



Dilseacht don Fhíor agus don Dúchas
Scoil Ailbhe Naofa

St. Ailbe's School

Policy Document

On

Dilseacht don Fhíor agus don Dúchas
Anti-Bullying

Scoil Ailbhe Naofa

Introduction:

The aim of St. Ailbe's School Anti-Bullying Policy is to ensure that pupils learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Bullying is an anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated in St. Ailbe's School. It is only when all issues of bullying are addressed will pupils be able to fully benefit from the opportunities available in our school.

Bullying behaviour, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. As such, it is an issue which must be positively and firmly addressed through a range of school-based measures and strategies through which all members of the school community are enabled to act effectively in dealing with this behaviour.

Bullying behaviour affects not only those immediately involved; it affects everyone in the classroom, in the school community and, ultimately, in the wider community. It is recognised internationally that bullying behaviour is not confined to pupils and schools alone; it is prevalent in society, in the workplace and in the home.

Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness and futility against the power being exercised by the bully; a high degree of collective vigilance is needed throughout the local community, the school, and other agencies and by parents if bullying behaviour is to be identified and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others.

Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which should not be condoned, can scarcely be described as bullying. However, when the behaviour is systematic and ongoing it is bullying.

Bullying is defined as deliberately hurtful behaviour, repeated over a period of time, where it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves. The three main types of bullying are:

Physical (hitting, kicking, theft)

Verbal (name calling, racist remarks)

Indirect (spreading rumours, excluding someone from social groups)

Types of Bullying

Pupil Behaviour

Physical Aggression:

This behaviour is more common among boys than girls. It includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While boys commonly engage in 'mess fights', they can often be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Damage to Property:

Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion:

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out) in the event of the victim not promptly "paying up". Victims' lunches, lunch vouchers or lunch money may be taken. Victims may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the bully. Sometimes, this tactic is used with the sole purpose of incriminating the victim.

Intimidation:

Some bullying behaviour takes the form of intimidation: it is based on the use of very aggressive body language with the voice being used as a weapon. Particularly upsetting to victims can be the so-called 'look' – a facial expression which conveys aggression and/or dislike.

Abusive Telephone Calls:

The abusive anonymous telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying. The anonymous phone call is very prevalent where teachers are the victims of bullying.

Isolation:

This form of bullying behaviour seems to be more prevalent among girls. A certain person is deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the victim on blackboards or in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the victim or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

Name Calling:

Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s), which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour; most name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance, e.g. 'big ears', size or clothes worn.

Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name calling. This tends to operate at two extremes; first, there are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be slow, or weak, academically. These pupils are often referred to as 'dummies', 'dopes' or 'donkeys'. At the

other extreme are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are labelled 'swots', 'brain-boxes', 'licks', 'teachers' pets', etc.

Slagging:

This behaviour usually refers to the good-natured banter which goes on as part of the normal social interchange between people. However, when this slagging extends to very personal remarks aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, then it assumes the form of bullying. It may take the form of suggestive remarks about a pupil's sexual orientation.

Bullying of School Personnel:-

Bullying of school personnel by means of physical assault, damage to property, verbal abuse, threats to people's families' etc.

Text, Internet Cyber Bullying:-

A relative new form of bullying has developed with the availability of mobile phones and widespread access to the internet. This is where people post details of students on various blogs Bebo or posting videos on U-Tube.

Teacher Behaviour:-

A teacher may, unwittingly or otherwise, engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour in a number of ways:-

Using sarcasm or other insulting or demeaning form of language when addressing pupils; making negative comments about a pupil's appearance or background;

Humiliating directly or indirectly, a pupil who is particularly academically weak or outstanding, or vulnerable in other ways;

Using any gesture or expression of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading physical contact or exercise;

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. Bullying may occasionally result in suicide. It is, therefore, important to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention is desirable.

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 him/her.

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

Characteristics in Bullying Behaviour

Schools need to recognise that any pupil can be a victim of, or perpetrator of bullying behaviour.

The Victim

Any pupil through no fault of their own may be bullied.

It is common in the course of normal play for pupils to tease or taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils are particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different are those more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of becoming victims are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner. The seriousness and duration of the bullying behaviour is directly related to the pupil's continuing response to the verbal, physical or psychological aggression.

It is of note that some pupils can unwittingly behave in a very provocative manner which attracts bullying behaviour.

The Bully

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour.

Pupils who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They can lack any sense of remorse; often they convince themselves that the victim deserves the treatment meted out.

Pupils who bully can also be attention seeking; often they set out to impress bystanders and enjoy the reaction their behaviour provokes. They tend to lack the ability to empathise. They are unaware or indifferent to the victim's feelings. Others seem to enjoy inflicting pain. It is of note that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are also bullied. They tend to be easily provoked and frequently provoke others.

Where does Bullying Happen?

(a) Pupil Behaviour

Bullying in schools frequently takes place in the playground. School playgrounds with hidden or obscured parts may provide an environment conducive to bullying. Many of the games which pupils play present possibilities for bullying because of their physical nature. It is relatively easy to single out and harass another pupil. The noise level masks much of what is going on. The playground provides the opportunity for older pupils to pick on younger pupils. The playground is also the ideal setting for the 'bully gang'. Continuing provocation may eventually lead to a physical fight, and ironically in some cases the victim may appear to be the aggressor because he/she finally gives vent to his/her frustration.

Toilets, cloakrooms, locker areas, changing rooms and showers may be the scene of verbal, psychological and physical harassment. The behaviour of pupils in those areas needs careful monitoring.

Bullying may also take place in class. It may occur subtly through glances, looks and sniggers but may take the more overt form of physical intimidation. It may also be exacerbated if a classroom atmosphere prevails whereby pupils are allowed to make derogatory comments about their classmates or other teachers. However, teachers need to be alert to the underlying reasons for such comments in case pupils are trying to disclose something which is disturbing them and thus needs further investigation.

Bullying may also, occur between classes irrespective of whether the class or the teacher moves. In the former situation the bullying goes on in the corridors and corners, while in the latter case the classroom is the arena for various forms of hurtful behaviour.

The area immediately outside the school, the local shops and local neighbourhood are often the scenes of bullying. Bullying also takes place on the journey to and from school, whether the individuals are walking, on bicycles or on school buses.

Teacher Behaviour

The teacher behaviour of a bullying nature as referred to in Section 3(b) is most likely to take place in a classroom situation but not exclusively so. Such behaviour may, for example, also take place in the school playground or the sportsfield.

Prevention of Bullying

International research clearly indicates the crucial importance of the existence of a School Policy, which includes specific measures to deal with bullying behaviour within the framework of an overall school Code of Behaviour and Discipline. It is considered that such a code, properly devised and implemented, can be the most influential measure in countering bullying behaviour in schools.

While it is recognised that home factors play a substantial role in the prevention of bullying, the role of the school in preventative work is crucial and should not be underestimated. School-based initiatives will either reinforce positive efforts or help counteract unsuccessful attempts of parents or guardians to control unacceptable behaviour.

Scope:

This policy will address bullying behaviour, harassment and sexual harassment. While the policy addresses issues related to bullying of students, this policy applies to teaching and other staff, parents/guardians, and others insofar as measures under the policy relate to them.

School management must comply with the requirements of the Employment Equality Acts 1998 and 2004 where a statutory Code of Practice applies to harassment and sexual harassment in the workplace.

This policy will apply at all school times, including break times, going to and from school, school trips and tours and extra curricular activities.

Rationale:

It is necessary to develop a whole school policy on Anti-Bullying as:

No school is immune from the problem of bullying

Under Section 23 of the Education (Welfare) Act 2000 schools are obliged to develop an Anti-Bullying Policy and specifies this policy “*should be an integral part of a written code of behaviour and discipline*”.

The Equal Status Acts, 2000 and 2004 prohibit discrimination on nine specific grounds: gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race and membership of the Travelling community.

Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures for Post-Primary Schools issued in 2004/2005 stresses the importance of having a policy in place to deal with bullying. It specifies that where this bullying incident is serious and where the bullying involved is regarded as potentially abusive the school should consult the health Service Executive with a view to drawing up an appropriate response.

Mission Statement:

- To provide quality education that meets the actual needs of young people in the best quality learning environment, creating an atmosphere of trust and confidence between students, parents, and staff which enhances self-esteem and self worth.
- To help all pupils reach their full potential in all areas of life, moral. Academic, social and vocational, recognising that there is no single standard that applies to all.
- To help pupils grow in confidence with a positive outlook on life and with the due consideration for others and for property.

Objectives:

The objectives of this policy are:

- 1 To create a school ethos which encourages students to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- 2 To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour with school management, teachers, students, parents/guardians.
- 3 To create a school ethos that acknowledges, accommodates and respects a diversity of students across the nine grounds covered by the equality legislation.
- 4 To ensure that the school's Social, Personal and Health Education programme raises awareness of the factors associated with bullying behaviour and develops appropriate knowledge, skills and behaviours.
- 5 To take practical actions to prevent incidents of bullying behaviour e.g. to ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- 6 To develop procedures for reporting and recording incidents of bullying behaviour.
- 7 To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- 8 To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour.
- 9 To work with, and through, the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.

Section A:

Identification of Actions to Prevent Bullying:

This policy stresses the need to prevent and not just control bullying. It is not sufficient to discipline the student involved and to give support to the victim. It is necessary to consider how the school can raise awareness of bullying (the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) programme has a key role in this regard) and what actions can be taken to prevent the behaviour in the school. It can't be over emphasised the value of techniques based on positive motivation and recognition in modifying behaviour.

Raising the awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils and parents/guardians

St. Ailbe's school must raise the awareness of bullying in its school community so that they are more alert to it and its harmful effects. **An inservice** staff day on the subject of bullying complemented by an awareness day for pupils **and parents/guardians. This will** help the development and adoption of an anti-bullying code. Such a code will give the parents/guardians of a pupil who is a victim the confidence to approach the school and will also send a clear message to the parents/guardians of a pupil who is engaged in bullying behaviour that they have a major responsibility in changing their child's behaviour. **The anti-bullying code is to** be included as part of the School Plan/**Policy Statement and is** available to all by way of a written Code of Behaviour and Discipline for the school.

It is of note that teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of circular initiatives. In English, there is a wide range of literature available which could be used to stimulate discussion. In Social Studies the interdependence of people in communities at local, national and international levels is stressed. In Geography and History references to colonisation and exploitation and the long line of dictators could be used to illustrate the negative aspect of power. The work could be extended into Art, Drama, Religious Education, Physical Education, etc. Co-operation and group enterprise can be promoted through team sports, clubs and societies in schools as well as through practical subjects. Sporting activities in particular can provide excellent opportunities for channelling and learning how to control aggression. Programmes such as Health Promotion in schools and various other social, health and media education programmes can further help to address the problem of bullying behaviour. **An awareness day on discipline in general is organised** and on countering bullying behaviour in particular.

Published material on bullying from various sources mentions the use of anonymous questionnaires to ascertain pupils' perceptions of bullying behaviour. **St Ailbe's School is** aware of the possible abuses that can arise from use of such questionnaires and extreme caution **is exercised when** they choose to use them. If used, questionnaires should not be used to identify the pupils involved but only to ascertain the extent and type of bullying, where it happens and the level of reporting, etc.

Comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation

All pupils but, in particular, senior pupils can be seen as a resource to assist in countering bullying. School councils, where applicable, and other school clubs and societies may also be of assistance.

Inclusion in the Curriculum

Involving Parents/Guardians and the Wider Community

Working with, and through, parents/guardians and various local agencies in countering bullying behaviour:

These may include:

- School bus drivers
- School traffic wardens
- Local shopkeepers/lunch venues
- Community youth workers
- Gardai
- Other local persons/groups involved with school students?

Section B:

Identify the steps to be taken in dealing with bullying incidents:

School

The following steps are taken when dealing with incidents:

If bullying is reported or suspected, the incident will be dealt with immediately by the member of staff who has been approached.

A clear account of the incident will be recorded and given to the Year Head and Principal.

The Principal has a right to fully investigate the incident.

All concerned will be interviewed and will record the incident.

Year heads and class tutors will be kept informed and if actions persist the appropriate subject teachers will be informed.

Parents will be informed.

Punitive measures, suspension and or expulsion, will be used as appropriate and in consultation with all parties concerned.

Pupils

Pupils who have been bullied will be supported by:

Offering an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with Year Head or member of staff of their choice.

Reassuring the pupil

Offering continuous support

Restoring self-esteem and confidence

Pupils who have bullied will be helped by:

Discussing what happened

Discovering why the pupil became involved

Establishing the wrong doing and need to change

Informing parents/guardians to help change the attitude of the pupil.

The following disciplinary steps can be taken:

Official warnings to cease offending

Detention

Exclusion from certain areas of school premises

Suspension

Expulsion.

Within the curriculum the school will raise awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in SPHE, Roll call each morning, assemblies and subject areas, as appropriate, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour.

Relevant existing policies are to be examined by reference to this Anti-Bullying Policy and any implications which it has for them are to be addressed.

The following policies may be among those considered:

Code of Behaviour

Child Protection

Internet Safety: Acceptable User Policy

Health and Safety

Responsibility and Delegation

Principal is responsible for leading the development, implementation and evaluation of this Anti-Bullying Policy and for ensuring that the policy is readily accessible to all members of the school community

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The Anti-bullying Plan must be reviewed on a regular (annually or immediately after an incident) basis, so that all members of the St. Ailbe's School community are aware of and remain committed to it. The Plan should reflect the current teaching and learning practices at the school. The review will provide opportunities for reflection and renewal.

Strategies to review the school Anti-bullying Plan include:

gathering and analysing all relevant information on the nature and extent of bullying, harassment and victimisation, including data that highlights patterns and trends such as suspension data

evaluating the extent to which the school's Anti-bullying Plan has been effective in addressing bullying, harassment and victimisation and promoting a safe and secure environment.

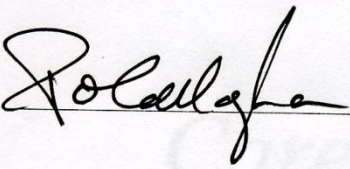
Schools should develop and implement a revised Plan, if necessary, following a review.

St. Ailbe's school will continue to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Plan on an ongoing basis.

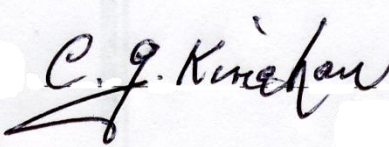
Coordinator: Mr. Paul O'Callaghan

This Policy was ratified by St. Ailbe's School Board of Management on Tuesday Jan 29th 2008.

Signed:



Mr. P. O'Callaghan (Principal)



Mr. C. Kinnihan (Chairman B.O.M.)

