

## **Anti-Social Behaviors in Primary School: Keeping Out of Trouble**

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### **Abstract**

There are a variety of factors that contribute to primary students committing anti-social and criminal acts. Family break down over the past 40 years and the changing dynamics of family life, with nurseries becoming more common place for children to spend their days, are taking their toll on the behavior. They are facing a more anxious and tentative world, and often expected to know how to deal with the challenges they face, without issues being discussed or coping strategies taught to them. The aim of the 'Keeping Out of Trouble' program is to enable primary schools to provide interventions targeted at students who are, or are at risk of, committing criminal offences. Through developing students' awareness of victims, understanding of the consequences of their actions, exploration of sensitive and relevant topics, encouraging students to engage in self-reflection, developing ownership of their behavior and improving their problem-solving skills, primary students will develop the strategies, knowledge and understanding to support themselves in making informed choices about their behavior and future actions. The program consists of an initial session, followed by 16 group sessions and a final self-evaluation and target setting session. This essential activity design is based on a program that was developed by staff in the Youth Offending Team and The Hillingdon Pupil Referral Unit, who recognized that students needed more support from both agencies and decided to implement a new way of targeting individuals and their behaviors within the context of a supportive and solution focused environment with some correction and adaptation on Indonesia-setting.

**Keyword:** *Keeping Out of Trouble, Anti-Social*

## **Introduction**

There are a variety of factors that contribute to young people committing anti-social and criminal acts. The increase in family break down over the past 40 years and the changing dynamics of family life, with nurseries becoming more common place for children to spend their days, are taking their toll on the behavior and coping strategies of young people. Young people are facing a more anxious and tentative world, and they are often expected to know how to deal with the challenges they face, without issues being discussed or coping strategies taught to them. In 2002, a Social Exclusion Unit report showed that most prisoners come from socially excluded backgrounds: they are 13 times more likely to have been in care and 14 times more likely to have been unemployed than non-offenders. More than half of all male prisoners and over two thirds of female prisoners have no qualifications.

The aim of paper is to enable primary schools to provide interventions targeted at students who are, or are at risk of, committing criminal offences. Through developing students' awareness of victims, understanding of the consequences of their actions, exploration of sensitive and relevant topics, encouraging students to engage in self-reflection, developing ownership of their behavior and improving their problem-solving skills, primary students will develop the strategies, knowledge and understanding to support themselves in making informed choices about their behavior and future actions.

The paper is a brand new to Inspire imprint which aims to help you to provide students with access to range of multi-agency services to help them to cope with their behavioral problems and prevent them from becoming involved in challenging behavior or criminal offences. This essential new resource is based on a program that was developed by staff in the Youth Offending Team and The Hillingdon Pupil Referral Unit, who recognised that students needed more support from both agencies and decided to implement a new way of targeting individuals and their behaviors within the context of a supportive and solution focused environment. This way of working fits in with the Every Child Matters agenda. The program tackles the 'Be Healthy' aim by encouraging the young people to be mentally and emotionally healthy through:

- talking and discussing significant aspects of their world
- educating them and encouraging them not to take illegal drugs to hide their true feelings and experiences

The 'Stay Safe' aim is tackled by addressing issues around bullying and, more obviously, being safe from crime and anti-social behavior in and out of school. This is fundamental to this paper. Young people are more likely to be the victims of crime, and educating them about the effects will help them to deal with sensitive issues. This program also tackles the 'Enjoy and Achieve' aim by developing the personal and social skills, and supporting participants to identify positive recreational activities. The most significant aim that this program addresses is 'Making a Positive Contribution' by supporting the young people to engage in:

- decision-making
- supporting the community and environment
- engaging in law-abiding and positive behavior both in and out of school
- developing positive relationships
- choosing not to bully and discriminate
- developing self-confidence
- successfully dealing with significant life challenges and changes

### **The Program**

Keeping Out of Trouble program consists of an initial tutorial session, followed by 16 group sessions and a final self-evaluation and target setting session. These strands of support aim to meet the following objectives:

- To enable students to develop consequential thinking
- To encourage the development of victim awareness
- To develop an understanding of restorative work and ways that they can engage in this kind of work
- To enable students to develop an awareness of their own feelings and the ability to label, identify and express these feelings in a safe way
- To further develop personal insight, gaining knowledge of strengths and weaknesses and the ability to take structured criticism and feedback
- To encourage the development of confidence and self-assurance
- To encourage the development of self-reflection skills
- To develop an awareness of the consequences of their behaviors – both for themselves and others

- To further develop a sense of responsibility and locus of control, that is, to have internal control
- To encourage students to further develop and appreciate the perspectives of others, that is, empathy
- To encourage students to develop a range of strategies to pre-empt and avoid anti-social and offending behaviors
- To encourage facilitators and students to cooperate as joint problem-solvers, engaging in wide ranging discussions around key issues

The program is aimed at:

- All young people, especially those who have demonstrated of anti-social or criminal behavior
- A group of young people of a similar age
- Young people who have not been identified as prolific offenders

Why should primary schools get involved?

- Every Child Matters (DfES 2004) to stay safe and make a positive contribution
- Reduce anti-social behavior in schools
- Encourage and develop skills that are in keeping with the citizenship curriculum

## **Sequences**

The program is divided into 18 sessions arranged in the following sequence:

- Individual Session - this session provides each young person with an individual one-to-one session in which he or she can contribute to a personal profile identifying interests, strengths and difficulties, and current knowledge and awareness of the Criminal Justice System. It also acts as a starting point for the student and facilitator to begin getting to know each other.
- Introductory Session – the introductory session provides the group of young people with an opportunity to get to know each other and for the facilitator to briefly outline the key aims of the program before engaging in two initial introductory activities.
- Criminal Damage - this session focuses on criminal damage and the consequences of such behaviors. The facilitator reads through an article entitled 'Caught in the Act,

Graffiti Gang Hits Again' in which a group of young people are caught on CCTV graffitiing on public property.

- Shoplifting - This session focuses on shoplifting and the consequences of such behaviors. The facilitator reads through the article entitled 'Shoplifting' in which the main character has been stealing make-up from a market stall.
- Street Robbery - This session focuses on street robbery and the consequences of such behaviors. The facilitator reads through the offender's diary entitled 'Mugging' and the victim's diary in which an old lady is mugged by a group of young people for her pension money.
- Burglary - This session focuses on burglary and the consequences of this kind of behavior. The facilitator reads through an article entitled 'Burglars Target Housing' whereby burglaries have been occurring within a council estate.
- Racially Aggravated Burglary - This session focuses on racially aggravated burglary and the consequences of such behaviors. The facilitator can read through the offender's diary and the victim's diary in which a shop keeper from Pakistan is racially abused and burgled.
- Joyriding - This session focuses on joyriding and the consequences of this kind of behavior. The facilitator reads through an article entitled 'Teenage Joyriders Kill Girl Aged 5 in Multiple Pile-Up' in which joyriders knock a little girl off the pavement in front of her house.
- Drunk and Disorderly - This session focuses on drunk and disorderly behaviors and the consequences of engaging in such activities. The facilitator reads through the newspaper article entitled 'Drunken Man Arrested for Indecent Behavior in Park' in which a drunk man indecently exposes himself.
- Substance Abuse - This session focuses on substance abuse and the consequences of engaging in such behaviors. The facilitator reads through the offender's diary entitled 'Substance Abuse' in which the young character Carl engages in substance abuse which leads him to attack a middle aged woman.
- Affray - This session focuses on affray and the consequences of this kind of behavior. The facilitator reads through the offender's diary and the victim's diary's which explain the story of two boys quarrelling in the street over a girl.
- Sexual Assault - This session focuses on sexual assault and the consequences of such extreme behaviors. The facilitator reads through an article entitled 'Boy (16) Arrested

for Sexual Assault' in which the boy commits a sexual assault against a girl that he has been targeting since he began school.

- Prostitution - This session focuses on prostitution and the consequences of engaging in this kind of activity. The facilitator reads through the offender's diary entitled 'Prostitution' in which Martine describes how she 'accidentally' became a prostitute.
- Arson - This session focuses on arson and the consequences of such behaviors. The facilitator reads through the newspaper article entitled 'Girl Caught in the Act of Burning Building' a young girl aged 15, who has had two previous convictions for assault and robbery, was caught on CCTV attempting to burn down the local community centre.
- Assault with an Offensive Weapon - This session focuses on assault with an offensive weapon and the consequences of engaging in this kind of activity. The facilitator reads through the offender's diary which describes how he attacks someone with a knife because this person was approaching a girl that he particularly likes.
- Gang Violence - This session focuses on gang violence and the consequences of engaging in such activity. The facilitator reads through the offender's diary which describes how Robbie has engaged in racist attacks against the Pakistani community in his area. The attacks, he feels, have been triggered by a girl from his community being raped by a Pakistani boy.
- Group Review - This session provides the young people with an opportunity to review the program and the learning that has taken place during the delivery of these sessions. The facilitator initially engages the young people in a brainstorming activity to identify what they think they have learned during the course. The young people are then required to consider their own futures and what these would look like with or without crime.
- Individual Review - In this final session the individual young person is provided with an opportunity to review the course on an individual basis. This session allows the facilitator and each young person to reflect upon the content of the course and the learning that may or may not have taken place.

## **The Result**

It is obtained by interview, focus group discussion, parents meeting parent's questioners, that Keeping Out of Trouble help them to prevent primary students from engaging in anti-social or criminal behavior by:

- Increasing their educational enjoyment and engagement (75%)
- Providing them with direction and hope for the future (66,5%)
- Working with young people to identify alternative activities that they can become involved with in their spare time (67%)
- Providing young people with an opportunity and appropriate forum to discuss personal and sensitive issues (80%)
- and encouraging them to talk through and problem-solve difficulties that they may have (64%)

## **Conclusion**

It is important to enable primary schools to provide interventions targeted at students who are, or are at risk of, committing criminal offences. Through developing students' awareness of victims, understanding of the consequences of their actions, exploration of sensitive and relevant topics, encouraging students to engage in self-reflection, developing ownership of their behavior and improving their problem-solving skills, primary students will develop the strategies, knowledge and understanding to support themselves in making informed choices about their behavior and future actions.

Keeping Out Troubles program has proven able to help them to prevent primary students from engaging in anti-social or criminal behavior, i.e: increasing their educational enjoyment and engagement; providing them with direction and hope for the future (66,5%); working with young people to identify alternative activities that they can become involved with in their spare time; providing young people with an opportunity and appropriate forum to discuss personal and sensitive issues; and encouraging them to talk through and problem-solve difficulties that they may have.

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