

St. Teresa's Special School

Anti-Bullying Policy

Introduction

This policy is based on the DES guidelines "Countering Bullying Behaviour". It aims to produce a safe and caring environment in which all pupils can develop to their full potential.

It is recognised that bullying in schools is a particular problem. In the first instance, it is the Principal and following this the Board of Management that is responsible for dealing with bullying in school.

The school does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. Every effort will be made to educate our cohort of pupils as to the nature of bullying and the detrimental effects it has on others. We recognise that understanding of these concepts may be difficult for some of our pupils. The Board of Management is committed to ensuring that all members of the school community - pupils, staff, and parents are enabled to act effectively to deal with bullying. This policy guides action and organisation within the school for preventing and responding to bullying. This policy supports and is supported by the school's Code of Behaviour, as per the Education (Welfare) Act 2000

Definition of Bullying

Bullying may be defined as repeated acts of aggression, which may be verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

It is behaviour that is intentionally aggravating and intimidating, and occurs among children mainly in social environments such as schools.

Bullying can also take the form of racial abuse. With developments in modern technology, children can also be the victims of non-contact bullying, via mobile phones, the internet and other personal devices, isolation, name calling, writing notes, emailing or texting. As a form of aggressive behaviour it is usually hurtful and deliberate. It is persistent over time and makes it difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

Bullying of children can also be perpetrated by adults, including adults who are not related to the child. Bullying behaviour when perpetrated by adults, rather than children, could be regarded as physical or emotional abuse. However, other major forms of child abuse, such as neglect and sexual abuse, are not normally comprehended by the term 'bullying'.

It is important not to confuse bullying with isolated incidents of aggressive or antisocial behaviour, which must not be condoned. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it becomes bullying. All members of the school community have a role to play in the prevention of bullying. Any incidents of bullying should be brought to the attention of the Principal who will revert to the Chairperson of the Board of Management if required..

It should be noted that within this school the children exhibit a range of behaviours which are not to be confused with bullying. These include Self Injurious Behaviour, Challenging Behaviour, and other behaviours which are associated with the different conditions which the children present. The staff in the school have all been trained in Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Behaviour to deal with different behaviour scenarios. We also follow **Behaviours of concern (Behaviours that Challenge) Guidelines** which are put in place by the Psychologists and Positive Behaviour Support Teams for individual pupils . The programmes in place are monitored and reviewed on a regular basis and there is constant communication with the Behaviour Support Specialists when changes need to be made to programmes.

Staff must care for the children with respect, giving them the time and space during incidences of challenging behaviours. Staff must follow procedures and guidelines, seeking support where necessary.

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Board of Management

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervision is in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

School Staff

It is imperative that all staff in the school are aware of the school's anti-bullying policy and its guidelines for dealing with bullying. In situations where the incident is serious and where the behaviour is regarded as potentially abusive, the school shall consult the HSE Children and Family Social Services with a view to drawing up an appropriate response, such as a management plan.

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Bullying of staff by staff, will not be tolerated. Bullying of pupils by staff will not be tolerated. Pupil's self-esteem will be developed through celebrating individual differences, achievements, acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and manners and providing opportunities for success throughout the curriculum and school. Teachers will help pupils to develop empathy by discussing feelings and trying to put themselves in the place of others. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Teachers will be vigilant, respond sensitively and caringly to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying. and will investigate all such reports.

Teachers will discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with the pupils and use Behavioural management strategies which focus on problem solving and enable pupils to take an active role in finding a solution to problems.

The formal curriculum of the school will also be used to educate all pupils against bullying behaviour. Anti-bullying issues may be raised through the school curriculum/programmes, the SPHE programme, the Stay Safe programme, the arts and/or circle time.

Pupils

Pupils are expected to be tolerant and to have mutual respect for each other. Pupils should report incidents of bullying to their parents and teachers. In some cases adults will advocate for the pupils.

Parents

- Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.
- Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.
- Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring, and to be understanding towards others.
- Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others.
- Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong.
- Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with her/him.
- Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

Procedures for Reporting and Investigating Bullying Incidents

Bullying incidents should be reported to the class teacher and/or the supervising teacher for investigation. This reporting may be done by the pupil, parent, another pupil or another staff member. All reported incidents which are serious or are part of a pattern of behaviour will be noted, investigated and treated as circumstances require. Serious cases of bullying will be reported to the principal. Reports of bullying behaviour on the school bus will be investigated by the principal.

Serious instances of bullying behaviour should be reported to the HSE Children and Family Services

Responding to Bullying

Support will be provided for anyone who is bullied by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about their experience with their teacher or another staff member, along with continuing support when they feel they may need it. Staff will act as advocates for the pupils. Victims will be assured that the school community will help them and put monitoring procedures in place to safeguard them.

The school will inform parents/guardians of what has happened and of the measures being taken to address the issue.

Help and support will be sought for a bully. The school recognizes that our cohort of pupils may not always be aware that behaviour they are engaging in can be classified as bullying. Every effort is made to help pupils understand their behaviour and to see things from the victim's point of view. This will include speaking with them to discover why they became involved, informing their parents/guardians and continuing to work with them in order to modify their behaviour. Bullies may be excluded from the playground at lunch break for short periods or be subject to special monitoring procedures.

Incidents of bullying will be used as opportunities for re-enforcing the anti-bullying policy of the school. Follow-up meetings may be arranged to assess progress and/or restore relationships.

In dealing with bullying issues among staff the school adheres to procedures set out in the Ability West document *Dignity, Equality and Respect in the Workplace*. However, all grievance procedures concerning school staff will be addressed by the chairperson of the Board of Management as opposed to the reporting procedures outlined in above named document.

Signed 
Chairperson, Board of Management

Date: 27th September 2022

Signed 

Date 27th September 2022

