



SCHOOL POLICY ON COUNTERING BULLYING

OBJECTIVE

To prevent bullying within the school.

Aims

1. For staff members to share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the Principal teacher, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school.
2. To promote qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.
3. To acknowledge the uniqueness of each individual as his/her worth as a human being.
4. To promote habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in group and community.
5. To co-operate and keep parents informed, when necessary, on procedures to improve relationships within the school community.
6. To promote a secure environment in which the members of the school community can enjoy school.
7. To promote positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among its members.
8. To disapprove of vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members.
9. To promote equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning.
10. To have the capacity to change in response to pupils' needs.
11. To promote, through aspects of the curriculum, positive and lasting influences towards forming the pupils' attitudes and values.
12. To take particular care of 'at risk' pupils and use its monitoring system to provide early intervention when/if necessary and responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.
13. To create an awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils and parents/guardians.

PROCEDURES FOR NOTING AND REPORTING AN INCIDENT OF BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

1. All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, should be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers.
2. Serious cases of bullying behaviour should be referred immediately to the Principal.
3. Parents or guardians of victims and bullies should 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 the position of helping and supporting their children before a crisis occurs.
4. Parents must be informed of the appropriate person to whom they can make their inquiries regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents.
5. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales but behaving responsibly.
6. Individual teachers in consultation with the appropriate staff member should record and take appropriate measure regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's policy and Code of Behaviour.
 - Non-teaching staff should be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mention to the appropriate teaching member of staff.
 - 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.
 - Where cases, relating to either a pupil or teacher remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the School's Board of Management.
 - If not resolved at Board level, refer to local inspectorate.

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PROCEDURES FOR INVESTIGATING AND DEALING WITH BULLYING

1. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
2. If a gang is involved, each member should be met individually and then the gang should be met as a group. Each member should 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 should be made clear to him/her/ how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
4. Each member of the gang should 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 bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. It may also be appropriate to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
6. In cases where it has been determined that bullying has taken place, meet with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate. Explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy. Discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.
7. Arrange follow-up meeting with the two parties involved separately.

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PROGRAMME FOR WORK WITH VICTIMS, BULLIES AND THEIR PEERS

Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those low in self-esteem opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Victims many need counselling and opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem and to develop their friendship and social skills whenever this is needed.

Research indicates that pupils identified as low achievers academically tend to be more frequently involved in bullying behaviour. The learning strategies applied within the school should allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

The promotion of relevant home/school/community links is important for the school in regard to countering bullying behaviour and should be encouraged as a normal part of the school's effective operation.

EVALUATION OF EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL POLICY ON BULLYING BEHAVIOUR

The anti-bullying policy should be subject to continuous review, in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. It should be included as an item on the agenda for staff meetings.

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