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Anti-Bullying Policy 2017-2018

Introduction

Having consulted the BOM and studied Circular 20/90 of DES the following policy was formulated and then reviewed in conjunction with support from SDP.

New Anti-Bullying guidelines must take cognisance of cyber bullying. Any case of bullying must be mandatorily reported to the BOM. In line with new anti-bullying procedures, this policy was reviewed by staff of Taunagh N.S.

Rationale

In order to encourage and promote a sense of responsibility within each child and the school generally we aim of having a code of conduct which is firm but tempered with kindness. We adopt a positive approach to the question of behaviour in the school.

Ethos

In Taunagh N.S. pupils and staff are cherished and are to be treated with respect and care. This policy has been formulated to ensure that this is upheld.

Aims

- To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
- To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
- To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
- To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
- To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
- To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti-bullying behaviour.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying can be defined as repeated aggression by an individual or group against others. This aggression may be physical, emotional, social, verbal or via internet.

Behaviour of this type, which occurs in isolated incidents, cannot be described as bullying. Although this behaviour may not be described as bullying it will be dealt with in the correct manner and by no means be accepted.

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 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.

Internet:

A single posting on a social media site which can go viral may be perceived as bullying. Online gaming and forums can also result in unwanted messages.

Texting:

Bullying can occur in the form of texting. Pupils can be left out and be the only one not included in texts. The use of mobile phones is forbidden during school hours.

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), who 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.

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;

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 of Bullying Behaviour

The staff of Taunagh NS recognises 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.

Pupils Who 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

Preventative Measures Against Bullying

Links to Other Policies

Our anti-bullying work is closely linked to our code of behaviour. Each child and family has a "Pupils Charter." This encourages respect and fosters responsibility for one's behaviour.

Education

Through our Social, Personal and Health Education programme self-esteem and respect for others is fostered. The following methods are included:

- Circle Time
- Relationships and Sexuality Programmes
- Stay Safe

- Walk Tall
- Webwise and My Selfie and the Wider World
- Incidental classes focussing on respect for self and others.
- Drama
- Artwork
- Our religion programme incorporates the aims of the anti-bullying policy.

Raising Awareness of Bullying

We hope to raise awareness of bullying in our school through

- Parents' talks
- Circulation of anti-bullying policy to parents and BOM
- Implementation of Pupils' Charter
- Artwork

Supervision

The teachers of Taunagh N.S. recognise that to operate a healthy anti bullying policy close supervision of the pupils is of utmost importance.

Procedures for Recording and Dealing with an Incident of Bullying

- All reports of physical bullying within the school grounds and cyber bullying no matter how trivial, should be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
- Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils should be referred immediately to the Principal or Vice-Principal.
- Parents or guardians of victims and bullies should be informed by the Principal or Vice-Principal earlier rather than later of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussion the matter. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
- It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales but are behaving responsibly.
- Individual teachers in consultation with the appropriate staff member should record and take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's policy and Code of Behaviour and Discipline.
- Non-teaching staff such as cleaners, parents should be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the appropriate teaching member of staff.
- In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this should normally in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and if necessary, with the Principal.
- Where cases, relating to either a pupil or a teacher unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the School's Board of Management.
- If not solved at Board level, refer to local Inspectorate.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

- Teachers will take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians. Such incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying involved, in an attempt to get both sides of the story. All interviews should be conducted

with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all pupils concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour we will seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a gang is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then the gang should be met as a group. Each member should be asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said.
- If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her how he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get him/her to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
- Each member of the gang should be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from the other members after interview by the teacher.
- Teachers who are investigating cases of bullying behaviour will keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. Those involved may also be asked to write down their account of the incident.
- In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, we will meet with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate. We will explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy.
- When appropriate we will arrange follow-up meetings with the two parties involved separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable.

Success Criteria

- We will feel our policy is successful if we have clear procedures for staff, pupils and parents to follow.
- We get positive feedback from teachers, parents and pupils.
- Observation of behaviour in class rooms, corridors and the yard shows a general respect for others.

Roles and Responsibility

- The staff will coordinate and monitor the implementation of this policy
- The pupils have a role to play in observing our school rules and telling when rules have been broken.
- Parents will encourage children to observe our school rules and discuss the bullying issue with their children.
- The BOM will support staff in the implementation and necessary training for this area.
- It is the responsibility of the Principal to report any bullying incident at the following Board Meeting.

Ratification and Review:

Approved by the Board of Management on the 3rd February, 2016. Reviewed by the Board of Management on the 22nd November, 2017. This policy will be reviewed annually.