

BALLYHEADA N.S.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It also affects those other children who watch, and less aggressive pupils can be drawn in by group pressure. Bullying is not an inevitable part of school life or a necessary part of growing up, and it rarely sorts itself out. It is clear that certain jokes, insults, intimidating/threatening behaviour, written abuse and violence are to be found in our society. No one person or group, whether staff or pupil, should have to accept this type of behaviour. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed, will a child best be able to benefit from the opportunities available at the School.

WHY IS AN ANTI-BULLYING POLICY NECESSARY?

The School believes that its pupils have the right to learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without the fear of being bullied.

All institutions, both large and small, contain some numbers of pupils with the potential for bullying behaviour. If a school is well disciplined and organised, it can minimise the occurrence of bullying. The School also has a clear policy on the promotion of good citizenship, where it is made clear that bullying is a form of anti-social behaviour.

It is WRONG and will not be tolerated in the School.

It is important therefore that the School has a clear written policy to promote this belief, where both pupils and parents/guardians are fully aware that any bullying complaints will be dealt with firmly, fairly and promptly.

WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour. It can be:-

- a). **PHYSICAL.**
A child can be physically punched, kicked, hit, spat at, etc.
- b). **VERBAL.**
Verbal abuse can take the form of name calling. It may be directed towards gender, ethnic origin, physical/social disability, or personality, etc.
- c). **EXCLUSION.**
A child can be bullied simply by being excluded from discussions/activities, with those they believe to be their friends.
- d). **DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OR THEFT.**
Pupils may have their property damaged or stolen. Physical threats may be used by the bully in order that the pupil hand over property to them.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED?

Remember that your silence is the bully's greatest weapon!

- a) Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is **WRONG!**
- b) Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- c) Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear.
- d) Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- e) Be assertive - shout "No!" Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- f) Fighting back may make things worse. If you decide to fight back, talk to a teacher or parent/guardian first.
- g) Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support.

The teachers will take you seriously and will deal with bullies in a way which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you.

IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE IS BEING BULLIED:-

- a) **TAKE ACTION!** Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.
- b) If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult **IMMEDIATELY**. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.
- c) Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.

AS A PARENT:-

- a) Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard.
- b) Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunch time was spent etc.
- c) If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the School **IMMEDIATELY**. Your complaint will be taken seriously and appropriate action will follow.
- d) It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse!
- e) Tell your own son or daughter there is nothing wrong with him or her. It is not his or her fault that they are being bullied.
- f) Make sure your child is fully aware of **the School policy** concerning bullying, and that they will not be afraid to ask for help.

AS A SCHOOL:-

- a) Organise the community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying, e.g. provide increased supervision at problem times.
- b) Use any opportunity to discuss aspects of bullying, and the appropriate way to behave towards each other, e.g. the RSE / Bí Folláin/Stay Safe programme.
- c) Deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints, involving parents where necessary.
- d) Review the School Policy and its degree of success.
- e) The School Staff will continue to have a firm but fair discipline structure. The rules should be few, simple and easy to understand.

- f) Not use teaching materials or equipment which give a bad or negative view of any group because of their ethnic origin, sex, etc.
- g) Encourage pupils to discuss how they get on with other people and to form positive attitudes towards other people. This includes a review of what friendship really is.
- h) Encourage pupils to treat everyone with respect.
- i) We will treat bullying as a serious offence and take every possible action to eradicate it from our School.

ACTION TO BE TAKEN WHEN BULLYING IS SUSPECTED.

If bullying is suspected we talk to the suspected victim, the suspected bully and any witnesses. If any degree of bullying is identified, the following action will be taken:-

Help, support and counselling will be given as is appropriate to both the victims and the bullies:

We support the **victims** in the following ways:

- by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, or another teacher if they choose.
- informing the victims' parents/guardians.
- by offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- arrange for them to be escorted to and from the School premises.
- by taking one or more of the seven disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

We also discipline, yet try to help the **bullies** in the following ways:

- by talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved.
- informing the bullies' parents/guardians.
- by continuing to work with the bullies in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- by taking one or more of the seven disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

DISCIPLINARY STEPS:

1. They will be warned officially to stop offending.
2. Informing the bullies' parents/guardians: In Journal or by phone.
3. They may be excluded from the School premises at break and/or lunch times.
4. We may arrange for them to be escorted to and from the School premises.
5. If they do not stop bullying they will be suspended for a minor fixed period (one or two days).
6. If they then carry on they will be recommended for suspension for a major fixed period (up to five days) or an indefinite period.
7. If they will not end such behaviour, they will be requested to appear before the Board of Management of the School with their parent(s)/guardians.

POLICY ON COUNTERACTING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

Definition of Bullying:

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.

Types of Bullying:

Pupil Behaviour:

Physical Aggression
Damage to Property
Extortion
Intimidation
Abusive Telephone Calls
Isolation
Name Calling
Slagging
Bullying of School Personnel

Teacher Behaviour:

A teacher may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:-

- Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing pupils, making negative comments about a pupil's appearance or background.
- Humiliating directly or indirectly, a pupil who is particularly academically weak or underachieving, or vulnerable in other ways.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidating nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.

Policy Aims:

- (1) To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- (2) To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- (3) To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.

Procedures for Noting and Reporting an incident of Bullying behaviour.

1. All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in “telling”. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
2. Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils will be referred immediately to the Principal.
3. Parents or guardians of victims and bullies will be informed by the Principal earlier rather than later of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
4. Non-teaching staff such as caretakers, cleaners are encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, to the teaching staff.
5. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should normally in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and if necessary, with the Principal.
6. Where cases, relating to either a pupil or a teacher remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the School’s Board of Management. (see Complaints Procedure)
7. If not solved at Board level, refer to local inspectorate.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by either pupils, staff or parents/guardians. Such incidents will be investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying behaviour. In any incident of bullying, the teacher will speak separately to the pupils involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews will be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

- (1) When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour, the teacher will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why, in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- (2) If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then the individuals are met as a group. Each member will be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said.
- (3) If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim’s point of view.
- (4) Each member of the group will be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from the other members after interview by the teacher.
- (5) Teachers who are investigating cases of bullying behaviour will keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.

- (6) In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, meet with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate to (a) explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy, (b) discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.
- (7) Separate follow-up meetings, with the two parties involved will be arranged, with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.

