

ST VINCENT DE PAUL CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL



ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

*"We are called to be the hands and face of Jesus
as we learn, love and grow together"*

School's own version

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What is bullying?

The Dfe states there is no legal definition of bullying. However, it's usually defined as behaviour that is:

- repeated
- intended to hurt someone either physically or emotionally
- often aimed at certain groups, for example because of race, religion, gender or sexual orientation

It takes many forms and can include:

- physical assault
- teasing
- making threats
- name calling
- cyberbullying - bullying via mobile phone or online (for example email, social networks and instant messenger)

In this document the terms "bullying" and "harassment" are considered to be interchangeable and equally as serious as each other.

In all cases of suspected bullying it is vital that staff act promptly and report incidents as soon as possible. Children have short memories and if they have witnessed an incident need to be questioned by the Headteacher or class teacher as soon as possible.

It is acknowledged that in a primary school many minor disagreements will take place between pupils on a daily basis. Our responsibility is to make sure that we can tell the difference between bullying and normal social interaction.

At St Vincent de Paul Catholic School we endeavour to:

- Develop positive relationships between all members of the community and a culture of respect and care.
- Identify at an early stage, pupils, who by their vulnerability may become victims of bullying.
- Give appropriate support to such pupils involving parents in any support plan.
- Identify at an early stage, any pupil whose behaviour suggests he/she may become a bully.
- Give appropriate support to such pupils involving parents in any support plan.
- Ensure that all members of staff are fully aware of vulnerable pupils and that appropriate strategies are in place to monitor and support these pupils.
- Work with appropriate outside agencies e.g. staff from the Behaviour Support Team, Educational Psychologists etc.
- Adhere to school guidelines to deal with incidents of bullying

General Principles

The ultimate objective of this policy is to make sure that children feel able to tell someone and understand that they will be listened to sensitively when they have problems. Pupils need to know how a teacher or a member of the support team will react to their complaints; that they will be dealt with sympathetically and fairly. The message that being bullied is not their fault must also be reinforced. Parents must also feel able to approach the Headteacher if they think there is a problem and feel confident that their concerns will be addressed.

1. All disclosures of or suspicions of bullying behaviour must be treated seriously and

- be recorded in the behaviour management sheets(kept by the Headteacher)
- be reported to the class teacher (if the incident was witnessed by or reported to a member of the support team)
- be brought to the attention of the Headteacher or, in their absence, their Deputy as soon as possible after the alleged incident.

The person responsible for this reporting (verbally) is the first witness (e.g. if an incident happens at lunchtime on the playground it will be an MSA or TA) whereas incidents which are noticed during lesson time will be reported by the class teacher or support assistant.

2. School Action

- Headteacher will consider the incident in the light of present circumstances and knowledge of previous incidents
- Pupils may be interviewed to gain more information about the incident
- Staff may be interviewed to gain more information about the incident
- Parents of the victim will be contacted if the Headteacher believes that an act of bullying has taken place and/or the incident is of a serious nature
- Parents of the child found to be showing bullying behaviour will be contacted and will be asked to support the school with any punitive action to be taken – loss of privileges etc
- ‘The way forward’ will be decided. This will include appropriate sanctions and a support programme for both the victim and the perpetrator
- In cases of proven repeated incidents of bullying the Headteacher will consult the LA/Diocese for advice regarding temporary and permanent exclusions.

3. Homophobic, Racist and Transgender Bullying

Schools face a particular challenge in responding to homophobic, racist and transgender language which can be used casually and without thought for the hurt it may cause. Staff will work to ensure that pupils are aware that such language is offensive and will not be tolerated.

Any pupil who fails to take heed of such direction will be challenged and appropriate sanctions will be implemented, including the recording of the incident. The school reinforces the stance taken by the leaders of all branches of the Christian faith and other faiths, that all forms of bullying are unacceptable.

Appendix 1

Techniques for preventing and responding to bullying (source Hertfordshire Anti-Bullying Toolkit)

The focus of all work on preventing bullying should be on making it clear that bullying behaviour is never acceptable.

Some of the approaches outlined below also seek to support the targets of bullying by encouraging them to develop assertiveness skills and coping behaviours. Others aim to help pupils who bully become more aware of the impact of their actions. However, these strategies on their own will not be enough to stop bullying and are not a replacement for effective whole school policies, reporting and monitoring mechanisms and confident and well-trained staff.

Peer support

This approach encompasses a range of activities which aim to make use of the knowledge and experience of pupils and to develop the skills, self-esteem and confidence of their peers.

It allows pupils to reject bullying behaviour, take responsibility for themselves and help them to empathise with others. The process benefits the personal development of peer supporters. Peer support is a valuable preventative strategy but is not appropriate for resolving bullying incidents and does not replace adult involvement in addressing bullying. For more information: www.ncb.org.uk/psf.

Different forms of peer support include:

Circle of friends

In this technique pupils are trained to befriend and support another pupil identified as vulnerable to bullying. It aims to provide emotional support to vulnerable pupils who may feel rejected by their peers and has proved effective in reducing aggressive behaviour as well as developing the social skills of pupils who are bullied.

With the agreement of the pupil who is being bullied, the class meets without them being present. The teacher encourages the class to speak about the pupil positively and to say how they would feel if they were isolated. A small group of peers volunteer to be in the Circle of Friends and agree ways to help them. As well as benefiting the one needing support, it provides all participants with a creative way of forming positive interpersonal relationships with their peers.

Peer listening

Pupils who provide support are trained in the skills of active listening. It can be particularly effective where there is a reluctance to share concerns with an adult.

Peer befriending and buddy systems

This can take the form of informal chats, but also extends to the use of 'buddy' systems, when the bullied pupil is befriended by another of the same age, with the aim of increasing their sense of belonging.

Peer mentoring

A supportive relationship between two pupils for a defined period where the mentor provides friendship combined with guidance, advice and encouragement.

Peer mediation

Peer mediators trained in conflict resolution techniques support other pupils. A written agreement is negotiated and signed by all participants. The mediators then follow up the outcome.

Peer advocacy

This involves encouraging pupils to identify the concerns of others around bullying and speak on their behalf in school, which can be done through the school council. This is an excellent way of ensuring the pupil voice influences anti-bullying policy development.

Circle time

Circle time can be used to raise pupil awareness and understanding of bullying and to discuss ways of dealing with it. As well as helping to develop listening skills and respect for others it provides a forum for subjects – such as the value of difference and our right to be different – to be discussed without drawing attention to excluded individuals. Used regularly, it can help encourage empathy and is a useful way of involving young people in the development of school policy as it allows their views to be heard and key messages to be reinforced.

Bully boxes

Pupils write down their concerns about bullying and post them in a box. To be effective, there must be a quick response to issues raised by the bully box.

Support Group or ‘No Blame Approach’

This emphasises a constructive solution achieved through a participative, non-punitive approach which involves the pupils themselves in resolving the problem. It stresses that it is bullying behaviour, rather than the person doing the bullying, that is not liked and that the main aim of the intervention is to stop the bullying.

The approach involves a teacher setting up a small support group containing both those responsible for the bullying and bystanders. The aim is to encourage all members of the group to take responsibility for their behaviour and its consequences, and to make a commitment to joint action, which will end the bullying and provide support for the bullied pupil. This approach can be effective in dealing with low-level bullying where the perpetrators may be unaware of the distress they are causing. It may be less effective in cases of more severe bullying and should only be used when the pupil being bullied is comfortable with the approach.

It is also not recommended where pupils have been subject to prejudice based bullying as having to repeat accusations may make the target pupil feel even more isolated from their peers. Schools need to say clearly that discrimination is always wrong and a ‘no blame’ approach may not be compatible with this message. For more information:

www.luckyduck.co.uk

Method of Shared Concern

A variation on the ‘no blame’ approach, this method is designed for situations where a group of pupils have been bullying one or more pupils on a regular basis for some time. It relies on individual conversations with pupils following a simple structured script. The pupils involved in bully behaviour are seen individually with the conversation conveying that the targeted pupil is unhappy. It concludes with each pupil agreeing to help the targeted pupil feel better and, with the adult’s help, identifying what they can do to improve the situation.

The targeted pupil is seen last. This conversation is primarily supportive, but may also involve supporting the pupil to think about anything they could do to help stop the bullying.

Restorative approaches

Restorative approaches aim to minimise the power imbalance that is present in bullying behaviour with all involved working together to resolve how to deal with the consequences. Stigma is avoided through naming the action as unacceptable rather than the pupil doing the bullying.

Because the approach focuses on the consequences for the other party, participants are encouraged to empathise with each other. Some pupils may respond better to restorative approaches because the focus is on finding an emotional and practical solution as opposed to punishment.

For more information:

www.transformingconflict.org/Restorative_Approaches_and_Practices.htm

Using Solution Focused Brief Therapy to support those who have been bullied

This approach focuses on solutions rather than problems and aims to encourage conversation around three main areas:

- past successes and exceptions to the problem
- existing skills and positive personal qualities
- the preferred future.

Discussion with the pupil begins with validating their self-esteem by looking at what they are good at. The focus is on enabling the pupil to utilise and develop their own ideas and highlighting successes rather than on giving advice.

Where bullying is sustained other solutions will also be required but this can be an effective way of supporting pupils who are bullied.

Assertiveness Strategies

This approach aims to support pupils in stating their intentions, wishes and/or feelings clearly and directly, particularly in situations in which they are feeling pressured to do something they do not want to do, or are being treated in a way they do not like.

Pupils should be given time to role-play a range of techniques and examine which responses seem most effective at deterring bullying. They should be encouraged to think about how they say things as well as what they say.

'Fogging'

This is an assertiveness technique that allows people to handle and cope with insults. It involves agreeing with the insults ("You're right, I do have big ears") so as to minimise their entertainment value for the perpetrator and to help the targeted pupil feel more in control of the situation.

Pupils are encouraged to think about how they respond (maintain eye contact, speak clearly and firmly) as well as what they say.

This is a technique that could usefully be taught to all pupils as it encourages a view of namecallers as less competent and admirable than their targets. However, it would probably be difficult for pupils with special educational needs, those who already lack confidence or are the objects of sustained attacks. It is also unlikely to be effective in tackling prejudice-based bullying unless the target is extremely confident and the school has a robust approach to promoting equalities of all kinds. For example, it may be ineffective in challenging homophobic bullying in a school in which lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships are rarely acknowledged as being as valid as heterosexual ones.

Curriculum approaches

This is one of the key ways of ensuring that addressing bullying, promoting equality and the inclusion of all members of the school community are seen as 'core business'. Both RE* and the PSHE and Citizenship curricula (including SEAL) offer opportunities for bullying and related issues such as difference, diversity, prejudice and stereotyping to be discussed. Many other subjects including Art, English, Geography and History present opportunities to focus on the development of beliefs, attitudes and values.

Hot spot map

Pupils are given a rough layout of the school mapped on paper and ask to colour in green safe spaces, amber for sometimes dangerous spaces and red for bullying hot spots. Comparing and discussing these will enable staff to gain a better insight into where bullying takes place and can help when deciding how to deploy of staff/peer supporters during breaks etc.

Working Together to Deal with Bullying

A leaflet for parents

Aims of this leaflet.

As a school community we have a shared responsibility for the well-being of all our children. We take this responsibility very seriously and wish to work together with you and your child to ensure that our school is a happy place for everyone. This leaflet is intended to help ensure that we have a shared understanding of what bullying is, of the approaches and strategies used by the school to respond to incidents of bullying and of the responsibilities of all concerned. We hope you find the leaflet informative and useful.

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Our approach

Our anti-bullying approaches are consistent with the values of a Catholic community and preparing children for life in an inclusive society. These include incorporating an acceptance and valuing of difference, the need to cope with difficult individuals, the role of forgiveness and ensuring acceptable standards of behaviour. We seek to create an environment that encourages and reinforces good behaviour.

What is bullying?

The following 3 dimensions help us to define bullying behaviour:

- Bullying is intentionally hurtful, physically, emotionally or mentally
- It is a repeated experience, rather than an isolated incident
- It involves an inequality of power, such that it is difficult to reject or deal with the hurtful behaviour

Examples of bullying may include:

- Verbal – mimicking, put-downs, humiliation, hurtful remarks, name-calling, racist remarks, posting nasty remarks on the internet
- Physical – hitting, pushing, hurting, disrupting work or play
- Indirect – spreading rumours, exclusion, getting others to be unkind, forwarding hurtful texts, photographs or messages
- Psychological – intimidation, threats, looks to make someone fearful

The School's role

The Headteacher has active oversight of the anti-bullying policy, procedures and strategies at the school.

The governor who is linked to child protection, safeguarding and anti-bullying is Geraldine Cartwright.

The school will:

- Create an environment where children feel safe to raise their concerns
- Listen and respond
- Teach pupils to understand what bullying is, to recognise their responsibilities towards others, to be resilient and reduce their own vulnerability. This includes key Christian messages such as respect and forgiveness
- Act to eliminate bad behaviour through education and sanctions and ensure that bullying behaviour stops
- Act to resolve incidents, strive to rebuild relationships and restore a safe environment for all
- Make staff aware of concerning behaviour and vulnerable children so they can provide appropriate support
- Inform parents of any significant incidents involving their children so they can support their child and assist in achieving resolution
- Record all significant incidents
- Provide follow up support to vulnerable individuals as appropriate

Parents/Carers: How you can support your child

Parents have an important role in encouraging their children to be positive members of the school community. We can only be fully effective in dealing with incidents with parents' support:

- Be aware that an anti-bullying policy is available from the office and on the website
- Inform the school of all incidents of bullying. Report single incidents to the class teacher or repeated hurtful behaviour to the head teacher
- Please do not approach other parents or children directly or spread stories about incidents
- If you think your child is the victim of bullying behaviour:
 - listen carefully and reassure her/him
 - explain the importance of telling an adult at school
 - work to raise her/his self esteem and self worth
 - help her/him to practise/implement any agreed strategy
- If your child has used bullying behaviour:
 - help her/him understand why their behaviour is unacceptable
 - support her/him in co-operating with the school
 - help her/him to practise/implement any agreed strategy
 - encourage and praise positive change
- In all cases parents can help their child to reconcile, repair relationships and put resolved incidents behind them.