

## Policy against Bullying

### **Background**

When staff, pupils and parents work together we create more considerate, courteous and co-operative environment in Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada.

Every student has the right to enjoy his/her learning and leisure free from intimidation. Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada does not tolerate bullying in any form. All members of the Gaelscoil community are committed to ensuring a safe and caring environment, which promotes personal growth and positive self-esteem for all.

The role of this school is to provide the highest possible standard of education for all its pupils. A secure, stable environment is essential to achieve this goal. Bullying behaviour undermines and dilutes the quality of education and can result in emotional damage. We have drawn up this policy firstly to try to prevent bullying and secondly to deal with both victim and bully should bullying occur.

### **What is bullying?**

Bullying is **repeated** aggression, verbal, psychological and physical, conducted by an individual or groups against others causing embarrassment, pain or discomfort.

Behaviour that is systematic and on-going is bullying. Bullying is a learned behaviour but is generally accepted that it can be unlearned.

Children in school argue and sometimes fight but where incidences are tit-for-tat this cannot be described as bullying. It is important to note that isolated incidents of aggressive behaviour, which are not condoned, cannot be described as bullying.

### **Examples of bullying:**

It can take a number of forms:

- Any form of physical violence such as hitting, pushing or spitting on others.
- Interfering with another's property by stealing, hiding, damaging or destroying it.
- Excluding others
- Using offensive names, teasing spreading rumours about others or their families
- Using put-downs, belittling others' abilities and achievements
- Writing offensive notes or graffiti about others
- Making degrading comments about another's culture, religious or social background
- Making suggestive comments or other forms of sexual abuse

- Ridiculing another's appearance, clothes or where they live
- Forcing others to act against their will

**If we are bullied:**

**Any pupil through no fault of his or her own may be bullied**

- We may feel frightened, unsafe, embarrassed, angry or unfairly treated
- Our work, sleep or ability to concentrate can suffer
- Our relationships with our family and friends may deteriorate
- We may feel confused and not know what to do about the problem
- It can be organised and planned or it may be unintentional
- Individuals or groups may be involved
- Remember if you are bullied it is not your fault

**What we do at Gaelscoil an Eiscir Riada to prevent bullying?**

Bullying behaviour thrives in an atmosphere of uncertainty and secrecy in which the victim often feels a sense of hopelessness and futility. A high degree of collective vigilance is needed throughout the school by teachers, parents and children if bullying behaviour is to be identified and dealt with in a fair and equitable manner

The Stay Safe Programme is taught in all classes in the school but is voluntary. This helps teachers and children to identify bullying and also teaches strategies to deal with bullying behaviour through discussion and role play. Children complete work sheets for homework, these should be signed by parents. The school intends to introduce different systems and strategies in order to raise awareness and to create an atmosphere in school where children know that bullying is not tolerated and when children feel confident to report bullying.

**As a school community we will not allow cases of bullying to go unreported but will speak up. Even at risk to ourselves.**

**Requirements of staff**

- Tell children from day one that bullying is not tolerated
- Remind students of their rights and responsibilities
- Be role models in word and action at all times
- Be observant of signs of distress or suspected incidents of bullying
- Make efforts to remove occasions for bullying by active patrolling during supervision duty

- Keep a written account of all incidents and suspected incidents of bullying, a copy of which is given to the principal or deputy principal to keep on file for future reference
- Arrive in class on time, move promptly and with pupils between the yard and the class room and to be present in class throughout instruction time
- Take steps to help victims and remove sources of distress while taking into account the victims view and feelings and without placing the victim at further risk
- Report suspected incidents to the principal or deputy principal, who will inform other members of staff so that the situation can be monitored and dealt with effectively
- If a member of staff is unsure as to whether an incident could be described as bullying then they should feel free to discuss the matter with principal

### **Requirements of students**

- Refuse to be involved in any bullying situation
- If you are present when bullying occurs, take some form of preventing action, as outlined in the Stay Safe Programme.
- Report the incident or suspected incident and help break down the code of secrecy; You have responsibility to tell, this is not **telling tales and by staying silent you are condoning bullying behaviour**
- If students who are being bullied or see other bullying, have the courage to speak out, they may help to reduce pain for themselves and other potential victims

### **Recommendations to parents**

- Watch for signs of distress in their child e.g. unwillingness to attend school, a pattern of headaches, missing equipment, request for extra money, damaged clothes or bruising
- Take an active interest in your child's social life and acquaintances
- Advise your child to tell a staff member about the incident. If possible allow her/him to report the problem himself/herself. He/she can gain much respect through taking the initiative and dealing with the problem himself/herself without parental involvement
- Inform the school if bullying is suspected
- Keep a written record (who, what, where, why, how), this will help the school to determine how to deal with the case and consequently help your child
- Do not encourage your child to retaliate

- Communicate to your child that parental involvement, if necessary, will be appropriate for the situation
- Be willing to attend interviews at the school if your child is involved in any bullying incident

### **How the school teaches children to deal with bullying**

*(Follows recommendations of the Department of Education guidelines 1993)*

- 1) A child or a parent makes a report that they/their child is being bullied
- 2) The teacher to whom the report is made seeks answers to questions of what, where, when and why in a calm manner and reports it to the school principal or deputy principal
- 3) If a gang is involved, each member will be interviewed individually and then the gang will be met as a group. Each member is asked for his/her account of what happened to ensure that everyone is clear about what everyone else has said
- 4) If it is concluded that a pupil has engaged in bullying behaviour it should be made clear that he/she is in breach of the Code of Behaviour and Discipline, where it is stated that bullying is always regarded as a very serious, unacceptable behaviour
- 5) The teacher will try to make children involved see the situation from the victim's point of view
- 6) Teachers will keep a written report of their discussions with those involved. Those involved may be asked to write an account of what happened
- 7) Where bullying has occurred the parents of those involved will be met. Actions being taken and the reasons for them will be explained and they will be referred to the school's behaviour and discipline policy. They will be asked to reinforce or support the actions of the school. We understand that it is difficult for parents to accept that their child may be involved in bullying behaviour but the role of the school is to stop this behaviour and your co-operation is essential. Denying that a problem exists will not solve the problem
- 8) The action taken will be dictated by the situation and the ages of the children involved and because no two situations are the same they will be dealt with on an individual basis. Appropriate actions will be taken in consultation with class teacher, principal, parents and where necessary the Board of Management

### **Actions open to the school if bullying occurs**

Some, all or a combination of the following actions are open to the school in order to stop and prevent bullying

- Change pupil's attitudes and redirect and reshape behaviour for the future, through Stay Safe, R.S.E. programmes, circle time, etc.
- Reconcile pupils involved, if possible
- Provide support and counselling, where necessary, for those victims of bullying behaviour, through the relevant section of the Health Board and/or the Nation Educational Psychological Services
- Restore harmony and goodwill, if possible
- Sanctions and strategies to show disapproval of very serious unacceptable behaviour as outlined in the school's policy for discipline and behaviour