

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY (Primary School)

Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that students learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Bullying is not simply two children falling out with each other. Bullying is anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable and will not be tolerated. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively. Anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell our staff.

We aim to tackle bullying quickly and thoroughly so that all students are able to fully benefit from the learning opportunities here at school.

What Is Bullying?

Bullying is the use of aggression with the intention of hurting another person, repeated over a period of time. Bullying results in pain and distress to the victim, who finds it difficult to defend him or herself.

Bullying can be:

- Emotional - being unfriendly, excluding, tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures)
- Physical - pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence
- Racist - racial taunts, graffiti, gestures
- Sexual - unwanted physical contact or sexually abusive comments
- Homophobic - because of, or focusing on the issue of sexuality
- Verbal - name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing
- Cyber - sending unwelcome or threatening messages through mobile phone texts or calls, email, or instant messaging, often anonymously.

Students who are being bullied may show changes in behaviour, such as becoming shy and nervous, feigning illness, taking unusual absences or clinging to adults. There may be evidence of changes in work patterns, lacking concentration or unwillingness to come to school (please see further examples in the list **Bullying: Signs and Symptoms** at the end of this policy). Students must be encouraged to report bullying in school. Any instances of cyber-bullying which have taken place **outside of** school but which are drawn to the school's attention will be dealt with **in** school.

The staff at ICS are alert to the signs of bullying and act promptly and firmly against it in accordance with this and our Behaviour and Sanctions Policy.

Working as a School to prevent Bullying

Within the curriculum the school will raise the awareness of the nature of bullying through inclusion in Circle-Time, assemblies and units of inquiry, as appropriate, in an attempt to eradicate such behaviour. Activities may include:

- signing a behaviour contract
- writing stories or poems or drawing pictures about bullying
- reading stories about bullying or having them read to a class or assembly
- teaching children to use conflict management strategies e.g. using “I” messages
- making up role-plays
- having discussions about bullying and why it matters

Implementation

The following steps will be taken when dealing with incidents:

- ✓ If bullying is suspected or reported, 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 Principal
- ✓ The Principal will meet all concerned and will record the incident
- ✓ All staff will be kept informed
- ✓ Parents will be kept informed
- ✓ Consequences will be used as appropriate and in consultation with all individuals concerned

Students

Students who **have been bullied** will be supported by:

- ✓ being offered an immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with a class teacher or member of staff of their choice
- ✓ being reassured
- ✓ being offered continuous support to restore their self-esteem and confidence

Some advice from children:

“The bully is the one with the problem”; “Don’t listen to them”; “Don’t give them a reason to bully you”; “Treat people how you want to be treated”; “Don’t give in”; “Remember, to have a friend, you have to be a friend!”

Students who **have bullied** will be helped by:

- ✓ discussing what happened
- ✓ discovering why the student became involved
- ✓ identifying the inappropriate behaviour
- ✓ identifying the affect / feelings of all parties involved
- ✓ create an action plan of positive preventative steps
- ✓ informing parents or guardians to help change the attitude of the student

Behaviour is driven by a need, which instigates a feeling which determines behaviour:

1. Connect with students before correcting them – empathise/acknowledge... “I can see you are feeling angry, I sometimes feel like that.”
2. Identify behaviours of both perpetrator and victim – physical, verbal, emotional – Ask open questions... “What happened?” repeat/clarify... “So ... happened like this / said this?”
3. Link to the need – try to get to the base need, could be like power and control, to be liked, to make someone feel as bad as they do, to be included (in a group / gang).

4. Explore feelings associated with need e.g. frustration, anger, loneliness, sadness, fear and move them on with strategies to make improvements – action plan.

Students who have bullied will go immediately to **Step 2 of our** Behaviour and Sanctions Policy, and the Primary School Principal will be informed. Parents will be informed at the first reported incident. If possible, the students will be reconciled. After the incident / incidents have been investigated and dealt with, each case will be monitored to ensure repeated bullying does not take place.

Bullying: Signs and Symptoms

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

- is frightened of walking to or from school
- doesn't want to go on the school / public bus
- asks to be driven to school
- changes their usual routine
- is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
- becomes withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
- starts stammering
- attempts or threatens suicide or runs away
- cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
- feels ill in the morning
- begins to do poorly in school work
- comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
- has possessions which are damaged or "go missing"
- asks for money or starts stealing money (to pay bully)
- has monies continually "lost"
- has unexplained cuts or bruises
- becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- is bullying other children or siblings
- stops eating
- is frightened to say what's wrong
- gives improbable excuses for any of the above
- is afraid to use the internet or mobile phone
- is nervous & jumpy when a cyber message is received.

Monitoring, evaluation and review

The school will review this policy annually and assess its implementation and effectiveness. The policy will be promoted and implemented throughout the school.

Statutory duty of schools

Principals have a legal duty under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998 to draw up procedures to prevent bullying among students and to bring these procedures to the attention of staff, parents and students.

*Updated by Lynne Horrobin and Michelle O'Connell: May 2010
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