
Statement On Bullying

INTRODUCTION

Bullying is an insidious social problem found in many occupations and walks of life. In the school environment, it is the role of the faculty and administration to ensure *as far as is reasonably practicable*, structures and procedures embedded in school behavior policies to prevent bullying. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the whole school community to eradicate bullying by ensuring the development of a caring and supportive ethos.

Bullying is a willful, deliberate, hostile and repeated behavior by one or more people that is intended to harm others. Bullying is not based in anger. Rather, it is the manifestation of intolerance and the consideration of someone else as worthless or inferior and a sense of entitlement to control or harm others.

Bullying is NOT a "normal", acceptable child behavior.

Bullying DOES diminish with adult involvement.

Self-defense does NOT stop bullying.

Bullying is the ENTIRE school's problem; not just the victim's.

Bullying can be:

- Physical: pushing, kicking, hitting, pinching, any form of violence, threats, any form of unwanted contact;
- Verbal: name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumors, persistent teasing or taunting
- Emotional: tormenting, threatening, ridicule, humiliation, exclusion from groups or activities;
- Discriminatory: racial/cultural taunts, graffiti, gestures;
- Manipulative: extortion, coercion;

Students are held responsible for good behavior and discipline in line with the administrative statement of general principles. A written policy can be found in the family handbook, which includes procedures for enforcing school rules.

In the school discipline policy, the zero-tolerance/anti-bullying policy is clarified and is publicized annually to pupils, staff and parents. It should also be regularly reviewed by all of those.

All faculty members have amoral and legal duty to take measures to prevent all forms of bullying among pupils.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Children who are being bullied at school will not always be prepared to tell those in authority. However, when a disclosure is made, it will always be treated seriously. While others may not feel that certain actions or words are of a bullying nature, if the recipient feels they are being bullied that is sufficient to be considered as prima facie bullying.

For those pupils who are unable to inform staff about their problem, observations regarding specific behavior patterns are routinely established within the school.

Signs of bullying might include:

- unwillingness to come to school;
- withdrawn, isolated behavior;
- complaining about missing possessions;
- refusal to talk about the problem;
- being easily distressed;
- damaged or incomplete work;
- unexplained academic decline/general low morale;
- high rates of absenteeism;
- frequent disputes, complaints and grievances;
- isolation from other members of the class;
- inefficient team working.

Where these difficulties are occurring, investigation will be undertaken, checking with teachers and maintaining vigilance.

Staff will be able to use their knowledge of the pupils to identify changes in their behavior that might indicate bullying. Pupils should be encouraged to be open with their parents who can then pass on concerns to the school.

METHODS OF PREVENTION

The first and most important measure we take is a proactive one. Positive social behaviors are taught, modeled and recognized. Several school-wide programs exist to reinforce these behaviors. In the event bullying does occur:

- Victims of bullying, both pupils and staff, may end up believing that they deserve to be bullied. They feel powerless and vulnerable. Self esteem can be badly damaged and self confidence needs to be re-established;
- The school policy maintains that bullying will not be tolerated and that all incidents will be taken very seriously;
- Ways of reporting bullying are clearly established for both pupils and staff;
- Parents can feel assured that their concerns for their child are taken seriously;
- Consideration is given to appropriate "assertiveness" training for the bullied and other vulnerable groups.

THE SCHOOL POLICY

The school policy dealing with bullying is part of the general discipline policy. These elements are considered in the policy.

- take all bullying problems seriously;
- investigate all incidents thoroughly;
- ensure that bullies and victims are interviewed separately;
- obtain witness information;
- keep a written record of the incident, investigation and outcomes;
- inform appropriate staff about the incident where a pupil is involved;
- take action is taken to prevent further incidents. Such action includes:
- imposition of consequences;
- obtaining an apology;
- informing parents of the bullied child(ren);
- mandatory meeting with the parents of the bully
- providing mentor support for both victim and bully.

Should bullying re-occur, further measures will be taken at each occurrence such as exclusion from extracurricular activities (trips, programs, etc.), suspension or eventual expulsion.

Parents and students may contact a principal directly with any be complaints or questions and should be assured that, should they make a complaint through that procedure, the matter will be taken seriously and dealt with accordingly.

The above text was adapted from the National Association of Head Teachers' revised bullying guidelines.