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Anti Bullying Policy

This anti-bullying policy operates in conjunction with the Code of Behaviour, which is used to address isolated instances of anti-social behaviour.

The school has a central role in the children's' social moral development just as it does in their academic development. In school, we work towards standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. The individuality of each child needs to be accommodated while at the same time acknowledging the right of every child to education in a disruption free environment.

Bullying is repeated verbal, psychological or physical aggression by an individual or group against others. The most common forms of bullying are aggressive physical contact, name-calling, intimidation, extortion, isolation and taunting. ***Bullying of any form is unacceptable and will not be tolerated.*** Parents are expected to cooperate with the school at all times in dealing with instances of bullying in accordance with the school's Anti-Bullying Policy. This policy is reinforced by the school's implementation of the "Stay Safe " and "Walk Tall" programmes.

Isolated instances of aggressive behaviour, which would be dealt with under the Code of Behaviour, would not be described as bullying. However when the 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 bullied and those who witness the bullying. Staff and teachers bear this in mind when dealing with bullying incidences and try to support and work with all parties involved.

Aims of the Policy

- To foster a 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 preventative 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

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. Teachers respect the need to support the esteem of each party involved in an incident. When a teacher becomes aware that a child is regularly involved in incidents he/she will start a record of such incidents. The purpose of this record is:

- To aid memory by recording details of the incident
- For clarity in assessment of the situation
- For planning and intervention

Parents of both parties will be informed of the incident and asked to have a discussion with their child at home. 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 themselves may be required to attend part or all of these meetings. The child should be able to see that parents and school are working together in his/her interest, so the co-operation of the parents is essential. Initially a review of behaviour will be carried out on a weekly basis, in a meeting with the Principal, teacher, parents and child. If progress is being made, longer intervals between meetings may be decided upon. The child who is the victim of bullying will also meet with the Principal and his/her parents. The aim of such a meeting(s) will be to address emotional needs and devise strategies for the child to deal with the bullying. This may involve reinforcing the programme being covered in class, or other strategies.

Stage 3

It is the duty of the school to provide a safe environment for all the children. Should the above interventions fail and the bullying continue, a programme of appropriate sanctions may be implemented by the Principal in consultation with the parents and Board of Management. Sanctions implemented aim to encourage positive behaviour and support the esteem of the child. These sanctions may include a period of suspension during which there will be ongoing consultation with the parents to decide on appropriate action(s) to be taken in the best interests of the child. Suspension for any period of time will be reported in writing by the Principal to the Chair of the Board of Management.

Bullying by Adults

In the case of **intra-staff bullying**, we will adopt the procedures outlined in Section C (c2) of the INTO booklet: 'Working Together: Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations'. A copy of this document is available for free download on the INTO website.

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

In the case of **Parent – Teacher** bullying, the Principal should be informed in the first instance, and if deemed necessary the Board of Management should subsequently be informed in writing.

In the case of **Parent/Visitor to the school – 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. Where it has not been possible to agree a framework for resolution, the matter should be referred in writing by both parties to the Board of Management for investigation.

Appendix A

Anti-Bullying Guidelines For Pupils, Teachers and Parents.

What is bullying?

Bullying can mean many different things. Bullying can take many forms, but its aim is always to make a person feel upset, intimidated or afraid.

These are some ways children and young people have described bullying:

- being called names
- being teased
- being pushed or pulled about
- being hit or attacked
- having your bag and other possessions taken and thrown around
- having rumours spread about you
- being ignored and left out
- being forced to hand over money or possessions.
- being cyber-bullied

Children get bullied

- at school – in the playground, in class or in the toilets
- on their way to and from school
- on the bus
- on the sports' field
- via technology

What does it feel like to be bullied?

Bullying hurts. It makes you scared and upset. It can make you so worried that you can't work well at school. Some children have told us they have skipped school to get away from it. It can make you feel that you are no good, that there is something wrong with you. Bullies can make you feel that it's your fault.

Why do some people bully?

There are a lot of reasons why some people bully. They may see it as a way of being popular, or making themselves look tough and in charge.

Some bullies do it to get attention or things, or to make other people afraid of them. Others might be jealous of the person they are bullying. They may be being bullied themselves.

Some bullies may not even understand how wrong their behaviour is and how it makes the person being bullied feel.

Why are some young people bullied?

Some young people are bullied for no particular reason, but sometimes it's because they are different in some way – perhaps it's the way they talk, their size or their name.

Sometimes young people are bullied because they look like they won't stand up for themselves.

Signs of bullying

As an adult, what are the signs I should look out for?

One of the most terrible effects of bullying is that the victim will very often deny that it's happening.

It's important that you don't put even more pressure on a child who may be bullied. Forcing someone to tell when he or she doesn't want to can itself be a form of bullying. **But there are certain signs to look out for if you have suspicions.**

These can include:

- A change in behaviour, such as suffering a lack of concentration and/or becoming withdrawn, excessively clingy, depressed, fearful, emotionally up and down
- Afraid and anxious when going to or coming from school
- Happy at the weekend but not during the week. A drop in performance in school.
- Physical signs: stomach aches, headaches, sleep difficulties, bedwetting, bruising
- Bingeing on food
- Unexplained bruises
- School performance steadily getting worse
- Being generally nervous, tense, unhappy
- Not explaining suspicious incidents
- Signs of being isolated from others of the same age
- Signs of regular interference with personal property, books, etc.
- Frequently asking for (or perhaps stealing) money.

Although these can also indicate problems other than bullying, it's important that you don't ignore them. Try to encourage the child to talk about what's going on, either to you or to another trusted adult.

How to approach the subject

- Broach the subject obliquely, giving the victim the option to talk about it or not
- Let them know that you are willing to listen at any time
- When they start to talk, listen carefully to what they have to say
- Once they begin to discuss the bullying, it may seem to be all they can talk about. Be patient and let them go on – it's better for them to let it all out than to bottle it up.

What to do next

- Don't over-react – victims need rational advice and help, not emotional overload
- Believe the victim. No one should have to put up with bullying.
- Ask victims if they have any suggestions about changing the situation
- Contact the school as soon as you are satisfied that the allegation is well founded
- Seek advice from an individual or a support group with experience in this area.

If you're being bullied what can you do?

Always remember – It's not your fault! It's the bully who has the problem, not you. Don't put up with bullying. Ask for help.

- **Believe in yourself.** Don't believe what the bully says of you. You know that's not true.
- **Say 'no' emphatically,** then walk away
- **Check out your body language.** Practise walking with confidence, standing straight with head held high and taking deep breaths.
- **Practice assertiveness.** Stand tall, look the bully in the eye, breathe steadily, speak calmly and firmly. This can help you to feel stronger, and also makes you look more confident.
- **Don't suffer in silence** – talk to someone you trust. It always helps to share a problem and to know that you are not alone. In schools and clubs, adults in charge have to pay attention to any complaints you make about being bullied.
- **If an adult is bullying you, then look for help from another adult you can trust.** You have rights, and you must insist on them. There are rules and procedures to deal with adult bullies at home, in school, in sport clubs and where people work. If you are too nervous, take along a friend.
- **Choose when to resist.** Sometimes the only sensible thing to do is to give in. Just get away and tell someone.
- **Try not to use violence.** It never solves anything, and usually just makes the situation worse.
- **Keep a diary.** Keep a record of details – who, where, when, how – as this will make it easier for you when you tell your story.
- **Have an answer ready.** Well chosen words can often make a bully look foolish, and that's the last thing they want!

- **Try not to show you are upset or angry** (even if you are). Reacting to the bully is only giving them what they want.
- **If there's a gang involved try to approach each person on their own**, rather than when they're together. If you talk straight to them, you'll probably find that they're not so confident without the protection of the group.
- **Ask your friends to support you.** Bullies don't like being outnumbered or isolated.
- **Try to make new friends** if the ones you have at the moment seem to enjoy trying to make you feel bad.
- **Change your routine.** Try to avoid being on your own in places where you are likely to be picked on.

Are you a bully?

- Have you ever hurt someone on purpose?
- Have you ever used your size or strength to win against someone weaker?
- Do you repeat rumours, even if you're not sure they're true?
- Have you ever tried to turn your friends against someone?
- Have you ever watched others bullying someone without doing anything to stop it?
- Have you ever used the excuse "I was only messing" when you knew you weren't "only messing"?

If answering these questions made you feel uneasy, maybe you should look at the way you treat other people.

Talking to someone always helps.

Choose a trusted friend or maybe one of the organisations listed in this booklet.

Remember that bullying is always wrong – feeling good shouldn't mean having to make someone else feel bad.

What should I do if my child is being bullied?

- Discuss bullying openly and regularly
- Thank the child for disclosing the problem
- Listen carefully
- Get all the details
- Write down the details
- Take action
- Make appropriate changes
- Seek professional help if necessary
- Bring your information to the relevant authority
- Discuss bullying openly and regularly with your children – don't wait for them to raise the issue.
- Thank the child for disclosing the problem. Confidence is the first casualty of bullying, so let your child know you believe them and will support them. Tell them it's not their fault.
- Listen carefully. Don't rush the story. Show you are concerned and sympathetic.
- Get all the details – what, who, when, where, etc.
- Write down the details and check the information with your child. This will be important with your child. This will be important for any meetings which may come later.
- Take action. Don't wait to see if it all blows over.
- Make appropriate changes that may help prevent your child being singled out and to build their confidence at the same time (e.g. new clothes, different hairstyle, etc.)
- Seek professional help if necessary (e.g. speech therapy, dental work, etc.)
- Bring your information to the relevant authority, and insist on getting an adequate response.

How do I approach the School?

- Make an appointment
- Speak to an appropriate teacher as soon as possible.
- Think about asking someone to accompany you for support.
- Don't exaggerate. Be honest and stick to the facts, as you understand them.
- Use your notes to make sure you don't forget to mention any important points.
- Recognise that you may be upset when you speak to the teacher.
- Accept that your child may not have told you all the facts, and that there may be another side to the story.
- Find out what action the school intends to take.
- Arrange for a follow-up meeting with the teacher to measure any improvement in the situation.
- If you are not happy with the teacher's response, make an appointment to see the principal.

How can I tell if my child is a bully?

Here are some indicators of bullying behaviour:

- a tendency to bully family members
- being a victim of bullying
- regularly witnessing bullying behaviour in their environment
- being frequently short-tempered and/or aggressive
- having past experiences which can still cause negative feelings
- bringing home items that you know weren't bought
- speaking of others in a negative way, perhaps on the basis of their appearance or beliefs of social status
- showing an interest in violent behaviour
- showing little sensitivity towards others
- having low self esteem
- being the subject of previous complaints or suggestions of bullying behaviour

Although these can also indicate problems other than bullying, it's important that you don't ignore them. Try to encourage the child to talk about what's going on, either to you or another trusted adult.

Directory of Support Services

Anti-Bullying Centre	(01) 6082573
CAB – Campaign Against Bullying	(01) 2887976
Childline Freephone	1800 666660
Irish Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy	(01) 2300061
ISPCC	(01) 6794944
The National Association for Parents Support (NAPS)	(0502) 20598
Parentline (Parents under Stress)	(01) 8733500
Samaritans (Callsave)	1850 609090
Sticks and Stones Theatre Company	(01) 2807065
Trinity College Dublin – Anti-Bullying Research Centre	(01) 6601011
Victim Support	1800 661771