



Anti Bullying Policy

Anti-bullying Policy

Introduction

In Willowbridge, bullying is always treated as a serious matter. We believe all forms of bullying behaviour are unacceptable and all pupils have the right to learn in a safe and supported environment.

We are committed to acting promptly and firmly to combat bullying whenever and wherever it occurs. Everyone has the right to feel welcome, secure and happy and only if this happens will all members of our school community be able to achieve their maximum potential. Bullying of any kind prevents this from happening and prevents equality of opportunity. It is everyone's responsibility to prevent this from happening and this policy contains guidelines to support this ethos within our school.

This policy has been developed within the following Legislative Context:

- * [The Addressing Bullying in Schools Act \(Northern Ireland\) 2016](#)
- * [The Education and Libraries Order \(Northern Ireland\) 2003 \(A17-19\)](#)
- * [The Education \(School Development Plans\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2010](#)
- * [The Children \(Northern Ireland\) Order 1995](#)
- * [The Human Rights Act 1998](#)
- * [The Health and Safety at Work Order \(Northern Ireland\) 1978](#)
- * United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The act of bullying is generally repeated over a period of time. In order to identify bullying behaviours and tactics, teachers first need to identify behaviours which are sometimes misinterpreted as bullying, particularly in certain pupils with severe learning disabilities. Some pupils with specific learning disabilities may have certain behaviours which can cause their peers some distress at times; however, this would not be viewed as bullying as it is related to the pupil's diagnosis. In this case, staff will make parents aware and reassure them that the behaviour may not be 'bullying' but will be dealt with appropriately in order to support their children. All staff should therefore familiarise themselves with the Individual needs of each pupil and know how to best support a child who may become upset or anxious as a result of another child's behaviour.

The school works hard to ensure that all pupils know the difference between bullying and simply "falling out".

Form teachers meet with their pupils 9-9:30am and 2:30-3:00pm each day. During this time concerns on how a pupil appears may be written in the home-school diary to parents, particularly for pupils who cannot communicate at home themselves.

Aims of the policy

- To ensure that in the school community, all pupils are valued and emphasis is placed on developing confidence and self esteem.
- To provide a safe, secure and supportive learning environment for all pupils.
- To give pupils the opportunity to talk about bullying in general and specifically.

- To help pupils to develop positive attitudes towards themselves and others
- To encourage respect for family, friends and others
- To create an atmosphere of trust where pupils feel they can voice their concerns, fears and feel confident that they will be dealt with
- To raise awareness of bullying throughout the school curriculum
- To provide counselling where necessary
- To provide learning experiences for all so that they recognise responsibility for their own behaviour
- To provide alternative strategies for those who bully so that they can work with others

Definition of bullying

Bullying is behaviour that is usually repeated, which is carried out intentionally to cause hurt, harm or to adversely affect the rights and needs of another or others.

Bullying is deliberately hurtful behaviour repeated over a period of time which makes other people feel uncomfortable, threatened or distressed. It is a form of abuse which is particularly destructive not just because of the victim's immediate distress, but also because the inevitable loss of self esteem can have damaging long term effects. The three main types of bullying are:

- **Physical:** hitting, kicking, pushing, taking or hiding belongings, etc.
- **Verbal:** name calling (including sectarian, homophobic, racist), teasing, insulting, threatening, telling lies or spreading false rumours etc
- **Emotional:** excluding, spreading rumours, tormenting, isolating, etc
- **Written or electronic Communication (Cyberbullying):** Using online platforms or other electronic communication to carry out many of the written acts noted above,
Impersonating someone online to cause hurt and, Sharing images (eg photographs or videos) online to embarrass someone
Cyberbullying is the act of bullying a target using technology such as mobile phones or the internet as a vehicle.
Mobile phones, tablets or computers may be used to send messages or pictures that can threaten, defame or harass. This type of bullying does provide a 'hard copy' which can be saved and used as evidence against a person who may be bullying another person.

There are various motivations behind bullying, These include, but are not limited to:

- * Age
- * Appearance
- * Breakdown in peer relationships
- * Community background
- * Political affiliation
- * Gender identity
- * Sexual orientation
- * Pregnancy
- * Marital status
- * Race

- * Religion Disability / SEN
- * Ability
- * Looked After Child status
- * Young Carer status

Bullying is an emotive issue, therefore it is essential that we ensure we use supportive, understanding language when discussion these matters. For that reason we will not refer to a child as 'a bully', nor will we refer to a child as 'a victim'. Instead, we will refer to the child b describing the situation surrounding that child, for example:

- * **A child displaying bullying behaviours**
- * **A child experiencing bullying behaviours**

We encourage all members of the school community to use this language when discussion bullying incidents.

This policy is an integral part of our Positive Behaviour policy. In the development and implementation of this Anti-Bullying Policy, the Board of Governors has been mindful of related policies, including:

- * Positive Behaviour Policy
- * Pastoral Care Policy
- * Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy
- * Special Educational Needs Policy
- * Health and Safety Policy
- * Relationships and Sexuality Education
- * E-Safety Policy & Acceptable Use of Internet Policy
- * Mobile Phone Policy
- * Educational Visits
- * Staff Code of Conduct

While bullying is usually repeated behaviour, there are instances of one-off incidents that the school will consider as bullying.

When assessing a one-off incident, to make a decision on whether to classify it as bullying, the school shall consider the following criteria:

- * severity and significance of the incident
- * evidence of pre-meditation
- * impact of the incident on individuals (physical/emotional)
- * impact of the incidents on wider school community
- * previous relationships between those involved
- * any previous incidents involving the individuals

Any incidents which are not considered bullying behaviour will be addressed under the Positive Behaviour Policy.

Discouraging bullying

It is important that we create an atmosphere in the school where students who are being bullied, or others who know about it, feel that they will be listened to and believed and that action taken will be sensitive to their concerns. The message to pupils should be 'Informing on bullies is not telling tales'.

Procedures for dealing with a bullying incident

1. Teachers should watch for early signs of distress in pupils. This could be evident in any aspect of school life and may include:
 - A deterioration in work
 - Spurious illness (medically unexplained symptoms)
 - Isolation
 - The desire to remain with adults
 - Erratic attendance
2. All instances of bullying observed or reported should be passed to the class teacher or vice principal (Appendix 1)
3. It is important that a written record is made detailing the facts of the incidents (Appendix 2)
4. The bullied pupil should record the events in writing
5. The Pupil displaying 'Bullying' Behaviour should be offered the opportunity to record the events in writing

6. The victim should be offered immediate support and help. He/she should be given the chance to talk the problem over and to be listened to. In minor cases this will be done by the class teacher. In more serious cases the matter should be reported to the appropriate vice principal who will deal with the problem.
7. Pupils who are involved should be spoken to separately at the initial stage. In more serious cases parent/guardians will be contacted and asked to visit the school to see the class teacher, vice principal, principal.
8. The situation will be monitored by the class teacher to ensure that the bullying has stopped
9. On going support will be provided for the victim
10. Parents/guardians and the Board of Governors are informed of the anti-bullying policy which will be in the school

NB It is important that a written record is kept of all discussions

Bullying and the school curriculum

We at Willowbridge School, believe that prevention is better than cure. We ensure that opportunities are provided through the curriculum to reinforce the ethos of the school and help pupils develop strategies to combat bullying type behaviour. An awareness of the issue of bullying is raised in a variety of subjects. Role play and other drama techniques are used so that pupils learn to cope better with bullies. These also provide a forum for discussing issues such as human rights, relationships, justice and acceptable behaviour.

In Willowbridge we aim to prevent bullying and create a safe learning environment.

Examples of these include:

- * Raising awareness and understanding of the positive behaviour expectations, as set out in the Positive Behaviour Policy
- * Promotion of anti-bullying messages through the curriculum eg. inclusion of age-appropriate material specific to individual subject areas related to bullying, positive behaviour and inclusion
- * Addressing issues such as the various forms of bullying, including the how and why it can happen, through PDMU/PD/LLW (eg. sectarian, racist, homophobic, transphobic, disablist, etc.)
- * Involvement in meaningful and supportive shared education projects, supporting pupils to explore, understand and respond to difference and diversity.
- * Through the preventative curriculum actively promote positive emotional health and wellbeing (eg. mindfulness training)
- * Participation in the NIABF annual Anti-Bullying Week activities
- * Engagement in key national and regional campaigns, eg Safer Internet Day, Good Relations Week, etc.
- * Development of peer-led systems (eg. School Council) to support the delivery and promotion of key anti-bullying messaging within the school

- * Development of effective strategies for playground management, zoning of playgrounds, inclusion of specific resources, adult supervision.
- * Focused assemblies to raise awareness and promote understanding of key issues related to bullying.
- * Development of effective strategies for the management of unstructured times (eg. break time, lunch)
- * Provision and promotion of extra- and co-curricular activities, aimed at supporting the development of effective peer support relationships and networks. For example sporting activity, creative arts, leisure and games, etc.

Parent/Guardian involvement

The parent/guardians of bullies and their victims will be informed of an incident and the action that has taken place. The bully will be reminded of the possible consequences of bullying and the sanctions for their actions will be clearly explained to them. The future conduct of any pupil found to be bullying will be monitored.

Parents/guardians are reminded that they must tell their children to report any incident of bullying immediately. Keeping information from the school, or from their parents/guardians, will never help a problem to be solved and will prolong the period the victim has to suffer. At Willowbridge we are proud of the excellent relationships and the family values which have been developed over the years, however, in relation to bullying we remain resolute in dealing with this issue. This policy will be kept under review to ensure we are in a position to respond to any future developments.

REPORTING A BULLYING CONCERN

WHAT TO DO

PUPILS

What to do if you are bullied

- Talk to someone you trust e.g. a parent/guardian, a teacher, an older friend, a relative
- If you can write down what the bully has said or done to you and how you feel about it. Be careful to write down what actually happened
- If you need to, ask a friend to come with you to talk to a member of staff
- Always do something – sometimes the bullying will stop, however, it may not and you may become more upset. This will encourage the bullies. Remember other people could be hurt unless they are stopped.
- Remember it is not your fault. The bullies need to change, NOT YOU

- Write a message and post it into the 'Post Box'/'Worry Box" outside the Pastoral Care/counselling Room.
- Select a 'I want to talk' PEC/communication buttons in your classroom.

What you should not do

- Do not suffer in silence – there is nothing wrong with asking for help
- Do not retaliate and hit the Pupil displaying 'Bullying' Behaviour – you could be accused of bullying
- Always be truthful – do not exaggerate. If anything you say is untrue – people may doubt your whole story
- Do not believe the lies bullies tell you about you – you know they are untrue

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Advice for Parents/Guardians

- Watch for signs of distress in your child e.g. –
 - o An unwillingness to attend school
 - o A pattern of headaches or stomach pains
 - o Equipment that has gone missing
 - o Request for extra pocket money
 - o Damaged clothing or bruising
- If you think your child is being bullied in school, inform the class teacher, vice principal and principal
- Advise your child that they **must** tell a teacher
- Do not encourage your child to hit back or respond verbally

Please remember that the school can only act if they are informed of the situation.

Log of Reported Names

