

PRESS RELEASE FROM ACTION ON RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN

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**PARENTS ACT TO CHANGE LAW ON BULLYING**

Parents determined to end school bullying are taking matters into their own hands. They are demanding changes in the law that will make all schools bullying-free zones. This week, Hilton Dawson MP will table amendments to the Children Bill that would put an active duty on schools and local authorities to prevent bullying.

“Does anyone know a child who has **not** been bullied at school?” Asks Terri Dowty of Action on Rights for Children. “Some children are absolutely desperate: their lives are being destroyed by bullying. Families have been driven out of the education system altogether in record numbers – some have to leave their homes. Every week we hear more horrifying stories, or yet another child commits suicide. It is a national scandal.

“We need urgent action to change this ‘Lord of the Flies’ culture completely. Schools must become places where bullying can’t happen because everyone takes responsibility for stopping it. Some schools are doing a fantastic job of eliminating bullying, but it takes real commitment and effort. Simply punishing and excluding won’t do – problem schools need to take a serious look at the whole ethos of their school.

“If some schools can manage it, there’s no excuse for the others. There’s plenty of material and advice on effective strategies. There’s also plenty of evidence that they work.”

At the moment, no figures are kept on the effects of bullying. Media reports indicate that every few weeks a child commits suicide as a direct result of bullying, and it is a factor in the suicides of others. It is a cause of mental health problems, self-harm, eating disorders and truancy. Some children are injured seriously enough to require hospital treatment. This year, Childline reported a 50% increase in calls about bullying.

"Charters, policies, and 'Tsars' are just tinkering around the edges," says Terri Dowty, "what's the point when some head-teachers refuse even to admit that bullying is going on in their schools? It's just not good enough to say schools must have an anti-bullying policy – it's time the law held schools and LEAs to account for whether it's effective or not.

"A school should be labelled 'failing' when it fails to keep children safe, and if the school can't sort itself out, a team of experts should be sent in to do the job for them. The same priority must be given to bullying as to poor academic standards. It's time all schools took bullying as seriously as parents and children do. Families want their children to be safe and happy. Is that really too much to ask?"

### **Notes to editors:**

#### **1) More information:**

The following ARCH representatives are available to speak to journalists:

Terri Dowty 020 8558 9317 <[terri@arch-ed.org](mailto:terri@arch-ed.org)>

Sally Lever 0870 262 6319

#### **2) Other contacts:**

We can provide contact details for several families who have direct experience of bullying

#### **3) About ARCH:**

ARCH (Action on Rights for Children) was formed in 2000 as an Internet-based network of families committed to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Its core membership consists of around 200 families who, in turn, belong to a variety of other networks.

ARCH's role is to examine the implications of policy and legislation for children's rights, to disseminate information to families as widely as possible through its networks, and to collect responses in order to represent families' views to policy-makers

**website:** <http://www.arch-ed.org/>