

Free of Bullying



Welcome to a world Free of Bullying

All children need to feel part of a community – no matter what part of the world they live in. This is the underlying philosophy behind Free of Bullying and its internationalisation.

The Free of Bullying project launched by The Mary Foundation and Save the Children Denmark is a pedagogical anti-bullying programme that strives to prevent bullying in preschools and primary schools (in the early grades).

Free of Bullying has been developed to prevent bullying among three- to eight-year-olds. It consists of a suitcase containing pedagogical tools such as the Buddy Bear, conversation boards and rhythm booklet. These tools enable teachers to talk to the children with ease about an otherwise abstract subject such as bullying; and studies show that this results in many children becoming more caring towards each other, while no less than 98% of teachers involved in the programme in Denmark would recommend Free of Bullying to other institutions.

Besides Denmark, the programme has also been established in Greenland and Estonia and there is growing international interest in Free of Bullying. This is why we have developed this short information leaflet. We wish to encourage and support new countries with an interest in Free of Bullying. We hope that you, too, will find the programme interesting and recognise the benefits of working with Free of Bullying.

Yours sincerely,



Helle Østergaard
Director, The Mary Foundation



Mimi Jakobsen
General Secretary, Save the Children Denmark

Why Free of Bullying?

All people need to feel they belong and our social relationships have a big impact on our well-being.

According to Danish experts, the consequences of bullying include:

- Bullied children are sick more often than children who are not bullied.
- Bullying badly affects children's self-confidence and self-esteem.
- Children who are lonely at school are often lonely outside school as well.
- Bullied children think about suicide more often than children who are not bullied.

Experts also highlight that bullying in the classroom affects the well-being of the entire class, which is why bullying is a group phenomenon and does not only impact individual children.

It is important to focus on children's interpersonal and emotional skills from an early age. Many experts stress that when it comes to teaching our children to be tolerant, respectful and kind to one another in their everyday interactions, the earlier you start, the better.

In addition, leading experts widely agree that the sooner you take action to prevent bullying, the less impact it will have on personal and social costs. This is why we have developed Free of Bullying.

What is Free of Bullying?

Free of Bullying is an anti-bullying programme. Its mission is:

- To reduce the number of children subjected to bullying in preschools and primary schools.
- To create a safe, positive and healthy environment for children attending preschool or primary school.



The mission is to be achieved by:

- Teaching children how to be a good friend.
- Giving children the courage to say no if they experience bullying.
- Supporting children to act based on the values of tolerance, respect, care and courage.
- Strengthening the group spirit among children and thus preventing bullying and children feeling unhappy with their lives.

Free of Bullying builds on the view that bullying involves the whole group. The anti-bullying programme is implemented by developing a range of good social practices designed to strengthen the children's community spirit. The children and teachers work with the tools contained in the suitcase – such as the Buddy Bear puppet, conversation boards and massage programme – at regular children's meetings. Continuity and the specific focus on well-being are paramount. The aim of Free of Bullying is to ensure that these social practices become embedded in the culture.

Free of Bullying revolves around four core values:

- **Tolerance** is about recognising and accepting differences within the children's group as a strength, and about treating each other as equals.
- **Respect** is about accepting and considering all children in the group, and about accommodating and respecting others' differences and ways of being.
- **Care** is about showing interest, compassion, concern and helpfulness towards all children.
- **Courage** is about setting boundaries and saying no when you see children overstepping others' boundaries. Being a courageous friend means reacting to injustice.

Buddy Bear symbolises Free of Bullying while also fulfilling a specific function, in that Buddy Bear is a friend of ALL the children. Buddy Bear communicates the values and thus underpins the positive aspects of being a good friend and of being courageous and showing kindness to your friends.



Does it work?

Research in Denmark has shown very positive results, including the following:

- Children from preschools and primary schools that work intensively with the Free of Bullying programme are significantly better at tackling teasing and bullying than children from other institutions.
- Staff experience their work with the Free of Bullying tools as exciting, meaningful and rewarding, 98% would recommend Free of Bullying to other institutions.
- Free of Bullying and the visible involvement of adults play an all-important role in combatting bullying.

The results of the follow-up research have been published in eight reports. These reports can be obtained from the Free of Bullying's coordination team (please see contact information below).

How to get started

If you are interested in the programme, please contact Free of Bullying in Denmark for more information and to arrange a meeting in your country. We would be pleased to provide you with more advice on how your country can benefit from Free of Bullying.

Implementing Free of Bullying requires commitment and considerable effort. Following a visit from Denmark, your next step would be to obtain the necessary funding and secure the required project and research partners.

We recommend that the implementation of Free of Bullying entails three phases: establishment, pilot and launch.

1. In the establishment phase, you will formulate your project description, plan the evaluation, translate and adapt/localise the materials, and hold instructor courses for key individuals.
2. In the pilot phase, you will test the programme in selected preschools and/or primary schools, run courses for pilot institutions, adapt materials based on the results of the evaluation, and prepare for the launch.
3. In the launch phase, you will roll out Free of Bullying to more preschools/primary schools and plan how you will continue to develop the programme.

These phases and the entire programme are described in detail in our brand guide.

For further information, please feel free to contact Free of Bullying's coordination team at:

The Mary Foundation's office in Copenhagen:
freeofbullying@maryfonden.dk / + 45 45 27 30 20

Or contact

Save the Children Denmark's headquarters in Copenhagen:
lsn@redbarnet.dk / +45 20 89 72 50.

We look forward to hearing from you.