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**IN TODAY'S
ISSUE ...**

During the past week, a violent confrontation between two girls at school, followed by the reported suicide of one of the girls, led to something of a media frenzy around bullying in schools.

How bad is the scourge really, and how serious is it in your school?

A tool is now available online, which could help you look into the answers.

Heads Up

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TRACKING BULLYING IN OUR SCHOOLS

HOW BIG IS BULLYING IN OUR SCHOOLS?

Looking at what precipitated the media hype on bullying, it appears that the fact that girls were involved in the widely-publicised incident seemed to make the entire episode just that much worse. This is probably because, according to Reichert in *How to Raise a Boy*, boys are disproportionately affected as both victims and perpetrators of violence, and bullying has a special place in boys' lives. It is thus not something we can simply ignore.

At the outset, a point that needs to be made is that the confrontation which we saw on our screens last week was not a matter of bullying: it was a violent attack which can surely be categorised as nothing less than vicious assault, a criminal act in a category which is very different from bullying.

It so happens, though – entirely fortuitously one must assume – that a handbook on bullying in South African schools has just been published. *Bully-Proof: A Practical Guide for Parents, Teachers and South African Schools*, by Gail Dore, is said to tackle bullying head on – the culture, the mechanics and the outcomes are all brought into focus. While Reichert's book pulls together the international research and perspectives of boy-violence and bullying, the book by Dore brings a local

slant to the problem. The second big advantage of Dore's book is that, with the special permission of the publishers (Struik Lifestyle), *Parent24* is publishing a tool featured in the book which parents and schools alike can use to identify the problem and scope of bullying in their own environments. In addition, the questionnaire can be adapted to include questions that give you more specific information if you want it.

Please note: the questionnaire is confidential, and can be used without buying the book. It brings into focus a clear understanding of what bullying really is about rather than a barrage of accusations with names or details of those involved in bullying. It also distinguishes between what probably is bullying, and what isn't.

Having made provision for clarifying what bullying is, the questionnaire poses 12 critical questions, with multiple-option answers, couched in simple, straightforward and understandable language. It is suitable for use in both high and primary schools, and explains how data can be collated and analysed.

An advertorial on the book and entrée to a download of the questionnaire can be accessed via the following link:

https://www.news24.com/parent/child_7-12/development/this-useful-bullying-questionnaire-may-help-your-child-20160603

THE TERM NOW ENDING

On a more positive note, the strange first term of 2021 is about to come to an end. Though few are likely to categorise it as pleasant, you can surely look back on it with some satisfaction, and forward to the new term with positive anticipation.

Amid the frustrations of the past three months you have managed your institutions and your responsibilities in such a way that there has been no major school-based spike in viral infections; your staff members have demonstrated their capabilities and adaptability while at the same time learning more about online and distance teaching; you adapted your academic and extra-curricular programmes to the new conditions; and you managed, pretty successfully it appears, an electronic governing body election. Take a bow, all, and enjoy a well-earned break.

In the new term, though spectators remain largely unwelcome at school activities, at least your boys will be involved in a more-normal programme, particularly extra-murally. But as we are so regularly warned, your management of the school's activities will continue to demand special care and vigilance on your part. You can, though, take solace in the way you have demonstrated that you are fully up to the task. May it be a very good term, hopefully presaging a return to greater normality as it unfolds.