



Holy Family Junior National School Anti Bullying Policy

This policy has been formulated by the teachers, parents and Board of Management of Holy Family Junior National School. It is based on the DES guidelines “Countering Bullying Behaviour”.

It is a review of our existing anti bullying policy contained in our **Code of Behaviour and Discipline**.

Relationship to Characteristic Spirit of the School

This policy reflects our school philosophy and ethos. We endeavour to cater for the full and harmonious development of each child. Every pupil in our school has the right to his/her learning and leisure free from intimidation both in the school and in the surrounding community. We endeavour to provide a safe and caring environment for each child. To ensure the effectiveness of this anti bullying policy cooperation between staff, pupils and parents is essential.

Aims

1. To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.
2. To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, staff, pupils and parents/guardians.
3. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures for all areas of school activity.
4. To establish procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
5. To establish procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
6. Those affected by bullying behaviour and those involved in bullying behaviour will be supported.
7. To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.
8. To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti bullying behaviour.

Content of Policy

This policy reflects our school ethos which promotes a nurturing environment of friendship, inclusiveness and kindness to all. Our policy promotes respect for each individual, individual difference is celebrated and self-esteem promotion is seen as a priority. In such an atmosphere bullying behaviour will not be tolerated. SPHE, Stay Safe and Religion programmes are central to our anti bullying policy. Included in our SPHE plan are strategies, taught to the children, which lead to the understanding, recognition and prevention of bullying. The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupils' attitudes and values. The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among all its members.

The school has a clear commitment to promoting equity in general and gender equity in particular in all aspects of its functioning. The school disproves of vulgar, offensive, sectarian, racist or other aggressive behaviour by any of its members. The school has comprehensive supervision procedures in place where pupils' behaviour and all areas of school activity are monitored at all times. We take particular care of "at risk" pupils and use our monitoring system to provide early intervention when/if necessary and respond to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.

Our school works in partnership with parents and together we aim to create an atmosphere where bullying is less likely to occur.

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against another or 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. (Guidelines on Countering Bullying Behaviour in Primary and Post-Primary Schools)

Types of Bullying

Pupil Behaviour:

- Physical Aggression
- Damage to Property
- Extortion
- Intimidation
- Abusive Telephone Calls/Texts
- Isolation
- Name Calling
- Taunting/teasing
- Bullying of School Personnel

Board of Management:

The Board of Management is responsible for ensuring that all members of the school community are enabled to deal effectively with bullying. The Board is committed to providing time and resources for the implementation of the policy. The Board will ensure that proper supervisory and monitoring measures are in place to prevent bullying and to deal with incidents appropriately as they arise.

Teachers:

Teachers should be mindful of their influence as role models in the lives of their pupils. Relationships with pupils will be based on mutual respect and trust so that pupils will have confidence in the school staff. Therefore any action or language that is likely to have a negative impact on pupil self-esteem should be avoided.

Each member of staff performs a different role in the school and each is fully entitled to be treated with professional respect and with dignity. Individual staff members should be aware of the importance of demonstrating a sense of fair play, tolerance and goodwill. With regard to staff relations mutual respect is of utmost importance; exercising sound judgement based on relevant information, common sense and reasonableness are significant factors in promoting positive staff relations. Teachers should be familiar with the INTO publication **Working Together – Procedures and Policies for Positive Staff Relations**.

Parents:

Encourage positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour both at home and at school.
Encourage children to solve difficulties without resorting to aggression.
Encourage children to share, to be kind, to be caring and to be understanding towards others.
Watch out for signs and symptoms that your child is being bullied or is bullying others.
Don't dismiss your instincts as being wrong.
Discuss the school's anti-bullying policy with her/him.
Support the school in its efforts to prevent and treat bullying.

Indications of Bullying

All staff should be vigilant for signs of bullying e.g. anxiety about travelling to and from school, unwillingness to go to school, deterioration in educational performance, deterioration in general school behaviour.

Prevention of Bullying

The school fosters a positive school ethos among pupils, staff, Board of Management and parents, and each has a clear role in the prevention of bullying:

- Through a programme of positive action, the school promotes an atmosphere of friendship, respect and tolerance.
- The SPHE curriculum is used throughout the school to support this policy.

- Positive self-esteem is fostered among the pupils by celebrating individual differences/achievements, by acknowledging and rewarding good behaviour and by providing opportunities for success.
- Pupils are helped to develop empathy by discussing feelings and by trying to put themselves in the place of others.
- Teachers respond sensitively to pupils who disclose incidents of bullying.
- The school's Anti-Bullying Policy is discussed regularly with the pupils.
- Staff are particularly vigilant in monitoring pupils who are considered at risk of bullying/being bullied.
- All disclosed incidents of bullying are investigated.
- Parents contribute to and support this policy by encouraging positive behaviour both at home and at school, by being vigilant for signs and symptoms that their child is being bullied or is bullying others and by communicating concerns to the school.

Procedures for Noting and Reporting an Incident of Bullying Behaviour

1. All reports of bullying behaviour will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In this way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling', knowing that their complaint will be listened to. This confidence factor is of vital importance. 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 will take appropriate measures in accordance with the school's policy and **Code of Behaviour and Discipline**.
2. Teachers who are investigating bullying behaviour will keep written records of their discussion with those involved.
3. Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils will be referred immediately to the Principal or Deputy Principal.
4. Parents or guardians of victims and bullies will be informed by the Principal or Deputy Principal.
5. Temporary teaching staff and non-teaching staff such as substitute teachers, SNAs, secretary, caretakers and cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them or mentioned to them.
6. 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.
7. Where cases relating to either a pupil or a teacher remain unresolved at school level the matter should be referred to the school's Board of Management.
8. If not solved at Board level, refer to local Inspectorate.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying Behaviour

1. Teachers are best advised to take a calm, unemotional, problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by pupils, staff or parents/guardians.
2. Such incidents are best investigated outside the classroom situation to avoid the public humiliation of the victim or the pupil engaged in bullying, in an attempt to get both sides of the story.
3. All interviews should be conducted with sensitivity and with due regard to the rights of all persons concerned. Pupils who are not directly involved can also provide very useful information in this way.
4. Seek answers to questions of **what, where, who** and **why** when analysing incidents of bullying behaviour. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example for dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
5. If a gang is involved each member should 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.
6. If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour it should 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.
7. Each member of the gang should be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from the other members after interview by teacher.
8. Teachers who are investigating cases of bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved.
9. In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred a meeting will be arranged with the parents/guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate. An explanation will be given of the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school **Code of Behaviour and Discipline**. Ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school will be discussed.
10. Arrange separate follow-up meetings with the two parties involved with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable. This can have a therapeutic effect.
11. An Anti Bullying Day/Week will raise awareness about bullying behaviour, support friendship and looking out for each other.

The school as a community is made up of management, teachers, non-teaching staff, pupils and parents/guardians. However, incidents of bullying behaviour extend beyond the school. It is known that they can occur on the journey to and from school. It is necessary, therefore, for an Anti Bullying School Policy to embrace, as appropriate, those members of the wider community who come directly in daily contact with school pupils. For example school traffic wardens will be encouraged to play a positive role in assisting the school to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and/or school as appropriate. Through such approaches a network is formed. While the school will investigate all incidents we must be mindful that the ultimate responsibility for incidents outside of school is shared with parents and the wider community.

The school may work, as appropriate, with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying as anti social behaviour. In certain cases it may be necessary to invite the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as general medical practitioners, gardai, health boards and their social workers and community workers.

A positive community attitude and involvement can, therefore, assist considerably in helping to counter bullying behaviour in schools.

Policies That Have a Bearing on This Anti-Bullying Policy

SPHE Plan
Record Keeping
Health and Safety Policy
Child Protection Policy
Inclusion Policy

Code of Behaviour and Discipline
Home/School Links Policy
Special Educational Needs Policy
RSE Policy

Evaluation of Effectiveness of School Policy on Bullying Behaviour

This school's Anti Bullying Policy will be subject to continuous review in the light of incidents of bullying behaviour encountered. It will be included periodically as an item for discussion on the school staff meeting agendas.

Conclusion

It is necessary that this school policy should have general acceptance by the partners in the education of the pupils. Thus it can be effective both as a means of preventing as well as of dealing with bullying behaviour.

An understanding of the factors that give rise to bullying behaviour is needed as well as sympathetic treatment of all those involved in the bullying behaviour. Furthermore, having regard to the nature of the problem, it must, in certain circumstances, receive the attention of others directly outside of the school community.

Any incident of bullying, when observed or reported, will always be treated seriously in our school in accordance with this policy. By so doing the school will merit the trust and confidence of pupils, parents and school staff when/if issues of bullying arise.

This policy will be reviewed annually.

*Next page: **Appendix 1 – Advice for Parents***

Appendix 1 Advice for Parents

Effects of Bullying

Bullying can affect pupils in many different ways. When pupils are bullied their lives may be made miserable. They may suffer injury. They may be unhappy about coming to school. They may lose self-confidence and self-esteem, blaming themselves for the bullying. Some children may experience stressful symptoms such as stomach aches and headaches, nightmares or panic attacks. This form of unhappiness is likely to affect their concentration and learning. If unchallenged other pupils can learn that bullying is a quick and effective way of getting what they want.

Indications of Bullying Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

The following signs/symptoms may suggest that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about traveling 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 (eg 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 her/him.

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

What to do if your child is being bullied

- Discuss the experience with your child to find out the precise details of what has happened.
- Reassure her/him that you and the school will help her/him
- Discuss with her/him what to do next – he may be able to suggest strategies for dealing with it.
- Encourage her/him to tell his teacher.
- Contact the school as soon as possible.
- Follow-up to ensure that the matter is dealt with and resolved.

What to tell your child to do if someone they know is being bullied

- Tell a teacher (privately if necessary)
- Tell his/her parents – they will contact the school.
- Talk to the person who is being bullied – you may be able to help her/him.
- Reject bullying behaviour among your friends – tell them that it is wrong to bully.
- Help the bullied person to get away from the situation.
- Know and follow the school code of behaviour and discipline.

What to tell your child to do if you are being bullied

- Tell the teacher immediately.
- Tell your parents when you get home
- Help the teacher to investigate it.
- Tell a friend about what is happening.
- Tell the bully to stop.