discipline, schools liked the greater focus on repairing relationships and thought this would reduce bullying. Staff and students also liked teaching and learning about emotional skills and thought this would also contribute to reducing bullying and aggression. We conclude that a larger study, which builds on the successful methods we used in this pilot study, to examine the impact of INCLUSIVE on bullying and aggression would be valuable.

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