

St Thomas à Becket Catholic Comprehensive School

Bullying Policy

Last updated: February 2008

Introduction

The school is committed to the health and safety of its members and will take action to safeguard their well-being. Jesus Christ Himself taught us to love our neighbours as ourselves and to turn the other cheek in the face of adversity. He taught us about the dignity and respect we must afford one another and our Mission Statement reinforces these extremely important Catholic values. Jesus also taught about forgiveness and reconciliation and the school acknowledges fully the two contrasting needs, those of the bully and those of the bullied, and will seek at all times to ensure the protection of each of its pupils from the effects of bullying and also that bullies are dealt with in accordance with the Behaviour and Discipline Policy which includes the need to reconcile the bully with the bullied and the community.

Aims and Objectives

- To ensure that staff, pupils and parents understand what the school community means by the term bully.
- To give a clear indication of how the school will not tolerate bullying of any sort.
- To describe the procedures to follow when bullying is alleged.
- To outline: -
 - a) The strategies we will employ to counsel and protect the bullied.
 - b) The sanctions we will take to discourage bullying.
- The measures to be taken to reconcile the bully with the school community.
- To ensure that pupils and staff are aware of issues surrounding equality in areas such as gender and race.
- To ensure that staff are aware of suspected bullying and are equipped to act fairly yet promptly.

What is bullying?

Bullying can take a large number of forms but we recognise that it is behaviour that is

- Deliberately hurtful and intimidating, sometimes physically so;
- Often repeated over a period of time;
- Difficulty for victims to defend themselves against.

Bullying may manifest itself in several ways but generally there are three main types recognised:

- Physical: hitting, kicking, taking belongs, intimidating staring;

- Verbal: name calling, offensive remarks or innuendo;
- Indirect: malicious stories, deliberate exclusion from a social group, giving someone the 'mickies'.

Staff should be aware that much bullying is quite subtle, may not fit into the normal definitions, but none the less is just as powerful and hurtful as any other form.

Procedures to follow:

These are outlined in Appendix 1 and staff in the school will be made aware of these procedures. Pupils will be made aware through their planners, class room notices, assemblies, PHSE + C of the procedures to follow in cases of suspected bullying either of themselves or their contemporaries.

Sanctions

The sanctions for bullying are detailed in the school's Behaviour and Discipline Policy. All staff have access to this policy and pupils will be made aware through the channels described in Procedures to Follow of what these sanctions are. The severity of the bullying may require the intervention of an outside agency (e.g. Police, WPRSS) but parents will be notified about this and welcomed to any meeting (see procedures).

Intervention:

The school encourages pupils to report bullying, as they perceive it, to an adult. Normally we would expect this to be the Parent, the Form Tutor or the Class Teacher. However the child may report this to other children or to senior staff. Many children feel uncomfortable describing bullying to adults and for this reason the school has peer-led Anti Bullying Counsellors who are basically trained to take on this role of early intervention which would then be reported to the PAHT. Whatever method is employed in disclosure the school will strive to deal with the incident/disclosure urgently.

Aftermath

The school will attempt to get the bully to meet with his or her victim but only with the agreement of the victim (and if necessary the parents) where the victim is able to outline how he/she feels and the effect that the incident has had on him/her. The victim will be offered some form of counselling (ABC, familiar teacher, Catholic Care etc.) whilst the bully may also be asked, as part of his/her rehabilitation, to undergo some form of anti-bullying training (ABC, Catholic Care, SIR).

In all cases the victims will be revisited after several weeks to gauge whether the bullying has continued, returned or ceased.

Dissemination

Parents will be made aware of our anti-bullying procedures through parents' evenings, the school prospectus and planner. The Governors have a disciplinary committee where issues surrounding bullying are commonly discussed. The Staff Handbook has a section dealing with bullying; pastoral staff briefings and some INSET are devoted to bullying issues.

Bullying in the Workplace

The school is fully committed to intervening when staff allege bullying from colleague(s). The Head Teacher and Staff Tutor will intervene at the earliest possible opportunity when such allegations are made. Further details are contained within the Staff Policies.

Appendix 1

Procedures to Follow:

1. The victim discloses to personnel an allegation of bullying from a pupil(s) or adult(s) (If adult go straight away to the Annex to this Appendix).
2. Staff should record this allegation and make preliminary notes to ascertain the extent, seriousness and nature of the bullying.
3. (a) It may be within the form group or glass group and can be dealt with initially there – by Form Tutor/Class Teacher. However a referral slip must be completed and sent to the Form Tutor. The Form Tutor will then decide whether the situation needs to go any further (see (b)).
(b) If the teacher to whom disclosure is made deems the incident to be serious enough he or she must record the incident as described above, advise as to confidentiality, fill in referral slip to the Form Tutor and then take the allegation to the Head of House.
4. Head of House will interview the child to ascertain in what context the bullying has taken place. The interview must be recorded and a summary of it written on the serious incident form. Other participants in the incident must be interviewed but it is essential that the bully and the victim are kept apart from the outset.
5. When the HoH has decided on the nature of the incident, referral should be made to PAHT and the strategies for dealing with bullying as described in Behaviour and Discipline Policy will be employed. Parents of both bully and victim may be contacted at this stage.
6. A suitable sanction should be employed against the bully. Where obvious physical assault has occurred or severe psychological bullying can be shown then the Police may be involved. If the bully is excluded from school then, on return, a length of time will be spent by her/him in the SIR. Strategies for re-entry and reconciliation will be worked out at this stage.
7. The victim will be offered counselling if deemed appropriate in consultation with parents. A meeting between bully and victim could be arranged at this stage.
8. Note that disclosure from ABC Counsellors will be made straight to PAHT.

Annex

The disclosure of bullying by an adult often falls under the remit of child protection. The disclosure will normally be very personal and therefore the Child Protection Designated person will need to be consulted and the child advised about confidentiality. Whatever the reason the discussion with the designated teacher should be done urgently.

If the disclosure concerns a member of staff then advice should be sought from the Head Teacher and/or the Staff Tutor before proceeding. Again the confidentiality aspect needs emphasising.