

Anti-Bullying Policy

Social growth involves testing limits and boundaries. Children need to explore emotions and behaviours in order to learn how to organize themselves within a relationship. Conflict is therefore necessary, and healthy when done in an assertive, respectful and empathetic manner. Educators are key in modelling and teaching children these skills, when conflict occurs. It is important to determine when children are going through conflict, or when intentions go beyond a regular interpersonal difference.

Bullying is unwanted, degrading treatment that involves a real or perceived power imbalance. The behaviour is repeated, or has the potential to be repeated, over time. Bullying includes actions such as making threats, spreading rumours, attacking someone physically or verbally, and excluding someone from a group on purpose.

The aim of the anti-bullying policy is to ensure that our students learn in a supportive, caring and safe environment without fear of being bullied. Bullying is an anti-social behaviour and affects everyone; it is unacceptable. We are committed to provide a caring, friendly and safe environment for all of our students so they can learn in a relaxed and secure environment. If bullying does occur, all students and adults should be able to tell and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

Persistent bullying can severely inhibit a child's ability to learn effectively. The negative effects of bullying can have an impact on a person for their entire life. This school wishes to promote a secure and happy environment free from threat, harassment and any type of bullying behaviour. Therefore,

this policy promotes practices within the school to reinforce our vision, and to remove or discourage practices that negate them.

Bullying can take many forms, including:

- A. Physical bullying which can include kicking, hitting, pushing and taking away belongings;
- B. Verbal bullying which includes name calling, mocking and making offensive comments;
- C. Emotional bullying which includes isolating an individual or spreading rumours about them;
- D. Cyber-bullying where technology is used to hurt an individual – for instance text messaging or posting messages/images on the internet or any form of social media
- E. Racist bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by racial, ethnic or cultural prejudice.
- F. Sexual bullying is where someone makes unwanted physical contact or makes sexually abusive comments.
- G. Homophobic and biphobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against lesbian, gay or bisexual people.
- H. Transphobic bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against people who identify as trans
- I. Disablist bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against people with any form of disability.
- J. Sexist bullying occurs when bullying is motivated by a prejudice against someone because of their gender

Staff members and parent´s must be aware and alert of the warning signs that a student is being bullied:

- Changes in academic performance; appears anxious;

- regularly feeling sick or unwell;
- reluctance to come to school;
- clothes/bags torn or damaged;
- money/possessions going missing; unexplained cuts and bruises;
- unexplained behaviour changes, e.g. moody, bad-tempered, tearful. Unhappiness;
- loss of appetite. Not sleeping. Loss of weight;
- seen alone a lot;
- not very talkative.

It is also important to be aware of why students bully, to promote mediation and limits:

- Desire to appear powerful
- Unhappiness
- Feelings of inadequacy
- Difficulties at home.
- Learned behaviour (They too have been bullied)

Who can students can talk to if they have any concerns about bullying?

- Head Teacher
- Section Coordinator
- Section Psychologist
- Subject teacher
- Learning Support Assistant / Therapist
- Office staff
- Peer Support group / Classmates

Students and adults must trust that any of the above will listen to their problem. Students and staff who report situation and actions associated to bullying will be supported by:

1. An immediate opportunity to discuss the experience with the Head Teacher or member of staff of their choice (Coordinator, Therapist or Principal)
2. Reassurance that they are being heard and will be helped
3. Have access to continuous support

4. Have their self-esteem and confidence reinforced and protected

Pupils who have bullied will be helped by:

1. Discuss what happened
2. Discover why the student became involved
3. Establish the wrong doing and need to change, by defining a repair action
4. Inform parents or guardians to help change the student's attitude

Responses will vary depending on the nature of the incident, but may include:

1. Counselling
2. Monitoring by Head Teacher and Staff
3. Peer support/peer mentoring
4. Use of Behaviour Agreement Contract
5. Internal Suspension through a Repair Action
6. Fixed Suspension, after 3 opportunities to change the behaviour
7. Permanent exclusion, if both school and parents find it is the best for the child, and that being in this environment is not in the best interest of the school community

It is made clear that bullying in any form is unacceptable. It will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly Staff Responsibilities

1. Listen and Investigate incidents promptly and as fully as possible
2. Refer to the student's Head Teacher and Section Psychologist
3. Share with parents of the victim and (bully), incidents of persistent and/or serious bullying

4. Implement appropriate procedures for the involved parties such as determine repair actions and limits, and assist all involved regarding well-being and social integration
5. Promote the use of a range of learning styles and strategies which challenge bullying behaviour through SER, Circle Time, Class and Student Assembly
6. Promote open management styles that facilitate communication and consultation within the school
7. Model the values our school believes in from the mission statement through staff and peer mentoring

Advice for Parents: How to Deal with Bullying

Adult intervention is vital in dealing with school bullying, and so it's crucial that children and adults first feel safe, by talking with a responsible adult or parent about bullying they may be experiencing. Parents will then need to contact the teacher, section coordinator or psychologist or school principal, as appropriate.

Once the school is notified, it's important for parents to:

1. Talk to the teacher, and section psychologist, to ensure the situation is put on pause
2. Talk to your child in an empathetic and open manner, showing respect for all parties. Beware to not speak badly about other children.
3. Expect to receive an action plan from the school and trust that the situation will be handled
4. Follow-up with your child's teacher, and section psychologist, to ensure the situation found a balance

Here's some advice for parents on bullying:

- Parents should make sure their children know the lines of communication are open, that they're not being judged and that their parents are there for them no matter what.

- Parents should look out for significant changes in mood, behaviour, physical appearance, etc as these are often indicative of a larger problem.
- Parents should be continually thinking about how they can support their child's teacher and school (e.g., through volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences, etc)
- If your child is playing a role in bullying, admit it and focus on what can be done to affect change.
- Are you inadvertently teaching your child aggressive behaviour? If so, seeking help for yourself with anger management will benefit your child as well!
- This has been mentioned many times before in the media, but limiting your children's access to violent video games, TV, etc, can help.
- There's a relation between children observing violence in the home and then becoming involved in violence in school. Ensure that your home is violence free and consider seeking help if it's not.
- How are problems solved in your house? If aggression is an accepted way of dealing with conflicts in your home, consider seeking help from a counsellor to change that and learn new ways to resolve conflict.

If children at your home have unsupervised access to a computer and the internet, then cyberbullying is a real possibility. Here's some cyberbullying information for parents and what parents can do to stop cyberbullying in the home:

- Have a discussion with your children about the responsible use of technology.
- In that discussion, explain the consequences of being aggressive towards others online.
- Ensure that children know their computer, phone, etc are privileges and can be taken away if they're not using technology responsibly.

- As parents, educate yourselves about online technologies your children are using including reading official guides produced by popular social networks your children may be on (e.g., Facebook and MySpace both have areas on their websites that parents should read)
- Visit the websites your children are visiting.
- If your children are on social networks, create a profile yourself and become friends with them on the social network.