

# ANTI-BULLYING POLICY (PRIMARY CYCLE)

## FOREWORD

We are committed to provide a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our pupils so they can learn in a relaxed and secure atmosphere. Bullying of any kind is unacceptable at our school. We are a TELLING school. This means that anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell an adult.

The Deputy Director and teaching staff take the lead in creating a climate in which pupils will report immediately any bullying incident in the expectation that it will be dealt with urgently and firmly. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed will pupils be able to fully benefit from the opportunities available at school.

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

## DEFINITION

Bullying can be:

- Emotional: being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist: racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual: unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic: because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber: All areas of internet, such as email & internet chat room misuse. Mobile threats by text messaging & calls. Misuse of associated technology, i.e. camera or video facilities

Bullying is conduct that meets all of the following criteria:

- Is directed at one or more pupils;
- Substantially interferes with educational opportunities, benefits, programs of one or more pupils;
- Adversely affects the ability of a pupil to participate in or the school's educational programs or activities by pupil in reasonable fear of physical harm or by causing emotional distress;

- Is based on a pupil's actual or perceived distinguishing characteristic (see above), or is based on an association with another person has or is perceived to have any of these characteristics.

Signs that might indicate if bullying is occurring: A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- Is frightened of walking to or from school
- Doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- Asks to be driven to school
- Changes their usual routine
- Is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- Begins to truant
- Becomes withdrawn, anxious or loses confidence
- Starts stammering
- Attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- Cries him/herself to sleep at night or has nightmares
- Feels ill in the morning
- Begins to do poorly in school work
- Comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- Has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
- Asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- Loses money continually
- Has unexplained cuts or bruises
- Comes home hungry (money / lunch has been stolen)
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Is bullying other children or siblings
- Stops eating
- Is afraid to say what's wrong
- Gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- Is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- Is nervous & jumpy when a message is received

Although the above list is most likely to apply to victims, changes in behaviour could indicate that someone has developed anti-social traits and may be bullying. Schools' teaching and locally recruited staff must be alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it in accordance with school policy.

## RESPONSE

### Reasons to respond to bullying

- Bullying hurts.
- No one deserves to be a victim of bullying.
- Everybody has the right to be treated with respect.
- Pupils who are bullying need to learn different ways of behaving.
- We have a responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

### School: Management, school psychologist and teaching staff

The following steps may be taken when dealing with incidents:

- If bullying is suspected or reported, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached.
- A clear account of the incident will be recorded and given to the Deputy Director.
- The Deputy Director will interview all concerned and the incident will be recorded.
- The school psychologist will be kept informed and if it persists the school psychologist will advise the appropriate teachers.
- Parents will be kept informed.
- Punitive measures will be used as appropriate and in consultation will all parties concerned.

### Pupils

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

- Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with the school psychologist or member of staff of their choice
- Reassuring the pupil
- Offering continuous support
- Restoring self-esteem and confidence

Pupils who have bullied will be helped by:

- Discussing what happened
- Discovering why the pupil became involved
- Establishing the wrongdoing and need to change
- Informing parents or guardians to help change the attitude of the pupil

The following disciplinary steps can be taken, in serious cases through a Discipline council:

- Official warnings to cease offending
- Detention
- Exclusion from certain areas of school premises
- Minor fixed-term exclusion
- Major fixed-term exclusion
- Permanent exclusion

Within the curriculum the school will raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through discussing the theme in class teaching, tutorial time, assemblies and various subject areas, as appropriate, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour.

*Note: Exclusions are used in exceptional cases only and when the nature of the behaviour is such that the school wishes to signal a strong degree of disapproval. Such behaviour includes physical violence to staff or pupils, verbal abuse to staff, persistent bullying of other pupils, consistently poor behaviour over a sustained period and persistent disruption of the learning of others.*

## Prevention

We will teach children to prevent bullying. As and when appropriate, these may include:

- Writing a set of school rules
- Signing a behaviour contract
- Writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- Reading stories about bullying or having them read to a class or assembly
- Making up role-plays
- Having discussions about bullying and why it matters

## Monitoring, evaluation and review

The school will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.