

## **Ashbourne Community School**

### **Anti-Bullying Policy**

**This policy was drafted by a working group and presented to the general staff body, parents and students in the academic year 2001/02 and revised in the academic year 2004/05.**

This response to bullying is an integral part of the school SPHE programme and promotes a positive and safe school climate.

It is linked directly to our school mission statement, in particular in the following sections:

1. Our school is a place which fosters such values as respect, inclusion and care as evident in our school policy and practice.
2. We aim to develop in each student a confident, healthy self-image and a sense of responsibility.
3. We recognise that every student's personal and spiritual growth is important.

#### Definition of Bullying:

- Bullying is repeated aggression, verbal, psychological or physical conducted by an individual or group against others over a period of time.(DES guidelines)
- Bullying is an abuse of power.
- Bullying is the breaking down of a person.

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

- **Physical.** A person is physically kicked, punched, hit, spat at, etc.
- **Verbal.** Verbal abuse can take the form of name calling. It may be directed towards physical/social disability, or personality, sexuality, hurtful jeering of mothers/fathers or other family members, academic performance, etc.
- **Exclusion/Isolation.** A person can be bullied by being excluded from discussions or activities with those they believe to be their friends.
- **Damage to Property or Theft.** A person's property may be damaged or stolen. Physical threats may be used by the bully in order that property is handed over to them.
- **Extortion.** Demands for money, possessions or equipment, often accompanied by threats or daring/ forcing others to steal.
- **E-Bullying.** Using web pages, anonymous phone calls, e-mails and text messaging to abuse, intimidate and attack others, either directly or indirectly i.e rumour mongering.
- **Racism.** Discrimination against a person's ethnic background, skin colour etc.

Bullying is not an isolated incident of aggression between people. Disputes will take place, and will be dealt with accordingly. Unpleasant as these incidents are, they are not bullying and should not be reported as such.

Aims:

To raise awareness of bullying as an unacceptable form of behaviour.

To create a safe environment for all members of our school community and to raise awareness of our Anti-Bullying procedures.

Objectives:

Pupils, staff, parents and visitors will treat one another and their belongings fairly and with respect.

Bullying behaviour will not be tolerated in Ashbourne Community School.

People feel safe and are able to report bullying without being afraid.

People stand up for and support each other.

To put in place a procedure for noting, reporting and responding to incidents of bullying.

The following symptoms may indicate that a pupil is being bullied:

- Anxiety about travelling to and from school.
- Unwillingness to go to school.
- Pattern of unexplained absenteeism or lateness.
- Pattern of illness.
- Unexplained changes in mood or behaviour.
- Out of character comments about pupils or teachers.
- Possessions missing or damaged.
- Increased requests for money, or stealing.
- Unexplained bruising or damaged clothing.

These signs do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. If they are repeated they require investigation.

Raising Awareness of Bullying as a Form of Unacceptable Behaviour:

- This will be achieved by displaying key points from the policy in every classroom and at school entrances.
- The policy will be printed in school journals and in staff and parent handbooks.
- Anti-Bullying lessons will be run in the first week of each term through the SPHE programme.
- Anti-Bullying weeks will be run through each school year as appropriate.
- Student Council mentoring.

How you can tell and who to tell if you are being bullied:

- Tell your tutor, year head, any teacher or a member of the student council.
- Tell the teacher after class or at another time.
- Write a note and hand it up with homework.
- Telephone the school or write to the school.

- Tell for another student.
- Keep telling until you get help.

Procedures for noting and reporting incidents of bullying:

1. All reports of bullying will be noted, investigated and dealt with by teachers.
2. It will be made clear to pupils that reporting is the right option, that they will receive help and that they will be kept informed.
3. When a teacher receives a report of bullying, a Bullying Report Form must be completed.
4. The Bullying Report Form will be passed on to the Year Head who will collaborate with the relevant members of the Anti-Bullying Committee.
5. Serious cases of bullying will be referred immediately to the Principal.
6. In cases where it has been determined that bullying has occurred, parents/guardians will be informed at the earliest appropriate time so that they are given the opportunity of discussing the matter.
7. Parents/guardians should report a suspected incident of bullying to the class tutor, year head or principal.
8. Non-teaching staff such as special needs assistants, caretakers, secretaries, cleaning staff and supervisors will be encouraged to report any incident of bullying witnessed by them.
9. In the case of a complaint regarding a staff member, this will normally be dealt with by the Principal.
10. In the case of a complaint regarding the Principal the matter will be dealt with by the Board of Management.
11. Where cases remain unresolved at school level, the matter will be referred to the Board of Management.

Procedures for investigating and dealing with bullying:

1. The investigating teachers(s) will be calm and objective. The matter will be dealt with outside the classroom to avoid humiliation to any party involved.
2. The teacher(s) will speak separately to the pupils involved in an attempt to get both sides of the story. Interviews will be conducted with due regard to the rights of all involved.
3. The teacher(s) will investigate the incident by seeking answers to questions of what, when, who and why. Factual notes will be kept of each stage of investigation.
4. Pupils will be asked to write down their account of the incident.
5. If a group is involved, each member will be interviewed separately.
6. If it is concluded that a pupil has been involved in bullying behaviour, it will be made clear to him/her that he/she is in breach of the school's Code of Behaviour. The teacher will also try to get him/her to see the victim's position.

7. Where a serious incident of bullying has been established, the teacher will present the Principal with a written record of the discussions with those involved.
8. Sanctions will be imposed in line with School Discipline Policy.
9. Follow-up meetings may be arranged separately with the two parties with a view to possibly bringing them together at a later date if the victim is ready and agreeable.
10. If the behaviour is repeated the parents/guardians of both parties will be informed. They will be given the opportunity to discuss the matter and are in a position to help and support their children before a crisis occurs.
11. Where cases remain unresolved at school level, the matter should be referred to the Board of Management.

Supporting the victim and counselling the perpetrator:

- Pupils involved in bullying need assistance on a regular basis.
- Perpetrators may need counselling to help them learn other ways of meeting their needs without violating the rights of others.
- Victims may need counselling and opportunities to develop their friendship and social skills.
- The School Chaplain and Guidance Counsellors may be involved.
- In some situations it may be necessary to get in touch with Gardai, Health Board or other external agencies, or parents might request contact numbers of same.

Initiatives to counter bullying Behaviour:

- SPHE Programme (lessons on Anti-Bullying once a term).
- Display of key points of Anti-Bullying policy in every classroom, in journals and in staff and parent handbooks.
- Anti-Bullying Week.
- Whole School approach.
- Class contacts.
- Sporadic anonymous questionnaires/surveys.
- Curricular initiatives.
- Learning support where appropriate.
- Student Council mentoring.
- Anger management.

Evaluation and review:

The school's anti-bullying code will be subject to regular review in order to ensure that it is being adhered to and that it continues to meet the needs of the school as these change and develop.

It was evaluated in May 2006 and will be reviewed again in May 2007.