

Londonderry Primary School



Anti-Bullying Policy

Article 29: Every child has the right to an education which will develop their personality, talents and abilities to the full.

Article 15: Every child has the right to choose their own friends, as long as it isn't harmful to others.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Introduction

Pastoral Care in Schools; Promoting Positive Behaviour (DE, 2001) Paragraph 125 states the following:

“As well as ensuring that pupils who are bullying are dealt with in accordance with accepted school policy and procedures, it will be necessary to work with these pupils to try to help them change their unacceptable behaviour.”

The Convention on the Rights of the Child states:

Article 19 – *We should not be harmed and we should be looked after and kept safe*

Article 29 – *Every child has the right to be the best that they can be.*

As A Rights Respecting School our anti bullying policy is underpinned by these two articles.

Objectives of the Policy

- Ensure all governors, teaching and non teaching staff, pupils and parents have a good understanding of what bullying is.
- Ensure all governors, teaching and non teaching staff, pupils and parents know what the school policy on bullying is and know the procedures for reporting bullying.

Defining Bullying

The term bullying refers to a range of harmful behaviours, both physical and psychological.

All bullying behaviour usually has the following four features:

1. It is repetitive and persistent.
2. It is intentionally harmful.
3. It involves an imbalance of power, leaving someone feeling helpless to prevent it or put a stop to it.
4. It causes distress.

The Northern Ireland Anti-Bullying Forum (NIABF) define bullying as:

“the repeated use of power by one or more persons intentionally to hurt, harm or adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.” (Effective Responses to Bullying File, pg 2)

The NIABF suggests that schools avoid labelling individual children involved in bullying situations. They suggest the following:

Victim: The term victim is problematic – it can mean different things to different people. NIABF recommends that schools use the term *‘child who has been bullied’*.

Bully: The term bully is problematic – it implies focus on the child’s self, rather than the behaviour he or she is displaying. NIABF recommends that schools use the term *‘child who has displayed bullying behaviour.’*

Staff must remain vigilant about bullying. It is their responsibility to play their part in creating an atmosphere, which is caring and protective. They have a vital role in assuring pupils and parents of our commitment to detecting and dealing with bullying in school.

Identifying a Child who has been Bullied

Although a child who has been bullied often remains silent, changes in their mood and behaviour can be indicative of their suffering. Children who have been bullied feel helpless and overwhelmed by the power that a child who is displaying bullying behaviour exercises. This can lead to insecurity, increased fear, and loss of confidence and consequently lowering of self-esteem. Vigilance with regard to any behavioural changes is important as early intervention is crucial.

A pupil who is being bullied may display some of the following signs and symptoms:

- A pattern of physical illness e.g. stomach aches, headaches.
- Anxiety about travelling to and from school, wanting to be taken to and collected from school.
- Changes in their own temperament or behaviour.
- Difficulty sleeping, eating or becoming introverted or unsociable.

- Increased request for or stealing of money.
- Unexplained cuts and bruises.
- Deterioration in educational performance or loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.
- Reluctance and or refusal to say what is troubling him / her.

Individually these signs and symptoms do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. However, if there is a combination or repetitive occurrence of these, then further investigation is needed in order to determine what is affecting the pupil.

Responding to a Bullying Concern

Staff should adopt a positive mind set when responding to bullying concerns.

They should be prepared with options for how to respond to incidents of bullying in a planned, deliberate and positive way. Confronting pupils who have bullied requires a high amount of self-control as well as preparation to know what to say and do. The following are important factors when managing a bullying situation.

- **Be calm.** It is important to be clear thinking and emotionally in control.
- **Be positive.** Have in mind the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with a pupil. A pupil is much more likely to modify his/her behaviour if he/she perceives that a teacher cares.
- **Be assertive.** Staff should directly and clearly express their thoughts, feelings and expectations concerning the need for the pupil to not only stop bullying, but also make restitution with the child who has been bullied.
- **Be confident.** It is important to trust that you will be successful in implementing practices that can have an impact on the pupil's future behaviour. It is always helpful to focus on the behaviour, not the pupil.
- Ensure that the specific behaviour is in fact bullying behaviour.
- Assess the situation and its severity level in order to determine the appropriate level of response required to manage the situation effectively.

- Once the incident has been determined, an appropriate level of intervention will be made by staff and the necessary stages of the school discipline policy will be followed if required.

When a child has disclosed that they have been exposed to bullying behaviour or a member of staff has identified a bullying situation, parents of the children involved should be contacted by telephone to inform them of the situation and make them aware that an investigation will ensue.

The same procedure must occur on the day on which any pupil is interviewed about suspected bullying behaviour.

Determining the Level of Severity

Staff should take the following into account:

- The **nature** of the bullying behaviour – for example deliberately teasing, excluding or hitting. There is a tendency among those who have a duty of care to rate some bullying, particularly violence, as more serious than subtle forms. This can be a dangerous mistake and leave us vulnerable to ignoring ‘teasing’ or ‘exclusion’.
- The **frequency** of the bullying behaviour: daily, weekly or less often.
- The **duration** of the bullying behaviour; whether over a short or prolonged period of time.
- The **perceptions** of the child being bullied – The seriousness of bullying can only be measured by the degree of distress suffered by the target.

Working in Partnership with Parents and Carers

Bullying is often reported to schools by parents /carers. Such complaints should be met openly and sympathetically.

The following should be considered when meeting with the parents / carers of pupils bullying others:

- Acknowledge that the parent / carer may be under stress as a result of having to come into school to discuss the incident with a member of staff.
- Remain understanding if the parent/carer expresses anger directed at the school.
- Try to get clear facts from the parent/carer but don't cross examine or emphasise inconsistencies in their version of events.

- Ensure that you have already gathered as much reliable information as possible and be clear that the behaviour does represent bullying.
- Ensure that the parent/carer understands how their child's behaviour conforms to the definition of bullying.
- Share your concern about what has happened to the child experiencing bullying.
- Avoid suggesting that it is the character of the child that is at fault. Emphasise that it is aspects of the child's behaviour that must change. Try to refer to their child's positive qualities.
- Be understanding but firm.
- Tell the parent/carer that you will need time (be specific) to gather information and that you will keep them informed.
- Avoid getting into an argument. Try to avoid blaming the parent/carer for their child's behaviour.

Steps to Follow When Recording an Incident of Confirmed Bullying

1. Gather and clarify the facts.
2. Check records for any previous incidents.
3. Complete a Bullying Concern Assessment Form (NIABF template)
4. On the basis of this initial assessment:
 - Choose an appropriate intervention level, which are outlined in the NIABF file, with guidance from the Principal and any other relevant members of staff.
 - Decide on the level of parental involvement needed.
 - Invoke the school discipline policy, if necessary, at the appropriate level and stage.
 - Possible involvement of the Special Needs Co-ordinator (SENCO).
 - Child Protection issues or involvement of outside agencies.
5. Refer to the support materials outlined in the NIABF file linked to the intervention path decided upon.
6. Monitor and evaluate the on-going effectiveness of the chosen intervention strategy.
7. Record actions taken and outcomes achieved in the relevant behaviour book, kept in the office.

8. Review the outcomes to determine whether further action is required and progress accordingly.

(A copy of NIABF's Bullying Concern Assessment Form is attached to this policy)

Choosing an Appropriate Intervention

The intervention undertaken will depend on the nature of the bullying itself. The main aim of any intervention is to **RESPOND** to the bullying that is taking place.

RESOLVE the concern and **RESTORE** the well-being of those involved.

The following should be considered when selecting an intervention:

- The level of severity.
- The age of those involved.
- Whether an individual or a group is involved.
- The agreement and support of the parent/carer in adopting a restorative, behaviour changing approach.
- Whether the pupil(s) displaying the bullying behaviour acknowledge(s) the unacceptable behaviour and can be enabled to feel empathy for the pupil experiencing bullying, and act appropriately.
- Whether it is realistic to expect that the bullied pupil can be strengthened adequately to deal with the situation.
- Whether or not the pupil experiencing bullying has acted provocatively.

Addressing Bullying through the Curriculum

In Londonderry Primary School we endeavour to ensure all pupils are aware of the effects of bullying behaviour, the steps they should take to prevent it and also how to report / deal with bullying.

This is addressed through:

- Our role as a Rights Respecting School
- Personal Development & Mutual Understanding (PDMU) teaching, in all year groups.
- Anti Bullying Week, run in conjunction with NIABF.
- Access to a school councillor through our association with Family Works.
- Circle Time.
- Drama scheme of work.
- Awareness of Designated Teachers for Child Protection.
- School Council

Acknowledgements

This policy was compiled using the NIABF file 'Effective Responses to Bullying Behaviour', issued to schools in June 2013.