

Overview of the Self-Evaluation Tool

What is the Self-Evaluation Tool for schools?

The 'Shield My School' self-evaluation tool is a component of the ISPCC Shield Campaign which aims to protect children from bullying.

The tool consists of ten statements, referred to throughout the document as Shield Statements. Each of these shield statements is based on international evidence in relation to the management of bullying. The series of questions that follow each shield statement reflect evidence informed practice that has been shown to have a positive impact on bullying.

The self-evaluation tool asks a group of teachers/facilitators to consider a set of evidence informed statements and questions about their schools approach to bullying. The questions are designed to act as evidence informed prompts to the school/club/centre to facilitate a self-assessment of where they are in relation to the statement and known evidence based approaches to bullying. The process encourages participants to reflect on their approach to bullying, to identify the aspects where they are strong and the areas they would like to improve upon. The self-evaluation tool includes an action plan for schools/clubs to record the outcome of their evaluation, their proposed actions, time-frames and review schedule.

This self-reflection component enables schools/clubs/centres to measure where they are in relation to meeting the core elements of an evidence informed approach to bullying and the built-in evaluation focuses efforts towards acknowledging strengths and identifying areas for improvement.

The overall aim of the self-evaluation tool is to help schools/clubs and community centres identify how effective they are in dealing with, and reducing, incidences of bullying within the school and community environment. To be effective the self-evaluation tool relies on honesty and trust within the group and therefore individuals require a secure setting where difficulties can be raised and opinions challenged in a constructive manner. Within this safe group setting teachers/facilitators are encouraged to consider their personal and combined approach to bullying, and the systems they have in place within the school, while being mindful of the available evidence and best practice research.

Why a Shield?

The ISPCC shield symbolises protection from bullying and in meeting each of these evidence informed statements schools can help create a safer, more bully-proof environment. While the potential for bullying will always exist where groups of people

gather, an approach that harnesses the principles and actions as outlined in each shield statement will lessen the potential for harm.

How does the Self-Evaluation Tool work?

The tool works by bringing together school personnel with responsibility for student welfare to consider how well they deal with bullying. There are three fundamental principles required for the process to work:

- Trust and security within the group setting which is conducive to an honest debate.
- An openness to examine, to challenge, and work through a process of change focused on a specific outcome.
- A commitment to follow the process from assessment to implementation and review, forming a continuous exercise of assessment, self-reflection, and evaluation.

In completing the exercise the group is encouraged to take a step back to individually reflect on their experience and perceptions of bullying before collectively moving forward to assess how they respond to bullying. The self-evaluation tool requires commitment from the group, sufficient time allocation to allow for discussion, an acceptance of the appropriateness of honesty within the group setting, and the combined obligation of all present to implement the agreed actions.

What is the purpose of the Self-Evaluation Tool?

There is now a large body of evidence regarding effective approaches to bullying and what has been proven to work. This self-evaluation tool helps break through this body of evidence and present the information in a user friendly format of information, prompts, self-reflection and evaluation. Through completing and working toward each of the shield statements teachers can be reassured that they are taking an evidence informed approach to tackling bullying and that the efforts they put in to combat bullying have been proven to work.

Who is the self-evaluation tool designed for?

The self-evaluation tool is designed for teachers/facilitators working within primary and secondary school environments, clubs and community centres. The self-evaluation tool can be used on a one-to-one basis for individual reflection, but it is best used as part of a group setting where a level of trust and security exists among the members.

How will I use it?

The self-evaluation tool is designed to be completed in one sitting within two hours. Further time may be required for more detailed discussions arising from a particular shield statement and this can be built into the school/club/centre action plan.

A school/club may decide to work through the tool over a series of meetings focusing on different sections at each meeting. This may allow for more time for discussion however, it will help maintain momentum in the discussion if a significant time lapse does not occur between sessions.

The process is time efficient and generally more effective if preparation by participants occurs prior to the meeting however, this is not an absolute requirement.

In working through each statement the school/club embarks on a journey of reflection of where they are in terms of an evidence informed approach to bullying.

Who will I include in the group?

It is essential that the self-evaluation exercise is fully supported by the person(s) within the school/club/centre who has overall responsibility for management, generally the school principal, board of management or centre manager. The tool works best if all individuals working within the environment are involved including those responsible for supervision outside of the classroom/centre settings. It is essential to bear in mind that an atmosphere of trust is integral to the process allowing for an open and honest debate of existing strengths and areas to build upon.

What are the benefits to our school/Club/Centre?

The self-evaluation tool will help you understand how effective you are in relation to bullying based on the evidence provided throughout the document. This tool is designed to be used among teachers/facilitators within a safe group setting. Through a means of self-assessment and useful prompts teachers/facilitators are encouraged to self-evaluate their effectiveness in relation to bullying and actively contribute to a thorough action plan to combat bullying.

The process will help generate a time efficient response to bullying as each shield statement is evidence informed making it more likely that positive effects identified in research studies will be replicated within participating schools/centres/clubs. The unified approach to the exercise is fundamental, sending a consistent message to everyone within your setting and providing added reassurance to parents and guardians regarding your approach to bullying.

What help is available?

The self-evaluation tool is available to download free of charge from the ISPCC website www.ispcc.ie. The ISPCC would like to be kept informed of usage of the tool and welcomes submissions and user feedback regarding the appropriateness of the tool in meeting the school's/club's/centre's needs.

The ISPCC is available to respond to queries and offer support to individual schools through the ISPCC's Anti-Bullying Coordinator. This support can be accessed through contacting our head office on 01 6767960.