

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School



Love, Grow, Believe, Achieve!

Anti-Bullying Policy

Aims

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School aims to ensure that all pupils are free to enjoy an education free from the fear of being bullied.

Understanding Bullying - A definition

It is important to recognise what, in law, is defined as bullying. Bullying can be defined as:

A range of harmful behaviour, both physical and psychological. All bullying behaviour usually has the following four features:

- 1) It is usually 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 feelings of distress, fear, loneliness and lack of confidence in those who are at the receiving end.

Objectives

In order to fulfil these specific anti-bullying aims, our school:

1. Ensures that the whole community of parents, pupils and staff understand what bullying is.
2. Reinforces the anti-bullying message with the whole staff community through regular general and specific INSET, staff meetings and individual communications between staff members.
3. Equips pupils with strategies which enable them to respond to bullying behaviour.
4. Reinforces the anti-bullying message with pupils specifically through PSE, class / tutor time, assemblies; and in general through the curriculum, using projects, drama, stories, literature, historical events, current affairs and the daily interactions between staff and pupils.
5. Reinforces the anti-bullying message with parents through the school website, regular formal parent communications and informal communications which reinforce the school's aims and quick response to concerns as they are aired.
6. Collates and listens to pupil opinions on incidents of bullying, in order to improve school policy and procedures.
7. Ensures that parents, staff and pupils are aware of the procedures to follow if they are the victim of alleged bullying or if they feel that they might be acting in bullying ways.
8. Ensures that parents, staff and pupils understand the signs of bullying.
9. Provides support to those who are the victims of bullying and those who are perpetrating bullying behaviours.
10. Provides Peer Mediators in school to support those who are the victims of bullying in conjunction with other adult support services.
11. Provides restorative justice conferences, either facilitated by school staff or the youth offending service as appropriate.
12. Ensures that all pupils understand the school's Behaviour Policy and the sanctions which may be put in place in response to substantiated incidences of bullying.

St. Mary's Catholic Primary School does not tolerate any form of bullying.

- It is up to everyone in the community to stop bullying by making it unacceptable for anybody to be a bully without being found out.
- Bullying can take a wide range of forms, but anything which is done to another person and is meant to hurt them or embarrass them, either by an individual or as part of a group, may be considered to be bullying and should be reported.

Some of the different types of bullying recognised by the school include:

- Emotional (being unfriendly, threatening looks/gestures, tormenting such as hiding belongings)
- Physical (pushing, hitting, shoving or any form of physical violence)
- Verbal (name calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours)
- Cyber (all forms of abuse involving the internet, social websites, chat rooms, mobile phones, email, text messages, photographs etc)
- Exclusion (deliberately ignoring and refusing to allow someone to join in)
- Interference with possessions (hiding, stealing and destroying belongings)

Some of the reasons why people may be bullied include:

- Sexual and sexist (unwanted physical contact, sexually abusive or sexist comments related to appearance or sexual activity, cyber-bullying, exclusion)
- Racial (emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, exclusion, interference with possessions which is done in the name of the victim's perceived racial differences)
- Religious (emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, exclusion, interference with possessions) which is done in the name of the victim's perceived religious differences
- Cultural (emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, exclusion, interference with possessions) which is done in the name of the victim's perceived cultural differences
- Special educational needs and/ or disability (emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, exclusion, interference with possessions) which is done in the name of the victim's perceived differences in terms of their special educational needs and/ or disability)
- Homophobic (emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, exclusion, interference with possessions) which is done in the name of the victim's perceived differences in sexuality. Research evidences that pupils may also experience homophobic bullying related to gender stereotyping, e.g. sensitive boys, academic boys, sporty girls, boisterous girls.
- Appearance (emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, exclusion, interference with possessions) which is done in the name of the victim's perceived differences/personal choices in terms of their appearance.
- Personal Hygiene (emotional, physical, verbal, sexual, cyber, exclusion, interference with possessions) which is done in the name of the victim's differences in terms of their personal hygiene.

Equality Act 2010

Bullying on the Basis of the Protected Characteristics referenced in The Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage/civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion and belief, sex and sexual orientation, Welsh Language) will be addressed in the same way as other forms of bullying. However, it will be seen in the context of the school's commitment to promoting an environment where all members of its community are respected, valued and celebrated equally for their differences. This aspect of the anti-bullying policy has a direct link to the school's Equality Policy and Equality Action Plan. All incidents of bullying related to the protected characteristics will be recorded and reported on.

Cyber Bullying

Cyberbullying can be defined as the use of information and communication technology (ICT), particularly mobile phones and the internet to deliberately upset someone else. Cyberbullying is different to other forms of bullying. In cyberbullying, the audience for the bullying can be very large and reached rapidly. This means that the degree and seriousness, as well as the possible risks and repercussions can be harder to control and curtail.

Cyberbullying can take many forms such as:

- Threats and intimidation;

- Harassment or stalking;
- Vilification and defamation;
- Peer rejection and exclusion;
- Identity theft;
- Unauthorised access and impersonation;
- Publicly posting, sending or forwarding personal or private information or images;
- Manipulation

The reasons why people may be a victim of cyberbullying are the same and the reasons for other types of bullying (noted above), for example for reasons related to their protected characteristic, their appearance or their personal hygiene.

The following technologies can be used as vehicles for cyberbullying:

- Mobile phones;
- Instant messenger and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP)
- Chatrooms and message boards
- E-mail
- Webcams
- Social network sites
- Video-hosting sites
- Virtual learning environments (VLEs)
- Gaming sites, consoles and virtual worlds

It is recognised that in the case of cyberbullying, the victim and aggressor may not be on the school premises at the time when the incidents occur. However, the school recognises its responsibility to address the problem where possible and will take action to prevent incidents of this kind. It is also recognised that 'bystanders' can easily become perpetrators – by passing on or showing to others images designed to humiliate, for example or by taking part in online polls or discussions.

Signs of bullying

Bullying can cause serious psychological damage. A pupil who is being bullied may display some of the following signs:

- Becomes frightened of coming to school, or frightened to attend specific lessons or go into specific areas of the school
- Changes to their usual routine
- Becomes more withdrawn or anxious than previously
- Begins stammering
- Threatens to run away or runs away
- Threatens suicide
- Begins to perform poorly at school
- Frequently has missing or damaged possessions
- Is always asking for extra money or never has money
- Has unexplained injuries
- Becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
- Begins to bully others
- Stops eating or attending meals
- Is afraid to use the internet or a mobile phone
- Becomes nervous when a cyber message is received
- Is reluctant to discuss reasons for any of the above

Pupil's guide to how to respond if you are being bullied

Pupils are taught various strategies to deal with bullying, including:

1. Be proud of the ways in which you are different – everyone is unique so everyone is different from everyone else.
2. If you are being bullied try to stay with friends as much as possible.
3. When the bullying starts, try to stay calm. People who bully often like the fact that they can ‘wind you up’. They like the feeling of power that they have and they want you to react.
4. Breathe deeply or count to 10 in your head. Remind yourself that you don’t deserve this treatment.
5. You may want to walk away from the situation. Sometimes this will help as the bully is not getting the reaction, he/she wants. (Remember that you should always tell someone what has happened).
6. Try explaining to the bully that his/her words/actions are upsetting; he or she may not be aware of this. ‘I don’t like what you are saying about me. I want you to stop.’
7. If the bullying continues try not to show your feelings. Walk away quickly, quietly and confidently, even if you don’t feel that way inside.
8. The bully will not stop if he/she thinks he/she can get away with such behaviour. Discuss the problem with your friends and/or a family member.
9. Tell a member of staff or ask your friends to tell a member of staff on your behalf. Don’t forget to use your peer listeners.
10. Keep a diary of the words or behaviour the bullies use to hurt you. Try to write the date, the time, what happened and who was involved. This is useful to your parents/guardians and teachers when they are trying to stop the bullying.

Pupil’s guide to how to respond if you think someone is being bullied and how to prevent bullying

Pupils are taught various strategies, including:

1. If the pupil being bullied is in any danger, fetch help. If he or she is not in danger, your presence may ease the situation so remain together
2. Show that you and your friends disapprove
3. Give sympathy and support to other pupil/s who may be bullied.
4. Be careful about teasing or making personal remarks. If you think individuals might not find your comments funny don’t say them
5. If you know of bullying, tell someone. The victim may be too scared or lonely to tell.

Remember it is helpful if allegations of bullying are supported with evidence. If bullying occurs via social networking sites or mobile technologies, copies should be printed and given to or information forwarded electronically to a member of staff.

Parents’ guide to bullying behaviours

Whenever a serious case of bullying is uncovered the parents or guardian of both the victim and the bully would normally be informed either in writing or by personal contact.

If your child is being bullied:

Parents along with peers will probably be the first to hear of a bullying incident. Parents should contact their child’s class teacher or headteacher if they are worried. It is essential to stay calm, supportive and find out the facts of the situation; bullying can be complex to understand as it is possible that the parties involved will have varying perceptions of the events under investigation. Reassurance will be needed in order to persuade your child that they have done the right thing by telling you. You may find it helpful to have the following checklist at your side to ensure that correct information is passed to the school.

- Who was involved?
- Where did it take place, when and how often?
- Why did it take place?
- What form did the bullying take?

When you inform the school of these details, you will be told how the school will proceed; this will normally begin with an investigation into the allegations (see below for details). Be reassured that this will be managed sensitively with the needs of all the pupils involved carefully considered. You will want to ask what you can do to support the school’s actions to support your child. You will also want to make

a note of the suggested strategy the school intends to take. Stay in touch with the school and inform the school of how things are improving. Establish further contact if necessary.

If your child is involved in the bullying:

It is important to work with the school to modify the patterns of behaviour which are causing your son/daughter to bully. Do not panic and blame yourself. Acknowledge that these things do happen and the school has mechanisms in place to deal with this issue. It is helpful to recognise some of the reasons why pupils behave in this way from time to time. Children sometimes bully others because:

- They are not aware of how hurtful it is
- They are copying the behaviour of older siblings or people they admire
- They have a temporary difficulty integrating in their peer group
- They are bullying others because of encouragement from friends
- They are going through a difficult time personally and need help
- They have not yet learnt satisfactory ways for making firm relationships

To stop your child from being involved in bullying behaviour:

- Talk with your son/daughter and help him or her to understand that what he or she is doing is unacceptable as it makes other pupils unhappy
- Discourage other members of the family from using aggressive behaviour in order to get what they want
- Suggest ways of joining in activities with other pupils without bullying
- Liaise with the school
- Make time to have regular chats about how things are going at school
- Check that your child has identified an adult at school to whom he or she can go to if she or he has a problem or a worry of any kind

Please note that the School will want to and need to take action if bullying behaviour occurs. The matter will be sensitively handled but it needs to be effective. Sanctions will link with those outlined in our behaviour policy named the Building Relationships Policy.

Prevention of Bullying

The school aims to prevent bullying from becoming established. This is achieved by establishing a culture in which bullying is not tolerated and where it is seen as the responsibility of all members of the school community to report any instances of bullying.

- School Council provides a forum where children and young people can raise general issues of concern
- The curriculum is used as a vital means of teaching children and young people how to manage these feelings and specific issues are addressed in PSE, Assemblies and class time
- The Restorative Justice system exists to support individuals in need.

Procedures for investigating a case of suspected bullying

Bullying events may be identified in several ways:

- Disclosure to a member of staff by the individual being bullied
- Disclosure to another pupil by the individual being bullied
- Witnesses to specific bullying events
- Suspicion of bullying based upon the indicators listed above.

In all cases an allegation of bullying should be treated seriously, open, fairly and investigated thoroughly.

All members of staff have a duty to respond straight away if they suspect, or are made aware of, a case of discrimination and/or bullying. It may be possible for the staff involved to carry out an initial investigation; however, the preferred route is for staff to make a note of the date, time and nature of the incident and pass evidence onto the relevant class teacher for investigation of the matter, in conjunction with a Senior Member of Staff.

An investigation of bullying will take time: there are no instant solutions. However, the member of staff investigating should take the following steps:

- Victim(s), Aggressor(s) and Witness(es) will be interviewed by the member of staff investigating. All parties will be reassured of the discretion of the school in dealing with such matters within the limits of our confidentiality policy. The victim(s) in particular should be reassured that the matter will be dealt with and is being treated seriously.
- If the victim reports the matter, they should be spoken to first. If not, any witnesses should be interviewed, followed by the accused pupil and finally the victim.
- All pupils involved in the situation should be given a fair hearing and be permitted to tell their version of events without comment upon the nature of the behaviour described.
- A written summary of the information gathered should be made, and agreed by the individuals involved. This is important as it will enable the victim and witnesses to feel reassured that action is being taken, and for the accused party to feel that they have had a fair hearing.
- Remember that it can be hard to establish the facts.
- A problem-solving approach, which avoids blame, can be more effective in clarifying the situation and achieving change.
- All incidents of discrimination and bullying related to the protected characteristics, ALN, appearance and personal hygiene will be recorded and reported on using the SIMS behaviour management system.

Action by the school

If it is felt that bullying has taken place, the victim will be told that action will be taken to prevent bullying from continuing in line with the School's Building Relationships Policy. The school may respond to incidents of bullying which take place outside of the immediate authority of the school. The bully needs to understand the effects of their actions upon the victim, and will be given support in order to modify their behaviour, including, if appropriate, counselling. If, in spite of support, the bullying behaviour continues, there are a number of possible sanctions available to the school. These may include:

- A verbal warning, recorded in the perpetrator's file
- A letter of apology to the victim, with a copy to be kept on file. A verbal apology would be appropriate for children at foundation phase
- Referral to the Head teacher for action in the case of persistent or severe bullying (in cases of severe and persistent bullying this may include exclusion).

The victim of the bullying will receive support from adults as required and their recovery will be closely monitored by a nominated adult who works closely in partnership with the victim's parents.

Partnership with Parents

Whenever a serious case of bullying is uncovered the parents or guardian of both the victim and the bully will be informed either in writing or by personal contact. This contact may involve class teachers, Deputy Head or Head teacher.

Follow Up

The victim will be asked periodically whether the situation has been resolved and has remained resolved. If any reprisals are reported, the Head must be informed immediately for further action to be taken.

Recording Incidents of discrimination and/or bullying and analysing the information

The Head Teacher will maintain an electronic record of incidents of discrimination and bullying and will prepare internal reports in order to analyse any specific patterns or trends which suggest either internal or external factors which can be diminished in order to prevent further incidences of discrimination and/or bullying. This information will be reported to the governing body on a termly basis and to parents on an annual basis through the Governors Report to Parents.

Links with other policies

- Behaviour
- Child Protection
- Complaints
- Equality
- Inclusion
- PSE

Welsh Government Guidance Documents (2016)

This series of guidance materials offers further information and advice:

- Rights, Respect, Equality: Statutory guidance for governing bodies of maintained schools - <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2019-11/rights-respect-equality-statutory-guidance-for-governing-bodies-of-maintained-schools.pdf>
- Rights, Respects, Equality: guidance for parents and carers - <https://gov.wales/rights-respect-equality-guidance-parents-and-carers>
- Rights, Respect, Equality: guide for children - <https://gov.wales/rights-respect-equality-guide-children>
- Bullying at school: guidance for parents & carers - <https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-03/is-your-child-being-bullied.pdf>

