Pupils urged to report bullies, drugs

'Schools most dangerous place for pupils'

MHLABUNZIMA MEMELA

WHISTLE blowing should be encouraged at South African schools to protect children from sexual abuse, bullying and drug usage, according to Dale Horne, operations director of Whistle Blowers.

He believes that problems facing local schools should ring alarm bells for parents, teachers and school administration bodies about mounting dangers at educational institutions. He said there was an urgent need to introduce measures to protect children.

It is at schools that pupils are most likely to be assaulted or become victims of theft, according to a 2006 report by the South African Human Rights Commission.

In this study, more than 26% of pupil assaults and more than 52.4% of theft happened at schools as a result of bullying.

Horne cautioned that video footage of school beatings which circulated, as well as those of other incidents, indicated that many victims lived in fear.

A recent statistic from the Progress in International Reading Literacy study showed that the country had the highest bullying rate in the world for Grade 4 pupils. In 2012, a Unisa survey revealed that 57% of school children had been bullied at school, of which 35% involved teasing, while 26% included pushing, hitting and beatings.

A survey, which polled 2064 pupils between 13 and 21 years old and 1045 family members, revealed that 68% of pupils were worried about being physically assaulted or threatened with a weapon at school while 54% said pupils brought guns and knives to school.

The survey also highlighted the risk of cyber bullying, with 16% of participants admitting to being threatened or insulted via cell phones, email or social media.

The report said that in all cases investigated, details of wrongdoing were known by fellow pupils who chose to keep quiet. Horne said that, just as schools are the most likely places for children to first encounter violence, they are also the ideal places for children to learn life skills and good values.

“WHEN TALKING ABOUT CREATING A CULTURE OF HONESTY AND INTEGRITY AMONG OUR YOUNG PEOPLE, SCHOOL SHOULD BE THE PLACE WHERE WE START. JUST AS BUSINESSES HAVE ETHICS AND WHISTLE BLOWING FACILITIES IN PLACE AS PART OF GOOD GOVERNANCE, SO SHOULD SCHOOLS,” he said.

Horne said there was no reason why learners shouldn’t use whistle blowing for reporting wrongdoing.

promotions@deltavoice.co.za