

St. Peter's Primary School

Anti- Bullying Policy

This policy is a collaborative exercise between teachers, B.O.M. and the parents. It was drawn up initially by the staff after which the draft copy was sent to parents to invite their comments and suggestions. Thereafter it was submitted to the B.O.M. for final consideration.

Rationale

As a result of the high incidence of bullying nationally and the psychological / physical effects it was decided to draw up a specific anti – bullying policy as distinct from a general code of discipline. In addition, while it is not an urgent issue in the school, it is a priority area identified by the staff.

Aims

- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teaching and non-teaching staff / pupils and parents / guardians.
- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying behaviour immediately upon it being reported.

Roles and Responsibility

The principal will coordinate and implement this policy

- The class teacher will assist by teaching the S.P.H.E. curriculum and promote positive behaviour.
- All teachers will be vigilant during the day whether on specific supervision in class, yard etc. or moving about the school.
- The principal will ensure that the policy is being implemented.
- The pupils are to be aware of bullying and parents to be supportive.

A definition of bullying

Bullying is **repeated** aggression, either verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. **Isolated** incidents of aggressive behaviour, which will not be condoned, cannot be described as bullying. It may manifest itself in many forms such as physical aggression, damage to property, extortion, intimidation, isolation, name-calling and 'slagging'. At the centre of our school's response to bullying is the continued development of a positive school climate, which focuses on respect for the individual. It is an important element of school policy to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.

Types of bullying include:

1. **Verbal bullying:** name-calling, put-downs, teasing, spreading rumours, abusive phone calls, ridiculing, etc

2. **Physical bullying:** includes threats of physical punishments, pushing, kicking, and damage to property, eg, defaced books, torn clothes, theft of property, extortion (money/favours) etc.
3. Sending abusive or offensive notes
4. **Intimidation**
5. **Threats- either physical or otherwise**
6. **Gesture bullying:** threatening gestures and glances.
7. **Exclusion:** cutting someone out of a group by isolating and ignoring him/her
8. **Cyber bullying:** The school regards the following as cyber bullying:
 - Text message bullying
 - Taking, sending and publication of photographs or video clips via mobile phone cameras
 - Phone call bullying
 - Email bullying
 - Chat room bullying
 - Bullying through instant messaging
 - Bullying via websites (social networking sites)

Bullies often have group support: Onlookers can be afraid to tell, or interfere because they fear retaliation.

Who is at risk?

There is no typical "bully" and no typical victim. To categorise could prejudice objectivity. However, children who are smaller or weaker than their peers are often victims, as are poor communicators, those with poor social skills, overweight, children who look different, not good at games, or members of a minority group.

Effects of bullying

Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self - confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of their self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour.

Signs and symptoms of bullying behaviour

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

1. Anxiety about travelling to and from school.
2. Fear of going out to yard.
3. Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, particularly among older children.
4. Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
5. Pattern of physical illness (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
6. Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. These may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
7. Visible signs of anxiety or distress - stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
8. Spontaneous out -of - character comments about either pupils or teachers.
9. Possessions missing or damaged.
10. Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
11. Reluctance and /or refusal to say what is troubling her.

12. Becoming isolated in the class.
13. Unexplained absences.
14. May begin to bully other smaller children.

Procedures to be followed:

1. All incidents of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be investigated and dealt with by the class teacher.
2. Those involved will be interviewed individually, then collectively.
3. Parents will be involved at an early stage.
4. Teachers will keep a written record of all reported incidents of bullying behaviour.
5. Teachers will inform the principal of all incidents of bullying.
6. Where there are repeated instances of bullying behaviour, the chairperson of the Board of Management will be informed and the parents will be requested in writing to attend at the school to meet with the chairperson and the Principal teacher.
7. If the bullying behaviour continues the board of management may suspend the child.
8. All communication will be recorded by the teacher/principal and all meetings will be held in the school.

Dealing with bullying behaviour in St. Peter's Primary School:

- The school recognises the need for teachers and parents / guardians to communicate and co-operate with each other to maintain good relationships within the school's community.
- The school recognises the responsibility of parents to share in the task of equipping their children with a range of skills that will help them in their dealings with others.
- The staff recognises the responsibility to act to preventing bullying / aggressive behaviour by any member of the school.
- The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and her worth as a human being. It therefore aims to foster self-respect and self-discipline in the child. Respect for and courtesy towards each other is encouraged and an awareness of the inter dependence of the group / school community is fostered.
- The school acknowledges the right of each child to enjoy school in a secure environment; it therefore promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding amongst the children both in school and out of school.
- The school aims to take particular care of all pupils and to respond to their needs, fears or anxieties.

What parents can do to help?

1. It is important to be realistic; it will not be possible for a single child to assert her rights if attacked by a gang. Children should be advised to get away and tell in situations such as this. Tell them that you would have done the same in such a situation.
2. Teaching your child to say "**no**" in a good assertive tone of voice and to carry herself in a confident way will help your child to deal with many situations. A child's self-image and body language may send out messages to potential bullies.
3. Children should be encouraged to talk about bullying and given an opportunity **to express their concerns**.
4. Children should be encouraged to tell class teacher.

5. Approach your child's teacher if the bullying is school related. It is important for you to understand that bullying in school can be difficult for teachers to detect because of the large numbers of children involved.
6. Teachers will appreciate bullying being brought to light. School bullying requires that parents and teachers work together for a resolution.
7. Children should be encouraged to be non-violent in resolving conflicts.
8. Keep an account of incidents to help you assess how serious the problem is. Many children, with a little help overcome this problem very quickly.
9. Should your child be involved in carrying out bullying, your support for the school is essential to the situation being resolved.

What if your child is a bully?

Give your child an opportunity to talk about anything that could be upsetting her. Don't punish bullying by being a bully yourself. Hitting and verbal attack will make the situation worse. Talk to your child and try to find out if there is a problem. Explain how the victim felt. Try to get the child to understand the victim's point of view. This would need to be done over time.

Bullies often suffer from poor self-esteem. Use every opportunity you can to praise good, considerate, helpful behaviour. Don't only look for negatives. Talk to the child's teacher and try to find out more about the child's school behaviour. Enlist the teacher's help in dealing with this. It is important that you both take the same approach.

Feel free to call in any time

In St. Peter's, co-operation and mutual understanding between parents and teachers, home and school we work together to lay firm foundation for the development of all children. We pride ourselves on working in union with the parents. If a parent is worried in any way with regard to bullying don't hesitate to contact the principal or any member of teaching staff.