



Scoil Mhuire Murroe

Anti-Bullying Policy

September 2016

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ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

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

The school does not tolerate or condone bullying of any form or at any level of the school community. 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.

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.

Bullying may take many different forms such as physical aggression, damage to property, theft of property, extortion, intimidation, abusive telephone calls, 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.

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.

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 supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

School Staff

The school staff will foster an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance. Children’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 incidence of bullying and investigate all disclosed incidents of bullying.

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 religion programme, the Social Personal and Health Education programme, the Stay Safe Programme and 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.

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 or a friend. 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 way to and from school will be investigated by the Principal.

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 other teacher, along with continuing support when they feel they may need it. A victim 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 help them, encourage them to report further incidences if they occur.

Help and support will be sought for a bully. 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. The school code of behaviour applies to bullying. The bully will be helped to see things from the victim's point of view. Bullies may be excluded from the playground at lunch break or subject to special monitoring procedures and if bullying continues they may be suspended in accordance with procedure.

Any pupil who is involved in retaliation against a pupil who reports bullying will be subject to the school code of discipline. 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.

Signed _____

Chairperson, Board of Management

Appendix 1

Advice for Parents

Effects of Bullying

Bullying can affect pupils in many different ways. When pupils are bullied their lives may be made miserable. They may suffer injury. They may be unhappy about coming to school. They may lose self-confidence and self esteem, blaming themselves for the bullying. Some children may experience stressful symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches, nightmares or panic attacks. (This form of unhappiness is likely to affect their concentration and learning). If unchallenged other pupils can learn that bullying is a quick and effective way of getting what they want.

Indications of Bullying Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

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

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school - requesting parents to drive or collect them, changing route of travel, avoiding regular times for travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school, refusal to attend, mitching.
- Deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. headaches, stomach aches).
- Unexplained changes either in mood or behaviour. It may be particularly noticeable before returning to school after weekends or more especially after longer school holidays.
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress - stammering, withdrawing, nightmares, difficulty in sleeping, crying, not eating, vomiting, bedwetting.
- Spontaneous out-of-character comments about either pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money or stealing money.
- Unexplained bruising or cuts or damaged clothing.
- Reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling her/him.

Those signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If repeated or occurring in combination, these signs warrant investigation in order to establish what is affecting the child.

What to do if your child is being bullied

- Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
- Reassure her/him that you and the school will help her/him.
- Discuss with her/him what to do next - he may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it.
- Encourage her/him to tell his teacher.
- Contact the school as soon as possible.
- Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.

What to tell your child to do if someone they know is being bullied

- Tell a teacher (privately if necessary)
- Tell his/her parents - they will contact the school.
- Talk to the person who is being bullied - you may be able to help her/him.
- Reject bullying behaviour among your friends - tell them that it is wrong to bully.
- Help the bullied person to get away from the situation.
- Know and follow the school code of discipline.

What to tell your child to do if you are being bullied

- Tell the teacher immediately. Tell your parents when you get home.
- Help the teacher to investigate it. Tell a friend about what is happening.
- Tell the bully to stop.