

Anti-Bullying Policy

The school has a central role in the children's social and moral development just as it does in its academic development. We strive to achieve standards of behaviour based on the principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. The individuality of each child is recognised while at the same time acknowledging the right of every child to an education in a safe and happy environment.

Bullying is defined as repeated aggression whether it is verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others. It is behaviour which is intentionally aggravating and intimidating. Examples of bullying include physical aggression, damage to property, intimidation, isolation, name-calling or taunting.

Bullying can take the form of child to child bullying, teacher to child, intra staff bullying, parent to staff and parent to child bullying (other than their own child).

Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness.

Isolated instances of aggressive behaviour will be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour and are not described as bullying. However, when behaviour is systematic and ongoing, it is bullying.

The school acknowledges that there are three parties involved in bullying - those who bully, those who are bullies and those who witness the bullying. The Staff will try to support and work with all parties involved.

Aims of the Policy

- To foster the school ethos of mutual and self respect
- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour
- To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventable approaches that can be used in response to reported incidences of bullying
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour
- To outline procedures for noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour
- To outline procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour

Some indications of Bullying may include

- Anxiety about attending school
- Deterioration in educational performance
- Pattern of physical illness
- Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress
- Possessions missing
- Increased requests for money
- Unexplained bruising
- Reluctance to talk about school

Procedures for noting and reporting incidents

- If parents have concerns about their child being bullied they should inform the class teacher
- Reports of bullying from parents or staff should be recorded. The teacher will investigate. If the teacher suspects that bullying has occurred the Principal will be informed.
- Parents of all those involved will be notified and given an opportunity to discuss the matter with the teacher
- It should be made clear that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly
- A record will be kept of how the matter was dealt with, actions taken, outcome etc. The succeeding class teacher will be informed by the present class teacher of any problems that existed.

Procedure to follow for investigating and dealing with a report of bullying

- The teacher will use a calm, unemotional, problem solving approach
- Incidents are best investigated outside of the classroom situation
- Teachers will speak separately to the children involved
- Members of a gang will be met separately and as a group
- Parents will be informed where it is determined that bullying has occurred. The school recognises that the parents have an important role to play in dealing with bullying
- Once bullying has ceased, the teacher will check with the child on a regular basis that no further difficulties have arisen

Actions taken to encourage an anti bullying environment

- The school has an annual "Friendship Week" (usually in January) in order to promote healthy friendships and to encourage respect and responsible behaviour, thus discouraging bullying type incidents.
- Appropriate behaviour will be encouraged and promoted regularly either incidentally, in SPHE lessons and/or at school assembly.
- A Friendship sign will be displayed in the playground where children can go if they want to join in games
- Children are encouraged to include others in their games
- The local Garda is invited to speak to all the pupils regularly about appropriate behaviour coming to/going home from school and when in the GAA pitch after school etc.
- Children are reminded regularly that we are all different and that we are allowed to be unique and be individuals.

Child to Child Bullying

Stage One

Unless the incident is of a very serious nature, it will be dealt with by the classroom teacher who will talk to the children involved. The teacher will record the incidents reported to him/her. Parents will be informed of incidents reported and recorded. (See procedures outlined above)

Should the action taken at this stage prove not to have resolved the issue, the staff will proceed to stage two.

Stage Two

The Principal will arrange to meet with the parents of the child who is seen to be bullying and separately with the parents of the victim of bullying. The children may be asked to attend part of these meetings. The child who is reported to be bullying will be monitored in all areas during the day. A short report will be recorded each day. The child will have an input into what is written each day. All positive behaviour will be noted. The purpose of this report is to focus as much as possible on the positive qualities and efforts of the child and to motivate the child to move away from negative behaviour. Co-operation of the parents is crucial for this approach to succeed. Regular meetings will be arranged between parents, teacher and Principal. The child who is the victim of bullying will also meet with the Principal and his/her parents. The aim of such a meeting will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bullying.

Stage Three

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and bullying continues a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the parents and Board of Management. The sanctions will aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the self esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension.

Bullying by Adults

In the case of **Intra-staff bullying**, the Board of Management will adopt the procedures outlines in the INTO publication "Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations" A copy of this book is available to view in the staff room

If a case of **Teacher- child bullying** occurs a complaint should first be raised with the teacher in question by the parent/guardian of the child and then if necessary referred to the Principal. Where it has not been possible to agree a resolution, the matter will be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management.

In the case of **Parent-Teacher** bullying, the Principal should be informed and if necessary the Board of Management

Parent-Child bullying: The complaint should be referred in the first instance to the child's class teacher and subsequently to the Principal if unresolved.

In the case of **Principal-Parent/Child** bullying, the matter should be raised with the Principal if possible or referred in writing to the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

This policy will be reviewed regularly but at least every two years.