

**ST. BRIGID'S CATHOLIC PRIMARY SCHOOL**  
**ANTI-BULLYING POLICY**



Date adopted by governing body - 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011  
Chair of Governors Mr Chris O'Connor  
Headteacher – Mrs Rachael Tyler

To be reviewed annually

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Chair of Governors

The Governors and staff of St. Brigid's recognise that as part of a whole approach to behaviour, it is essential to address the problem of bullying. We recognise that bullying can be a problem in all schools and it is essential to plan for its occurrence rather than merely act when a problem occurs.

### **Background**

Schools in which bullies are allowed to operate become stressful and unwelcoming places, not just for the victims but for all those who look on and feel threatened and helpless. Bullying affects everyone - other children, teachers, the class and indeed everyone associated with the school.

Bullying can take many forms. It may be short term or can continue systematically over months or years. Bullying can be verbal, physical or just a look. It can be overt or subtle intimidation. Different teachers, parents and children may define bullying differently.

*Bullying is generally regarded as willful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone else.*

Given this definition it becomes necessary to state the kinds of behaviour which we consider to constitute bullying.

In order to bully someone, a bully has to have some sort of power over the victim. (A power that is not always recognised by the parent or the teacher). Home and school values may conflict. This makes tackling the problem very difficult. The school may have to work in a climate where the values of the school differ from the values of the home and sometimes of society itself.

*All bullying is aggression - physical, verbal or psychological although not all aggressive behaviour is bullying.*

Any behaviour, regardless of the age or the sex of the child, which is the illegitimate use of power in order to hurt others is bullying behaviour.

Violence and secrecy undermine the power of the school and affirms the power of the bully. To be seen to act is as important as taking action - silence and secrecy nurture bullying. **Traditional stereotypes of bullies are unhelpful.** However, bullies do tend to have some things in common.

### **Bullies may:**

- Have assertive, aggressive attitudes over which they have little control.
- Lack empathy. They cannot imagine what the victim feels.
- Lack guilt. They rationalise that the victim somehow deserves the bullying treatment.

**Stereotypes of victims can also be unhelpful.** There are some children that are bullied because they speak, behave or look different. However vulnerability is not always visible or obvious to adults - a victim may look like any other child.

The most important and fundamental approach to the problem is to acknowledge that the problem exists and that the school intends to deal with them. Bullying is a form of unacceptable behaviour which needs modifying.

**Identifying children at risk.** (Vulnerability is not always obvious.)

Such children often have:

- No friends
- Unusual physical characteristics
- Poor communication and / or poor co-ordination
- Volatile, sulky or tearful behaviour
- Illness or frequent absences
- Accent or racial differences
- Unpopular families

*Child protection issues run parallel with bullying issues.*

There is increased public awareness and media coverage. Most people in society would agree that individuals have rights. Children also have basic rights therefore adults have basic duties. Children have the right to feel confident to tell us what is happening to them - we have the duty to act.

The majority of children have a fear of bullying. However, most children are reluctant to talk about it. We need to consider why children do not talk to adults about bullying.

**Why don't they tell us?**

- They feel parents and teachers cannot or will not help.
- Parents and teachers do not understand.
- If they tell, it makes things worse.
- They feel shame and guilt.
- They feel that in some way they must have deserved it.
- They are frightened.
- If it is hidden it might go away.
- It is an accepted part of life.

If a child feels confident and has the confidence in us or is so desperate that they want to tell us, then it is extremely important how we react. We can help by being positive.

**Guidance**

As bullying is a form of abuse there are some general guidelines for adults when a child confides in them that they have been bullied or have witnessed bullying.

**Do:**

- Tell the child you are glad they told you.
- Acknowledge they have been brave to tell you.
- Reassure them that what happened was not their fault.
- Show sympathy - empathise but never patronise.
- Reassure them that they are not alone.
- Be honest about your position - explain who you have to tell and why.
- Confidentiality is important as is a realistic, positive offer of help.

**Never:**

- Make promises you cannot keep.
- 'Interrogate' with lots of questions.
- Say anything which makes them feel responsible for the bullying - e.g. Why have you never told me before?
- Cast doubt on what they tell you - remember it has taken courage to tell you.
- Communicate feelings of anger without saying it is the bully you are angry with. (The child may think you are angry with them.)
- Panic - feeling that immediate action is required (acting in haste can be counter productive).

**What should we do if a bullying incident is reported or observed?**

If a child reports a bullying incident then the first reaction of the adult to the child is of paramount importance. (See guidelines above)

Similarly if behaviour which could be bullying is witnessed, or you are told about it by another child or adult or you have a feeling that something is going on ..... but you are not sure, then the way in which the incident is handled initially can affect the outcome and the success of the investigation into the incident.

**When an incident occurs it is important to follow set procedures.**

- Remove the victim and the bully from their audience
- Do not enter into any discussion with the victim or the bully in front of other children
- Talk to the victim - be sympathetic and non-judgmental. Tell them action will be taken.
- Speak to any witnesses or participants in the incident.
- Make brief notes on important evidence
- Talk to the bully, stay calm - let them have their say.

**If it is apparent that bullying has taken place** inform the Head / Acting Deputy / LM so that they can deal with it.

The Head / Acting Deputy / LM will then:

- Speak to the victim
- Speak to the bully. Confront the bully with any evidence. Invite their comments.
- Record the incident.
- If the incident is very serious or there has previously been evidence of bullying tell them their parents will be sent for and told about what has happened.
- Speak to the victim. Explain that you have taken action. Tell them again how brave they have been to talk to you.
- Speak to the victims parents and tell them what has happened.

Be aware

- If the victim is upset, crying etc., try not to see this as the most important element of the incident and so neglect the bullying.

- If the victim is always complaining about the way the other children treat them, do not assume that there is no validity in the accusation.
- If the bully has a past record of bullying it may not be the case that in this instance s/he has been bullying.
- A child with a record of bullying is accused unfairly by other children of bullying.

### **Points to consider**

Do not jump to conclusions.

An aggressive child is not necessarily a bully

The child who is upset is not always the victim.

Children should be encouraged to tell - talk - trust.

Children should be encouraged to discuss feelings, fears, attitudes and points of view.

Discussions about bullying consequences, ways of acting and speaking should be encouraged, particularly in Circle Time.

Children who are observers in the bullying incident can be encouraged to act in a positive way. For example, they may be encouraged to write down what they saw.

### **Recording of Incidents**

Each teacher has an Incident Book.

Any incident or accusation of bullying (by child or adult) must be recorded and reported to the Head.

If a child from another class is involved, that teacher should be informed of the issue.

The Head (Acting Deputy / LM) should be consulted before contact is made with the parent of either the victim or the bully. Other information may need to be considered.

Sanctions will follow those outlined in the **Behaviour Policy**.