



Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Guide for Primary Schools

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Introduction

About MVP

MVP is a peer-led leadership and bystander programme developed in the United States by educator, Dr Jackson Katz.

Harnessing the ‘power of peers’, it trains children and young people as mentors and equips them with the confidence, knowledge and skills to identify and speak out against bullying, abusive behaviour and violence. It aims to tackle the beliefs, attitudes and culture which can give the message that violence within and outside of relationships is acceptable. Mentors influence, motivate and empower all young people to play their role. Within the MVP programme, this is delivered through organised sessions with younger pupils/students but also more informally in the wider school environment. Ultimately MVP promotes the healthy social norms and culture which is known to prevent violence.

MVP was introduced to our area by the Violence Reduction Network (VRN), following an evidence-review of the same programme being effectively delivered in Scotland. Initially the VRN commissioned an experienced consultant to deliver the training to schools but more recently he also assisted in training a team of local school and VRN staff to become local trainers. This team of MVP trainers now deliver the training and provide on-going support other schools who wish to implement the programme.

MVP was initially launched locally in several secondary schools in 2021, although the programme is transferable to many other settings including further and higher education, youth groups, sport clubs and the workplace. In 2022-23 the programme was adapted for primary schools and in January 2023 the first ‘wave’ of 14 primary schools commenced their MVP journey.

You can access these links to find out more around Dr Katz’s work:

[Dr Katz TED talk](#)

[Dr Katz Podcast](#)

About this Guide

This guide is for secondary school staff from across Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland (LLR) who have:

- An interest in understanding more about the Mentors in Violence (MVP) programme and/or have;
- Successfully completed the MVP training and are planning to implement MVP in their school.

It can also be used as a reference guide for those schools who are currently delivering MVP.

The purpose of this guide is to:

- Summarise the Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) programme, its origins and how it is currently being implemented in our area.
- Outline the commitment required.
- Assist schools to prepare for the programme.
- Provide guidance on the selection of delivery staff and student/pupil mentors.
- Outline the training for both staff and mentors.
- Outline the preferred delivery model to assist schools to deliver the programme as intended (fidelity) so to maximise achievement of positive outcomes.
- Provide an outline and links to the various resources available including the lesson plans.
- Outline the on-going support offer for MVP schools.
- Provide schools with a summary of the anticipated outcomes and the activity needed to support evaluation.
- How to express an interest.

Preparing for MVP

Required Commitment

After considering the information outlined in this guide and/or attending a MVP on-line information session, schools will need to express an interest (see page 9) and complete the MVP Agreement (Appendix A). This captures the key commitments needed including:

- Commitment to the ethos of the programme.
- Agreement to prepare the school sufficiently.
- Commitment to attending training sessions and completing online e-learning.
- Agreement to co-operating with and participating in the evaluation of the programme.
- A willingness to attend the termly MVP Network meeting.

The Agreement also requires confirmed commitment from the Head/Deputy Head or equivalent.

[Link to appendix A](#)

On receipt of the MVP Agreement, a member of the VRN team will contact the school to confirm a place (and the date) of the next MVP training. In the event of the number of interested schools exceeding spaces available, a waiting list system will be used. In the unlikely event that demand far exceeds capacity, those schools who have pupils/students from communities who experience higher rates of violence will be prioritised.

Selecting and supporting MVP staff

The school will need to select suitable staff to undertake the training and deliver the programme. Some examples of the type of staff regularly selected for these roles are senior pastoral staff and leads for PHSE. The important thing is that staff are committed to delivering it as intended and have the skills and reach to empower and support mentors.

It is advised that a school selects a minimum of three senior staff to provide peer support and resilience.

It is these selected staff who will attend the training, select, train and support mentors, run the programme and become part of the on-going MVP Network. They will champion MVP internally and seek to embed the key element of active bystandership in the school's culture and everyday language – for example referencing to this at strategic and operational levels e.g. in relevant documents such as relationships and behaviour policies, the school prospectus and whole school events like assemblies.

MVP staff will need to continuously ensure that pupil safety is paramount and that mentors are not expected to intervene where it is not safe to do so (for example with people they do not know well or strangers). They will also ensure that pupils and students are fully aware that any safeguarding concerns that arise through MVP sessions will always be referred to a DSL trained member of staff.

Preparing for MVP

Staff training

Selected staff will be invited to attend the training which is delivered by the local MVP trainers and through an e-learning package. The dates for training will be provided in advance. Full attendance and completion of the e-learning package is required before MVP can be implemented. There is no cost for the training other than the need to release staff to attend the training and complete the e-learning.

The training is organised and delivered as followed:

- Three after school training sessions via Teams which last for one hour (3:30pm-4:30pm).
- An e-learning package which is provided after the first session and should be completed before the second and third sessions. Access to this package will be provided following the completion of the first session. It typically takes 3-4 hours to complete.
- The first session is an introduction to MVP. This includes a recorded input from Dr Jackson Katz to explain the history and context of the programme. The session will also cover how MVP has been successfully used in Scotland and more recently, in our local LLR schools.
- The second and third sessions are focused on reflections and learnings from the e-learning. The sessions also begin to prepare schools to successfully plan, recruit and launch the programme in their own settings including familiarisation with training for mentors and lessons plans.

A whole school approach

It is important that the MVP staff also have the buy in and supported from senior leads, governors and the wider school team. This is because MVP works best when adopted as part of a whole school approach to violence prevention.

Schools have found it beneficial if mentors, staff and governors (or equivalent) appoint MVP Champions to promote and monitor MVP across the whole school community.

Schools should use existing methods and channels of communication which can be used to promote MVP. These may include weekly newsletters, Head Teacher's reports, Facebook pages, text messages and year group or whole school gatherings. Schools may also wish to create an MVP Display Board, with photos of mentors with details of how to access and what topics MVP Mentors will cover.

Delivering the Programme

Selecting, training and supporting mentors

The MVP programme is delivered by older pupils to younger pupils, for example Year 6 pupils delivering to Year 4 pupils. Most schools use an annual cycle, co-terminus with the school year, to recruit a cohort of mentors and then run MVP throughout each school year.

The attention paid to the recruitment of suitable mentors is a really important success factor and this is repeatedly confirmed by local MVP schools. There are two recommended methods listed below although it may be that a combination of these methods is appropriate.

- **Targeted Approach.** Identifying pupils/students that would benefit from being considered to become an MVP mentor. Pupils and students who may have themselves been challenged or challenging in terms of lived experiences and behaviour often make great mentors and benefit greatly from being entrusted into a mentoring role. These young people often have credibility among their peers.
- **Universal Approach.** Advertise and promote the programme at year group assemblies and explain how pupils and students can become an MVP mentor. Set up follow up meetings with potential mentors to provide more detail and to answer any questions.

Schools may wish to ask potential mentors to submit a written/recorded/verbal application outlining their motivation and why they believe they would be a good mentor.

Training

There is a Mentor Training Guide which staff will receive following their training.

As a guide, most MVP schools have found that dedicating a full day to mentor training and preparation at an off-site location works well in order to equip and support them effectively.

MVP mentors will need time to familiarise themselves with the lesson scenarios and also to be given time to rehearse and practice how these are best delivered in their school. It is recommended that mentors practice and present sessions as part of a trio or group of four, this supports resilience from abstractions and supports the delivery of the content.

The responsibilities of MVP mentors are covered in their training. Alongside engaging in the training, reflecting on learning and preparation for session, they become active bystanders and support the development and maintenance of a positive school environment free from bullying, violence and harmful social norms.

It is vital that MVP mentors are fully aware of their responsibilities around safeguarding disclosures and know to pass on any concerns immediately and directly to a member of staff who is DSL trained. Pupils and students attending the MVP Sessions will need to be reminded of this too, the importance to not 'keep secrets' and passing on relevant information to staff members who are trained as DSL's.

Delivering the Programme

Delivery Method

MVP should be embedded in the curriculum offer and is best placed and relevant as part of the PHSE, Personal Development Education or Character Education offer.

The core way that MVP is delivered is through MVP mentors delivering sessions to younger pupils/students using the lesson plans provided. Whilst this can be delivered through various methods (for example classroom based, drama etc) the format and content of the lesson plans is an important element and should be followed. Sessions should be frequent enough to cover key topics and have a cumulative effect on learning and school culture. A minimum of three sessions per term is advised.

Each session should commence with reference to a 'Group Agreement' which encourages everyone taking part in the session being able to freely contribute to discussions without fear of reprisals or mockery. Mentors should then outline and introduce the chosen scenario and then present information to promote discussions. These will always include asking the class to identify 'Red Flags' which are points of concern that need to be identified and discussed along with an 'Agree – Disagree – Unsure' (ADU) activity where pupils have a chance to express their views and beliefs around a given scenario in a safe and controlled environment.

The wider roles of MVP mentors, as active bystanders in the school community, is also important as it supports the consolidation of learning in lessons and key messages about issues such as bullying and violence.

In one specialist school it is the staff who lead the sessions as this has been the most successful approach given the needs of their students.

In another school MVP scenarios are delivered by staff using the medium of drama where the children act out the scenarios.

Although not compulsory, some schools have found the involvement of partners from wider communities beneficial. The VRN team can assist in developing this partnership approach if required.

Session Plans and other resources

A series of session plans and training materials are specifically designed for primary schools including an 'Implementation Guide' and 'Playbook' along with mentor training slides and three introductory sessions which will support mentors into their role. The resources are accessible from the VRN website.

Primary sessions are designed to be age appropriate but school-based staff are best placed to make judgements and decisions about this and whether any setting specific amendments or refinements to the materials are necessary. We do not advocate using secondary materials in primary schools.

The password to access the resources is released to school leaders on completion of the training.

The full list of lesson scenario titles appears below:

Scenario Titles	Topic
Hate Speak	Racism
Glasses	Difference
Playtime	Teamwork
Rumours	Spreading gossip
Looking down	Mocking
Subject choices	Expectations
Friend in need	Online chat
Posting pictures	Sharing images
Online	Cyber bullying
Control	Unhealthy demands

Delivering the Programme

Development of session plans

The VRN retains oversight of session plans and will ensure the latest versions are readily accessible via the website. MVP schools are asked to use the approved lesson plans and resources as this will maximise the effectiveness of the programme and support evaluation.

However, all schools are encouraged to contribute to the on-going development of session plans to ensure they remain relevant to the needs of pupils/students. Ideas and sharing of good practice are a key part of the MVP Network meetings. The VRN team will take responsibility to collate any suggested changes and update the resources pages accordingly.

As a minimum, session plans will be checked and reviewed by the VRN team on an annual basis and in time for the new school year.

On-going support and development for staff

Following the training, schools will be allocated a MVP trainer to be a point of contact and support for implementation of the programme. The VRN's lead for MVP will also offer support where required.

Schools are then asked to attend the MVP Network meetings to enable on-going support from MVP trainers and peer support from other schools. These meetings provide an opportunity for refresher sessions and the sharing of any issues and good practice. As indicated above, it is also the main forum for informing the updating of lesson plans.

On-going support and recognition for mentors

School staff are best placed to offer their MVP mentors and mentees ongoing support and advice. In line with school safeguarding procedures, it is vital that all pupils/students know which adult/s they can turn to if they need help should they have concerns about their own or others safety and wellbeing and how help can be accessed.

MVP staff are advised to ensure that session material is viewed well in advance of delivery and that suitable support is available for students where subject matter may be 'triggering' for them.

An internal recognition process for MVP Mentors which celebrates their commitment to the programme is advised. The VRN can provide certificates, MVP mentor badges and merchandise to support this. There may also be opportunities for mentors to attend an annual celebratory event.

Several well-established MVP schools have invited experienced MVP Mentors to take an active role in the recruitment and training of 'new' mentors and this has proved both popular and successful.

Evaluation

The VRN invests in projects and interventions which have a clear Theory of Change (ToC) and can be evaluated so to ensure they are having their intended impact. The ToC for MVP can be found in Appendix B at the end of the guide.

Intended outcomes and impact

Whilst MVP is a violence prevention programme, if implemented well, it is likely to have a positive effect on several outcomes. The intended outcome and overall impact are outlined below:

Short Term

- Development of positive and trusting relationships between peers, their mentors and their staff across the school with improved understanding of the causes of problem behaviours for example individual, familial, school, peer, & contextual factors
- Increased awareness of consequences of anti-social behaviour and ability to identify and intervene with peers demonstrating anti-social behaviours
- Improved understanding of negative peer influences and family relationships
- Increased opportunities to develop leadership skills as mentors
- Mentors to develop their leadership skills, confidence and wellbeing
- Mentees aware of consequences of risk-taking behaviours and who they can approach in school for advice, support and guidance

Medium Term

- Reduction in positive attitudes towards anti-social behaviour
- Development of new skills to manage peers and own emotions and behaviours
- Development of new skills to manage negative peer influences
- Increased motivation towards ETE and development of employability skills
- Evidence of an increase and more effective active bystander behaviours and approaches on display around the school
- Schools to monitor the number of recorded and/or reported referrals or sharing of concerning behaviours
- Increased network of positive peers, trusted adults both within and outside of the school setting

Long Term

- Improved relationships with peers, staff, family and reduction in conflict at school
- Improvements in attendance and academic achievements
- Reduced incidents of school recorded incidents of anti-social based poor behaviour
- Sustained motivation to find/stay in full time education leading to employment
- Improved feelings of safety as expressed through student voice termly surveys

Evaluation/Expressing an interest

Evaluation

As outlined above, part of the MVP Agreement is that schools will engage in the monitoring and evaluation process. This is to enable us to continuously check that the programme is being delivered as intended (process evaluation) and achieving the intended outcomes (impact evaluation). This is of value to all MVP schools as it ensures resource is being deployed in the most effective way and pupils/students are benefiting from the programme.

The evaluation of MVP will include pre- and post-intervention surveys administered to mentors, pupils and teachers to assess the delivery of the programme and achievement of the outcomes listed in the Theory of Change. The VRN will share survey links (paper copies can also be made available) and a schedule for survey completion before the commencement of MVP.

In addition to this, the VRN may contact schools to carry out semi-structured interviews and/or focus groups with a small number of mentors, pupils or teachers to obtain additional insights into the delivery and outcomes of the programme.

If a sufficient number of responses are collected, each school can receive a summary of their pre- and post-survey and insights data.

Expressing an interest

Interested schools can contact the VRN through the following email address:

vrn@leics.pcc.pnn.gov.uk

www.violencereductionnetwork.co.uk

Schools can expect a response within 1 week and a follow-up call from our MVP lead within 3 weeks but usually sooner.

Appendices

Appendix A
MVP Agreement

Appendix B
Theory of Change

