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## **POLICY ON COUNTERING BULLYING BEHAVIOUR IN OUR SCHOOL**

### **“Treat each other person as you like to be treated”**

This motto is the cornerstone of behaviour in our school. We endeavour to maintain a school climate which encourages respect, tolerance, care, trust, consideration and support for each other. Teachers, parents and other adults in our school community try to act as good role-models for our children in our own behaviour.

#### **Aims:**

The aims of this anti-bullying policy are

- to raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour.
- to maintain a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- to ensure that procedures are in place for noting, reporting, investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- to incorporate into our school programme positive action towards countering bullying behaviour and towards raising self-esteem, self-worth and respect for each other.

#### **What is Bullying?**

Bullying is repeated intimidation and victimisation of an individual or a group by another or others.

Bullying causes pain and distress in the “victim” and can have serious long-term effects.

#### **Types of Bullying:**

##### **1. Verbal Bullying:**

Repeatedly and persistently-

- name-calling, and jeering.
- belittling someone due to her life-style, dress, appearance, manner, attitudes, opinions, family background etc.

##### **2. Exclusion Bullying:**

Repeatedly and persistently-

- excluding a child from games, conversations, activities etc.
- encouraging other children to exclude a child as above and controlling a group to such an extent that other children are made to feel left out.

### **3. Physical Bullying:**

Deliberately and persistently-

- pushing, kicking, hitting or otherwise physically abusing another pupil.
- using aggravating behaviour to irritate and/or frustrate another pupil.
- touching, damaging or taking another child's belongings without their permission.

### **4. Extortion Bullying:**

- Extorting goods or money from another child using threatening behaviour.

### **5. Gesture Bullying:**

Repeatedly and persistently-

- using aggressive or intimidating gestures to threaten or control another child's behaviour.
- indicating by eye contact, facial expressions or gestures that another child's actions or opinions are not acceptable or approved of and warrant derision.

### **6. E-Bullying / Cyber-bullying:**

- Sending or displaying threatening or upsetting messages or images.

## **Reporting and noting incidents of bullying behaviour:**

- All reports of bullying behaviour should be noted. Children are helped to distinguish between a minor one-off incident and an incident which is more serious and perhaps repeated.
- Reporting an incident must never be seen as "telling tales". Children are taught that telling is the right thing to do.
- If our policy is effective, a child who is being bullied should feel safe and secure enough to tell a responsible adult.
- Children who witness bullying behaviour should see it as their duty to report this to a responsible adult. By not reporting they are themselves colluding with the bully.
- Incidents should be reported to Class Teachers, Parents or the School Principal.

## **Investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour:**

**All incidents of bullying behaviour in school will be addressed.**

- When incidents of bullying behaviour occur in the classroom or in the school yard they will usually be dealt with by a Class Teacher or by the teacher on yard duty. Depending on the nature of the incident, the Principal may also be involved at this stage.
- Minor incidents may not necessarily involve direct intervention from a teacher – advice may suffice. More serious incidents will be investigated and dealt with.
- Repeated and serious incidents will always be brought to the attention of the School Principal.
- When an incident of bullying behaviour is considered to be serious, the parents of the victim(s) and of the perpetrator(s) will be informed. Parents may be asked to come to the school to discuss the matter.
- Some bullying behaviour can be very insidious and very difficult to detect and name. This emphasizes the need for children to tell, for adults to listen and for investigation when names are repeatedly mentioned.

**Procedure for investigating and dealing with incidents:**

The school makes every effort to resolve bullying issues in co-operation with parents. Incidents of bullying behaviour are dealt with according to the individual circumstances of each incident. As a general rule the following procedure will apply:

- Listen to the victim’s account of the alleged bullying.
- Attend to what is being said, keeping an open mind and not making judgments.
- Reassure the child that she was right to tell you.
- Speak to all those who are involved or have knowledge pertaining to the incident.
- Listen to each side of the story. Speak to those involved separately or together, as appropriate.
- Make written notes, as necessary, to aid recall and reporting.
- Discuss the bullying behaviour with the perpetrator(s). It is the behaviour that is criticized, not the child personally.
- An agreement must be reached where the bullying behaviour will stop immediately.
- The perpetrator must agree a change in her attitude and behaviour in the future.

- In serious incidents a signed contract pertaining to future behaviour may be required from the perpetrator in co-operation with her parents. The consequences of not keeping such an agreement will be decided on an individual basis.
- The perpetrator must apologise to the victim.
- Reconcile the pupils involved, if possible and try to assist in restoring harmony between them.
- Monitor the situation by noting the future interaction between these children. Arrange to speak to the victim and separately with the perpetrator to see how the situation has improved.

### **Positive action towards countering bullying behaviour in our school:**

The best way to counter bullying behaviour in our school is through a programme of positive action which fosters an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.

The following school activities contribute to this ethos:

- Religion Programme
- S.P.H.E. (Social, Personal and Health Education) including the Stay Safe Programme.
- Circle Time / regular class discussions / creating a class charter etc.
- Friendship Week: This includes discussions, assembly, drama and role-play, anti-bullying posters and art activities, songs, poems, workshops, visit by theatre group e.g. Sticks and Stones.
- Parental involvement and support for school policy. Reading at home with children the booklet “Stop it! Steps to address bullying.”

### **Bullying in the Workplace:**

While the main focus of this policy is on our pupils, the policy is also applicable to the adults in our school community – staff, parents and Board of Management members. Bullying or aggressive behaviour, verbal or physical, perpetrated by an adult in our school community, is equally unacceptable. In such an instance it is open to the victim to raise the matter with the School Principal and, if necessary, with the Board of Management. The Board of Management in turn will follow the procedures agreed between CPSMA and the INTO.

### **Conclusion:**

It is our hope that the friendship, respect and tolerance which is fostered among the children and adults in our school community, will also influence the wider community around us.

*September 2007*