

# St Bernardine's School Regents Park



## Bullying Policy

# INTRODUCTION

The definition of "bullying" is widely known and stated in school policies, anti-bullying programs and literature worldwide. However, negative incidents which occur on a daily basis in schools and homes which are NOT bullying are less clearly defined. This leads to the term "bullying" being overused by children to explain and identify all negative interactions and incidents as they do not have alternative terminology to use.

When children perceive themselves as victims of bullying, regardless of whether the incident is bullying or not, according to the true definition, children will inevitably develop a victim mentality over time. The same can be said for a child accused of bullying when in fact it may not be. Damaging accusations can be made when common understanding is not reached. Prolonged identification as a "bully" will create for a child an identity which leads to an unhealthy concept of self for that child. Perceptions, emotions and behaviours are all closely related. It is for these reasons that it is important that children are able to accurately interpret and describe situations they are in. This helps empower them to take control of their lives and circumstances surrounding it. It also helps those dealing with the problems and issues to address them in appropriate ways and to use commonly understood words to do so.

Bullying affects everyone, not just the bullies and the victims. It also affects those other children who watch, and less aggressive pupils can be drawn in by group pressure. Bullying can have negative lifelong consequences both for students who bully and for their victims.

**Bullying is not an inevitable part of school life or a necessary part of growing up, and it rarely sorts itself out.**

It is clear that certain jokes, insults, intimidating/threatening behaviour, written abuse and violence are to be found in our society. No one person or group, whether staff or pupil, should have to accept this type of behaviour. Only when all issues of bullying are addressed, will a child best be able to benefit from the opportunities available at our School.

The school is committed to the eradication of bullying in all its forms. Bullying is wrong and will not be tolerated and we aim to make the children and parents well aware of this. **We rely on communication between the home and school to overcome bullying at St Bernardine's.**

## St Bernardine's defines bullying as:

A form of behaviour which is usually hurtful and deliberate, often persistent, sometimes continuing for weeks, months or even years, and it is difficult for those being bullied to defend themselves.

# WHAT IS BULLYING?

Bullying can occur through several types of anti-social behaviour.

## PHYSICAL.

A child can be physically punched, kicked, hit, spat at etc.

## VERBAL.

Verbal abuse can take the form of name-calling and teasing. It may be directed towards gender, ethnic origin, physical/social disability, or personality etc.

## EXCLUSION.

A child can be bullied simply by being excluded from games/discussions/activities, with those they believe to be their friends.

## DAMAGE TO PROPERTY OR THEFT.

Pupils may have their property damaged or stolen. The bully may use physical threats in order that the pupil hands over property to them.

## CYBER BULLYING

The same rules apply online as in the 'real world' about how to treat other people. Unfortunately, people don't always treat each other well online, and students may find that they are the target of cyberbullying. You might be teased or have rumours spread about you online, receive nasty messages (online or texts) or even threats. It can happen any hour of the day, from people you know, and sometimes people you don't know.

# WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU ARE BEING BULLIED?

## **Remember ...**

**...Your silence is the bully's greatest weapon!**

- ❖ Tell yourself that you do not deserve to be bullied, and that it is WRONG!
- ❖ Be proud of who you are. It is good to be individual.
- ❖ Try not to show that you are upset. It is hard but a bully thrives on someone's fear. Stay with a group of friends/people. There is safety in numbers.
- ❖ Be assertive - shout "No!" Walk confidently away. Go straight to a teacher or member of staff.
- ❖ Ensure your online content is secure and privacy settings are used.
- ❖ Fighting back may make things worse. Talk to a teacher or parent/guardian first.
- ❖ Generally it is best to tell an adult you trust straight away. You will get immediate support. Teachers will take you seriously and will deal with bullies in a way, which will end the bullying and will not make things worse for you. If at first you do not feel you are being listened to try again.

# IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE IS BEING BULLIED

- ✓ TAKE ACTION! Watching and doing nothing looks as if you are on the side of the bully. It makes the victim feel more unhappy and on their own.
- ✓ If you feel you cannot get involved, tell an adult IMMEDIATELY. Teachers have ways of dealing with the bully without getting you into trouble.
- ✓ Do not be, or pretend to be, friends with a bully.

# AS A PARENT

- Look for unusual behaviour in your children. For example, they may suddenly not wish to attend school, feel ill regularly, or not complete work to their normal standard.
- Always take an active role in your child's education. Enquire how their day has gone, who they have spent their time with, how lunchtime was spent etc.
- If you feel your child may be a victim of bullying behaviour, inform the School IMMEDIATELY. Concerns can be directed to a member of Administration or your child's teacher. **Under no circumstances do you take up the issue with the bully (or the bully's parents) yourself.** Try not to immediately apportion blame. While you remain calm and concerned please keep communication lines open with the school. Resolution cannot always be achieved in one visit so we welcome your continued feedback.
- Watch your child's online usage and monitor communication and ensure privacy settings are enabled and maintained.
- It is important that you advise your child not to fight back. It can make matters worse!
- **Listen to your child and take his/her feelings & fears seriously.**
- Make sure your child is fully aware of the School policy concerning bullying, and that they will not be afraid to ask for help.

# AS A SCHOOL

- ❖ Organise the community in order to minimise opportunities for bullying, e.g. ensure diligent supervision at all times.
- ❖ Use any opportunity to discuss aspects of bullying, and the appropriate way to behave towards each other
- ❖ Deal quickly, firmly and fairly with any complaints, involving parents where necessary and take every action required to eradicate it from our school.
- ❖ Review the School Policy and its degree of success.
- ❖ The School Staff will continue to have a firm but fair discipline structure. There are 4 school rules which are simple and easy to understand.
- ❖ Encourage pupils to treat everyone with respect and to seek help if they are being bullied.

# ACTION TO BE TAKEN WHEN BULLYING IS SUSPECTED

Should a case of alleged bullying occur, the Principal, APA, APRE and class teacher will be informed immediately and a thorough investigation will take place. This will be to establish the facts and to decide if **actual bullying** has taken place. If not, the incident will be dealt with according to our normal behaviour management policy.

At this time a judgement will be made determining the extent of the bullying and how it should be managed. Each situation may be treated differently depending on circumstances.

If what has happened proves to be **actual bullying**, the Parents of the bully will be informed and asked to come into school to discuss the situation. The parents of the victim will also be informed and may be asked to come to school to discuss the situation.

The Principal, APA or APRE will make it clear to the parents of the bully that bullying will not be tolerated and that any further incidents could result in a number of disciplinary steps including suspension or, if severe, exclusion. The child in question will then be carefully monitored for a period of time and a review meeting with his/ her parents will be arranged at the end of it. Access to the School's Guidance Officer or Pastoral Worker will be determined depending on the individual needs of both victims and bullies.

Help, support and counselling will be given as is appropriate to both the victims and the bullies:

## We support the victims in the following ways:

- by offering them an immediate opportunity to talk about the experience with their class teacher, or another teacher or member of administration if they choose.
- informing the victim's parents/guardians.
- by offering continuing support when they feel they need it.
- by taking disciplinary steps described below to prevent more bullying.

## We also discipline, yet try to help the bullies in the following ways:

- by talking about what happened, to discover why they became involved. Informing the bully's parents/guardians.

- by continuing to work with the bully in order to get rid of prejudiced attitudes as far as possible.
- by taking disciplinary steps to prevent more bullying.

## DISCIPLINARY STEPS

- ∅ They will be warned officially to stop offending.
- ∅ Informing the bully's and victim's parents/guardians/Carers.
- ∅ The bully may be excluded from the playground at break times for a period of time deemed appropriate by the Administration Team.
- ∅ The bully & victim may be involved in a process of mediation aimed at empowering the victim and helping the bully to take responsibility.
- ∅ If they continue to bully they will be excluded from interaction with students both in class and lunch times.
- ∅ They may be placed on an individual behaviour management plan and their parents informed again.
- ∅ If they do not stop bullying their parents will be called in again and suspension is an option.
- ∅ If they do not stop bullying they will be recommended for permanent exclusion from the school community.

## CURRICULUM ACTION PLAN

The subject of bullying is frequently discussed in the course of normal school activities but particularly in RE work, creating and maintaining the class vision statement, morning assembly, values programme and school assemblies. The Anti-Bullying programme "Beating Bully Bulldozer" is taught explicitly to all year levels and revisited frequently in every classroom. Posters about bullying and strategies to deal with bullies are visible in each classroom.