

Policy on Bullying Behaviour.

Rationale

The anti-bullying policy, as presented, operates in conjunction with the Code of Behaviour, which is used to address breaches of the school expected standards of discipline and isolated instances of unacceptable behaviour. This policy replaces the previous policy adopted by the Board of Management in February 2010.

Relationship with the Characteristic Spirit of the School

Our school plays a central role in the children's social, emotional, spiritual and moral development which is viewed as of equal importance to that of their academic development. In Scoil Íosa one of our core aims is to work towards acceptable standards of behaviour based on the basic principles of honesty, respect, consideration and responsibility. The right of every child to an appropriate education in a disruption free environment is of paramount importance. At Scoil Íosa we nurture, develop and respect individual differences inherent in each child, in line with the all encompassing core values consistent with the Catholic ethos of the school. In achieving this, the staff, parents and Board of Management of the school endeavour to work towards making Scoil Íosa a bully free zone. Children are kept aware of the issue of bullying and of their responsibility to contribute to achieving this status, through school assemblies, informal classroom discussions and as part of the SPHE programme.

General Aims.

- (1) To cultivate a positive school climate, which focuses on respect for all individuals and their property, in line with the ethos of our school.
- (2) To highlight among all sections of the school community that any form of bullying is unacceptable.
- (3) To encourage children to pass on any information they may have on bullying behaviour, stressing that this is the correct thing to do.
- (4) To supervise all areas of school activity in as far as possible so as to minimise the opportunities for bullying.
- (5) To involve the parents in dealing with any serious bullying behaviour or issues that may arise.

Policy Aims

- (1) To foster and promote a school ethos of mutual and self-respect
- (2) To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour
- (3) To outline, promote and raise awareness of preventative approaches that can be used in response to reported incidences of bullying

- (4) To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour
- (5) To outline procedures for noting and reporting instances of bullying behaviour
- (6) To outline procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour

Definition of Bullying:

Bullying is defined as any repeated act of aggression or abuse, whether physical, verbal or psychological by an individual or group against others. Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, while not to be condoned, cannot always be described as bullying. Bullying can take on many forms, and is sometimes very difficult to detect. Those being bullied suffer needlessly in a variety of ways. It is important that all groups in the school community, pupils, staff, parents and Board of Management co-operate together in dealing with any bullying behaviour that may arise. Just as bullying is unacceptable where pupils are concerned, it is equally unacceptable in the case of teachers or members of the Board of Management.

Among the common forms of bullying are

- Physical (beating, kicking etc.),
- Intimidation & Threatening behaviour.
- Verbal (name calling, belittling, teasing, taunting etc.),
- Exclusion (left out of games, groups, activities)
- Damage to or theft of property of others.

Possible Symptoms of Bullying

Children who are being bullied may display one or more of the following symptoms:

- Anxiety about attending school
- Deterioration in educational performance
- Pattern of physical illness
- Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour
- Visible signs of anxiety or distress
- Possessions missing
- Increased requests for money
- Unexplained bruising
- Reluctance to say what is troubling him/her

General Approaches for investigating and dealing with bullying:

- ✓ All concerned should adopt a calm, unemotional, problem solving approach at all times

- ✓ Incidents are best investigated outside of the classroom situation
- ✓ Teachers should speak separately to the children involved
- ✓ Members of a gang should be met separately and as a group
- ✓ Once the bullying of the child appears to have ceased, the teacher should monitor and check with the child on a regular basis and be certain that no further difficulties have arisen

Implementing the Policy.

- In class, the children are constantly made aware of the unacceptable nature of bullying, and encouraged to report any incidents. This is achieved on a formal basis, as part of SPHE lessons and on an informal basis during discussions within the class context. It is school policy that reference should be made to bullying at every assembly and that specific elements of school policy will be outlined
- All reports of bullying will be noted, investigated and dealt with by the teachers, always in an appropriately responsive manner. Reports of bullying either from parents or staff members should be recorded. It should be made clear at all times that children reporting incidents of bullying are acting responsibly. If parents have concerns about their child being bullied they should inform the class teacher as a matter of policy.
- The teacher should investigate any allegations of bullying and should endeavour to establish whether the incident is one of bullying. Isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour are not defined as bullying and should be dealt with within the provisions and procedures outlined in the school policy on behaviour and discipline. If it is suspected that bullying has indeed occurred, this being systematic and ongoing, the Principal/Deputy Principal should be informed as soon as possible to make them aware of the situation. The teacher should deal with the issue initially by talking to those involved and informing them of their responsibilities as a pupil of the school. Where the bullying is deemed as being serious and where the teacher feels that it is necessary, the Principal and Deputy Principal should be directly involved.
- In such cases, either the Principal or the Deputy Principal will discuss the problem with those involved in a calm manner. Depending on the initial outcome it may be necessary to inform both the parents of the victims and of those responsible for the bullying behaviour at this stage. Should this be the case, the matter will be discussed with the parents at a mutually convenient time primarily to clarify the school policy in this area and to make all concerned aware of their

responsibilities. The Principal and Deputy Principal will be present at this meeting. The situation will be monitored for further developments or for evidence of bullying continuing to establish whether this intervention has been successful. Further meetings with the parents of both the victim and the alleged bully may be necessary. In this eventuality it may be necessary for the child to be present when the matter is being discussed with the parents. A written record should be kept of how the matter was managed and of the outcome of the intervention. Any such record must be kept on file and succeeding teachers of the children involved will be made aware of its content. The aim of this being to ensure that any repetition of the bullying behaviour should be avoided. Follow up discussions may take place with the parties to inform of progress.

- Any cases unresolved at school level, will be referred to the School's Board of Management whose duty it is to provide a safe and non threatening environment for all children. Having reviewed the case with the Principal and Deputy Principal, the Chairperson of the Board of Management will meet with the parents of all parties in a final attempt to find a solution to the problem. The Board of Management may invoke sanctions in line with the school discipline policy. This may include a period of suspension while deciding with the parents on an appropriate course of action to be taken in the interest of all children.

General Points.

- (1) By developing social skills and increasing self esteem among the pupils, the school hopes to minimise the risk of being bullied.
- (2) By developing an anti bullying climate, which can be done by discussing several relevant issues, the school hopes to foster a strong sense of responsibility and good social behaviour among all pupils.
- (3) By encouraging all to treat others as we would like them to treat us, the school hopes to develop good, positive, social values.
- (4) Suggestions on the general area of bullying from any of the parties in the school community would be welcome, and looked at respectfully by the school authorities.

Policy Revised and Updated. February 2012.

Adopted by the Board of Management on : 25/10/2012 (Date)

Signed: 
Chairperson BOM


Principal.