

Cartoon character educates tots about bullying

A NEW cartoon character is being used to help young children on both sides of the border to cope with bullying.

Bulala had its premier in Belfast to mark the beginning of Anti-Bullying Week and Universal Children's Day (November 20).

NIPPA, Northern Ireland's largest early years organisation, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) and the Organisation for Children (OCO) in the Republic of Ireland launched the programme.

As well as the introduction of Bulala, a media campaign, pre-school activities and resources will be 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 will be shown during children's and adults TV programmes on UTV, RTE and Channel 4.

The event also included the launch of anti-bullying resources for primary and secondary schools by NICCY and the launch of cross-border funding from the Special European Programme Body

(SEUPB) through the Cross Border Consortium, for 300 pre-schools in Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland.

The bullying message is new in a series of media messages, to help pre-school children deal with sectarianism, racism and physical discrimination. The messages were developed by NIPPA and the Peace Initiatives Institute (United States) supported by a group of experts from Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and based on extensive consultations with young children.

Over 1000 children have been involved in the programme to date and the result for the 2004 children study carried out by Prof Paul Connolly, Queen's University Belfast shows a very promising impact by the programme on the behaviour and attitudes of children, teachers and parents.

Stobhan 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 differences.

"The new message is part of NIPPA's ten year strategy to build strong, competent children who



James Adams, age 5, and Aidan Nolan, age 4, learn Bess Nee's Ploggrass in Newtownards play the drums with Tara Arista from Antigua as NIPPA launched a new Anti-Bullying programme.

can value and respect others who are different. I would like to take this opportunity to thank OCO, NICCY and SEUPB for investing in the Media Initiative and making possible the development of this anti-bullying message and the roll out of the programme to so

many more children."

Barney McNeany, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People, said: "Bullying has been in the news lately in a koefortie. This cartoon is a vital step in helping children understand at an early stage that bullying is

wrong and that they can take steps together to stop their friends suffering bullying. At the same time, we are jointly launching this cartoon, NICCY is publishing guidelines for primary and post-primary schools to help pupils and teachers help stop bullying."