

## **Countering Bullying Behaviour**

### **Introduction:**

The Board of Management, teaching and non-teaching staff, parents / guardians, pupils and community of Gaelscoil na Camóige, are committed to:

- 1) Devising school based measures to prevent and deal with bullying behaviour.
  
- 2) Increasing the awareness of bullying behaviour in the school community.

We acknowledge that the role of the school is to provide the highest possible standard of education for all its pupils. Bullying, by its very nature, undermines and dilutes the quality of education and imposes psychological damage. Countering bullying behaviour is encouraged as a normal part of our schools effective operation

### **Definition of Bullying**

Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against 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.

### **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.

**Damage to Property:** Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books etc.

**Extortion:** Demands for money, victims lunches, may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out) in the event of the victim not promptly "paying up".

**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.

**Abusive Telephone Calls:** The abusive anonymous telephone call is a form of verbal intimidation or bullying.

**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.

**Name Calling:** Persistent name-calling directed at the same individual(s), which hurts, insults or humiliates should be regarded as a form of bullying behaviour.

**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, one's family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, then it assumes the form of bullying.

## 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.

### **Policy 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, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.
3. To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.
4. To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.
5. To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.
6. To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.
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.

Our school climate encourages respect, trust, care, consideration and support for others.

As pupils model their behaviour on the behaviour of adults, Principal and teachers are careful to act as good role-models and not misuse our authority. Moreover, we should be firm, clear and consistent in our disciplinary measures. We favour techniques based on positive motivation more than methods that are based on threat and fear.

**Note:** Factors having their origins in differences or conflicts between parties outside the school may contribute to increased incidents of bullying within the school.

This policy stresses the need to prevent and not just control bullying. It is not sufficient to discipline the bully and to give support to the victim. Following an incident of bullying the issues relating to the prevention of bullying will be examined.

### **Raising the awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils and parents/guardians.**

**Gaelscoil na Camóige**, is committed to raising the awareness of bullying in our school community so that we are more alert to it and its harmful effects. This will be done by:

1. Circulation of School Policy and availability of resource materials.
2. Meeting and talks for parents organised by CAIRDE Parent's Committee.
3. Teachers can influence attitudes to bullying behaviour in a positive manner through a range of curricular initiatives.
4. Programmes such as Stay Safe Programme already in use in our school and further programmes, e.g. Human Development Programme will be used to help address the problem of bullying behaviour.
5. In-service courses for teachers on aspects of bullying behaviour to raise awareness and develop techniques to deal with such behaviour.

### **Procedures for Noting and Reporting an incident of Bullying Behaviour.**

In this school we have a "Record of Bullying Behaviour"

1. In this school we have a "Record of Bullying Behaviour" procedure for the formal noting and reporting an incident of bullying behaviour and this such procedure should be seen to be an integral part of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline in the school. This system should, also, provide for early detection of signs of indiscipline and/or significant change in mood or behaviour of pupils.
2. All report of 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 factors is of vital importance.

3. **Serious cases** of bullying behaviour by pupils should be referred immediately to the Principal.
4. Parents or guardians of victims and bullies should be informed by the Class Teacher or Principal earlier rather than later of incidents so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter. They are then in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
5. The classroom teacher is the appropriate person to whom Parents/guardians can make their enquiries regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or that have come to their attention through their children or other parents/guardians.
6. It should be made clear to all pupils that when they report incidents of bullying they are not telling tales, but are behaving responsibly.
7. Individual teachers should record and take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's policy and Code of Behaviour and Discipline.
8. Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, caretakers, cleaners should be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the appropriate member of staff.
9. 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.
10. 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.
11. If not solved at Board level, refer to local Inspectorate.

### **Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying.**

Teachers are best advised to take a calm, unemotional problem-solving approach when dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour reported by either 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 behaviour. In any incident of bullying, the teacher should speak separately to the pupils 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.

1. When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This should be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
2. 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.
3. If it is concluded that a pupil has 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.
4. 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.
5. Teachers who are investigating cases of bullying behaviour should keep a written record of their discussions with those involved. It may also be appropriate or helpful to ask those involved to write down their account of the incident.
6. In cases where it has been determined that bullying behaviour has occurred, meet with the parents or guardians of the two parties involved as appropriate. Explain the actions being taken and the reasons for them, referring them to the school policy. Discuss ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.
7. 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. This can have a therapeutic effect.

### **Programme for work with victims, bullies and their peers.**

Pupils involved in bullying behaviour need assistance on an ongoing basis. For those low in self-esteem opportunities should be developed to increase feelings of self-worth. Pupils who engage in bullying behaviour may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others. Victims

may need counselling and opportunities to participate in activities designed to raise their self-esteem and to develop their friendship and social skills whenever this is needed.

Research indicates that pupils identified as low achievers academically tend to be more frequently involved in bullying behaviour. It is, therefore, important that the learning strategies applied within the school allow for the enhancement of the pupil's self-worth.

Pupils who observe incidents of bullying behaviour should be encouraged to discuss them with teachers.

### **School working with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying as an anti-social behaviour.**

We should as a whole community approach the problem of bullying behaviour. 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 this anti-bullying school policy to embrace, as appropriate, those members of the wider school community who come directly in daily contact with school pupils. For example, school bus drivers, school traffic wardens and local shopkeepers could be encouraged to play a positive role in assisting the school to counter bullying behaviour by reporting such behaviour to parents and to the school. Through such approaches, a network is formed. In certain cases, it may be necessary for us to seek the assistance of other local persons and formal agencies such as general medical practitioners, Gardaí, health boards with their social workers and community workers.

Our Home/School/Community Links Department plays an important role.

### **Conclusion**

- (1) A copy of this policy has been made available to all relevant parties.
- (2) It will be promoted by the school managerial authorities within the school on a repeated basis with particular attention being given to incoming pupils and their parents.
- (3) We would ask everyone to co-operate in implementing the policy.

The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored and evaluated. It will be subject to review at regular intervals.

