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**Belgrove Senior Boys'
Anti-Bullying Policy**

Definition

Bullying is a type of behaviour that is unacceptable in all its forms. Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical, conducted by an individual or group against others. A one-off incident can also be considered bullying if it deliberately serves to intimidate the target of the bullying on a long-term basis. It is *not* bullying when a teacher offers fair and just criticism of a pupil's work, or when a teacher implements a sanction in line with the school discipline code.

Aims of Anti-Bullying Policy

To create a school ethos which encourages children to disclose and discuss incidents of bullying behaviour.

To raise awareness of bullying as a form of unacceptable behaviour with school management, teachers, pupils, parents/guardians.

To ensure comprehensive supervision and monitoring measures through which all areas of school activity are kept under observation.

To develop procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying behaviour.

To develop procedures for investigating and dealing with incidents of bullying behaviour.

To develop a programme of support for those affected by bullying behaviour and for those involved in bullying behaviour.

To work with and through the various local agencies in countering all forms of bullying and anti-social behaviour.

To evaluate the effectiveness of school policy on anti-bullying behaviour.

Ethos of School

The school acknowledges the right of each member of the school community to enjoy school in a secure environment. The school promotes positive habits of self-respect, self-discipline and responsibility among its members.

The school disapproves of vulgar, offensive, sectarian or other aggressive behaviour by any of 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 has the capacity to change in response to pupil's needs.

The school identifies aspects of curriculum through which positive and lasting influences can be exerted towards forming pupil's attitudes and values.

The school takes particular care of "at risk" pupils and uses its monitoring system to provide early intervention when/if necessary and responds to the needs, fears or anxieties of individual members in a sensitive manner.

The school recognises the need to co-operate with and keep parents informed on procedures to improve relationships within the school community.

The school recognises the right of parents to share in the task of equipping the pupil with a range of life-skills.

The school recognises the role of other community agencies in preventing and dealing with bullying.

The school promotes habits of mutual respect, courtesy and an awareness of the interdependence of people in-group and community.

The school acknowledges the uniqueness of each individual and his worth as a human being.

The school promotes qualities of social responsibility, tolerance and understanding among all its members both in school and out of school.

Staff members share a collegiate responsibility, under the direction of the principal teacher, to act in preventing bullying/aggressive behaviour by any member of the school.

Types of Bullying

Pupil Behaviour

Physical Aggression

This behaviour includes pushing, shoving, punching, kicking, poking and tripping people up. It may also take the form of severe physical assault. While boys commonly engage in 'mess fights', they can often be used as a disguise for physical harassment or inflicting pain.

Damage to Property

Personal property can be the focus of attention for the bully; this may result in damage to clothing, school books and other learning material or interference with a pupil's locker or bicycle. The contents of school bags and pencil cases may be scattered on the floor. Items of personal property may be defaced, broken, stolen or hidden.

Extortion

Demands for money may be made, often accompanied by threats (sometimes carried out) in the event of the target not promptly "paying up". Target's lunches or lunch money may be taken. Target may also be forced into theft of property for delivery to the perpetrator. Sometimes, this tactic is used with the sole purpose of incriminating the perpetrator.

Gesture Bullying

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. Particularly upsetting to targets can be the so-called 'look' – a facial expression which conveys aggression and /or dislike.

Abusive Communication

The use of anonymous telephone calls, mobile texts or other forms of IT (e-mail/Bebo etc) to make abusive or derogatory comments about other pupils or staff members – is illegal. It contravenes the 1951 Post Office Act and Section 10 of the 1997 Act and is regarded as a most serious breach of the school's code of discipline. Such a form of bullying is particularly damaging because it renders a person vulnerable to bullying at any place and at any time. Such activity will be immediately referred to the BOM. An official record will be kept in the school of such an incident and it will be noted on the child's Report Form. Pupils who bring mobile phones to school must switch them off in the school unless a teacher's permission is given to the contrary. It is the responsibility of parents to monitor children's use of computer.

Isolation

This form of bullying behaviour involves a person being deliberately isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. This practice is usually initiated by the person engaged in bullying behaviour. It may be accompanied by writing insulting remarks about the target on blackboards or in public places, by passing around notes about or drawings of the target or by whispering insults about them loud enough to be heard.

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; most name-calling of this type refers to physical appearance e.g. 'big ears', size or clothes worn.

Accent or distinctive voice characteristics may attract negative attention. Academic ability can also provoke name-calling. This tends to operate at two extremes; first, there are those who are singled out for attention because they are perceived to be slow, or weak, academically. These pupils are often referred to as 'dummies', 'dopes' or 'donkeys'. At the other extreme are those who, because they are perceived as high achievers, are labelled 'nerds', 'licks', 'teachers' pets'.

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 aimed again and again at the one individual about appearance, clothing, personal hygiene or involves references of an uncomplimentary nature to members of one's family, particularly if couched in sexual innuendo, then it assumes the form of bullying.

Prejudice

The school believes strongly in the need to treat everyone – irrespective of race, origin, religion or socio-economic background – with dignity and respect and to cherish the contribution each person can make to society. Any teasing, taunting or alienating of children in regard to background/in relation to all above its strictly forbidden. Recent research into bullying and self-esteem among children and teenagers suggests that homophobic taunting of students may have serious effects on their later psychological/emotional health; it has been linked with depression, anxiety and attempted suicide. The school is firmly set against such alienation and isolation of children.

Teacher/Pupil Behaviour

The teacher has a particular responsibility to model positive behaviour in their dealings with pupils. The use of sarcasm, negative comments or other demeaning form of language when addressing pupils is to be avoided.

The teachers will always be sensitive to children who are academically very weak, outstanding or vulnerable in any other way. The use of gestures or expressions of a threatening or intimidatory nature, or any form of degrading or physical contact or exercise is to be avoided.

Effects of Bullying

Pupils who are being bullied may develop feelings of insecurity and extreme anxiety and thus may become more vulnerable. Self-confidence may be damaged with a consequent lowering of their self-esteem. While they may not talk about what is happening to them, their suffering is indicated through changes in mood and behaviour. Bullying may occasionally result in suicide. It is, therefore, important to be alert to changes in behaviour as early intervention is desirable.

Indications of Bullying/Behaviour – Signs and Symptoms

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

- anxiety about travelling 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, missing.
- deterioration in educational performance, loss of concentration and loss of enthusiasm and interest in school.

- pattern of physical illnesses (e.g. 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 him.

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

Characteristics in Bullying Behaviour

The school recognises that any pupil can be a target of, or perpetrator of bullying behaviour.

The Target

Any pupil, through no fault of his own, may be bullied.

It is common in the course of normal play for pupils to tease and taunt each other. However, at a certain point, teasing and taunting may become forms of bullying behaviour. As pupils are particularly quick to notice differences in others, pupils who are perceived as different are those more prone to encounter such behaviour. However, the pupils who are most at risk of becoming targets of bullying are those who react in a vulnerable and distressed manner.

It is of note that some pupils can unwittingly behave in a very provocative manner which attracts bullying behaviour.

The Perpetrator

It is generally accepted that bullying is a learned behaviour.

Pupils who bully tend to display aggressive attitudes combined with a low level of self-discipline. They can lack any sense of remorse; often they convince themselves that the target deserves the treatment metered out.

Pupils who bully can also be attention seeking; often they set out to impress bystanders and enjoy the reaction their behaviour provokes. They tend to lack the ability to empathise. They are unaware or indifferent to the victim's feelings. Others seem to enjoy inflicting pain, it is of note that many bullies suffer from a lack of confidence and have low self-esteem.

It is not uncommon to find that pupils who engage in bullying behaviour are also bullied. They tend to be easily provoked and provoke others.

Prevention Strategies

- The implementation of the school policy, which includes specific measures to deal with bullying behaviour, can be a most influential measure in combating the issue
- Raising awareness within the school community will help to make everyone alert to bullying and its harmful effects
 - Staff meeting devoted to Bullying
 - Awareness sessions for pupils/parents e.g. Guest speakers for 5th and 6th classes; Garda Juvenile Liaison Officer, Speaker from Anti-Bullying Centre in T.C.D., Drama for 3rd and 4th classes (Sticks & Stones Drama Group)
 - General talks to class groups about bullying behaviour
- An anonymous Questionnaire is given to pupils at the end of the first term every year to ascertain pupil's perception of bullying.
- The Stay Safe Programme is taught every 2nd year, ensuring that each pupil will have followed the programme twice while in the school
- Where opportunities arise, links with different curricular areas will be explored to the full to promote tolerance, respect and empathy e.g. stories from class readers, Social, Personal and Health Education Programme, History (exploitation, colonisation, dictators) Geography (People in different countries with their own values, customs, ways of life) Drama.
- Adequate supervision of pupils at all times – in the classroom /playground/ out of school activities - helps to create an environment that lessens the likelihood of bullying behaviour occurring.
- Use of the Walk Tall Programme.

Procedures for Noting and Reporting an Incident of Bullying Behaviour

- All reports of bullying, no matter how trivial, will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers. In that way pupils will gain confidence in 'telling'. This confidence factor is of vital importance.
- Serious cases of bullying behaviour by pupils will be referred immediately to the Principal or Deputy-Principal.
- Parents or guardians of targets and perpetrators will be informed by the Principal or Deputy-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.

- Parents or guardians will be informed of the appropriate person to whom they can make their enquiries regarding incidents of bullying behaviour which they might suspect or have come to their attention through their children or other parents/guardians.
- It will 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 record and take appropriate measures regarding reports of bullying behaviour in accordance with the school's policy and Code of Behaviour and Discipline.
- Non-teaching staff such as secretaries, caretakers, cleaners will be encouraged to report any incidents of bullying behaviour witnessed by them, or mentioned to them, to the appropriate teaching member of staff.
- In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this will normally in the first instance be raised with the staff member in question and if necessary, with the Principal.
- Where cases relating to either a pupil or teacher are unresolved at school level, the matter will be referred to the School's Board of Management. If not solved at Board level, the matter will be referred to local Inspectorate.

Procedures for Investigating and Dealing with Bullying

- When analysing incidents of bullying behaviour seek answers to questions of what, where, when, who and why. This will be done in a calm manner, setting an example in dealing effectively with a conflict in a non-aggressive manner.
- If a gang is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then the gang will be met as a group. Each member will be asked for his account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said.
- If it is concluded that a pupil has been engaged in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him how he is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline and try to get him to see the situation from the victim's point of view.
- Each member of the gang will be helped to handle the possible pressures that often face them from the other members after interview by the teacher.
- Teachers who are investigating cases of bullying behaviour will 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.
- 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 the ways in which they can reinforce or support the actions taken by the school.

- Arrange follow-up meetings with the two parties involved separately with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the target of bullying is ready and agreeable.

Sanctions

Strategies for dealing with misbehaviour:

1. The child is made aware that his behaviour is unacceptable, explaining that it is the behaviour that is rejected, and not the child.
2. The seating arrangement in class may be altered.
3. The child may be temporarily removed to another class.
4. Extra work or the repetition of work may be assigned to the pupil.
5. Play may be curtailed.
6. A comment may be written into the child's homework journal, to be signed by parent(s).
7. Parents may be called in to discuss the child's behaviour with the teacher.
8. An official verbal warning will be given to the pupil. The Principal will be notified.
9. A written warning will be sent to the parents concerning their child's behaviour.
10. The matter will be referred to the B.O.M. The Board will recommend one or more of the following sanctions:
 - (a) Transfer of child to another class on a permanent basis.
 - (b) Ban on the child representing the school or participating in any out-of-school activities.
 - (c) Recording of misbehaviour on child's School Report Form.
 - (d) Suspension from school.

Programme for work with Perpetrators and Targets of Bullying Behaviour

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. Targets of bullying 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.

Teachers can, in co-operation with parents, help those who are involved in bullying behaviour in a number of ways. Irish research evidence shows that there is a strong link between *self-esteem* and involvement in bullying behaviour (as a perpetrator, or a target, or both). For this reason, the school will make every possible effort to promote self-esteem enhancement in students through its day-to-day teaching practice and particularly in its anti-bullying measures. Expert bodies typically advise that parents of children, who are involved in bullying behaviour, particularly as targets, should make every effort to help build their children's self-esteem through positive parenting and involvement in extra curricular activities.

It is possible, if situations indicate this to be favourable and with parental approval, for teachers to work with targets of bullying in building *assertive behaviour*. In this way, targets of bullying can learn to feel effective in their interactions in a non-aggressive way. Likewise, *social skills* can be developed in perpetrators and targets alike. These types of work are undertaken in a collaborative, behaviourally-focussed way, in which the teacher will seek to build an alliance with the child in exploring future behavioural options.

Some children who perpetrate bullying behaviour may have the more general problem of managing anger. When this proves to be the case, *anger management* work may be attempted in a similar way to the types of work outlined above.

In the event that a solution is not forthcoming with reference to existing staff and resources at the school, the school may refer to *Trinity College Dublin Anti-Bullying Research and Resource Centre* for guidance on these and related matters.

This Policy has been sanctioned by teachers, Parents Association and Board of Management 2007.