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A still from the new anti-bullying cartoon series, which is aimed at helping children

Cartoons join battle to beat Ulster bullies

BY KATHRYN TORNEY

A NEW cartoon has hit our TV screens as part of the battle against young bullies.

The new character, Bakola, had its premiere at the Moviehouse on Belfast's Dublin Road yesterday and is part of the Media Initiative for Children programme.

The cartoon is part of a major new initiative to help young children in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland learn to oppose bullying while developing respect for themselves and others.

NIPPA, Northern Ireland's largest early years organisation, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Chil-

dren and Young People (NICCY) and the Ombudsman for Children (OCO) in the Republic of Ireland launched the programme to mark the beginning of Anti-Bullying Week.

As well as the introduction of Bakola, a media campaign, pre-school activities and resources have been introduced to help parents and teachers deal with bullying behaviour and support children who have been bullied, as well as children who are exhibiting bullying behaviour.

The media campaign is being shown during children's and adults' TV programmes on UTV, RTI and Channel 4.

Yesterday's event also included the launch of anti-bullying resources for primary and sec-

ondary schools by NICCY and the launch of cross border funding to roll the media initiative project out across 300 pre-schools in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Siobhan Fitzpatrick, chief executive of NIPPA, said: "Research results indicate a significant change in the behaviour of young children who have embarked on the media initiative programme which to date has dealt with sectarianism, racism and physical difference."

Barney McNeany, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, said: "This cartoon is a vital step in helping children understand at an early stage that bullying is wrong."