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**Anti-Bullying Policy**

**Introduction**

At Gurrane National School, we are committed to providing a caring, friendly and safe environment for our entire school community, so they can learn, work or participate in a happy, relaxed and secure atmosphere.

The school is committed to Gospel values in its daily living.

Central to this is the maxim; *always treat others as you would like them to treat you*

Bullying of any kind is, therefore, completely unacceptable at our school and will not be tolerated. If bullying does occur, all pupils should be able to tell, and know that incidents will be dealt with promptly and effectively.

We wish to be a school where anyone who knows that bullying is happening is expected to tell the staff, and feels able to do so both in confidence and with confidence.

We are fortunate to have the following policy and procedures drawn up in consultation with parents and pupils, where all had an input as to how we can best ensure the safety and happiness of our children at school.

**Objectives of this Policy**

* All teaching and non-teaching staff, pupils and parents should have an understanding of what bullying is.
* All teaching and non-teaching staff should be fully aware of the school’s anti-bullying policy and follow it when bullying is reported.
* All pupils and parents should know the school’s anti-bullying procedures and what they should do if bullying arises.
* At Gurrane National School we wish to take bullying seriously so pupils and parents should be assured that they will be supported when bullying is reported.

In parallel with this policy, we believe it is important to guide pupils in conflict resolution and in appropriate anger strategies. Young children often interpret many arguments as “bullying”. We shall endeavour to encourage children’s understanding of and ability to resolve the everyday misunderstandings and disagreements they will have as they go through life. We teach the children strategies such as counting to 10, walking away, telling the person annoying them to stop, asking for help, writing a journal, explaining their point of view again in a calm voice, etc.

**Rationale for our Anti-Bullying Policy**

* Bullying is the persistent use of words or actions with the intention of hurting another person. It invariably results in pain and distress to the victim.
* Bullying is not an isolated argument or falling out between equals. (All children argue or disagree from time to time.)
* No one deserves to be a victim of bullying. Everybody has the right to be treated with respect. Pupils who are bullying need help with their behaviour as much as the victim of the bullying needs support.
* The behaviour is to be differentiated from the child or adult themselves. We recognise a difference between the “doer” and the “deed”. A child accused of alleged bullying deserves to have the complaint investigated before being sanctioned.
* Our school will endeavour to behave with responsibility to respond promptly and effectively to issues of bullying.

**What is Bullying? It can take many forms, including:**

Emotional being unfriendly, isolating, excluding from group membership, avoidance or tormenting (e.g. hiding books, threatening gestures) constant undermining of an individual’s self-esteem and confidence, etc.

Physical pushing, kicking, hitting, punching or any use of violence or unwanted physical contact etc.

Verbal name-calling, sarcasm, spreading rumours, teasing, etc.

Cyber This is carried out through an internet device such as email,chat room, social networking site misuse, etc.

Mobile threats by text messaging & calls, etc.

Misuse of ICT Using camera & video facilities to humiliate or harass, etc

**Possible Signs and Symptoms of Bullying**

A child may indicate by signs or behaviour that he or she is being bullied. Adults should be aware of these possible signs and that they should investigate if a child:

* changes their usual routine
* is unwilling to go to school (school phobic)
* becomes unusually withdrawn anxious, or lacking in confidence
* cries themselves to sleep at night or has nightmares
* regularly feels ill in the morning
* begins to inexplicably do poorly in school work
* comes home with clothes torn or books damaged
* has possessions which are damaged or " go missing"
* has unexplained cuts or bruises
* becomes aggressive, disruptive or unreasonable
* is bullying other children or siblings
* stops eating
* is frightened to say what's wrong
* gives improbable excuses for any of the above
* is afraid to use the internet or their mobile phone

These signs and behaviours are not a definitive proof that bullying has occurred. These signs could indicate other problems, but bullying should be considered a possibility and will be investigated if reported.

**How to report Bullying or concerns about bullying.**

Parents are often the first people that a child will confide in. Parents should come and tell the class teacher as soon as they have a concern. Early intervention is the key to solving conflict, avoiding hurt, and preventing bad behavioural habits. Together, the parent and class teacher will discuss what has happened and then go through the **Procedures** Steps.

Any child may speak to a teacher or tell a teacher of their concerns. Children are encouraged to ask their parents to talk to a teacher if they feel too shy to do it themselves.

**Procedures**

The bullying behaviour or threats of bullying must be investigated and the behaviour stopped quickly

1. Children – or their parents – are to report bullying incidents to staff, which will use the following steps.
2. The class teacher, principal, and any other teachers on playtime supervision closely and discreetly monitor the interactions of the children in the days following the complaint. Besides any physical interaction, teachers will also check for any disagreements, arguments, shouting, “Falling out”, resentful or aggressive behaviour etc between the children. Any such behaviour is noted.
3. The class teacher and Principal will meet with the child who feels victimised. Through talking with the pupil, a record is made of behaviour or incidents which are upsetting the child, and of how the child would like issues resolved. The child is reassured that the teachers have their best interest at heart and are here to help.
4. Class teacher and Principal then meet with the child accused of bullying. If staff members have noted the bullying behaviour, the child is told that the behaviour is unacceptable and must stop immediately. If no bullying behaviour is observed by staff members, the concerns are still raised and discussed and the accused child will be asked to volunteer ways to improve and repair the relationship with the child who feels victimised. The parent of the child accused of bullying is also informed at this stage.
5. Both children are brought together for a chat to explore and discuss the best way to repair friendships and get along better.
6. The parents of both children will then be informed that such a meeting has taken place, and of the steps taken and agreed with the children. Parents are invited to come in and meet the teachers if they can.
7. All teaching staff will continue to monitor the relationship between the two children, either in class or during play periods.
8. A follow- up meeting/s will be held a week later with each child independently, to ascertain if the behaviour has been resolved satisfactorily.
9. In cases of proven bullying, follow-up meetings with the victim and child doing the bullying will be held at further irregular intervals during the term and the remainder of the school year, to reassure the victim and to encourage the child who was bullying to maintain positive behaviour.
10. Parents of each child will be encouraged to maintain contact with the teacher. Parents are also encouraged to talk to each other to keep each other informed.
11. In cases of serious bullying a written record will be kept by the class teacher at each stage of the process.
12. All cases of bullying will form part of the CPOR (Child Protection Oversight Report) to BOM

It should be recognised that there are some children who may not be aware that their behaviour can be perceived as bullying by other children. For example, a very young child who is accustomed to “rough and tumble” play may not realise the inappropriateness of such play when they begin school, etc. etc.

Therefore, we believe that the child accused of bullying also deserves to be dealt with in a caring and sensitive manner, as much as the child who has been hurt, in order to help them engage in positive and friendly play and relationships.

In Gurrane National School, we also encourage all the children to realise that they can become passive bullies by their silence and failure to speak out if they realise a child is being regularly bullied in school. We encourage the children to care for and look after each other, and to have the courage to speak out if they see bullying taking place.

**Communication with Parents:**

We recognise that it can be dismaying, hurtful and upsetting for parents to be told that their own child is actually bullying someone else, or that an accusation has been made against their son or daughter. Instinctively, a parent’s natural reaction is to defend their own child from accusation.

We also appreciate in such a small & close community that some parents may feel reluctant to risk friendships with other parents by complaining to the school.

We are therefore grateful for the responsible and constructive response of our parents in recognising that all children need to learn the value of patience and tolerance as part of their path to maturity, and also for recognising that the school has the best interests of all the children and parents at heart.

A child who is actually bullying may suffer from a real or perceived injustice, and may have been bullied and in turn need help themselves.

We endeavour and make it our wish that Gurrane National School be a place where parents and children feel safe in raising concerns, and where conflict can be resolved in a way that cares for and respects all concerned.

Our school is a community where all children and adults have the right to be treated equally, with kindness and compassion. This is only possible with the positive and constructive support of parents, who are the child’s primary educators.

**Specific Prevention Teaching Methods**

All classes from Infants to 6th will engage in Anti-Bullying lessons throughout the school year.

These are to be taken from the Stay Safe, RSE, and Alive-O/Grow in Love programmes. School Assemblies will also be arranged.

The following is the whole-school schedule that will be implemented.. Staff will make every effort co-ordinate timing to achieve maximum benefit.

Teachers are free to add to this if the need arises within their own classes.

* **Playground Buddy Bench** : Year-Round .A buddy bench is provided for children All children will be encouraged to ensure no child is left out of games at lunchtime. The responsibility of ensuring other children are cared for will also reinforce positive behaviour among children when they play and hang around together.

**Examples of Specific Class Discussion Questions For children:**

1. What is bullying?
2. What can you do if you are being bullied?
3. Is reporting bullying the same as telling tales?
4. Will reporting make the bullying worse?
5. If you know someone being bullied, what should you do?
6. What do you do if the parent of the person bullying you is great friends with your parent? (kids fear parents won’t want to risk friendships)

# Interview with the parties involved (see meeting with pupils policy)

While it is extremely difficult to give a prescriptive list of questions.

Below are a list of possible questions

**Examples of Specific Questions to use when talking to a child who may be bullied:**

Are you happy in school?

Is there anything making you unhappy?

Are there particular times when you felt bullied?

Was it always the same person?

When did it start?

How did you deal with it yourself?

Did you ask anyone for help? Have you told mum or dad?

What would you like the teachers to do to help sort it out?

Would you like us to come up with a plan?

Have you anything else you would like to say?

Have you anything else you would like us to do?

We will meet with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(accused child) and have a talk.

We will talk to you again after that to make sure you feel ok about everything.

**Examples of Specific Questions to use when talking to a child accused of bullying:**

Are you happy in school?

How are you getting on with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

What is happening and where

What solutions could you suggest

We will meet with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_(accused child) and have a talk.

We will talk to you again after that to make sure you feel ok about everything.

**The Physical Environment**

The school does its best to ensure that opportunities for bullying are kept to a minimum in so far as is possible. For example:

All children line up in their own places in the yard. Places are determined according to Roll-Order.

Lines are supervised on their way to and from the yard.

Cloakrooms are monitored and supervised while the children get their coats.

On buses, children are allocated seats at teachers discretion.

Children may only go to the toilet with permission, and only one at a time may go during class periods.

Seating arrangements in class are selected by the class teacher.

Access to the main school is restricted during playtime.

Picking teams etc are organised/monitored with the input of teachers.

Obstacles in the yard that cause visual hindrance for supervision have been removed (eg hedging dividers between play areas, etc)

Children line up in single file in Roll Order at dismissal time, and walk in single file to the gate.

All assemblies are organised by teachers to ensure that cliques etc may not form in these situations.

At assembly, children are informed that certain games are not allowed eg “Pile-Ons”, and rough play such as “sliding tackles”, grabbing or catching others by the hood of their coats, holding another child in a headlock, etc.

School Rules are used to indicate that certain behaviour eg name-calling, imitating, inappropriate gestures etc are not acceptable.

Teachers are requested to lock classroom during breaks.

**This policy was ratified by the Board on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

##### Signed \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (Chairperson Board of Management)

###### Circulation of the ratified document to members of the school community will take place in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_