

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

The Anti-bullying Policy reflects the School Aims with a view to maintaining a safe, secure and happy environment for all pupils and staff. This policy should be read and understood in close association with the Positive Behaviour Management Policy, whose procedures and definitions of categories of misconduct will be in principle held to apply. Where appropriate, the sanctions listed within the Positive Behaviour Management policy, in relation to bullying will be actioned.

We will ensure that all members of the school community are aware of this policy.¹

Aims

- To foster an atmosphere of tolerance and mutual respect within the school community.
- To encourage a whole school approach to bullying to ensure effective learning and teaching takes place for all.
- To provide a safe and caring environment in which each pupil is afforded the opportunity to maximise his potential in all facets of school life.
- To prevent bullying in any form, including racist, homophobic, sectarian and cyber-bullying and to have a consistent approach for dealing with incidents of bullying quickly and effectively.
- To create on the part of staff and pupils an awareness of bullying and an understanding of its causes.
- To promote a moral climate in which bullying is socially unacceptable and in which both victim and witness are at liberty to report any incident either directly, or via a third party.

Objectives

- It will be the responsibility of all members of staff to be aware of and report any incidents of bullying to the appropriate Head of Year as and when it occurs.
- Bullying will be closely monitored through recording of inappropriate behaviour in SIMS.
- Subjects like LLW will teach pupils about tolerance, inclusion, socially acceptable and unacceptable behaviour.
- To help pupils to understand the different forms that bullying can take and the consequences of engaging in such behaviour.

Prevention and Awareness

¹ Anti-Bullying Network www.antibullying.net

- Bullying is a whole school issue and as such the topic arises in a variety of curriculum areas.
- Bullying is formally addressed in Learning for Life and Work classes where the nature of bullying is explored and an attempt is made to develop self-protective strategies and appropriate responses.
- At all appropriate opportunities the message that bullying is unacceptable is reinforced and pupils are encouraged to foster positive attitudes and conduct in respect of the same.
- Pupil mentors are used to raise awareness of the issues and to provide support and advice to pupils in Years 8 and 9.

Dealing with incidents of Bullying

- The victim of bullying is reassured that the matter will be taken seriously and he is given guidance in order to help him cope.
- Appropriate counselling and sanctions are applied to the bully and his behaviour is monitored.
- All incidents of bullying will be recorded.
- Serious incidents of bullying will be reported to parents.

Complaints Procedure

- Pupils or parents with any concerns or complaints regarding bullying, or any of the above, should, in the first instance, contact the Head of Year.
- Where an allegation of bullying is made against a member of staff, the matter should be referred to the Headmaster where it will be dealt with under the formal complaints procedure and child protection procedure.

Evaluation

- Through discussion in Learning for Life and Work classes and through consultation between Heads of Year and parents.
- The policy will be kept under review and updated to be in line with best practice.

BULLYING - GUIDANCE & CHECKLIST FOR STAFF

1. WHAT IS BULLYING?

"It is the wilful, conscious desire to hurt, threaten or frighten someone."

2. TYPES OF BULLYING

Bullying covers a wide range of activity:

(a) PUPIL BEHAVIOUR

- (i) Physical Aggression** - includes pushing, shoving, kicking and punching - it may also take the form of severe physical assault.
- (ii) Verbal** - here the voice is used as a weapon. It may be in the form of persistent name calling directed at the same individual which humiliates, hurts or insults. This bullying is often directed at the victim because of his race, religion, physical appearance, accent or distinct voice characteristics and academic ability of both high and low achievers. Name calling may also take the form of suggestive remarks about a pupil's sexual orientation.
- (iii) Intimidation** - This is based on the use of very aggressive body language and tone of voice where the victim may be pressurised to do something that he/she does not want to. The bully's facial expression or "look" can convey aggression and/or dislike. Threats are consistently used to undermine the victim's confidence.
- (iv) Exclusion** - This practice is usually initiated by the bully. The victim is purposely isolated, excluded or ignored by some or all of the class group. It may be compounded by circulating notes, whispering insults which can be overheard by the victim or writing derogatory remarks on whiteboards or in public places.
- (v) Extortion** - Money may be demanded and the victim threatened if he does not pay up promptly. Victim's lunches, dinner tickets or lunch money may be taken. The victim may be coerced into stealing property for the bully. Such tactics may be employed solely to incriminate the victim.
- (vi) Damage to property** - The bully may focus attention on the victim's property. As a result clothing, school books or other personal property may be damaged, stolen or hidden.
- (vii) Cyber-bullying** – This makes use of Internet forums and web sites (which invite and/or facilitate postings), email, text and video messaging to send offensive comments and images, often anonymously. It can also involve hijacking email accounts to impersonate individuals and sending messages over short distances using “Bluetooth” technology.

(b) TEACHER BEHAVIOUR

Unwittingly or otherwise, a teacher may engage in, instigate or reinforce bullying behaviour by:

- (i) humiliating a pupil who is academically weak/outstanding or vulnerable in other ways;
- (ii) using sarcasm/negative comments with regards to a pupil's physical appearance or background;
- (iii) using gestures or expressions which are intimidating and threatening.

3. EFFECTS OF BULLYING

Although victims often remain silent, changes of mood and behaviour can be indicative of their suffering. Victims of bullying feel helpless and overwhelmed by the power that the bully exercises. This leads to insecurity, increased fear, loss of confidence and consequent lowering of self esteem. Thus, the victim becomes more vulnerable. Vigilance with regards to any behavioural change is important as early intervention is crucial.

4. IDENTIFYING BULLYING

A pupil who is being bullied may display some of the following signs and symptoms:

- anxiety about travelling to and from school;
- reluctance about attending school;
- a pattern of physical illness e.g. headaches;
- changes in temperament and/or behaviour;
- signs of anxiety or distress - difficulty in sleeping, not eating, crying etc;
- possessions and/or clothing damaged or missing;
- unexplained bruising or cuts;
- deterioration in educational performance or loss of enthusiasm and interest in school;
- reluctance and/or refusal to say what is troubling him.

Individually, these signs and symptoms do not necessarily mean that a pupil is being bullied. However, if there is a combination or repetitive occurrence of these, then further investigation is needed in order to determine what is affecting the pupil.

5. WHY DOES BULLYING OCCUR?

The reasons for bullying behaviour are complex and varied. Some common reasons are:

- (i) aggressive behaviour is acceptable;
- (ii) to gain status in front of peers;
- (iii) to gain attention from significant adults;
- (iv) boredom;
- (v) extortion;
- (vi) to compensate for failure;
- (vii) prejudice against people of a particular sexual orientation or because of their race or religious beliefs.
- (viii) bullying behaviour can be symptomatic of a victim of child abuse/neglect.

6. DEALING WITH BULLYING

Bullying behaviour is not acceptable in Bangor Grammar School. Pupils should be encouraged to report incidents and to accept responsibility for the welfare of other pupils.

Incidences of bullying behaviour should be reported to the boy's Head of Year. Pupil mentors are trained in bullying awareness and are required to bring any concerns about bullying among pupils in Years 8 and 9 to the Form Teacher or Head of Year.

CHECKLIST FOR ACTION BY HEAD OF YEAR ²

(A) DEALING WITH THE VICTIM

1. Reassure the victim that the matter will be taken seriously and will be dealt with.
2. Meet with the victim as soon as possible - Obtain a written account of what has happened. (Give help if necessary)
3. Meet with individual witnesses.
4. Support the victim in planning self-protective strategies and a response, if the incident should recur.
5. Agree action to be taken e.g. interview the bully etc.
6. Review date - arrange to see the victim in an agreed short period to review situation.
7. Report the action taken to the parents of the victim where appropriate.
8. Possible referral to Designated Teacher for Child Protection, Pastoral Vice Principal or Headmaster.

N.B. In all situations, the victim's welfare must take paramount importance.

(B) DEALING WITH THE BULLY

1. Meet with the bully as soon as possible. Ask for written record of what has happened (where, what, when, why?)
2. Stress that it is the behaviour and not the person that is unacceptable.
3. Suggest acceptable forms of behaviour (and highlight any good form that the pupil has already demonstrated).
4. Responsibility for any harm/hurt/damage must be accepted by the bully (and recompense made).
5. Agree action and sanctions to be taken - let the bully know that his behaviour will be closely monitored.
6. Where appropriate, the action taken is reported to the parents of the bully.
7. A review date will be set to allow for positive changes to be acknowledged.
8. Possible referral to designated teacher for child protection, or Headmaster.

(C) RECORDING PROCEDURES

- (i) Heads of Year should record all incidents of bullying.

² DENI Circular 1999 'Pastoral Care in Schools - Child Protection' Section 7 pages 41-42

A written account of incidents of bullying should be placed in the files of those pupils involved.

- (ii) In the case of cyber-bullying, every effort should be made to acquire and preserve evidence.
- (iii) Serious or persistent incidents should be reported to a Vice Principal or the Headmaster.
- (iv) A pupil's persistent bullying behaviour that defies the school's attempts to satisfactorily address it by behavioural management strategies or disciplinary methods within a reasonable time should be reported to the designated teacher for child protection. Child protection procedures will be instigated.
- (v) When appropriate, all staff are informed about the incident and the action taken.
- (vi) Parents of children involved may be informed by a senior member of staff in order that they may support their child and the school.

7. MONITORING OF BULLYING

(A) RAISING AWARENESS

- (i) Learning for Life and Work (LLW) classes.
- (ii) Year Assemblies and School Assembly when required.
- (iii) Pupil mentors advising boys in Years 8 and 9.
- (iv) Posters on school notice boards.
- (v) Consultation with pupils through questionnaires
- (vi) Policies on Child Protection and Anti-Bullying available to all parents.
- (vii) Northern Ireland Anti-bullying Forum 028 9043 1123

(B) MONITORING WITHIN THE SCHOOL

- (i) Through discussion and questionnaires in LLW classes and with parents.
- (ii) Head of Year, Form Teacher and pupil records.

8. EVALUATION

Heads of Year and a Vice Principal review the outcomes of pupil questionnaires and discussions. Recommendations for refining the policy and procedures are brought to Senior Management for action as appropriate. The Board of Governors will review the policy annually.