

Anti-Bullying Policy

Nov 04.

INTRODUCTION STATEMENT

The Board of Management of Ss. Peter & Paul's Christian Brothers Primary School present the core elements of the school's policy document on Bullying Behaviour – Intervention and Management.

RATIONALE.

- Priority area, identified by staff, parents, Board of Management
- International research indicates that the existence of such policy is the best way to counter bullying behaviour in school.
- The existence of this policy will help to enhance the safety and learning environment of pupils.
- It safeguards working environment of staff.

RELATIONSHIP TO CHARACTERISTIC SPIRIT OF THE SCHOOL.

Our Mission Statement states:

Ss. Peter & Paul's C.B.S. is committed to providing for the pupils a safe, secure and healthy environment where they are encouraged to develop their potential to the best of their ability for their own good and the good of others.

Our anti-bullying policy seeks to reflect the above statement.

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, school personnel.
3. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
4. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
5. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
6. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
7. To work with and through the various local agencies (e.g. Social Services, N.E.P.S. etc) in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
8. To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti-bullying behaviour.
9. To provide children with opportunities to develop a positive sense of worth, as self-esteem is the single most important factor in determining behaviour.
10. To encourage adults (parents, guardians, teachers etc.) to act as positive role models for children in regard to how they relate to others.

DEFINITION.

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

N.B. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which cannot be condoned, cannot strictly be described as bullying. Only when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing can it be termed bullying.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS.

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness or refusal to attend school.
- Sudden deterioration in performance at school.
- Pattern of physical illness –headaches, stomach pains, etc.
- Unexplained changes in either mood or behaviour or both.
- Visible signs of stress – stammering, withdrawal, nightmares, insomnia, crying, loss of appetite, bed wetting.
- Out of character comments about other children.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money – stealing.
- Unexplained bruises or cuts or damage to clothing.
- Reluctance to say what is wrong.
- Begins to bully other children.
- Continuously making excuses to explain away any of the above.
- Isolation of students by peers e.g. classroom activities, playground.
- Attempted suicide (or successful).

Note: These signs do not necessarily mean that bullying is taking place, but when repeated or recurring in combination, they should always be investigated.

CHARACTERISTICS IN BULLYING BEHAVIOUR.

Schools need to recognise that any pupil can be a victim of, or perpetrator, of bullying behaviour.

THE VICTIM.

Any pupil, through no fault of their own, may be bullied.

It is common in the course of normal play for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils are particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different are those more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of becoming victims are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour is directly related to the pupil's continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

It is of note that some pupils can unwittingly behave in a very provocative manner which attracts bullying behaviour.

Likely Victims.

- Any child or adult.
- Children with poor self-image/lack of confidence.

- Children who attend Learning Support/Resource.
- Children who are particularly gifted.
- Children who consistently outperform others and particularly the bully/ies.

THE BULLY.

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour.

Pupils who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They can lack any sense of remorse; often they convince themselves that the victim deserved the treatment meted out.

Pupils who bully can also be attention seeking; often they set out to impress bystanders and enjoy the reaction their behaviour provokes. They tend to lack the ability to empathise. They are unaware or indifferent to the victim's feelings. Others seem to enjoy inflicting pain. It is of note that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are also bullied. They tend to be easily provoked and frequently provoke others.

The Bully.

- May be a victim themselves.
- May learn behaviour from an adult or siblings.
- May bully because they find it difficult to fit in with peers.
- May be under severe pressure to succeed.
- May be reacting to something else in the child's life – (New baby, sudden illness, etc.)
- May be attempting to deflect attention away from own poor self-image.

The school community – B.O.M./Teachers/Parents/Ancillary Workers and pupils must endeavour to raise the awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.

Awareness within the School.

- Creating a school climate which encourages children to report bullying.
- Raising awareness of bullying through programmes like Stay Safe, Sticks and Stones and Prim-Ed.
- Providing comprehensive supervision of pupils at all school activities.
- Developing clear procedures for reporting and investigating bullying.
- Providing a supportive environment for those affected by bullying behaviour.
- Liaising with relevant agencies in the local community.
- Circle Time.

BULLYING SITUATIONS.

Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground where hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many of the games which pupils play present possibilities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and harass another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. The playground is also the ideal setting for the 'bully gang'. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to physical fight. Ironically in some cases the victim may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration.

Toilets, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms and showers may be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical harassment. The behaviour of pupils in those areas need careful monitoring.

Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers. However, teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation.

Bullying may also occur between classes irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves. In the former situation the bullying goes on in the corridors and corners, while in the latter case the classroom is the arena for various forms of hurtful behaviour.

The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood, is often the scenes of bullying. Bullying also take place on the journey to and from school, whether the individuals are walking, on bicycles or on school buses.

The school community needs to be aware that mobile phones may be used as a bullying device.

TEACHER BEHAVIOUR.

The teacher behaviour of a bullying nature is most likely to take place in a classroom situation but not exclusively so. Such behaviour may, for example, also take place in the school playground, gymnasium or the sports field.

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 forms 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 outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways.
- Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise.
- Calling children by their surnames.

PROCEDURES FOR NOTING AND REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR.

1. All incidents of bullying (small or big) will be investigated and recorded by the teacher in the Classroom Discipline File.
2. This File is used to record incidents of indiscipline and/or significant change in mood or behaviour of pupils.
3. The school Principal/Deputy Principal will be informed of cases of bullying.
4. Parents/Guardians of victims and bullies will be informed by the Principal/Deputy Principal earlier rather than later of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter. They may then be in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
5. Parents/Guardians are advised to notify the class teacher in the first instance of any concerns in regard to bullying. Otherwise the Principal or Deputy Principal should be informed.
6. It will be made clear to pupils, through Anti-Bullying lessons in class, that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.

7. Individual teachers, in consultation with the appropriate staff member, will record and take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's policy and Code of Behaviour & Discipline. Reference should be made to the Class Discipline File.
8. Non-teaching staff, e.g. secretary and caretaker, are advised/requested to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the appropriate teaching member of staff/Principal/Deputy Principal.
9. School bus drivers, school traffic wardens and local shopkeepers, will be encouraged to play a positive role in assisting schools to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or the appropriate school authority.
10. In certain cases (e.g. serious bodily harm) it may be necessary to involve agencies such as G.P.'s, Gardaí, Health Boards, Inspectorate & Education Welfare Board.
11. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member this will normally, in the first instance, be raised with the staff member in question or, if necessary, with the Principal.
12. Where cases, relating either to a pupil or a teacher or non-teaching member of staff, remain unresolved at school level, the matter will be referred to the B.O.M.

POLICY WITH CODE OF BEHAVIOUR.

Individual teachers, in consultation with the appropriate staff member will record and take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's policy and Code of Behaviour & Discipline. Reference should be made to the Class Discipline File.

EPILOGUE.

The school's anti-bullying policy will be reviewed and up-dated when and if necessary.

Motto.

*'Act the Gentleman
— not the Hardman!'*